



5 Public spaces in Kuwait are littered with trash



6 Trump, Macron, Erdogan clash overshadows NATO summit



21 Sudan cinema flickers back to life after Bashir ouster



28 Messi wins sixth Ballon d'Or as Rapinoe takes women's prize



Saudi King invites Qatari Amir to Riyadh for GCC summit

UAE praises Assad for 'wise leadership', cementing ties with Syria



KUWAIT: Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, looks on from the window of a building as Kuwaiti and British soldiers outside take part in the Desert Warrior exercise at Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah Camp yesterday. — AFP (See Page 2)

DOHA/DAMASCUS: Saudi King Salman has invited Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to a meeting next week of the Gulf regional bloc in Riyadh, Qatari state media said yesterday without specifying if Doha had accepted. The invitation to the Dec 10 summit of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation (GCC) comes amid signs of reduced animosity between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which has led an economic boycott of Doha since 2017.

Saudi Arabia and allies Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates closed their airspace to Qatar Airways and banned travel to the country over charges that Doha backs radical Islamists and seeks closer ties with Iran. Qatar vehemently denies the charges. The three Gulf boycott countries are currently participating in a regional football tournament in Qatar having announced their participation at the last minute.

Saudi Arabia and hosts Qatar are facing off in the semifinals tomorrow. "The Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, received a written message from... Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud to attend the (GCC) summit," the Qatar News Agency reported. The Amir has been represented by senior officials at GCC summits since the blockade was imposed despite hav-

ing received invitations.

Meanwhile, the United Arab Emirates' top diplomat in Syria has praised President Bashar Al-Assad for his "wise leadership", in one of the strongest expressions of support yet from a country that once backed Damascus' enemies in the civil war. The two restored diplomatic ties last year and the UAE's vocal support will be welcome by Assad, who has wrested control of most of his country from rebels and jihadists and is seeking to shed his status as pariah to much of the outside world.

Speaking at a ceremony to mark UAE national day on Dec 2, UAE charge d'affaires Abdul-Hakim Naimi said he hoped "security and stability prevails throughout the Syrian Arab Republic under the wise leadership of President Bashar Al-Assad. "Syria-UAE relations are solid, distinct and strong," he added, according to a video posted by Russian broadcaster RT.

The UAE has begun to forge closer ties with Damascus to counter the influence of its rivals Iran and Turkey. Last December it reopened its embassy there, angering Washington, which has sought to keep Assad isolated.

Continued on Page 24

MoCI rejects bid to scrap ration cards

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources yesterday said that in response to a memo by the Cabinet's financial affairs committee, the ministry of commerce and industry rejected a proposal to cancel ration cards given to citizens and some non-Kuwaitis like GCC nationals and military bedoons. The sources explained that the ministerial financial affairs committee had earlier discussed a parliamentary proposal calling for cancelling the cards that annually cost the government over KD 10 million, and instead pay monthly food allowances to citizens with their monthly salary.

"The proposal was meant to cut financial subsidies to less than half and only give citizens monthly allowances to purchase food supplies, save the sums paid to expats working at subsidized goods centers and prevent smug-

gling of subsidized goods abroad and giving them to people who do not deserve them," the sources explained, warning that in this case, non-Kuwaitis getting subsidized food supplies would be deprived of the privilege.

The sources added that the ministry memo also warned that cancelling these cards would lead to price hikes and overburden citizens, which might be used as a pretext to demand pay raises. "This will overburden the state budget, especially since salaries already consume over three quarters of the general budget and the government is trying to cut expenses and salaries through encouraging more citizens to work for the private sector," the sources remarked.

"Kuwait is an open market based on demand and supply, which makes it hard to monitor and control prices," the sources added, noting that possible price increases will also affect needed expats who might be forced to leave, and Kuwait cannot afford losing them. Finally, the sources reconfirmed that the subsidized food supply cards will remain in use with some reforms such as appointing Kuwaiti supervisors at all centers, restricting jobs done by expats to handling only and inspecting the centers more often.

above the pre-industrial average between 1850-1900. That puts 2019 on course to be in the top three warmest years ever recorded, and possibly the hottest non-El Nino year yet.

Man-made emissions from burning fossil fuels, building infrastructure, growing crops and transporting goods mean 2019 is set to break the record for atmospheric carbon concentrations, locking in further warming, the WMO said. Oceans, which absorb 90 percent of the excess heat produced by greenhouse gases, are now at their highest recorded temperatures.

Continued on Page 24

UN: 2010s hottest decade in history

MADRID: This decade is set to be the hottest in history, the United Nations said yesterday in an annual assessment outlining the ways in which climate change is outpacing humanity's ability to adapt to it. The World Meteorological Organization said global temperatures so far this year were 1.1 degrees Celsius

smoke billowed into the sky after the blaze broke out at a tile manufacturing unit in an industrial zone of north Khartoum, witnesses said. Police cordoned off the entire area, an AFP correspondent reported from the scene as fire engines battled to douse the blaze.

"A fire erupted in an industrial area because of which 23 people were killed and more than 130 injured," the cabinet said in a statement. "A blast in a gas tanker triggered the fire." Preliminary reports from the scene indicate that necessary safety equipment was missing at the site, it said.

Continued on Page 24

23 killed as fire engulfs Sudan factory

KHARTOUM: Twenty-three people were killed and dozens injured as a fire triggered by an explosion in a gas tanker tore through a factory in the Sudanese capital yesterday, officials said. Thick plumes of black



KHARTOUM: A burning gas tank is seen at a tile manufacturing unit in an industrial zone yesterday. — AFP

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Local

Prince William visits Sheikh Salem Al-Ali military camp

Duke of Cambridge concludes Kuwait visit



KUWAIT: Prince William is seen off at the airport upon his departure from Kuwait yesterday. — Amiri Diwan and AFP photos



Prince William looks on from the window of a building as Kuwaiti and British soldiers outside take part in the Desert Warrior exercise at the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali military camp yesterday.



Prince William speaks with soldiers while attending the Desert Warrior exercise.

KUWAIT: Duke of Cambridge Prince William left Kuwait yesterday, concluding an official visit to the country. He was seen off by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah

Al-Sabah and Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs and Head of the Mission of Honor Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. Earlier yesterday, Prince William

paid a visit to Sheikh Salem Al-Ali military camp in Subbiya. The British royal attended a military exercise: 'Desert Warrior', jointly conducted by Kuwaiti and British troops.

Prince William was accompanied by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Sabah. On Monday, the British royal toured the southern desert Sahara in Kuwait. —KUNA



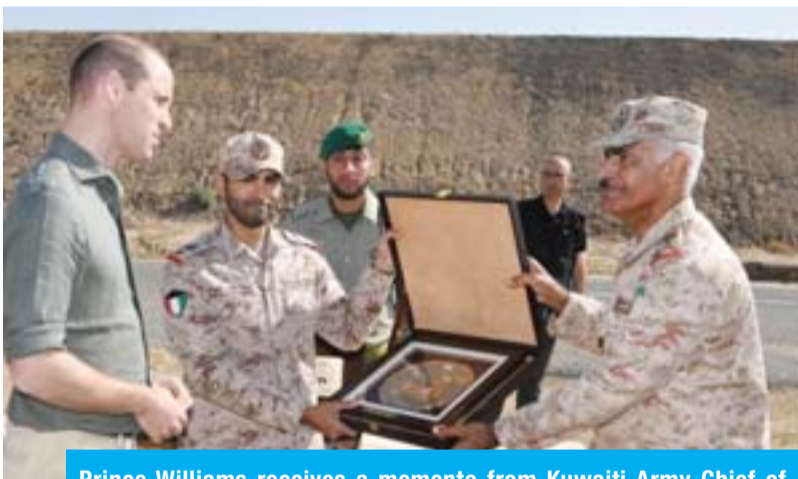
Prince William listens as he attends the Desert Warrior exercise.



Kuwaiti and British soldiers take part in the Desert Warrior exercise.



Prince Williams poses for a group picture with top Kuwaiti Army and National Guard officials.



Prince Williams receives a memento from Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khudhr.



Prince Williams listens to an explanation on Sadu weaving during his visit to the southern desert.



Prince Williams is seen during his visit to the southern desert.

Kuwait's Deputy FM hails UAE achievements

KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah expressed admiration of the UAE great achievements in a wide array of domains. These achievements have drawn world attention to the UAE. Jarallah told reporters Monday on the sidelines of the UAE embassy celebrations of the national day. He noted that the planned hosting of Expo 2020 shows the world's appreciation of UAE significant regional and international role. Jarallah lauded the deeply-rooted special relations between Kuwait and the UAE. He recalled the UAE leadership and people's support to Kuwait and hosting of Kuwaitis during the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990s. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Dignitaries cut the cake during the UAE Embassy's national day ceremony. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Dutch deployment in the Strait of Hormuz

KUWAIT: The Dutch Embassy in Kuwait released the following statement, announcing the deployment of a Dutch frigate as part of a European-led mission to secure traffic at the Strait of Hormuz:

"To enhance maritime security in the Gulf region, from the end of January to the end of June 2020 the Netherlands will make a military contribution to the French-initiated, European-led mission in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH). Tensions in the Gulf region have risen steadily higher in recent months. Incidents that disrupt shipping and raise uncertainty have direct consequences for the world economy including for Dutch shippers. This has an immediate impact on Dutch economic and security interests. Safeguarding the free and safe passage of all maritime traffic in this part of the world is therefore in the Netherlands' interests. The Dutch government has for this reason decided to contribute a frigate with an onboard helicopter to EMASOH and to second a number of staff officers to its headquarters. The mission's goal is to prevent further incidents in the region. It also includes a diplomatic track, which will focus on de-escalating tensions, for example by means of an inclusive regional dialogue on maritime security. In this way the



mission, in line with the Netherlands' own points of departure, aims at an integrated approach to maritime security in the Gulf region. The frigate is called His Majesty's De Ruyter and was built by Royal Schelde in Vlissingen, now part of Damen Shipyards. The 144 meter frigate has a crew of 174 men and women was commissioned in 2004."

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NBK sponsors PAAET career fair

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has provided golden sponsorship for the third annual career fair, organized by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), to provide job opportunities in the private sector for the Kuwaiti youth. The sponsorship underscores the bank's keenness to support the youth and qualify them to build a career pathway.

The career fair seeks to open channels of direct communication between private sector companies and job seekers and also provide students and fresh graduates with suitable job opportunities. NBK human resources personnel were available at its booths and provided their advice and guidance to students seeking assistance with their future career, in addition to educating them on the nature of joining the banking industry and guiding them through the required procedure to join NBK.

"NBK is seeking to spread the career culture between students and the fresh graduates, providing them with training programs that equip them to join the private sector in gen-

eral and the banking business in particular," stated Abdullah Al-Jassem, Head of Recruitment at NBK Group.

NBK continues to maintain its leading position among the private sector institutions that have consistently attracted and trained national manpower, developed their skills and equipped them to be part of the banking sector," Jassem added.

Jassem also pointed out that NBK is the ideal choice for new graduates as well as those looking for a promising career, given its resources and development programs that come in line with the highest international standards, tailored specifically to refine and enhance work related skills.

NBK is focused on attracting young Kuwaiti talents as part of its development and training plans that invest in Kuwaitis to build a promising banking generation. As a leading banking institution in Kuwait, NBK provides professional and academic training programs as part of its mission aimed at ensuring that young professionals receive the required training programs.

Local

Amir receives Speaker Ghanem, Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad

Sheikh Sabah receives Gulf Popular Heritage Festival officials



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. —Amiri Diwan photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, head of the higher committee of Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village,

where the Sixth Gulf Popular Heritage Festival is taking place. The reception also saw the presence of Advisor of the Amiri Diwan and General Supervisor of the Village Mohammad Daifallah Sharar. Both briefed His Highness the Amir with the festival's cultural activities. In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed his deepest sympathies yesterday over the lives lost when a bus overturned in

Morocco's northern city of Taza. His Highness the Amir extended his condolences in a cable he sent to Morocco's King Mohammed VI, saying he was distraught over the tragic loss of life caused by the transport mishap. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Moroccan king. —KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah and Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Mohammad Daifallah Sharar.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

PM meets UN Special Envoy for Yemen

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen Martian Griffiths and the accompanying delegation. Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah and other officials from the Foreign Ministry attended the meeting. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also received separately the Chairman and CEO of the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA) Engineer Salem Al-Othaina and head of the bureau of financial control Khalifa Al-Ujail.

Also yesterday, Assistant Foreign Minister and Office Director of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah received at the Foreign Ministry's Diwan the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen Martian Griffiths and the accompanying delegation. They tackled, during the meeting, the latest developments in the international efforts aiming at reaching a resolution to the crisis in Yemen. Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Al-Nasser emphasized Kuwait's supporting role to all the efforts by Griffiths to retain security and stability to Yemen and alleviate the humanitarian suffering of its people. Senior officials at the Ministry attended the meeting

Uncompromising justice

In other news, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled affirmed that Kuwait is a nation of "firm laws and uncompromising justice," where anyone convicted will be held accountable. In an interview with editors-in-chief of local newspapers and media outlets, the Premier cited His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's "explicit

instructions" over efforts to fight corruption and protect public funds; a plan the Kuwaiti government is intent on bringing to fruition, he said. It is incumbent upon the government to take His Highness the Amir's words to heart, Kuwait's new prime minister emphasized, saying that his previous position as foreign minister is unlike the responsibilities he now has to take over.

On the fight against corruption, His Highness said it entails "collective efforts" on the part of the government and citizens alike, calling on his fellow compatriots to report to concerned bodies any information they may have on corruption cases. On forming a new government, the top minister said the process would take place in due course, pointing out that any political and parliamentary endeavor should be undertaken by those with the knowhow needed to navigate through hardship. He said that, at times, lawmakers "defy logic," promising that as soon as a new government is formed, he would immediately start working with ministers and officials to achieve the county's development plans, saying his diplomatic experience would serve him well.

Govt priorities

On the new government's priorities, he listed education and the status of Kuwait's illegal residents as matters that would ultimately take precedence, in addition to plans that aim to "rejuvenate" the national economy, adding that the country has "high hopes" in the face of harsh realities.

Kuwait is on the cusp of a significant juncture marked by the formation of a new government that will assume an "enormous amount of responsibilities," as he urged the ministers to be chosen to perform their duties competently. On the relationship between the government and parliament, the prime minister said it is largely a "political affair," clarifying that it should not come at the expense of public funds or the welfare of the state. The prime minister went on to pin high hopes on the upcoming Gulf summit slated for next week in the Saudi capital Riyadh, saying the talks could help usher in a period of positive change. —KUNA



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KUWAIT: Assistant Foreign Minister and Office Director of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah meets with the United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen Martian Griffiths. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait hosts conference on detainees' health in Arab World

Kuwait role model in healthcare provided to detainees, says interior ministry official

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The first regional conference for Arab states on healthcare in detention kicked off yesterday at Radisson Blu Hotel under the slogan 'Detainees' health is our health.' The three-day conference was held in collaboration with Kuwait's ministries of interior and health. During his opening speech, assistant undersecretary for correctional institutions and law enforcement institutions at the ministry of interior Maj Gen Farraj Al-Zuabi said Kuwait is a role model in the healthcare it provides to detainees in correctional institutions.

"A prisoner in Kuwait undergoes a medical examination upon his arrival to the prison, and if he has a health issue, he will be separated and treated. There are specialized places to receive prisoners in Farwaniya Hospital and other specialized hospitals. Then the necessary work will be done to treat the patient, give him medications and check on his health throughout the day by the nursing team," he said.

Zuabi pointed out that this conference is to get acquainted with the experience of correctional institutions in Kuwait in the field of healthcare for detainees, which is a model in comprehensive and diverse care on the health, food and psychological levels. Prisoners have been receiving healthcare and humanitarian aid in every aspect possible for years.

Assistant undersecretary for national medical services at the ministry Dr Fatima Al-Najjar, who represented the ministry of health, said: "We will provide full and human rights-compatible healthcare, and stress the support of comprehensive health cooperation between institutions." She revealed a new hospital with a capacity of up to 128 beds at the Central Jail is currently being planned during a period in which Kuwait will witness a paradigm shift in the health sector.

Dorothea Krimitsas, deputy head of the regional delegation for GCC countries of ICRC, praised Kuwait's choice to host the conference, noting that it is a role model in the field of healthcare provided to detainees and prisoners in correctional institutions. "Millions of people are in prison around the world. They deserve to be treated humanely. The 'Detainees' health is our health' slogan here today is important to be remembered," she said. Krimitsas said that ICRC goes all over the world to ensure proper treatment in prisons, and this allowed them to better understand the challenges faced by concerned authorities. "Part of our work is to collaborate with detainees and healthcare centers to improve their health conditions," she added.

Amalid Chebly, regional healthcare in detention specialist in Middle East and Eurasia at ICRC, said 100 participants from 16 Arab countries are sharing their experiences



KUWAIT: A group picture of the attendees at the conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

and recommendations, and will be discussing topics in the field of laws and regulations of the health of prisoners in detention and

women accompanied by children there. "On the last day of the conference, we will visit health centers, clinics and rehabilitation centers

in Kuwait to see the experience of correctional institutions in Kuwait in the field of healthcare for detainees," she said.

Embassy hosts 'Know India Seminar'

KUWAIT: The Embassy of India in Kuwait, in association with India Tourism, conducted a 'Know India Seminar' this past Sunday at Radisson Blu Hotel, Kuwait. The event was well attended with the presence of a large number of distinguished guests comprising officials from the Kuwaiti government, representatives from the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, leading tour operators, representatives from airlines,

frequent tourists and travel bloggers from Kuwait, members of the media, representatives of lifestyle and travel magazines and members from the Indian Community in Kuwait.

Addressing the gathering, the chief guest of the evening, Yousef Mustafa, Assistant Undersecretary, Tourism Sector, Ministry of Information, State of Kuwait, praised the bilateral relations between India and Kuwait and hailed the role played by people-to-people linkages in nourishing and strengthening the relationship over the years. In his address, Majdi Abu Omar, General Manager of Kuwait Travel and Tourism Agencies Association, spoke about India's rich heritage and the myriad touristic options available for all kinds of travelers. Seetharaman Avany, Assistant Director, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, made a detailed presentation on India Tourism. In addition, the del-

egates from India delivered a presentation talking about latest product offerings from India.

K Jeeva Sagar, Ambassador of India to Kuwait, talked about India's unique features, its rich and diverse geographic and cultural tapestry, the special connect between peoples of the two friendly countries, and invited industry representatives from both the countries to make use of this opportunity to explore collaboration opportunities so as to provide tourists with enhanced value offerings and seamless travel experience.

A brief interactive session, followed by B2B meetings, were also held during the event. The seminar provided an excellent opportunity for all the industry participants in Kuwait to learn about the new developments taking place in the Indian tourism sector and also provided a unique platform for business networking.



KUWAIT: A group photo taken on the sidelines of the seminar.

Renewed Pearl Lounge introduced at Kuwait airport

KUWAIT: National Aviation Services (NAS), the largest lounge operator in the Middle East, introduced its newly refurbished Pearl Lounge and renewed Hala Kuwait meet and assist service at the Kuwait International Airport Terminal 1 (T1) recently.

The official opening was held under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Salman Al-Hamoud Al-Sabah, President, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and led by Emad Faleh Al-Juluwi, Deputy Director General for Aviation Safety and Air Transport Affairs from DGCA, Adel Malallah, Chief Government Relations Officer, Mansour Al-Khezim, General Manager and Maha Al-Musallam, Director, Customer Experience from NAS Kuwait.

The Pearl Lounge has been operational since 2004 and till date remains one of the popular lounges at the Kuwait International Airport. The refreshed lounge wears a contemporary look and introduces new and unique features covering a space of 475 square meters. The lounge offers an expanded seating area with 220 seats, a larger hot and cold buffet selection, a live cooking station, prayer rooms, children's playroom, shower facilities and a smoking room.

In line with quality and luxurious services, a newly introduced feature includes two special rooms with reclining lounges, dedicated to guests that need some quiet area to take a relax and nap. The lounge also has free Wi-Fi, live streaming TV channels and a selection of reading material ensure a wide array of entertainment options.

Located in the departures area after immigrations, the Pearl Lounge offers an ideal environment for passengers to relax, unwind or freshen up before or after their flight. The lounge partners with major credit cards as well as lounge access cards and can also be booked

ahead of time via www.fasttrack.aero or accessed around the clock through direct payment. This Pearl Lounge is one of five lounges operated by Kuwait based NAS, under the supervision of the Kuwait Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

Commenting on the opening, Hassan El-Houry said, "NAS is proud to be a Kuwaiti company - a company from the emerging markets, for the emerging markets. With a presence in 40 airports across the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, we have an established global network but continue to remain committed to our roots. Our topmost priority is to ensure that we offer world-class facilities and services to the airports in Kuwait, be it infrastructure, resources or training. We also offer operational expertise, innovative technology solutions and industry benchmarked services. The new look Pearl Lounge is one of our continued efforts and investments in this direction and we are extremely grateful to the Kuwait Directorate General of Civil Aviation for their continued cooperation and support."

NAS also introduced its Pearl Assist meet and assist service called Hala Kuwait in the departures lounge. This service helps travelers avoid long waiting times when departing from or arriving into Kuwait. For departures the service helps you cross over immigration while on arrival passengers are greeted at the aircraft gate and walked through all the immigration formalities.

Mansour Al-Khezim highlighted that NAS also offers a variety of other airports services in Kuwait that include, "Baggage Delivery Services" on arrival at T1 to your doorstep at any location in Kuwait and help you exit the airport faster and IATA certified travel and tourism services through the "NAS Travel and Tourism" office available 24/7 at the airport.

Khezim added "While we extend our efforts to develop facilities and services in Kuwait, we also support hiring of local talent and work on offering alternative careers opportunities to youth in the country through our various services at the airports in Kuwait." NAS operates over 40 lounges across Middle East, Africa and South Asia. The company's joint venture was recently awarded a contract to develop and operate the lounge at the Midfield Terminal in Abu Dhabi.



KUWAIT: Officials inaugurate the Pearl Lounge at Kuwait International Airport.

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Local

Littered trash ruins image of Kuwait's parks, public spaces



KUWAIT: While most people enjoy going out to various parks and public spaces in Kuwait for quality and leisure time, the sad fact is that most of such areas are littered with trash, creating a nauseating image; ruining the fun for everyone. Time and again, government entities and organizations spread public service announcements encouraging the populace to safeguard the environment and to protect the beauty of beaches and parks. The state also launched the Environmental Police initiative to curb violators from polluting and throwing trash, but despite all those efforts, some individuals keep on doing it. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Acting Deputy Director General for the Firefighting Sector at Kuwait Fire Service Directorate Maj Gen Mohammad Al-Mahameed speaks during a meeting on a joint drill to be held in February 2020.

KFSD conducts 'crisis management' drill Feb 2020

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Acting Deputy Director General for the Firefighting Sector at Kuwait Fire Service Directorate Maj Gen Mohammad Al-Mahameed held a meeting yesterday with representatives of 21 state departments to coordinate on a joint drill to be held in February 2020. Following the meeting, he said that the Shamel-6 exercise will

deal with the joint command for crisis management.

In other news, Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Naham visited the general traffic department's building where he inaugurated the central control operations room after it underwent some renovations. He was received by Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs and Operations Maj Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh and other officials.



KUWAIT: A group picture of participants in an awareness program on diabetes held for primary health care doctors.

Early cancer detection saves lives: Kuwaiti doctor

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Cancer rates are on the rise around the world, a Kuwaiti specialist warned, adding that the Gulf region has the same cancer rate as global rates which stands at 102 cases for every 100,000 people. Breast cancer makes a quarter of cancer cases at the rate of 43 cases for every 100,000 people, while Kuwait is among countries with above average rates at 58.8 for every 100,000 people, said Dr Faisal Al-Tarkeet, Head of the Medical Unit of Breast Cancer and Tumors at Kuwait Cancer Control Center (KCCC).

Dr Tarkeet was speaking during the second summit for the Middle East and Africa for combating breast cancer, which was held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). "Heart disease is the number one killer around the world, followed by the various types of cancer," he said, adding that cancer will likely become the number one killer in several years.

High recovery rate

Breast cancer tops the list among female cancer patients worldwide, he said, adding that it is not terminal as many people think, noting that the recovery rate from breast cancer is 96 percent. In the meantime, he warned against late diagnosis, urging the public to carry out periodic testing. "People are afraid to talk about cancer because they

believe it is a terminal disease, but that is mostly because they are unaware of the fact that early detection makes survival chances very high," he indicated.

Meanwhile, Head of UAE Tumors Society Dr Hameed Al-Shamsi said although breast cancer is the most prevalent type of cancer in the Middle East, many women who are affected refrain from seeking immediate medical care, and as a result, the region is seeing an increase in the rate of late detections. "This encouraged us to create many partnerships with government and non-government institutions to design a group of programs that suit the needs of local communities to confront the worrying trends, and benefit from the rare opportunities to educate about the disease," he said.

Pre-diabetes stage

Separately, a Kuwaiti specialist said that the pre-diabetes stage is important because there is up to 60 percent chance to prevent the disease before getting it. "The patient does not feel any symptoms and seems normal in this stage, therefore it requires close attention to save this group of patients," Head of Kuwait Diabetes Society (KDS) Dr Waleed Al-Dhahi said.

Dr Dhahi was speaking after an awareness program on diabetes that was held for primary health care doctors. The event was organized by KDS in cooperation with the Central Department of Primary Care at the Health Ministry. "Any person with a family history with this disease, high blood pressure (hypertension), obesity or minimal physical activity must carry out blood sugar level tests periodically," he said. Furthermore, he noted that KDS holds awareness activities throughout the year, applauding the Ministry of Health's support in that regard. "There is coordination at the highest level between the ministry and KDS, and the ministry has a major role to ensure the success of such conferences," he indicated.

Kuwait continues backing IAEA 'leading role'

VIENNA: Kuwait stressed on Monday its continued support to the leading role by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in building capabilities contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. This came in a speech delivered by Kuwaiti Ambassador to Austria and Permanent Representative to International Organizations in Vienna Sadeq Marafi before the IAEA exceptional annual conference to inaugurate the agency's new Director General Argentina's Rafael Grossi. Marafi stressed the agency's key role in boosting nuclear safety and security of all member states. He expressed his sincere congratulations to Grossi on being elected the new chief of the agency. He said Grossi's big experience would enable him

lead the agency professionally and neutrally. The Kuwaiti Ambassador noted he is looking forward to working with the new chief and all concerned countries. He affirmed Kuwait's full backing, and absolute preparation, to participate effectively in achieving the common goals. He thanked the agency's acting chief Cornel Feruta for achieving the assigned duties while he was chairing the institution during the transitional period. The conference was held to approve the appointment of Grossi, who is the first Latin American to chair the IAEA. Grossi replaced Japan's Yukiya Amano who died last July. Grossi was elected for the post by the Board of Governors with 24 votes out of 35, as one member abstained from voting. — KUNA

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Kim opens huge mountain development

Mugabe left \$10m, farm and two houses



LONDON: US President Donald Trump and France's President Emmanuel Macron react as they talk during their meeting at Winfield House yesterday. — AFP

Clashes overshadow NATO summit

Trump slams 'nasty' France • Macron says Turkey 'works with ISIS proxies'

LONDON: US President Donald Trump launched a blistering attack on France's criticism of NATO strategy as "brain dead" yesterday, but French leader Emmanuel Macron doubled down and turned his fire on Turkey. The three-way battle overshadowed the build-up to the alliance's 70th anniversary summit in London, threatening to derail efforts to show unity in the face of Russia and China. Macron had tried to shake up the agenda of the meeting by demanding a review of NATO strategy, but Trump - who arrived boasting that he had forced members to boost defense spending - hit back hard.

"I think that's very insulting," Trump said of Macron's assertion last month that NATO's is experiencing "brain death" and should focus more on Islamist terrorists and on re-opening a strategic dialogue with Russia, branding it a "very, very nasty statement". "Nobody needs NATO more than France," he warned. "It's a very dangerous statement for them to make."

Trump later softened his tone at a joint appearance with Macron, but the French leader stood by his statement, going on to lay the groundwork for a difficult meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan by accusing Turkey of working with extremists in Syria. "My statement created reaction from a lot of people. I stand by it," Macron said, just ahead of a one-to-one meeting with Trump.

"The common enemy today are the terrorist groups, as we mentioned, and I'm sorry to say that we don't have the same definition of terrorism around the table," Macron said, noting that Turkey has attacked the Kurdish militia that backed the allies against the Islamic State. "When I look at Turkey they now are fighting against those who fight with us, and fought with us shoulder-to-shoulder against ISIS. And sometimes they work with ISIS proxies. This is an issue," he declared, shortly before he was due to meet an already furious Erdogan.

Erdogan has threatened to hold up NATO efforts to beef up the protection of the Baltic republics against Russia, unless the other allies declare the Kurdish militias who fought with US and French forces against IS in northeast Syria "terrorists".

Trump calls out 'delinquent' members

NATO secretary general Jens Stoltenberg renewed his own criticism of the French leader's remarks, saying allies "should never question the unity and the political willingness to stand together and to defend each other". Trump defended Stoltenberg, boasting that NATO members have massively increased their defense spending thanks to his pressure.

But the president then reiterated his long-standing complaints about European spending. "When I came in, I

was angry at NATO, and now I've raised \$130 billion," Trump said, referring to the sum Stoltenberg says Canada and European members will have added to defense budgets by next year. "And yet you still have many delinquent - you know I call them delinquent when they're not paid up in full," he said.

Only nine of NATO's 29 members spend two percent of their GDP on defense. Trump cited in particular Germany as falling short, spending only 1.2 percent. Leaders of the 29 allies are descending on London to lock horns over spending and strategic direction in a major test of unity as NATO seeks to assert its relevance.

'Brain death'

If the Macron comments set an angry tone for the meeting, there are also expected to be clashes with Erdogan, who has described the French leader as "in a state of brain death". Macron and Erdogan will come face to face on Tuesday in a four-way meeting with Merkel and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, whose spokesman said he would be emphasizing the need for NATO unity. NATO has mooted a plan to bolster the defenses of Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia against a potential attack from Russia, though details remain unclear.

Polish President Andrzej Duda played down the dis-

pute, saying he believed "a good solution" would be found. But he weighed in on Macron, urging him to stop carping about NATO and come up with "concrete propositions" for how to improve the alliance. Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow was open to cooperation with NATO against joint threats such as terrorism.

Where next?

The substance of the summit is thin, with only one three-hour session planned, where leaders are expected to sign off on a set of decisions already taken by NATO foreign and defense ministers. These include making space a full domain of conflict - alongside land, sea, air and cyber space - as well as a new report on how the alliance should approach China and its growing international assertiveness. "We have now recognized that the rise of China has security implications for all allies," Stoltenberg said.

What is likely to be more significant in the longer run is the fallout from Macron's broadside, in which he complained NATO talks too much about money and not enough about strategic priorities. In response, Germany has suggested setting up an expert panel to look at how NATO can be adapted to address political questions more effectively. — AFP

Iraq parties debate new PM as violence hits shrine cities

BAGHDAD: Iraqi politicians and their regional allies gathered in Baghdad yesterday to discuss a way out of two months of protests that brought down the government, as violence hit southern cities. Demonstrators demanding root-and-branch reform have flooded the capital and the Shiite-majority south since October in the largest grassroots movement the country has witnessed in years. Seen as a threat to the ruling elite, the rallies were met with a heavy-handed response from security forces and armed groups that has left more than 420 people dead and nearly 20,000 wounded - the vast majority demonstrators.

After a fresh uptick of violence last week, prime minister Adel Abdel Mahdi formally resigned and talks to find a replacement have intensified this week in Baghdad. Among those attending the negotiations are two key allies of Iraq's main Shiite parties: Iran's Revolutionary Guards commander Major General Qasem Soleimani and Lebanese power-broker Mohammad Kawtharany, a high-ranking political source told AFP. "Soleimani is in Baghdad to push for a particular candidate to succeed Abdel Mahdi," the source said, without providing details.

Kawtharany, who is Lebanese militant group Hezbollah's pointman on Iraq, "is also playing a large role in persuading Shiite and Sunni political forces on this", the source added. Political powers in Shiite-majority Iraq have long had close ties with counterparts in Iran and Lebanon further west, both of which



BAGHDAD: Iraqi mourners gather for the funeral of an anti-government protester who died from injuries sustained in previous confrontations with security forces yesterday. — AFP

have also been rocked by protests in recent weeks. The United States said Soleimani's presence showed that its arch-foe Iran was again "interfering" in Iraq.

Kurds seek to keep 'gains'

Protests in Iraq erupted two months ago over rampant corruption, lack of jobs and poor public services. Despite the oil wealth of OPEC's second-biggest producer, one in five Iraqis lives in poverty and youth unemployment stands at one quarter, the World Bank says. Demonstrators say such problems require more deep-rooted solutions than the resignation of Abdel Mahdi, the first premier to step down since Iraq installed a parliamentary system after Saddam Hussein's overthrow in 2003.

The 77-year-old said it would be a "waste of time" to keep a caretaker cabinet in place, in a hint that a political deal to name a new premier was in the offing. But any successor

would need the approval of divided Shiite factions, Kurdish authorities in the north and Iraq's key allies, the US and Iran. The Kurdish regional government (KRG) was a main backer of Abdel Mahdi and is likely worried by his resignation.

The KRG is prioritizing keeping a sizeable share of federal government posts and making sure constitutional amendments do not threaten its recent "gains", said analyst Adel Bakawan. The Kurdish administration said Tuesday it "hoped for the implementation" of a deal agreed in principle just days before the premier's resignation, granting it a share of the 2020 federal budget in exchange for exporting its crude oil through the national seller. Other parties were also seeking guarantees as part of the talks, a government source told AFP. "Political blocs want to maintain their positions," the source said, describing discussions as "very difficult". — AFP

Najib takes stand in 1MDB trial

KUALA LUMPUR: Former Malaysian prime minister Najib Razak was a "victim" of the multi-million dollar 1MDB scandal that saw state coffers drained on his watch, his lawyer said Tuesday, as the ex-premier gave evidence in his own fraud trial. Huge sums were stolen from sovereign wealth fund 1Malaysia Development Berhad, allegedly by the ex-prime minister and his cronies, and spent on everything from high-end real estate to artwork.

Najib's coalition was ousted at the polls last year after six decades in power, largely due to public anger over the scandal. He has since been arrested and hit with dozens of charges linked to the looting of the investment vehicle. "Najib is not part of the conspiracy. He is a victim as much as others in the 1MDB scandal," his lawyer Muhammad Shafee Abdullah told reporters.

"The leader of the pack is Jho Low," he said, referring to fugitive Malaysian financier Low Taek Jho, a member of Najib's inner circle who allegedly masterminded the elaborate fraud that spanned from the United States to Switzerland, Dubai and Singapore. "The crux of my defense is the entire scheme is designed by Jho Low," Shafee added. Low "portrayed himself as someone influential in the Middle East countries" Najib told the packed courtroom, speaking calmly during five hours of testimony. "I thought his influence and connections will help

1MDB achieve its goals and attract investments."

Najib, 66, went on trial in April over the controversy, in a case centred on the transfer of 42 million ringgit (\$10.1 million) from former 1MDB unit SRC International into his bank accounts. The former leader arrived at the court wearing a blue suit and held a brief Muslim prayer with supporters at the building's steps. Defense proceedings began with Najib giving testimony under oath. He will be cross-examined by prosecutors and is expected to be on the witness stand for around four days.

He began his testimony reading from a 243-page statement, recalling his long career in politics and ministerial posts he held since 1978, including the post of finance minister, and giving lengthy background on the setting up of 1MDB and SRC. Defence lawyers had earlier said it would take two days for him to read the entire statement, but as his testimony went on, it appeared it would take longer. He was able to read only 70 pages in his statement by the end of the day. The trial will resume today.

Najib is facing four charges of corruption and three counts of money-laundering in the trial. Each charge of corruption carries a maximum jail term of 20 years, and each money-laundering count is punishable by a term of up to 15 years. Prosecutors have argued that Najib wielded huge influence over the unit and knew that stolen money was being funnelled from it into his accounts. But Najib told the court: "I, in an absolute and unequivocal manner, like to state that I do not have any personal interest in SRC, except in a professional manner as the prime minister and minister of finance and in the interest of the public." — AFP

International

US ends freeze on \$100m in military aid to Lebanon

In protest-hit country, debate tents draw in the street

WASHINGTON/TRIPOLI: US President Donald Trump's administration said Monday it has released \$100 million in military assistance to Lebanon that had been quietly frozen for months amid US complaints about the clout of Hezbollah. A State Department official and a congressional aide, both speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the assistance has been unblocked by the White House's Office of Management and Budget. "The money is good to go," the State Department official said.

The Trump administration has been tight-lipped on the reason for the hold-up in support for Lebanon but has been pressing the government to distance itself from Hezbollah, the Shiite militant movement close to Iran. Prime Minister Saad Hariri, who included Hezbollah members in his cabinet, resigned a month ago in the face of major street protests. The State Department official said there had been "some disagreements about the efficacy of US aid" to the Lebanese Armed Forces.

But the official defended the military as a "national institution" in a country long divided on confessional lines, and praised its "high level of capability" in fighting extremists such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State movement. "It defends Lebanon's borders; it is an excellent partner to the United States in counterterrorism and fighting Sunni jihadi Islamists," the official said. "They have responded in recent weeks - I think in impressive fashion - in terms of protecting demonstrators from violence, demonstrating, I think, the fact that they are a national institution," he said.

But the official said that detractors pointed to "isolated incidents" in which the military has kept its distance from Hezbollah, considered a terrorist group by the United States. The militant group has fought Israel for decades, including through a guerrilla campaign to end the Jewish state's occupation of southern Lebanon. Hezbollah still maintains a formidable arms stockpile with support of Iran and by some experts' measures is more powerful than the Lebanese army.

Debate tents

A secular state, early elections, solving poverty. Every evening, Sarah Al-Ghur joins other residents of Lebanon's second city Tripoli to debate how to fix her

protest-gripped country. "I'd rather take part in the discussions than applaud or shout out slogans," says the 32-year-old in the city's Al-Nour square. After years of disillusionment and apathy, a freefalling economy and anti-government protests have spurred Lebanese back into political debate.

Across the Mediterranean country, squares where protesters have denounced mismanagement and corruption have also become centers of spontaneous discussion. In Tripoli, Ghur walks between debate tents, stopping outside one where dozens of people are discussing a "roadmap for the revolution". Men and women of all ages sit on the floor, huddle on benches, or stand arms crossed, listening to the latest speaker.

Nearby, protesters revel to the sound of patriotic tunes and techno beats. "I've discovered laws I knew nothing about," says Ghur, her hair trimmed short and wearing a dress. "Now I'm more aware of my rights and my duties," she says, in an impoverished city that has emerged at the forefront of the protests. A young protester takes the microphone to say he thinks the "popular revolution" must evolve towards "political dialogue". He calls for "early parliamentary elections", as a first step towards an overhaul of the political system.

'They'd lost all trust'

Every evening from 5 pm to 9 pm, Tripoli residents gather under the tents to rebuild their country one idea at a time. University professors, activists or even economists are often in attendance. They talk of secularism and sectarianism, in a country whose legacy from a devastating 1975-91 civil war is a political system that seeks to maintain a fragile balance of power between the myriad of religious communities.

They discuss poverty, in a country where around a third of the population are poor, and the World Bank warns that proportion could soon rise to half. But they also discuss what they view as the questionable independence of the judiciary, alleged corruption, plummeting public funds, and sometimes urban planning.

In Tripoli, half of all residents already live at or below the poverty line. Some six weeks into the protest movement, demonstrators in the northern city have continued



TRIPOLI: People gather at a tent where Lebanese anti-government protesters debate and discuss political and economic topics as part of an ongoing awareness at Al-Nour Square in this northern port city on Nov 27, 2019. — AFP

to gather on a daily basis, even as numbers dwindle in other parts of Lebanon. The government resigned on Oct 29, but no concrete measures have been taken to form a new cabinet since.

Philosophy professor Hala Amoun says that, before the protests, most Lebanese had long given up on any political activity. "They'd lost all trust in the political class," she said in classical Arabic. Lebanese have long complained of endless power cuts, gaping inequality, unemployment, and alleged official graft. But last month a proposed tax on calls via free phone applications such as Whatsapp, pushed them over the edge and onto the streets.

'Meaning of a revolution'

"This revolution is people becoming more aware," said the woman, who appeared in her forties, wrapped in a

warm red coat. "But taking to the streets was not enough. They felt they needed to understand, to know more." Every evening, she heads down to the square to help dissect the "structural problems" of political power in Lebanon. "Lebanese are hungry for knowledge," she says. "It's as if they needed to re-examine their economic, social and political reality, to understand how their political and sectarian leader is controlling their life." Nadim Shakes, a doctor, is one of the proud initiators of the debate evenings, which he calls "awareness raising conferences". The aim is to "think about the country's future, what will happen after this revolution," says the 47-year-old, wearing a dark blue jacket over a slightly unbuttoned shirt. Around the tent, young participants sit together in small groups, chatting in hushed tones or raising their voices when they grow excited or want to make a point. — AFP

Activist Thunberg channels youth fury to climate summit

LISBON/MADRID: Teen activist Greta Thunberg reached Europe yesterday after a 21-day catamaran dash across the Atlantic for a United Nations summit where she will invoke the fury of global youth at politicians' foot-dragging over climate change. "People are underestimating the force of angry kids," the Swede told a crowd of reporters and supporters as she disembarked from a white catamaran, La Vagabonde, in Portugal. "They're angry and frustrated."

The prospect of another fiery intervention by the 16-year-old, whose ability to stare down politicians has inspired a global protest movement, electrified younger delegates at the international climate talks underway in neighboring Spain. Since staging a solitary protest outside the Swedish parliament more than a year ago, Thunberg has channelled the anger felt by millions of teenagers saddled with the prospect of an escalating climate crisis their parents failed to avert.

In September, she carried her message to a one-day climate summit at the United Nations in New York, furiously telling leaders "you have stolen my dreams," before sailing back to Europe for the latest round of talks. Thunberg

was due to spend the rest of Tuesday meeting activists in Portugal before departing for Madrid, where the negotiations are being held in a series of hangar-like halls.

Carolina Schmidt, environment minister of Chile, which is chairing the negotiations, said she hoped Thunberg's presence would galvanise more ambitious commitments by governments at talks aimed at bolstering the 2015 Paris Agreement to avert catastrophic temperature increases. "We need that tremendous force in order to increase climate action," Schmidt told Reuters television. "We need Greta in here with all that force." Increasingly erratic weather patterns, from wildfires in Australia and California to floods in Europe, have added to the sense of urgency around the two-week summit in Spain.

Hottest decade on record

Underscoring the pace of change, the Geneva-based World Meteorological Organization (WMO) launched a report at the talks that found the past decade was almost certain to have been the hottest on record. In a stark reminder that burning fossil fuels has fundamen-



LISBON: Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg is pictured after disembarking from the catamaran La Vagabonde at the Santo Amaro docks yesterday. — AFP

tally changed the composition of the Earth's atmosphere, the report said the concentration of carbon dioxide hit a record 407.8 parts per million in 2018 and rose again in 2019, hovering at the highest levels seen in millions of years.

Opening the climate summit on Monday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres had warned that 400 parts per million had once been considered an "unthinkable" tipping point. Despite the grim statistics, young delegates said they were inspired by Thunberg's determination to minimize her own carbon

footprint by twice braving the Atlantic instead of flying: which they saw as a symbol of resourcefulness and defiance.

"She is making a statement that you don't always have to take the easy way," said Lander Wanters, 20, a Belgian climate activist. "We have to act now to do something for the climate." Delegates at the talks aim to finalise groundwork to support the Paris pact to curb the rise in global temperatures, which enters a crucial implementation phase in 2020. Last year, greenhouse gas emissions hit a record high. —Reuters

'Blood and violence'

After a long break, the UN-led dialogue between Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria and Mauritania resumed in Switzerland in Dec 2018, followed by a second round in March, without achieving a breakthrough. The Polisario Front is demanding a referendum on independence for Western Sahara, which Morocco has rejected. Rabat considers Western Sahara integral to the kingdom and has said it will not accept anything beyond autonomy for the resource-rich territory.

Haidar lamented that in the nearly three decades since the Polisario Front lay down its arms, Morocco and the international community have largely ignored the people's non-violent demands for justice, dignity and self-rule. She warned that the last round of unfruitful talks had left Sahrawi youth especially disillusioned. "They are angry, and they are frustrated... They say that the international community only acts in conflicts where there is blood and violence," she said, describing how she and other advocates of non-violent resistance had become the targets of insults. More worrying, she said, "they are pressuring the Polisario Front to pick up their arms again."

The activist slammed the international community for lacking the political will to enforce various UN resolutions and international court rulings that the Sahrawi people should have a say on the independence question. "This is due to the complicity of some international powers," Haidar said. "Spain is responsible, and France is responsible," she said, also slamming the European Union for blindly supporting Morocco, in part out of its desire to retain access to resources in the territory. "Without European support, Morocco could not pillage and exploit the natural resources, and it could not continue its occupation and to ignore all of the Security Council resolutions," Haidar said. — AFP

Tourism in Israel? US charity's Gaza offer irks Palestinians

GAZA/JERUSALEM: A US charity building a tent hospital in the Gaza Strip is causing Palestinian unease by offering foreign medical volunteers the opportunity of weekend tourism in Israel, just across the volatile border. The facility, to be operated by the US evangelical Christian group FriendShips, had won rare joint support from Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas and their enemy, Israel, which maintains a blockade along its frontier with the enclave.

Now, however, eyebrows are being raised in Gaza over a Holy Land pilgrimage pitch on the Louisiana-based organization's website that is promoting an endeavor to improve health services strained by years of conflict. The 50-bed encampment in northern Gaza across from Israel's Erez border crossing "will offer a wonderful opportunity to work in an important and productive project and, at the same time, to see and enjoy the Biblical sites of Israel", the website said.

Volunteers at the facility would be expected to work and live onsite Monday through Thursday but they "will be free to go to Israel and tour" on their days off, it said. Asked about the NGO's tourism perk to volunteers, Hamas official Basim Naeem said: "We are certainly against using our people's suffering to market Israel or attracting employees at our people's expense." There was no suggestion from Hamas that it was about to scrap the project as a result of the sightseeing offer. — Reuters

'Gandhi of W Sahara' warns time running out to avoid war

GENEVA: Aminatou Haidar, a champion of peaceful resistance to Morocco's annexation of Western Sahara, is demanding urgent international action to prevent the frozen conflict from devolving into war. The 52-year-old Sahrawi human rights activist, who today will receive a top human rights award in Stockholm, said she feared that youth in the disputed region have given up hope of achieving self-rule through non-violent means.

"The international community must act without wasting any more time, because the young people have no more patience. They no longer believe in peaceful resistance," Haidar told AFP in Geneva last week. The activist, dubbed the "Gandhi of Western Sahara", insisted that the United Nations, Europe, and France and Spain in particular had a responsibility to "avoid war" in the region.

Morocco annexed the Western Sahara in 1975 following the withdrawal of colonial power Spain in the dying days of right-wing dictator Francisco Franco's regime, sparking a war with the Algeria-backed Polisario Front movement. The two sides agreed to a ceasefire in 1991, and a UN mission was deployed to monitor the truce and prepare a referendum on Western Sahara's independence from Morocco, but it never materialized. The UN peacekeeping force (MINURSO) of 240 Blue Helmets is charged with monitoring the nearly three-decade-old ceasefire.

News in brief

Dutch police arrest rape gang

THE HAGUE: Police have arrested eight men suspected of being part of a sex ring who drugged underage girls before gang raping them at a car workshop in southern Netherlands. The arrests were made in the city of Den Bosch and surrounds after separate rape charges were filed by three girls aged 15-16, police said yesterday. "The girls, who were believed to have been drugged, were then abused in their helpless condition by several men in the group. Sometimes violence was used," a police statement said. "The girls met the men via social media," it added. The suspects were aged between 18 and 26 and were from Den Bosch and the nearby town of Rosmalen, police said. — AFP

Trump campaign bars Bloomberg

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's campaign said Monday it was banning journalists from Bloomberg News from its electoral events, claiming "bias" by the media group owned by presidential rival Michael Bloomberg. Brad Parscale, the Trump 2020 campaign manager, said the decision was made after Bloomberg News announced it would not investigate the company boss or his Democrat competitors. Bloomberg News editor-in-chief John Micklethwait said in response: "We have covered Donald Trump fairly and in an unbiased way since he became a candidate in 2015 and will continue to do so despite the restrictions imposed by the Trump campaign." Trump took to Twitter to blast "Mini Mike" Bloomberg for the news organization's coverage decision. — AFP

Billionaire told to pay \$58m

LOS ANGELES: Greek billionaire Alkiviades "Alki" David was ordered to pay \$58 million damages to a Hollywood assistant in one of the largest sexual harassment awards in US history, her attorney said Monday. David, an heir to a Coca-Cola bottling fortune who has also battled recent lawsuits over his 3D hologram and online streaming businesses, was accused of routinely groping Mahim Khan. The verdict was "a reminder to predators everywhere to not think they can get away with hurting others," Khan said in a statement to AFP. Attorney Gloria Allred described it as one of the largest sexual harassment punitive damage awards in US legal history. David is worth an estimated \$2.6 billion. — AFP

Carter hospitalized again

WASHINGTON: Former US president Jimmy Carter has been hospitalized for treatment of a urinary tract infection, the Carter Center said Monday - the latest in a series of health issues for the 95-year-old Democrat. Carter "was admitted to Phoebe Sumter Medical Center in Americus, Georgia, this past weekend," his center said in a statement. "He is feeling better and looks forward to returning home soon." Last week, Carter - the first US president to reach the age of 95 - left the hospital after undergoing successful surgery to relieve pressure on his brain caused by multiple falls. — AFP

International

Trump will 'stay out' of UK election during NATO visit

Johnson warns Corbyn is a security threat

LONDON: US President Donald Trump yesterday praised Prime Minister Boris Johnson but promised to "stay out" of Britain's election campaign during his two-day visit. Downing Street is braced for fireworks as Trump attends a meeting of the NATO military alliance in Britain just days before the Dec 12 vote. "I'll stay out of the election," the US leader insisted, adding: "I don't want to complicate it."

Answering questions during talks with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg, Trump added: "I think Boris is very capable and I think he will do a good job." The president confirmed he would be meeting Johnson, who is co-hosting the NATO summit. Trump will attend a reception for the alliance leaders at Buckingham Palace on Tuesday evening before Downing Street hosts them all. But it is not yet clear if the pair will have a one-to-one meeting. There is speculation Johnson wants to avoid appearing too close to a US president who is deeply unpopular in Britain, with protests planned in central London on Tuesday evening.

Trump denies NHS interest

Opinion polls suggest Johnson's Conservative party is heading for a comfortable win in next week's election, which is dominated by Britain's looming exit from the European Union. But his team is nervous about any incendiary remarks from the notoriously unpredictable Trump, particularly after a rocky state visit to Britain earlier this year. The US leader supports Brexit but criticized former prime minister Theresa May's approach, suggesting she give up on trying to get a divorce deal with Brussels.

Trump has since questioned whether Johnson's own Brexit deal would allow Britain to sign a trade deal with the US - something the Conservative leader holds up as one of the biggest prizes of leaving the EU. The main opposition Labour party meanwhile has accused Johnson of planning to give US firms access to Britain's much loved state-run National Health Service (NHS) as

part of any post-Brexit trade deal. Labour election rallies routinely erupt into chants of "Not for sale!" and Corbyn has sought to capitalize on Trump's visit to highlight the issue. But Johnson rejects the claim, saying last week that if Washington tried to include the NHS in trade talks, "we'd walk away". Trump fuelled the row on his state visit to Britain earlier this year by saying everything would be on the table in a trade deal. But yesterday he insisted: "We have absolutely nothing to do with it and we wouldn't want it if you handed it to us on a silver platter."

Corbyn concerns

The US president also declined to repeat his previous criticism of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, after previously telling a British radio station that he would be "bad for your country". Corbyn has a long history of criticizing British and US military interventions, and has been accused of sympathizing with proscribed terrorist organizations, from the IRA to Hamas. Johnson warned yesterday that the Labour leader was a security threat, saying that "every time he has the chance, he sides with our enemies".

He told The Sun tabloid that Britain's intelligence allies - including the United States - were "very anxious" about working with a Corbyn-led government. Corbyn described the claims, which come just days after a terror attack in London in which two people were fatally stabbed, as "complete nonsense". Asked about the Labour leader, Trump again refused to intervene, saying: "I can work with anybody, I'm a very easy person to work with."

Pressed further, he said: "I know nothing about the gentleman, really, know nothing about Jeremy Corbyn." Corbyn boycotted a royal dinner during Trump's state visit to Britain but is due to attend the reception for NATO leaders on Tuesday hosted by Queen Elizabeth II at



LONDON: US President Donald Trump meets NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at Winfield House yesterday. — AFP

Buckingham Palace. The NATO leaders will today gather at a hotel near Watford, north of the capital, for discus-

sions on the future of their alliance, with splits over defense spending and military action in Syria. — AFP

Finland PM quits, coalition to survive

HELSINKI: Finnish Prime Minister Antti Rinne resigned yesterday after losing the support of the coalition partner Centre Party, though the governing alliance is expected to stay in power to avoid a snap election. A Social Democrat who has headed the center-left five-party government since June, Rinne handed his resignation to President Sauli Niinistö, who asked the government to stay on in a caretaker capacity until a new government has been appointed, the presidency said. "All of the governing parties have confidence in me, except the Centre Party. When I was told why they no longer have confidence in me, I made the decision to resign," Rinne said.

The Centre Party was angered after the prime minister was accused of lying by the head of Finland Post - the culmination of a long-running dispute over reforms to the pay and conditions for some postal workers. "All of the government parties are committed to the... government program. If (me) being prime minister jeopardizes the government program, it is better that I steer clear of it," Rinne told reporters.



HELSINKI: Finnish Prime Minister Antti Rinne (right) hands over his resignation to Finnish President Sauli Niinistö at the president's official residence Mantymies yesterday. — AFP

The Social Democrats, Finland's biggest party, will now appoint a successor to try to form a new government, which could take days or even weeks. Sanna Marin, the party's number two behind Rinne and the current minister of transport, has already said she would be willing to take over. Political analyst Sini Korpinen said the coalition parties - the Social Democratic

Party (SDP), Centre, Greens, Left Alliance and Swedish People's Party - would in all likelihood agree to carry on together, as it was not in any of their interests to bring down the government.

That is especially true for the Centre Party, which "doesn't want elections because they'd do worse" than last time. "The most probable (scenario) is that they

will carry on, with the same government programme" but possibly changing a few cabinet ministers, she told AFP.

Finland Post crisis

Rinne's resignation comes after several weeks of political crisis over a plan to move 700 employees of Finland Post, a public limited company with the state as sole shareholder, to a less advantageous collective wage agreement to improve competition. In September, criticism initially focused on the minister in charge of state ownership, Sirpa Paatero, a member of Rinne's SDP. The crisis deepened in November when a large strike broke out, with employees of other industries walking off the job in sympathy with the postal employees, which is permitted under Finnish labor law.

Finland Post withdrew its reform plans, but unions demanded to know whether the state had approved the reform. Paatero made several contradictory remarks before Rinne stepped in on Nov 28. The prime minister denied that the state had given its blessing, but the following day the company's chairman of the board accused Rinne of lying. Rinne then announced Paatero's resignation, but the move was seen as too little too late. The Social Democrats won April's legislative elections on promises to end years of economic belt-tightening introduced by the Centre Party to lift Finland out of a recession, and prioritizing social equality. — AFP

Macron faces fresh challenge as huge strike looms

PARIS: Trains cancelled, schools closed: France scrambled to make contingency plans yesterday for a huge strike against pension overhauls that poses one of the biggest challenges yet to President Emmanuel Macron's sweeping reform drive. Paris metro and rail workers will walk off the job starting tomorrow, banking on widespread support for their protest against plans they say will require millions to retire later or face reduced pensions.

It is the latest expression of discontent by broad swathes of French society, from police and firefighters to teachers and hospital employees - as well as a yearlong "yellow vest" movement demanding improved living standards. Looming over the reform is the specter of 1995, the last major attempt to change the pension system when weeks of strikes paralyzed the country and forced the government to back down. "The social discontent now is stronger than it was in 1995," according to Bernard Thibault, a former CGT leader during the protests 24 years ago. Bike shops have been inundated with rental requests, ride-hailing services are planning to add drivers and electric scooter operators are offering special deals to help commuters cope with the expected traffic jams.

'Provocation'

So far, Macron has been able to ride out opposition to previous signature reforms, including less-restrictive labor laws and tax cuts to encourage hiring and overhauls of the education system. He even pushed through changes to the state-run rail operator SNCF, long considered an untouchable union bastion, ending job-for-life guarantees and other benefits for new employees. Those successes have only fired up union leaders, who have vowed to maintain their strike until Macron abandons his campaign promise for a "universal" retirement system.

It would do away with 42 "special regimes" for sectors ranging from rail and energy workers to lawyers and Paris Opera employees, which often grant workers higher pensions or early retirement. But unions say the changes would effectively require millions of private-sector workers to work beyond the legal retirement age of 62 if they want to receive the full pension they have been promised.

"The flagrant provocation is trying to say this reform would affect only the special schemes," Philippe Martinez of the hard-line CGT union said last week. "It's a shameful lie," he continued. "Everyone understands that it's a reform that will affect the public as well as the private sector."

'Quite harmful'

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe has acknowledged that French workers will gradually work longer but no concrete details of the overhaul are to be announced before mid-December. And while 76 percent of respondents in an Ifop poll published on Sunday back the reform, 64 percent do not trust the government to pull it off. Police unions, rubbish collectors, air-traffic controllers and Air France workers have said they will start striking tomorrow, and the biggest union for primary school teachers expects four out of 10 schools will remain shut.

The SNCF and Paris metro operator RATP announced the likely number of service cuts, expected to match a similar protest on Sept 13, when most Paris lines were shut down completely. Rallies and work stoppages are planned in dozens of cities, capped by two demonstrations planned for Paris that will converge on the Place de la Nation.

Officials have already ordered Paris businesses along the routes to close tomorrow, underscoring retailers' fears that a long strike will take a heavy toll on their businesses. "It's a period of heavy spending," Francois Asselin, president of the CPME association of small and midsize businesses, told France Info radio yesterday. "We estimate that a day of general strikes takes away some 400 million euros (\$440 million) of revenues for the country, including nearly 200 million euros for the Paris region," he said. And if the strike persists, he warned, "it can frankly be quite harmful, especially with Christmas coming up." — AFP

Mugabe left \$10m, farm and 2 houses

HARARE: Zimbabwe's late former president Robert Mugabe left US\$10 million, 10 cars, a farm and two houses, details of his estate released yesterday revealed. The state-owned Herald newspaper said his daughter, Bona Nyepudzai Mutsahuni-Chikore, disclosed these assets to the High Court after the family had been unable to locate his will. The \$10 million (nine million euros) was in a foreign currency account with a local bank, the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe (CBZ), the report said. It did not identify the make or model of the 10 cars.

During his presidency, Mugabe, who styled himself as a leftwing radical, was reported to own several farms that were seized during his controversial land reforms. Only one farm is listed on the inventory of his assets. His other properties, according to the list given to the High Court on Oct 21, include two houses in posh suburbs of the capital, Harare: his rural homestead in Zvimba; a two-hectare farming plot in Zvimba and a five-acre orchard.

Mugabe, who ruled Zimbabwe from the country's independence from British colonial rule in 1980 until being ousted in November 2017, died on Sep 6 at the age of 95 in Singapore, where he had been receiving treatment for prostate cancer. "Mrs Grace Mugabe was listed as the sole surviving spouse while Bona, Robert, Bellarmine and stepson Russel Goreraza were listed as surviving children," The Herald reported.

Mugabe once said in jest that he would remain in power until he turned 100. He was ousted after 37 years in power and replaced by his former deputy Emmerson Mnangagwa, whom Mugabe had fired weeks earlier. The later years of his rule were characterized by food shortages, massive joblessness and the use of brutal force against his opponents. Many had hoped Mnangagwa would fare better but the hardships that Zimbabweans suffered under Mugabe have returned to haunt the country. According to the World Bank, extreme poverty is likely to affect 5.7 million Zimbabweans this year - equivalent to 34 percent of the population, after 29 percent in 2018. Gross domestic product is likely to contract by 7.5 percent in 2019, it says. — AFP

Prince Andrew accuser slams 'ridiculous excuses'

LONDON: An American woman who claims she was trafficked by Jeffrey Epstein to have sex with Prince Andrew criticized the "ridiculous excuses" from the royal's side in an interview aired on Monday. The interview was recorded before Andrew's own BBC interview, which prompted him to stand down from public duties because of a backlash at his defence of his friendship with Epstein. But Virginia Giuffre called on the British public to support her as she dismissed claims initially made by the prince's backers that a photograph apparently showing him with his arm around her might not be genuine.

"The people on the inside are going to keep coming up with these ridiculous excuses like his arm was elongated or the photo was doctored," she told the BBC's Panorama program. "I'm calling BS (bullshit) on this. He knows what happened, I know what happened. And there's only one of us telling the truth," she said. "It's a real photo. I've given it to the FBI for their investigation." Andrew himself doubted the authenticity of the photograph during his badly received interview, saying "nobody can prove whether or not that photograph has been doctored".

Giuffre has alleged she was trafficked to have sex with friends of Epstein when she was 17. Epstein was found dead in a New York prison in August awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges. She described how Epstein preyed on her once he knew she came from a vulnerable background, having already suffered sexual abuse. The financier initially lured her with an offer of a job as a masseuse, but soon began abusing her, according to Giuffre.

She accused Epstein of bringing her to London in 2001, where she was introduced to Andrew and Epstein's socialite girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell. The prince asked her for a dance at a nightclub, she recalled, telling Panorama he was "the most hideous dancer I've ever seen in my life". "His sweat was like it was raining basically everywhere," she added. "I was just like grossed out from it but I knew I had to keep him happy because that's what Jeffrey and Ghislaine would have expected from me."



Virginia Giuffre

house in central London, she alleged. "It was disgusting," she said. "He said 'thanks' and walked out."

Andrew, 59, said he did not remember meeting Giuffre and that he "absolutely and categorically" did not have sex with her. But an email discovered by Panorama appeared to show Andrew writing to Maxwell in 2015 with "specific questions to ask you about Virginia Roberts". She replied "have some info - call me when you have a moment", according to the BBC investigation.

Giuffre admitted to having a "foggy memory" over dates and places when she was asked about inconsistencies in her story. "I might be wrong on dates, I might be wrong on places sometimes, but one thing I can tell you is you never forget the face of someone who has heaved over you." She added: "I implore the people in the UK to stand up beside me, to help me fight this fight, to not accept this as being OK. This is not some sordid sex story. This is a story of being trafficked. This is a story of abuse and this is a story of your guy's royalty."

Panorama reported that Andrew could be served with subpoenas if he returns to the US, with lawyers for five of Epstein's victims demanding that the prince testify in their court cases about how he witnessed people being given massages. After his BBC interview, Andrew issued a statement in which he said "I... unequivocally regret my ill-judged association with Jeffrey Epstein" and "deeply sympathize with everyone who has been affected and wants some form of closure".

A statement from Buckingham Palace said they "emphatically denied that The Duke of York (Andrew) had any form of sexual contact or relationship with Virginia Roberts". Panorama also interviewed another of Epstein's victims, who made further allegations against Maxwell. Sarah Ransome told the program that she "controlled the girls... like the madam". — AFP

'Ill-judged' friendship

The prince told the BBC he was unable to sweat at the time due to a medical condition he developed after serving as a helicopter pilot in the Falklands War in 1982. After the nightclub, Giuffre - then known as Roberts - said that Maxwell told her: "I have to do for Andrew what I do for Jeffrey and that just made me sick." She and Queen Elizabeth II's second son later had sex at Maxwell's house.

International

Typhoon Kammuri kills two in Philippines, shuts Manila airport

340,000 people evacuated from homes in central Bicol region

MANILA: Typhoon Kammuri killed at least two people in the Philippines yesterday as it tore roofs off houses and forced the international airport in Manila to shut down. The storm roared ashore late Monday and passed south of Manila - home to 13 million people - and thousands of athletes at the regional Southeast Asian Games. Just before it exited into the South China Sea, the typhoon killed two people in the central island of Mindoro, where one man was crushed by a falling tree and another killed by a flying piece of lumber, police said.

Ahead of the storm's arrival a 33-year-old man was electrocuted on Monday while securing a roof against the winds, which by late yesterday weakened to a maximum of 130 km per hour. Authorities were still assessing the storm's impact, but a small local airport was seriously damaged, many power poles toppled and homes were battered. "A lot of trees fell... There were a lot of roofs flying during the typhoon too," said Junie Castillo, a disaster officer in one of the areas first hit.

Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport was "closed for operations" due to high winds, leaving nearly 500 flights cancelled, general manager Ed Monreal told AFP. Flights would resume at 11:00 pm (1500 GMT), Monreal later told a news conference. One of the terminals AFP visited, which would normally be bustling with morning departures, was occupied by a handful of staff and stranded passengers.

One traveller, 23-year-old Canadian Constance Benoit, was hit with a nearly day-long delay to her flight back home. She had arrived in Manila on a typhoon-buffed

flight Monday morning from the central island of Cebu. "It was the most turbulent flight I ever took in my life," she told AFP. "I just discovered what airsickness is."

About 340,000 people had been evacuated from their homes in the central Bicol region, disaster officials said. The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 storms and typhoons each year, killing hundreds and putting people in disaster-prone areas in a state of constant poverty. The country's deadliest cyclone on record was Super Typhoon Haiyan, which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

Games rescheduled

Kammuri had already snarled some plans for the SEA Games, which opened Saturday and are set to run through Dec 11 in and around Manila. The typhoon forced organizers to reschedule about half of the events set for yesterday, but they pledged the competition would finish on time. Kammuri wrought particular havoc on water-based and outdoor competitions, causing more than a dozen events to be postponed.

The storm is another difficulty for the Games, which suffered from a string of logistical glitches and a rush of last-minute construction in the run-up to Saturday's opening. The competition, which is spread across three main sites that are hours' drive apart, includes a Games-record 56 sports and dozens of venues. Around 8,750 athletes and team officials are expected at this year's 30th edition - the biggest ever - along with another 12,000 volunteers. — AFP



LEGASPI, Philippines: Debris litters a passenger terminal after one of its walls was destroyed in this city in Albay province south of Manila yesterday. — AFP

Kim opens huge mountain development

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has opened a flagship construction project close to Mount Paektu, a symbol of the Korean nation and officially the birthplace of his father and predecessor, state media reported yesterday. The ceremony was held in snowy scenes before thousands of soldiers and civilians, and portrayed as a demonstration of the resilience of the North, which is subject to international sanctions imposed over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

It comes with time running out on Pyongyang's demand for the US to offer it fresh concessions by the end of the year, and ahead of Kim's New Year speech on January 1, a key political set-piece in the isolated country. Kim donned a black leather trench coat and gloves for the opening, and - surrounded by fur-hatted officials - cut a red ribbon in front of a statue of his father Kim Jong Il.

Winter already has North Korea's far north firmly in its grip, and icicles hung from buildings, Korean Central Television (KCTV) footage showed - the largely



SAMJIYON, North Korea: This picture taken on Monday and released yesterday shows a view of this township after its completion. — AFP

empty streets covered in snow. Banners proclaimed: "Long live the great leader of the force of our party and country, comrade Kim Jong Un!" Kim had "worked heart and soul to turn Samjiyon County, the sacred place of the revolution, into the utopia town under socialism", the official KCNA news agency said.

The Korean people were, it said, "advancing along the straight road chosen by themselves without any vacillation

despite the worst trials". Nuclear negotiations with the United States have been deadlocked since the Hanoi summit broke up in February, and Pyongyang has issued a series of increasingly assertive comments in recent weeks as its time limit approaches. In a separate report yesterday, KCNA quoted vice foreign minister Ri Thae Song saying: "What gift the US receives for Christmas depends entirely on the US' decision."

White horse

Pyongyang has poured huge resources into the rebuilding of Samjiyon, the closest town to Mount Paektu, a dormant volcano that straddles the border with China. Kim is closely associated with the scheme and has visited the area several times, reportedly riding a white horse to the mountain's summit in October. The vast Samjiyon project includes a museum of revolutionary activities, a winter sports training complex, processing plants for blueberries and potatoes, and 10,000 apartments.

Thousands of workers swarmed over the site during construction, AFP saw, many of them soldiers. Much of the North Korean army is devoted to construction. Students have been sent to work on the scheme during university holidays, KCNA reported previously, while diplomats say children have also been deployed.

According to North Korean propaganda, Kim Jong Il was born at the nearby Mount Paektu Secret Camp where his own father Kim Il Sung was fighting the Japanese - although independent historians and Soviet records say he was actually born in Russia, where North Korea's founder was in exile. The official story plays a central role in Pyongyang's teachings about the Kim family, who have led the country for three generations, and every year 100,000 or more students and workers are taken on study trips to the area. — AFP

Blind stumble on New Delhi's 'broken' streets

NEW DELHI: Tapping his white cane, Vinod Kumar Sharma spends four hours a day running the gauntlet of crowded trains and New Delhi's congested, potholed and often pavement-less roads. Sharma is one of an estimated 63 million visually impaired people in India, according to the World Health Organization. Of those, some eight million are completely blind - around 20 percent of the global total.

Many Delhi roads lack pavements, forcing the 44-year-old father-of-three to walk on the roadside, probing his white cane in front as cars and trucks tear past just centimetres away. On trains, where passengers are packed like sardines in the megacity of 20 million people, he is dependent on fellow commuters helping him to navigate platforms and squeeze in and out of carriages.

Sharma told AFP that people always help him to get on and off trains. "The people are good. But there are broken roads and open sewage holes which are always a risk," he added. Sharma, like many other blind Indians, also battles a dire lack of opportunities in education and employment for disabled people. Many are forced to beg or turn to charity to make ends meet. Poverty and poor access to healthcare in rural areas also contributes to the high prevalence of vision impairment in the South Asian nation, experts say.

Sharma - from one of India's poorest states, Bihar - lost his sight as a teenager while working in the fields of his village. He moved to the Indian capital to try and get treatment but when doctors were unable to help him, he stayed on. Sharma trained at a school for the blind and landed a job in a factory, making children's braille toys, for more than two decades before it shut down last year. He started to retrain as a massage therapist in January, resolutely making the long commute to classes at the Blind Relief Association in Delhi. "I have picked up massage as I have become older and there aren't many other avenues for me," he said.

Swarna Merlin from the Blind Relief Association said many of its trainees are from rural regions and have been brought up to believe that they could not exist outside their families' care. "Once they come out and know they can do different things, that itself is a big exposure to them... Every story of success is an inspiration for many others." The International Day of People with Disabilities was yesterday. — AFP

Nepal mass animal slaughter begins despite outcry

BARIYARPUR, Nepal: The stench of raw meat hung in the air and pools of blood dotted the muddy ground yesterday as what is thought to be the world's biggest animal sacrifice swung into action in a remote area of Nepal. Efforts from activists and officials were expected to cut the death toll from the 200,000 butchered at the last Gadhimai Festival five years ago, but thousands of creatures were still set to be killed over the two days.

The event in honor of a Hindu goddess kicked off in the early hours amid tight security, with the ceremonial slaughter of a goat, rat, chicken, pig and a pigeon. A local shaman then offered blood from five points of his body. Some 200 butchers with sharpened swords and knives then walked into a walled arena bigger than a football field that held several thousand buffalo as excited pilgrims climbed trees and walls to catch a glimpse.

"We had tried not to support it but people have faith in the tradition and have come here with their offerings," Birendra Prasad Yadav from the festival organizing committee told AFP. Thousands of goats were also bound for sacrifice - mostly by having their throats slit - as well as pigs and even some rats. The pilgrims could either take the remains to cook or leave them for organizers to bury.

Thousands of worshippers from Nepal and neighboring India have spent days sleeping out in the open and offering prayers ahead of the event in Bariyarpur village, close to the Indian border. "I believe in the goddess. My mother had asked her for the good health of my son," one of them, Rajesh Kumar Das, 30, told AFP, holding a goat in his hand. Some 2,000 police personnel were patrolling the village and the field where sacrifices were taking place to control crowds gathered to watch.

According to legend, the first sacrifices in Bariyarpur were conducted several centuries ago when goddess Gadhimai appeared to a prisoner in a dream and told him to offer blood and establish her temple. When he awoke, his shackles had fallen open and he was able to leave the prison and build the temple, where he sacrificed animals to give thanks, so the legend goes.

'Less bloodshed'

Indian border authorities and volunteers have in recent days seized scores of animals being brought across the frontier by unlicensed traders and pilgrims. While this has failed to stop the flow, officials and animal rights groups say such efforts combined with awareness campaigns have helped decrease the bloodshed. "The temple committee seems to be shaken by the campaigns as well as the government. The number of animals sacrificed are gradually decreasing," said Amruta Ubale of Animal Equality India.



BARIYARPUR, Nepal: Recently sacrificed buffaloes lie on the ground in an enclosure during the Gadhimai Festival yesterday. — AFP

Local officials have also been running programs to raise public awareness against the sacrifices and asked devotees to offer money instead of animals, district official Phanindra Mani Pokharel said. Many were hopeful the centuries-old tradition would end after the temple authorities announced a ban in 2015 and Nepal's supreme court directed the government to discourage the bloodshed a year later. But animal rights activists say both government agencies as well as temple committees have failed to implement these rulings. "It is now time for the Nepal gov-

ernment to step up and introduce a ban in law on animal sacrifice so that this is the last time we witness such horrors at Gadhimai," said Tanuja Basnet, director of Nepal's Humane Society International. Among the bleating goats in the temple area were some devotees who opted not to kill any animals but to free pigeons, like 20-year-old Rabinendra Kumar Yadav who came to thank the goddess for his health. "We didn't sacrifice an animal, we worshipped the goddess with a pair of pigeons instead," he said, before the lucky birds flapped away to safety. — AFP

Tourists found alive after two weeks lost in Aussie outback

SYDNEY: A man and woman have been rescued after surviving two weeks in Australia's arid outback on little more than vodka, groundwater and biscuits, but a third person is still missing, police said yesterday. The three friends set out to explore the country's vast sun-baked interior near Alice Springs on Nov 19 when their car became bogged down in a river bed. After three days staying put and waiting for a rescue, the group feared supplies were dwindling and two of them decided to walk along a property fence line in the hope of finding help. Police said yesterday that a local rancher had found

the man, 40-year-old Phu Tran, "slightly disoriented" but in a "good condition" a two-day walk from the vehicle. His discovery came after Tamra McBeath-Riley, 52, was found on Sunday less than two kilometres from the same vehicle suffering from dehydration. McBeath-Riley told public broadcaster ABC that the trio - accompanied by their blue Staffordshire terrier Raya - had survived by drinking pre-mixed vodka drinks and water from a hole dug for cattle, eating biscuits and sheltering in a hole dug under her car.

But the third person, 46-year-old Claire Hockridge, has not been seen since splitting from Phu two days ago. "She was still fine when he left but we obviously are now focusing our search to identify where she is," police superintendent Pauline Vicary said. Police were "hopeful that she's still in that condition." Vicary added, as her colleagues resumed an aerial search, McBeath-Riley and Hockridge live in Alice Springs, while Phu was visiting from elsewhere in Australia. — AFP



NEW DELHI: In this photograph taken on Nov 16, 2019, 44-year-old blind man Vinod Kumar Sharma walks from a platform onto rail tracks with his wife Indrapati after arriving at Okhla railway station. — AFP

Analysis

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Iranian videos hit Internet, revealing scope of crackdown

Videos showing harrowing scenes of bleeding protesters, burning roadblocks and snipers on rooftops have emerged after Iran lifted a near-total Internet blackout, opening a window onto what analysts say was one of Tehran's bloodiest crackdowns. This repression "was harsher" than during previous protests in Iran, Kamran Matin, senior lecturer in International Relations at Sussex University in Britain, told AFP in Nicosia. "All the videos I have seen from before the Internet was shut down show that from the moment of the gathering of people to 'shoot or kill' was very short."

The protests that broke out across the country from November 15 were ignited by a price hike on fuel - a heavily subsidized commodity in one of OPEC's largest producers - as part of an effort to ease pressure on the sanctions-hit economy. But global insight into the protests and most Iranians' access to those outside the country was quickly cut off when authorities clamped down on internet access, according to NetBlocks, which monitors internet disruptions.

Shaky footage

As the Internet was gradually restored a week later - with supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei saying a "very dangerous" plot had been foiled - a picture of events began to emerge piecemeal. Many videos from some of the estimated 100 areas where demonstrations erupted appear to show security forces firing at close range at unarmed demonstrators or beating them with batons. Shaky footage shows bloodied people prone on the street, shouts and panicked screaming as others rush to their aid.

Crowds can be heard chanting slogans against the security apparatus and the ruling elite, venting frustrations over high inflation and unemployment. Iran "has never felt so hopeless and sad", said one Iranian living abroad who was in the country during the unrest, asking not to be named. Shops, banks, petrol stations and police cars were torched, while major traffic arteries were blocked with tipped dumpsters and burning tyres.

In one video from an eastern Tehran neighborhood verified by London-based rights group Amnesty International, a cluster of security forces rush out from behind a building, firing at demonstrators in the street. Another shows several gunmen in dark uniforms repeatedly firing at people from the roof of a government building in Javanrud, west of Tehran in Kermanshah Province. Ethnically Kurdish western areas and majority ethnically Arab Khuzestan province were initial sites of unrest, Matin said.

'So many what-ifs'

Amnesty researcher Raha Bahreini said in a New York Times Op-Ed on Monday that authorities have used excessive force in the past against peaceful protesters. "What we've seen this time though is an unprecedented use of lethal force against unarmed protesters", Amnesty says 208 people are now believed to have died, with the actual figure expected to be much higher. Iran's judiciary on Tuesday rejected as "utter lies" unofficial casualty figures, saying they were being spread by "hostile groups".

Authorities have said five people were killed and have announced more than 500 arrests, including some 180 "ringleaders", blaming the unrest on "thugs" backed by outside enemies, including archfoes the United States, Israel and Saudi Arabia. But even with careful verification, building a full picture of what happened remains challenging. Nick Waters of investigative group Bellingcat told AFP it was possible old images from previous protests were being recirculated.

"Right now there's a load of content coming out at the same time, which makes it more difficult to verify because you don't have as good a view of the contextual information," he said. "You're not seeing the whole picture," said Nazila Fathi, author of "The Lonely War: One Woman's Account of the Struggle for Modern Iran". "You're just seeing what's in front of the camera, so it's really hard to put it in numbers. How many people are there, how they were instigated... what if they are older videos. There are so many what-ifs."

'Can you hear us?'

According to Amnesty, "families of victims have been threatened and warned not to speak to the media". Some are still doing so, such as the family of Pooya Bakhtiari, one of those confirmed dead by the rights organization. Videos sent to US-based activist Masih Alinejad by the family start with a warning. In a morgue, someone unzips the body-bag to expose Bakhtiari's corpse, showing where he was apparently shot in the head. But for many others, the fear of reprisals is an effective deterrent. Journalist Mohammad Mosaed was reportedly arrested after he circumvented the blackout to tweet: "Hello Free World! I used 42 different proxies to write this! Millions of Iranians don't have Internet." — AFP

All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



A young Egyptian fisherman pulls his net in the River Nile in Gabal Al-Tear village near Minya city, some 265 km south of the capital Cairo, on Nov 13, 2019. —AFP

Troubled waters as Ethiopia pushes Nile dam

Under the shade of a tree, Mohamed Omar joined other farmers bickering over who would water their crops first as supply from the Nile to a nearby canal dwindled. "My plot has been thirsty for days. I need the water to nourish the soil before it goes to others," said Omar, 65, whose farm is nestled in a village on the outskirts of Egypt's Giza. "We are dependent on the Nile water which is especially short during summertime," he added as he tended to his leafy vegetable crops of spinach and cabbage.

Egypt has for years been suffering from a severe water crisis that is largely blamed on population growth, and farmers try to make the most of the short supply. But other factors include climate change drying up the Nile, and water pollution due to sewage discharge as well as industrial and municipal waste. Mounting anxiety has gripped the already-strained farmers as the completion of Ethiopia's gigantic dam on the Blue Nile, a key tributary of the Nile, draws nearer.

Egypt views the hydro-electric barrage as an existential threat that could severely reduce its water supply. But Ethiopia insists Egypt's water share will not be affected. "It will be devastation to all of us and our farmlands. How will we be able to sustain our businesses then? If we cannot support ourselves, how will the rest of the country find food?" said Ahmed, a 23-year-old farmer.

On Monday and yesterday, Egypt was hosting two-day talks with Sudan and Ethiopia on the giant project with a January deadline for an accord looming. "A deal has to be reached. Otherwise Egypt will be prone to insurmountable social and economic risk," said Hani Raslan, an ana-

lyst at Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo.

Water scarce

Parched land, a fall in food production and an inability to generate electricity from Aswan's High Dam are a few risks, he said. "And this could eventually translate to political crisis and instability," said Raslan. The Nile provides nearly 97 percent of Egypt's freshwater needs and its banks are home to some 95 percent of Egypt's 100 million population, according to the United Nations. Even historians believe the country's ancient civilization would not have existed if it was not for the Nile which was worshipped by the pharaohs.

The river - the world's longest - is a lifeline supplying both water and electricity to the 10 countries it traverses. Its main tributaries, the White and Blue Niles, converge in the Sudanese capital Khartoum before flowing north through Egypt to drain into the Mediterranean Sea "Egypt's dependency on the Nile does not compare with other Nile-basin countries," said former irrigation minister Mohamed Nasr al-Din. "We are far below water scarcity baseline," he said.

Hydrologists note that people are facing water scarcity when the supply drops below 1,000 cubic metres per person annually. Egyptian officials say in 2018 the individual share reached 570 cubic metres and is expected to further drop to 500 cubic metres by 2025. In recent years, the government under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has been pushing for strict water conservation measures. Those include installing water-saving taps at public facilities,

recycling water and restricting cultivation of water intensive crops like rice.

'US pressure'

Egypt also signed multi-million dollar contracts with US-based Fluence Corp to build seawater desalination plants, according to the company. Ethiopia launched construction of its dam in 2011 and expects to begin generating power by the end of 2020 and to be fully operational by 2022. Nine years of negotiations between the three countries have so far brought no deal. Last month, Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia agreed in Washington to hold a series of meetings to resolve the main points of contention regarding the filling and operation of the dam.

The three-way meetings - attended by World Bank and US observers - have set Jan 15 as a target to resolve the longstanding issue. "The intensified schedule and the presence of observers increases the likelihood of all sides reaching a compromise agreement on the filling and operation of GERD," said William Davison, senior analyst at Crisis Group. Ethiopia says its \$4 billion structure is indispensable for economic development and providing electricity. And for Sudan the dam would provide electricity and help regulate floods every rainy season. A breakdown in talks in October pushed Egypt to urge international mediation. Despite increased tensions, analysts have dismissed the possibility of armed conflict. It is "highly unlikely as it would be enormously damaging for all sides," said Davison. But the possibility stands "that the US government applies pressure on the parties to reach an agreement," he added. — AFP

Albanians beg for return of IS youngsters

After media interest helped mobilize the evacuation of an Albanian boy from northern Syria last month, families of other children of Islamic State fighters are pleading with Tirana to redouble its efforts and bring the rest home. Alvin Berisha, an 11-year-old Albanian boy from Italy, was rescued from a Kurdish-run prison camp in Syria in November after a popular Italian TV show whipped up support for his plight. The boy's homecoming has also opened a ray of hope for other families in Albania who have been struggling for years to bring back youth snatched by their jihadist parents.

"I am happy for him but I am anxious for my two children who are still there in the middle of this hell," says Mide Dumani, a 46-year-old mother who lives on the outskirts of Tirana, her entire body shaking with nerves. Her children are among around 30 Albanian youngsters that Tirana believes are stuck in Syria. Most are in the dusty Al-Hol encampment, a tent city home to more than 70,000 people, mostly relatives of IS militants, who were rounded up by Kurds.

Dumani has not seen her two children since her husband ferried them off to Syria in Feb 2014. He was killed a few months later, leaving Eva and Endri, now aged 13 and 11, to fend for their own. "I am a mother. It's been six years. I can't take it anymore," Dumani says, gripping a notebook that contains her daughter's first English lesson, with the words "good morning" written in a neat script. "So many broken dreams," she mumbles.

From time to time, she receives phone calls and messages from Eva. "Life inside the camp is very hard. We are all in danger," her daughter wrote in a recent WhatsApp message. Over the past six years, Dumani's relatives have gone to Turkey and to Egypt in desperate attempts to make contacts to get the children out. Their 72-year-old grandmother Mentie has also gone to Syria twice. The first time she tried to convince her son to come home. Then, after his death, she attempted to retrieve the grandchildren but found herself stuck with them in Al-Hol, where she remains today.

Mide Dumani has now pinned all of her hope on the Albanian government, who helped Damascus and Rome with the return of Alvin Berisha. "May they be with their families, with their mothers, so that they can grow up like all the others," she pleaded.

Ethical dilemmas

Since the fall in March of the IS "caliphate" proclaimed in 2014, the international community has struggled with the thorny task of repatriating relatives of militants who were captured or killed in Syria and Iraq. The huge number of people in the overcrowded Al-Hol camp has also created a headache for the semi-autonomous Kurdish administration. Western European countries have been slow in returning their own citizens.

According to official figures, some 144 people from Albania, a country with a Muslim majority, left to join IS between 2012 and 2014, when the Balkan state passed a law punishing participation in foreign conflicts. "For Albania, the priority is to get the children out," Deputy Interior Minister Romina Kuko told AFP. But there are many complications. "There are problems in identifying children born locally who do not have Albanian nationality," she said.

The number of these children is unknown, and according to security experts, identifying them would



Asije Shuli, 70, holds a picture of her son Krenar in her house in the village of Gurres near Pogradec on Oct 31, 2019. — AFP

require field investigations and possible DNA testing. Authorities are also faced with the issue of mothers who have allegedly participated in the fighting and are liable to prosecution. "We have to ask ourselves the question: Why did the parents leave? What is our (legal) duty towards them?" said Kuko. With that comes the ethical dilemma of separating mothers from children. "We must be careful not to cause another traumatic shock to these children," Kuko added.

The return of young Alvin also touched a nerve with 82-year-old Dylber Shuli, an Albanian overwhelmed with worry about his five grandchildren held in Al-Hol. "Children are innocent, they must not pay for their parents' irresponsible behavior," he said outside his home in the rural southeastern Albanian village of Gurras. His 32-year-old son Krenar left in Oct 2013 with his wife Adalina and their three daughters Elona, Erma and Justra. A son, Ibrahim, was born in 2016. — AFP

Residents return after IS losses in east Afghanistan

Afghan farmer Gulnar Malik had seen her share of hardships as war ravaged her country for decades - but nothing prepared the mother of five for the arrival of the Islamic State group. IS militants seized her village in the east Afghanistan province of Nangarhar, bordering Pakistan, nearly five years ago, unleashing a tide of carnage and slaughter as they sought to expand their self-declared Syria and Iraq "caliphate" into Afghanistan.

The IS "fighters committed a lot of atrocities", Malik, 55, told AFP shortly after the Afghan army dislodged the jihadists from her home district of Achin, following weeks of house-to-house fighting, shelling and US air strikes. "They shot dead one of my children and injured another. My dead boy was trying to run away when they shot him," she recalled, adding

that her husband had been detained and tortured over a three-week period. Malik went home last month having spent years in the comparative safety of a nearby town, after Afghan military officials announced that IS's Afghan branch, also known as IS in the Khorasan, or IS-K, had been completely defeated in Nangarhar. While some local officials are not convinced that the loss is comprehensive, the Nangarhar gains - if they hold - would mark a major accomplishment for Afghanistan's beleaguered security forces.

The exact nature of links between IS in Afghanistan and the Middle East remains unclear, but IS-K first emerged in the region in 2014, largely made up of disaffected fighters from the Taliban and other jihadist groups in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. IS-K fighters coalesced in the hilly district of Achin in Nangarhar in 2015, the first time they controlled territory inside Afghanistan.

They confounded early US predictions they would be defeated quickly, withstanding continual air strikes, as well as battles with the rival Taliban. They replenished their ranks using a mix of cash and extreme ideology spread inside Kabul's universities. An AFP correspondent recently travelled with an Afghan army unit to a small village in Achin and saw the destruction wrought by IS-K. Built on a forest-

ed hillside, many stonework buildings had been reduced to rubble, house walls were pockmarked with bullet holes and there were mangled remains of cars on the roadside. "We were forced to leave our homes. Now we have returned, all our houses and all of our belongings are destroyed," said local resident Himatullah, 36, who only uses one name. He recalled that when IS-K fighters first arrived, they forced residents to sit on bombs, then detonated them.

Another day, they beheaded a man accused of infidelity. Even though the village now is free of IS-K, it will take time for residents to feel safe, and many are traumatized. "Daesh have planted mines everywhere - in schools, clinics, people's homes," Himatullah said, using the Arabic acronym for IS. According to an American defense official, Afghan military operations supported by US-led coalition air strikes set the conditions that have in recent weeks forced more than 1,400 IS fighters and their families to surrender. Stalled talks between the US and the Taliban were aimed at striking a deal that would have seen the Pentagon pull thousands of troops from Afghanistan in return for various security guarantees, while leaving a counter-terrorism footprint in the country to go after IS-K and other jihadist groups. — AFP

Business

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SIDON, Lebanon: Protesters chant slogans and strike a tabla during an anti-government demonstration in the southern Lebanese city of Sidon. — AFP

Suicide over mounting debt in Lebanon

Plummeting Syrian pound hits new black market low

BEIRUT: A suicide in Lebanon committed over mounting debt sparked a social media outcry in the protest-hit country, where weeks of political and economic turmoil have raised alarm. Naji Fliti, a 40-year-old father of two, committed suicide outside his home in the border region of Aarsal on Sunday because he could not pay outstanding medical bills for his cancer-stricken wife, his relative told AFP on Monday.

The death resonated with many on social media, who blamed the country's under-fire political class for failing to address a months-long economic downturn that has resulted in inflation, swelling unemployment and fears of a currency devaluation. "He is a victim of this regime, of this political class and their financial and monetary policies," Doumit Azzi Draiby, an activist, said on Twitter. An unprecedented anti-government protest movement has gripped Lebanon since October 17, fuelled in part by deteriorating living conditions.

The World Bank has warned of an impending recession

that may see the number of people living in poverty climb from a third to half of the population. Unemployment, already above 30 per cent for young people, would also go up, it said. Prime Minister Saad Hariri's cabinet resigned two weeks into the protest movement, bowing to popular pressure. But the country's deeply divided political class has yet to form a new cabinet, frustrating demonstrators who have remained mobilized.

Public anger was fuelled further following Fliti's death. "Our anger is as strong as our determination to change this deadly and corrupt state," Ghassan Moukheiber, a former lawmaker, said on Twitter, attaching a picture of the deceased. Fliti, a former stone quarry worker, had been unemployed for the past two months because of a crunch in demand for one of the region's main exports, his cousin Hussein told AFP on Monday. "He is a victim of the economic situation," Hussein said. "The blame is squarely on the corrupt political class that brought us here."

Plummeting Syrian pound

Meanwhile, the value of the Syrian pound on the black market sank to 1,000 to the dollar at some money changers yesterday, marking a new record low for the nosediving currency. The drop comes amid a spiraling liquidity crunch in neighboring Lebanon, which has long served as a conduit for foreign currency entering the heavily sanctioned government-held areas of Syria.

One currency exchange office in the Syrian capital Damascus told AFP he was selling dollars on the black market for 1,000 pounds for the first time yesterday. A specialized website put the volatile rate at 975 pounds to the dollar - more than double the official rate of 434 Syrian pounds posted by the central bank on its website.

At the start of the war in 2011, the rate stood at around 48 pounds to the dollar. In the Old City of Damascus, a trader who preferred not to give his name said everything from food to transport had become

more expensive in recent weeks. "Prices have doubled in the past two months," the trader said. "Everybody prices their items according to the new dollar exchange rate" on the black market, he explained. Syria analyst Samuel Ramani said the pound had fallen by 30 percent since anti-government protests erupted in Lebanon on October 17.

An economic downturn has accelerated since the protests started, and a liquidity crunch has become more acute in a country that has long served as an economic and financial lifeline for dollar-starved Syrian businesses. As Western sanctions tightened on Syria during the war, many in the country have opened businesses in neighboring Lebanon, stashed their money in its banks and used the country as a conduit for imports. But Lebanese banks started introducing controls on dollar withdrawals over the summer, straining the supply of the greenback to Syrian markets. — Agencies

China targets quarter of vehicle sales to be electric by 2025

BEIJING: China should adopt a plan that will see electric vehicles make up a quarter of all autos sold in the country in six years' time, the industry ministry said yesterday, as the sector struggles with falling sales. A draft blueprint for the development of the "new energy vehicle" sector - which includes hybrids and fully-electric vehicles - comes after the government withdrew subsidies for carmakers earlier this year. China is the world's largest new energy vehicle market, but sales of electric motors plummeted 34 percent on-year in September, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM).

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's draft proposal said China should seek to ensure one in four of all vehicles sold in 2025 were either hybrids or fully-electric vehicles. The measures are partly to ensure the country meets its air pollution targets, and to reduce Beijing's dependence on imported oil. China would also continue



LOS ANGELES: The BMW i8 plug-in Hybrid is on display at the 2019 Los Angeles Auto Show in Los Angeles, California. The rise of electric cars is proving a challenge not only for auto makers but also gas stations, supermarkets and malls forced to adapt as more and more electric vehicles hit the road, experts say. — AFP

to develop electric vehicle battery technologies, improve infrastructure for hydrogen fuel cell vehicles and driverless cars, it said.

The draft proposal, which includes guidelines for the development of the new energy vehicle sector from 2021 to 2035, is open for public feedback until December 9. A previous state target set in 2017 had called for 20 percent of cars sold to be electric vehicles by 2020, but the draft released yesterday gave no indication whether China was on track to meet that goal. Fuelled by rising incomes and government sales incentives, China is the golden

goose upon which the global automotive industry has staked its future.

But after years of strong growth, car sales fell last year for the first time since the 1990s, hit by a slowing economy, US trade tensions and a Chinese crackdown on shady credit practices that has crimped car-financing channels. Passenger vehicles sales in China have now fallen for 15 consecutive months, according to the CAAM. The government had earlier said it was planning to impose quotas requiring carmakers to maintain a certain percentage of new energy vehicles in their Chinese production. — AFP

New IMF chief Georgieva urges debt wisdom

DIAMNIADIO: New International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva on Monday highlighted Africa as a lure for investment as she kicked off her maiden visit to the continent, but urged leaders to be smart on debt management. Africa has made "tremendous improvements", the IMF managing director said at a conference near the Senegalese capital Dakar on sustainability and debt. "As a result, over the past two decades, extreme poverty levels have declined by one-third, life expectancy has increased by a fifth and real per capita income has grown by about 50 percent," she said. "We have not been able to communicate sufficiently Africa as an investment destination," she added.

"We have to dispel the perceived riskiness of investment in the region," she said, emphasizing that the key to this was "providing more up-to-date data." But she also pointed to Africa's challenges, including demographic growth

that would require up to 13 million new jobs each year, and the impact of climate change. To increase social spending and to create the right conditions to attract investment requires money, and this raises the question of debt as a financing tool, she said.

"Borrowing does make sense if it is done wisely, if it finances projects that can boost productivity and living standards, if it materializes on the ground (with) more roads... more airports, more schools, more hospitals, more opportunities." But, she said: "Room for borrowing in the region is not endless," pointing to a surge in borrowing at commercial rates by many countries in the region. State indebtedness has spiked as a result, although it has recently stabilized, Georgieva noted.

Countries should generate higher public revenues, make investment spending more efficient and strengthen management of public data, she said. Georgieva also chided rich countries, which have pledged to provide 0.7 percent of their GDP in support for development. "We are not there, by a long mile, we are still at around only 0.2 percent," she added. After taking office in October, Georgieva last month warned that global debt, both public and private, had surged to an all-time high of \$188 trillion, "about 230 percent of world output." — AFP

Business

US may increase tariffs; WTO rejects EU claims over Airbus

France, EU ready to fight back amid US tariff threat

PARIS: The World Trade Organization on Monday rejected European Union claims that it no longer provides subsidies to planemaker Airbus, prompting the United States to say it could increase retaliatory tariffs on a wider range of European goods. A new compliance report from the Geneva trade watchdog found that the Airbus A380 and A350 jetliners continue to be subsidized as a result of past European government loans.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said the decision affirmed that European subsidies to Airbus continued to harm the US aerospace industry, and strong action was required to eliminate such market-distorting subsidies. It was the latest salvo in a record transatlantic trade dispute involving mutual claims of illegal aircraft subsidies, which comes to a head at a time of rising global trade tensions and has grabbed the attention of financial markets this year.

The United States was in October awarded the right to impose tariffs on \$7.5 billion of annual EU imports in its case against Airbus. It placed partial tariffs on most Airbus jets and products from cheese to olives and single-malt whisky. A decision on retaliation rights for the EU in a parallel case on aid for Boeing is due next year. Officials on both sides have expressed support for a negotiated settlement, while accusing the other of failing to take the prospect of a negotiated solution seriously.

In Monday's finding, a three-person panel rejected EU claims that a recent decision by Airbus to stop producing the slow-selling A380 meant the giant airliner could no longer be seen as a threat to Boeing, whose competing 747 is also out of fashion. While the WTO no longer faulted Airbus for causing lost sales to Boeing with the A380, which is no longer marketed, it ruled that the superjumbo would cause market-share damage to Boeing for as long as it is produced and delivered. Airbus plans to shut production in mid-2021. The WTO appeared to strengthen findings against the A350, saying it had both cost sales and damaged Boeing's market-share prospects - a process called impedance - in the busier twin-engined long-haul

market where Boeing offers its 787 Dreamliner. A previous WTO ruling had focused only on lost sales. The latest report put the world's largest corporate trade dispute squarely on the agenda for new EU Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan, who started his term on Sunday. The Commission said the new findings contained serious legal errors and that it would consider its next steps, including a possible appeal, while seeking an accord with the United States. USTR, which imposed tariffs of 10% on large civil EU aircraft and 25% on selected farm and other products in October, said it would look at raising tariff rates and subjecting additional EU products to the tariffs. It gave no immediate details on the size of the possible increases, or which products could be added to the current list.

Appeals dilemma

As so often following the dozens of rulings in the 15-year-old trade case, Airbus and Boeing were left starkly at odds. Boeing claimed a complete loss for its European rival Airbus, which it said continued to harm the US aerospace industry by receiving billions of euros in illegal aid.

Airbus said the WTO's decision to drop previous references to the A380 causing lost sales to Boeing meant the United States should slash its authorized tariffs by \$2 billion to \$5.5 billion. The USTR rejected that argument, saying it saw no basis in the report to justify reducing US retaliatory tariffs. US sources said only full compliance or a political settlement - which is widely seen as remote amid fragile economic ties - could legally cancel WTO approval for tariffs.

European executives warned against a "lose-lose" trade war. Both sides can appeal the latest finding but doing so could place the WTO in uncertain legal territory, experts said. The WTO Appellate Body will cease to function after Dec 10, due to US blocking of new appointments, leaving a tight deadline for a challenge to Monday's ruling. Appeals launched after that risk falling into a legal void, and it is unclear if the body will be allowed to rule on appeals filed before then.



ROISSY: Photo taken from the tarmac at Roissy Paris Charles de Gaulle airport shows an Air France Airbus A380 moving. French unions are calling for a strike starting tomorrow against planned pension reforms. — AFP

EU ready to fight back

France and the European Union are ready to fight back over the latest US tariff threats on French products, French government ministers said yesterday. On Monday, the US government said it may impose punitive duties of up to 100% on \$2.4 billion of imports from France, including champagne, handbags, cheese and other products, after concluding that France's new digital services tax would harm US tech companies.

French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire described the US proposals as "unacceptable". "In case of new American sanctions, the European Union would be ready to riposte," Le Maire told Radio Classique. French junior economy

minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher told Sud Radio that France would be "pugnacious" in its dealings with the US on the matter, and that France would not back down on its digital tax plans. France's 3% levy applies to revenue from digital services earned by companies with more than 25 million euros (\$27.86 million) in French revenue and 750 million euros (\$830 million) worldwide. But the US Trade Representative's office said on Monday that its investigation found that the French tax was "inconsistent with prevailing principles of international tax policy". It said it found the French tax proposal "unusually burdensome for affected US companies," including Alphabet Inc's Google, Facebook Inc and Amazon.com Inc. — Agencies

US Cyber Monday sales break records, hit \$9.2 billion

NEW YORK: Cyber Monday sales were on course to bring in a record \$9.2 billion, according to evening estimates, building on a bumper Black Friday weekend for US retailers driven by earlier-than-usual promotions and free shipping. Shoppers have already had nearly a month of offers and deals as retailers look to draw out their vital holiday season, which is six days shorter this year due to a late Thanksgiving.

Adobe Analytics predicted that \$72.1 billion was spent online in the month ending Dec 1, and Cyber Monday - now traditionally the US economy's biggest internet shopping day - had logged a 16.9% jump in sales over the year prior as of 7 pm. Adobe, which measures transactions from 80 of the biggest 100 US retailers, said it marked down its

prior \$9.4 billion forecast slightly as more data came in.

Amazon.com Inc and rivals such as Target Corp and Walmart Inc were poised to benefit from the event, having beefed up delivery services to fulfill online orders more quickly. In-store pickup of online orders has become smoother, too, said Carol Spiekerman, president at consultancy Spiekerman Retail.

"At the end of the day, Cyber Monday is just Black Friday revisited so the momentum, and the deals, really started last week," Spiekerman said. Adobe also said \$3 billion of the estimated sales would be from smartphones, a new US record. Large companies did well in this channel, outpacing small businesses due to investment in mobile apps and other technology, as well as to larger product and deals selections, said Taylor Schreiner, director of Adobe Digital Insights. "The big companies are still getting disproportionate growth versus the small ones," he said.

Penthouse protest

The event was not all smooth sailing for the world's biggest online retailer, Amazon. Protesters, who have described poor treatment of warehouse workers and rising climate emissions from the company's push for speedier

deliveries, marched outside CEO Jeff Bezos' Fifth Avenue penthouse in New York City on Monday. "We're humans, not robots," read one sign.

Amazon spokeswoman Kristen Kish said unions and groups funded by competitors were "conjuring misinformation" about Amazon, which had industry-leading pay and benefits. The company aims to be carbon neutral by 2040. Activists also tried to block a shopping mall in Paris, denouncing the spread of Black Friday to European shores. The day's shopping in the United States still paled in comparison to Alibaba Group Holding Ltd's "Singles Day" last month, when the Chinese e-commerce giant raked in \$38.4 billion in sales.

The US National Retail Federation estimates nearly 69 million Americans will scour the web on Monday for deals on everything from mobile phones to kitchenware, with Adobe estimating the biggest discounts on televisions and computers. Top sellers included toys from the film "Frozen 2," LOL surprise dolls and Nintendo Co Ltd's Switch games console, Adobe said. "#CyberMonday2019 The day of the year 85% of the US population pretends to actually be working," tweeted Erika Mayor, a user in Miami. — Reuters

Dimah Capital Investment Company established a subsidiary based in US

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Dimah Capital Investment Company, a subsidiary of Al Imtiaz Group, announced the company has established a subsidiary based in the United States named APEX Capital Investments Corporation during a press conference held yesterday. Vice Chairman and CEO of Dimah Capital Investment Company Hosam Nasser Al-Muzael said APEX Capital provides real estate investment services such as acquisition and asset management, in addition to being a strategic extension to Dimah Capital in the US.

"The US real estate market is vast and it is important for us and our investors to have a strategic presence there. APEX Capital will further enable us to explore and strengthen our investment opportunities on a wider range and manage our assets more efficiently, while further enabling us to improve the quality of our services to our clients," said Muzael. According to him, the US market is bigger than the European market presently. "We are currently present in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and



KUWAIT: (From left) Ahmad Al-Qatami, SVP, Dimah Capital; Waleed Mohammed, Senior Vice President and Head of Alternative Investments at Dimah Capital; Hosam Al-Muzael, Vice Chairman and CEO of Dimah Capital and John Gaghan, CEO APEX Capital are pictured during the press conference.

are planning to expand to Germany soon," he concluded.

Senior Vice President and Head of Alternative Investments at Dimah Capital Waleed Mohammed noted that APEX Capital provides a wide range of services such as asset management and investment structuring and unique opportunities related to deal finalizing, finance structuring, loan scheduling and much more.

"APEX Capital's services are not limited to Dimah Capital's ventures but provide real estate services to the local US market as well, as it is equipped with an entire team that possesses extensive years in the industry," Mohammed said. APEX Capital CEO John Gaghan said the US economy is very strong now and that the real estate sector in the US is performing very well.

Turkish wealth fund to invest \$10 billion in petrochemical refinery

ANKARA: The Turkish wealth fund will invest around \$10 billion for the construction of a petrochemical refinery in southern Turkey, the state-run Anadolu news agency said yesterday, in a move it said was aimed at alleviating the country's trade deficit. Data on Monday showed Turkey's trade deficit had more than tripled from a year ago to stand at \$2.15 billion in November, according to a special trade system. Both exports and imports rose year-on-year, the data showed.

The Turkish Wealth Fund (TVF), worth \$50 billion, was set up in 2016 by the government to develop and increase the value of Turkey's strategic assets and provide resources for investment. Last year, President Tayyip

Erdogan appointed himself chairman of the fund and completely changed its board. Anadolu, citing information it obtained from the TVF, said the fund would invest around \$10 billion for the construction of a refinery and petrochemical complex in the southern province of Adana.

It said that construction will begin in 2021. The project will create 10,000 jobs during the construction period and another 5,000 jobs when the complex is operational, Anadolu said. It added that the project would contribute around \$1.5 billion annually to Turkey's trade deficit. The TVF later confirmed to Reuters that it was planning a greenfield investment in the area, but did not provide further details.

The government has previously transferred to the TVF stakes worth billions of dollars of state assets, including stakes in flag carrier Turkish Airlines, major banks and fixed-line operator Turk Telekom. In October, the fund's general manager was quoted as saying the TVF wants to buy the 10% stake of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) in the Istanbul bourse. EBRD is set to sell its stake after the appointment of a former Halkbank executive who was jailed in the United States as CEO of the stock exchange. — Reuters

CMA concludes Bursa Kuwait's privatization

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority (CMA), the regulatory body for capital markets and securities activities, yesterday announced that the public offering to Kuwaiti citizens for its 50% stake in Bursa Kuwait Securities Company (BKSC) has successfully concluded on schedule at 1pm yesterday with more than 8.5 times oversubscription.

CMA's Chairman of the Board of Commissioners and Managing Director Dr. Ahmad A. Al-Melhem said, "As of 1 pm yesterday, 94% of Bursa Kuwait Securities Company is owned by private investors, while the remaining 6% is owned by the State-run pension fund, the Public Institute for Social Security. As a result of the successful closure of the offering, Bursa Kuwait has become the only stock exchange operator in the Middle East that is not owned by the State.

This marks as a landmark transaction in the history of Kuwait's capital markets, and an important step towards achieving the ambitious national development goals set out in Kuwait's Vision 2035 with an aim to strengthen the country's position as a regional financial center, and give the private sector a stronger role and a greater opportunity to develop the national economy". The public offering of 50% of BKSC, led and managed by KAMCO Investment Company, is the second and final phase of the privatization process of Bursa Kuwait which followed the sale of 44% of the company to strategic investors in February 2019.

BKSC privatization overview

The BKSC privatization program was mandated by Article 33 of Law No 7 of 2010 regarding the Establishment of the Capital Markets Authority and Regulating Securities Activities and its Amendments and was rolled out in two phases. The first phase took place in February 2019 through an open and transparent bidding process, a strategic consortium consisting of local investors and an international Securities Exchange operator acquired a 44% stake in the company. The consortium comprised of Hellenic Exchanges-Athens Stock Exchange SA Holding, National Investments Company, First Investment Company, and Arzan Financial Group. The second phase, the nation-wide IPO, was implemented in the last quarter of 2019 with the distribution of the CMA's 50% stake in the company to Kuwaiti citizens. Upon the allocation of the remaining 50% of Bursa Kuwait's shares, Bursa Kuwait will be 94% owned by citizens and the private sector, while the Kuwaiti government, through the Public Institution for Social Security, owns the remaining 6%.

Public Offering Highlights

Subscription period: October 1, 2019, to December 1, 2019; Subscription rate: Oversubscribed more than 8.5 times; Number of subscribers: c.83,000; Eligibility: In accordance with the CMA Law, CMA's 50% stake in BKSC is offered only to Kuwaiti citizens registered with the Public Authority for Civil Information as of the subscription day, September 8, 2019; Offering price: 100 fils per share; Offering allocation: Investors to be notified of final allocation by December 8, 2019.

Bursa Kuwait was founded in 2014 by the CMA Board of Commissioners Resolution No 37/2013 to replace the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE). Since then, the CMA has embarked on a mission to transform the company into a leading regional exchange that is built on global best practices and structures. The market development program led by the CMA in collaboration with Bursa Kuwait and the Kuwait Clearing Company introduced reforms to increase competitiveness and liquidity, reinforce transparency and management, elevate investor confidence, and attract international, regional, and domestic investments. As a result of the successful implementation of these reforms since 2014, Kuwait was upgraded to an Emerging Market status by the leading global indices. Kuwait has been classified in FTSE Russell Emerging Markets Index (FTSE) in September 2017, S&P Dow Jones Global Benchmark Indices with an Emerging Market classification in December 2018, and most recently to an 'Emerging Market' status by MSCI subject to two conditions in June 2019.

Zain carrier billing now available for App Store, iCloud purchases

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced that, beginning 5 December 2019, customers will be able to pay for App Store purchases and iCloud storage across Apple devices via carrier billing - providing a versatile payment method to meet Kuwait's growing demand for digital entertainment. Signing up for carrier billing takes only a few simple steps.

Zain customers need to have a new or existing Apple ID, and can select "Carrier Billing" as their payment method from their account settings on App Store and iCloud from their iPhone, iPad, iPod touch and Mac, or on iTunes from their PC. Once "Carrier Billing" has been selected, all future purchases with the customer's Apple ID will be automatically charged as part of the monthly carrier bill or directly deducted from the customer's prepaid account - eliminating the need to use a credit card.

The new payment option will be configured automatically and immediately allow for easy, one-tap purchasing from all Apple devices, including Apple TV and Apple Watch. This includes purchases of apps and iCloud storage. No personal information will be shared with any third parties, making carrier billing both simple and safe to set up and use. For more information on how to set up carrier billing, please visit kw.zain.com.

Kuwait's real estate sector requires data and information

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank gathered industry leaders, experts and decision makers from real estate companies, government institutions and nonprofit organizations in a closed session to discuss the present developments of the local real estate market. The session came as part of the Bank's commitment to providing a platform where professionals can exchange insights and experiences with decision makers in an aim to advance the business environment and ultimately benefit stakeholders.

Real estate market position

Presently, the Kuwait real estate sector is considered healthy when compared to other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, mainly due to the halt in its expansion from 2013 to 2016 which contributes to keeping supply under control. However, and despite the controlled supply, number of factors continue to affect the level of transactions and trade volumes of each real estate subsector.

Investment properties in particular saw a decline of 0.3% to 0.5% in every quarter of 2018, and closed the first quarter of 2019 with a 0.3% decline in a comparison to the same period in the previous year. The decline in these prices affected in turn trade volumes, which declined by 16.2% in the first quarter of 2019, and then witnessed a slight growth in the second quarter by 1.5% compared to the same period of 2018. Volumes declined once again by a sharp 25.7% year-on-year in the third quarter.

Residential, commercial properties

Statistics show that residential and commercial properties performed better than investment properties when it came to price levels and trade volumes. While trade volumes of residential and commercial properties increased by 47% and 57% respectively in the first quarter of this year, prices in each subsector increased by 0.2% and 0.1% respectively for the same period.

Value of lands

Value of lands in Kuwait have witnessed noticeable increases in some rare and popular locations. Between 2015 and 2016, the average price per square meter of investment properties in the capital stood at approximately KD 800, and increased to a soaring KD 1,400 to KD 1,500 today. And despite the increase in prices, a few family-owned real estate companies still hold a significant share of total trades of investment and commercial properties, while the number of vacant investment lands ranges between 1,200 and 1,300 only following the large expansion seen in the market pre-2013 in response to the back then shortage in supply.

As for residential properties, the price per square meter in the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate stood at approximately KD 400 between 2015 and 2016, and reached today an average of KD 600. Prices of lands in the residential sector have increased despite real estate companies absent from this sector as per the law (9/28) which prevents them from owning land for in residential areas. These companies have therefore turned to invest in other area in the GCC and Europe.

The landscape for industrial properties somewhat differs and is witnessing a growing demand for warehouses and industrial lands. Available statistics show a rise in the prices in the service and crafts sectors, however it is not driven by the industry, but by traders who control the supply and its prices. The ultimate beneficiary in this sector is the real estate trader, searching for fast financial gain and benefiting from a lack of regulations or law of ownership in this specific sector. Properties developed for retail and restaurants are also suffering today due to a weak demand, perhaps caused by high rental prices. Demand for supply in this sector can only regain balance should rents be reduced.

Mega projects

Land prices continue to rise at a time where Kuwait is ranked last among GCC countries in terms of spending on mega projects such as the development of its waterfront, the Shuwaikh industrial and chalet areas, the labor accommodation project, gated communities and other similar projects including industrial cities. While neighboring countries are moving towards a massive development of "Mega Projects", many of which have been successful, Kuwait has not kept pace with this trend despite its demographic and financial fundamentals that support similar developments, subsequently opening door to opportunities that would benefit developing companies as well as community at large which these developments are built for.

Accordingly, the real estate market requires today from the government to introduce new residential, investment and commercial areas in its capacity as the main owner of lands with the objective to change the structure of trades in the sector. The step is a need today, in addition to the endeavors of the Public Authority for Housing Welfare which resulted in the launch of mega real estate projects under the PPP Law such as the development of malls, offices and investment housing in Jaber Al-Ahmad Sabah



Source: Kuwait Ministry of Justice

Commercial Transaction Value (KD Mn.) and No. of Transactions



Al-Ahmad cities, as well as new residential cities such as South Saad Al-Abdullah city.

Enhance transparency

Providing the required information about the real estate remains a challenge for the sector. The growth of investments in the real estate market today relies on the sole data collected by various government institutions when a transaction is registered. This decentralization limits the possibility of developing in-depth studies and report on the outlook and opportunities that the sector may offer.

In fact, real estate companies lack a central entity whose only purpose is to collect all sector-specific data from the market and provide it to companies and individuals seeking to invest their capital in Kuwait. Real estate companies depend on such to prepare their feasibility studies and development plans in a clear methodology

that achieves the objectives of the investor as well as the prosperity of the sector. The data also served to protect them from defaulting investments.

Promoting transparency in the sector is without a doubt a foundation to any vital sector. It is therefore crucial to establish an independent body capable of providing the necessary data and regulating the sector by developing the framework that enable the growth of the sector. With such a structure, transparency in the sector will increase naturally. And when there is transparency, capital flows increase because investors can assess their returns based on reliable data. The independent body would have the responsibility to provide opportunities to invest lands by setting clear standards and laws for real estate developers and ensuring it regulates supply and demand.

Organizational challenges

The private sector emerges as a provider of solution to

the need of the real estate sector which today lacks quality developments. The sector is faced with challenges of weak activity and a need to create a more transparent environment, regulated by laws and a clear vision for the standards of development and urbanization to contribute to its long-term sustainability and attract new investments.

Real estate developers are also faced with obstacles, including a disparity in statistics and their unconformity with data and laws presently regulating the sector. Some of these statistics show that the private housing sector attracts 50% of total trades made in the real estate sector, while Kuwait is living a housing crisis that is leading the government to subsidize rents at a value exceeding KD 2 billion over the past five years. Real estate developers remain absent from the role of finding a solution to this crisis despite their proven success in developing residential projects out of Kuwait.

Returns of real estate investor

Today, the value of the land represents around 60% to 70% of the total investment value of a property. For an investment to be economically viable, the value of the land should ideally stand at 20% of the investment value. The high value of lands is mainly due to the monopoly on lands as well as many other challenges that were seen in the past 50 years and which included a limited road network and infrastructure. These challenges have clearly shown the necessity to introduce an infrastructure development program for new areas under the PPP Law.

Moreover, the economic viability of any property development is key. Today's environment does not support a balance in real estate prices because of the monopoly on lands and limited regulations. The real estate sector will start regulating automatically when addressing these imbalances. Government regulators must take into consideration the limited support and incentives presented to the private sector, in addition to the lack of a "code" for the development of private housing and other properties and a clear plan to bring solutions to the land planning issue.

Challenges and opportunities

(1) The residential real estate sector in Kuwait suffers from the size of houses which drain resources, energy and infrastructure, and pushes urbanization to an unsustainable stage. The solution lies in fragmenting the property and creating new cities at a low construction rate. The size of houses need to be reviewed. (2) Boursa Kuwait recently introduced REITs, enabling the real estate sector to attract local and international investments, and providing a transparent platform to trade and for small investors to benefit of fixed dividends. These funds are expected to attract new capital to the market and therefore their role as a new investment tool in the market needs to be strengthened.

(3) Mortgages are one the necessities to the development of the private sector in general and the private housing sector in particular. Introducing mortgages will contribute to a solution to the housing crisis. (4) New laws capable of attracting Kuwaiti funds instead of flight out of the country and involving the private sector in providing solutions to the housing crisis. (5) Promote the participation of the private sector in the development of infrastructure projects under the PPP Law. (6) Provide data and market studies to help investors make informed decisions.

KFH announces winners of 'Win with Hesabi'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced the winners of the 4th draw of 'Win with Hesabi' campaign that offers 3 Jeep Wrangler Sport cars and 120 cash prizes worth KD250 each. The draw was held at KFH Headquarters under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. Bader Alsaedi was announced as the winner of Jeep Wrangler Sport car. Nawaf Almuhaissen, Fahad Alshajji, Saad Alajmi, Naser Meltah, Fatema Ejail, Anfal Almusaitel, Aesha Alkhalidi, Bader Alsulaibi, Fatemah Alazemi and Abdulrahman Mohamad were announced as winners of cash prizes worth KD250 each. This campaign comes as part of KFH continuing efforts to add value to Hesabi customers including advantages, discounts, prizes and exclusive rewards.

Once the social allowance is transferred to

Hesabi program, customers enter the monthly draw on 10 prizes of KD250 each, in addition to 3 special draws on Jeep Wrangler Sport cars. KFH offers "Hesabi for Youth" with a variety of privileges as part of its continued endeavor to provide adequate customer care, innovate new products and services and fulfill the needs of all customers of various age categories and interests. Services and products are tailored to suit customers' needs and provide distinguished service as per global standards regarding quality, accuracy and speed.

Hesabi program has been designed to meet the needs of youth and aspire for their active life style. This program presents for youth many exclusive offers and a wide range of privileges including Hesabi ATM card with a unique design, eligibility to issue Hesabi prepaid card (as per credit regulations of KFH), distinguished offers and discounts etc. KFH continues to launch marketing campaigns to reward youth customers. Hesabi for Youth represents the ambitions and expectations of youth category and copes with KFH aspirations to attract the largest portion of youth who represents the major part of Kuwaiti society. Also, the account represents KFH initiative to diversify banking services and products.

Experience real speed with 5G - exclusively from Ooredoo Kuwait

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, the first to launch innovated digital services in Kuwait announced the launch of a new 5G service add-on for KD5 per month. The new 5G service add-on can be activated by both new and existing customers. Existing customers do not need to have any contract obligations, but must be subscribed to certain tariff plans which include Shamel Voice plans, Shamel Internet plans, and Shamel Home plans.

Customers can enjoy an unsurpassed experience with Ooredoo's 5G service add-on with the latest routers and smartphones starting from KD7 per month. The 5G service add-on can be activated through

Ooredoo's eShop or any Ooredoo branch nationwide. Customers can also bring their own 5G enabled device to any Ooredoo branch and have the 5G service add-on activated.

The 5G network includes an array of benefits such as a superior experience in download and upload speeds, streaming HD videos in a matter of seconds and provides high speed internet access with no delays and interruptions. Customers can also connect multiple devices using the same internet access even during peak hours. It is worth mentioning that Ooredoo Kuwait made the first trial International 5G call in the region between Ooredoo Kuwait and Ooredoo Qatar, demonstrating the phenomenal capabilities of its 5G networks in Qatar and Kuwait.

Ooredoo Kuwait is constantly working to expand 5G coverage nationwide. Please follow our website and social media channels to stay informed or visit the nearest Ooredoo branch to check for coverage and device availability. For more information, please contact 121, our team will answer all inquiries around the clock 7 days a week. Or visit our website www.ooredoo.com.kw or the nearest shop to you, or simply use our App 'MyOoredoo' for updates and more.

What's On



Jumeirah Group adds Capri Palace to its expanding international portfolio

Jumeirah Group, the global luxury hospitality company and a member of Dubai Holding, yesterday announced it has been appointed to operate and manage the renowned Capri Palace in Italy. Reopening as Capri Palace, Jumeirah in April 2020, this beautiful Italian property enjoys an idyllic location in bustling Anacapri; one of the most exclusive and unspoiled parts of the island. The hotel, founded by Tonino Cacace, stands high up on a hill overlooking the Gulf of Naples and fully embodies the Italian Dolce Vita: with an authentic Capri style and far reaching sea views.

Designed in the style of an eighteenth-century Neapolitan palazzo, Capri Palace has attracted the great and the good since it first opened its doors in the 1960s, swiftly establishing itself as the island's most iconic hotel. Under Jumeirah's direction, the property is set to continue to go from strength to strength with exciting upgrades and refurbishments in the pipeline.

Art and design are at the heart of this hotel; and the elegant white-washed walls, arched ceilings, and columns create a sense of serenity as soon as guests step through the door. The light and airy interiors are filled with historic and contemporary artwork with trib-

utes to the works of Miró, Magritte and Warhol. The reverence for contemporary art continues in The White Museum collection, dispersed throughout the hotel, which recounts the spirit of Anacapri and includes pieces by De Chirico, Keith Haring, and Pomodoro, amongst others.

The tasteful interiors of the open spaces flow into the 68 guest rooms. White, blue and neutral tones create an unmistakably Mediterranean atmosphere, whilst the ceramic tiles and bespoke furniture evoke the sense of an Italian family home, ensuring guests are well rooted in their surroundings.

In line with Jumeirah's commitment to offering exceptional culinary experiences, Capri Palace, Jumeirah is home to three of the island's Michelin stars. The hotel's signature restaurant L'Olivo, which serves Mediterranean classics with an extensive wine list, has been awarded two stars; whilst Il Riccio - the hotel's private beach club - has one, and is the only beach club in the world to do so. Il Riccio, which clings to the rocky coastline, is known for providing some of the best local seafood on the island, especially their sea urchins from which the restaurant takes its name.



Capri Palace, Jumeirah is also revered as a wellness destination, with the exclusive Capri Beauty Farm upholding a loyal international following. Under the direction of the esteemed Professor Francesco Canonaco, this world class-medical spa facility- on the cutting edge of medical research- offers highly specialised signature treatments including the 'Leg School(r)' and the 'Metabolic Response' which

have won acclaim the world over. Jose Silva, Chief Executive Officer of Jumeirah Group, commented: "We are proud and excited to welcome Capri Palace, Jumeirah into our portfolio. It is one of Europe's most recognised and well-respected hotels, with a global reputation and following. We are pleased to announce that the hotel's current General Manager Ermanno Zanini will contin-

ue in his role, taking on additional responsibilities as Regional Vice President for Italy and Spain for Jumeirah Group. Capri Palace, Jumeirah embodies our brand values of providing excellent service, unrivalled culinary experiences and inspiring design, and joins our existing collection of European properties in London, Mallorca and Frankfurt."

Ermanno Zanini, General Manager of Capri Palace, Jumeirah and Regional Vice President for Italy and Spain said: "We are delighted that Jumeirah Group have embraced Capri Palace to be a part of its portfolio. With the warmth of our team, the big smiles and the even bigger hearts, we look forward to build on greatness and reach new frontiers as part of this renowned global luxury hospitality company."

Capri Palace, Jumeirah will open for the 2020 season on April 23, 2020, bringing the existing Jumeirah international portfolio to six hotels in Europe, including Jumeirah Frankfurt, Jumeirah Port Soller, Jumeirah Lowndes Hotel, Grosvenor House Suites Jumeirah and The Carlton Tower, Jumeirah. In addition to the group's portfolio of hotels in the Middle East, Jumeirah further manages hotels in China and Maldives with additional properties planned for 2020 in Indonesia and Oman.



LAIF holds its annual convention

Abundant International Fountain Church (LAIF) held its annual convention themed 'Glory of This Latter House.' The three-day power-packed event featured Christian musical extravaganza, anointing service, bible studies and thanksgiving service.

In his message, the host pastor, Bishop Dr Jonathan Njoku urged Christians to be good ambassadors of Christ. He praised Kuwait leadership for promoting peace and religious tolerance in the region. The program attracted dignitaries from different Christian denominations.

VIVA organizes PlayStation tournament

VIVA, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and a subsidiary of STC Group, has organized a PlayStation tournament in FIFA 20 game for its employees, as part of its newly launched corporate values 'Drive, Devotion and Dynamism'.

VIVA aims through these activities and competitions to focus not only on technical competencies but on

those that lie underneath as core values which in turn impact work culture and corporate performance. Moreover, VIVA emphasizes on the interaction between all employees from different sectors and departments and embeds the concept of new values among them, to ensure the successful implementation of the new strategy.

VIVA was keen to organize the tournament at VIVA's headquarter building to spread the loyalty spirit and sense of belonging amongst the employees. This competition is part of a chain of interactive activities, which showed a large turnout of participants coming from different departments within the company, attending with great enthusiasm and high level of engagement for this exciting game. At the end of the tournament, the public relations team distributed valuable prizes to the first and second place winners.



ELT best project competition

Jaber Al-Ali Educational Area, of Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Area, recently hosted Mubarak Al-Kabeer's ELT Supervision best project competition in which all the area's male secondary schools took part.

Participants from Abdullah Al-Mubarak, Sabah Al-Salem, Duaij Al-Salman, Khaled Soud Al-Zaid, Al-Adsani and Al-Imam Malek were received by the school director, Dr Abdullah Al-Ajmi, the acting head of the English Department and Abdullah Al-Aboudi.

The jury panel supervised by Mubarak ELT senior supervisor, Hadeel Al-Kandary included ELT supervisors, Habib Rezzouk, Mahmoud Al-Najjar and Mohammed Sallam. Notably, the Best Project Competition is held for the first time where each school team is required to select a certain topic and present it in 10-15 minutes before the jury. The first winner will represent the area's boys schools in the finals amongst the first winners from the six educational areas.



Health & Science

In Spain, how nutrients poisoned one of Europe's largest saltwater lagoons

MAR MENOR: "I am in love with this sea. I live for it and I live off it. If they took it away from me, I would die," says Pedro Martínez-Banos, gazing out across the sparkling waters of Spain's Mar Menor. A fisherman all his life, this 50-year-old father-of-three grew up along the shores of the so-called Small Sea in the southeastern coastal region of Murcia, casting out his nets to bring in a catch to support his family.

It had been a very good year for him, his small boat bringing in about 100 kilos per day. But that all changed on October 12 when millions of fish and crustaceans washed up on the Mar Menor's northern shores, dead or dying. "It is the worst thing that can happen to a fisherman, the worst thing your eyes can see — a catastrophe," he recalled heavily. "It was like someone was dying, as if you yourself were dying."

Many people were in tears that day as the Mar Menor spat out the sealife that had been thriving there, in a huge blow to this coastal lagoon whose warm climate and sandy beaches have proven a major tourism draw, earning it the nickname "the jewel in the crown."

Beneath the calm of one of Europe's largest saltwater lagoons, whose coastline stretches some 70 kilometers (45 miles), a toxic storm has long been brewing, the product of years of nutrient pollution from intensive agriculture and rampant urban development.

Experts say the fish died of suffocation, caused by a phenomenon known as eutrophication, an environmental hazard that causes aquatic ecosystems to collapse due to a lack of oxygen in the water. With scientists warning that global warming is set to increase such phenomena, it is a topic likely to be on the agenda at the UN climate change summit in Madrid.

'Chronicle of a death foretold'

"What happened in October was triggered by the high levels of contamination going into the lagoon over decades, predominantly from intensive agriculture," said Oscar Esparza, head of Marine Protected Areas at World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Spain.

For years, runoff water loaded with nitrates has entered the lagoon causing a vast bloom of algae which, as it died and began decomposing, decreased the amount of oxygen in the depths, creating a pocket of toxic anoxic — or oxygen-free — water that wiped out everything living there.

When a major storm hit in September, it triggered a process that saw the anoxic layer rising to the surface, forcing fish and crustaceans to flee for their lives. "What we saw went beyond the worst we could ever have imagined — death on a massive scale," said Pedro Garcia, director of regional conservation organization ANSE, warning it could happen again. Nobody thought such a thing could happen in Mar Menor, but the scientific community had been warning about it for decades, Esparza said, describing it as "the chronicle of a death foretold."

Most of the nutrients seeped in from the Campo de Cartagena, a vast area of intensive agriculture which has grown tenfold over the past 40 years and today covers between 50,000 and 60,000 hectares (124,000 to 148,000 acres). "The Campo de Cartagena is very warm in winter and can produce two, three or in some cases even four crops per year," Garcia told AFP, saying such intensive agriculture "needs a large quantity of fertilizer."

Farmers defiant

But agricultural groups insist they are not responsible for the crisis. "The sector is not producing any type of

contamination," said Vicente Carrion, regional head of the COAG farmers' association, saying all processes were "fully compliant" with environmental legislation.

Farmers also had to analyze the soil every year "to ensure nitrogen deposits are not passing a certain level of enrichment," he told AFP, saying the sector "does not deserve to be criminalized the way it has been" over the Mar Menor.

The regional government has also come under fire, with conservationists accusing it of failing to enforce laws to protect the Mar Menor and "looking the other way" when it came to the rampant but profitable growth of intensive agriculture and development.

However Miriam Perez, the regional official in charge of the Mar Menor, dismissed the allegation, pointing to eight emergency measures to protect, monitor and regenerate the lagoon. "We are confident the Mar Menor will recover," she told AFP. "Although it's weak at the moment, its ecosystem is actually very strong and is able to regenerate itself. Obviously, after what happened with the storm, it needs a bit of time."

The authorities have removed 1,800 tons of debris from the waters, which have cleared noticeably, and those fishermen who went back to sea last month have caught fish, but less than half the usual amount.

Warning for the Mediterranean?

Researchers say the problems caused by nutrient pollution will not be resolved overnight, and that, agricultural models must change to address it. "Eutrophication is a very important issue, the cost for ecosystems and for the environment is huge," said Chantal Gascuel, senior scientist at INRA, France's National Institute for Agricultural



SAN PEDRO DEL PINATAR: Pedro Martínez (right), a fisherman, fishes from his boat off the coast of San Pedro del Pinatar, in Mar Menor (Minor Sea) on November 27, 2019. — AFP

Research. "Decreasing nitrogen and phosphorus emissions is very important, so agriculture has to change. This is our message: the system has to be changed to significantly decrease emissions," she told AFP.

For the Mar Menor, that means reducing the pace of regional economic development and intensive agriculture to lower nitrate flows, WWF's Esparza said. And it should sound a warning for other maritime zones. "What happened here in the Mar Menor could happen within 50 years in the rest of the Mediterranean," he warned, saying both were closed, confined seas suffering from intense human pressure and a lot of contamination. "It's the same, just on a different scale." — AFP

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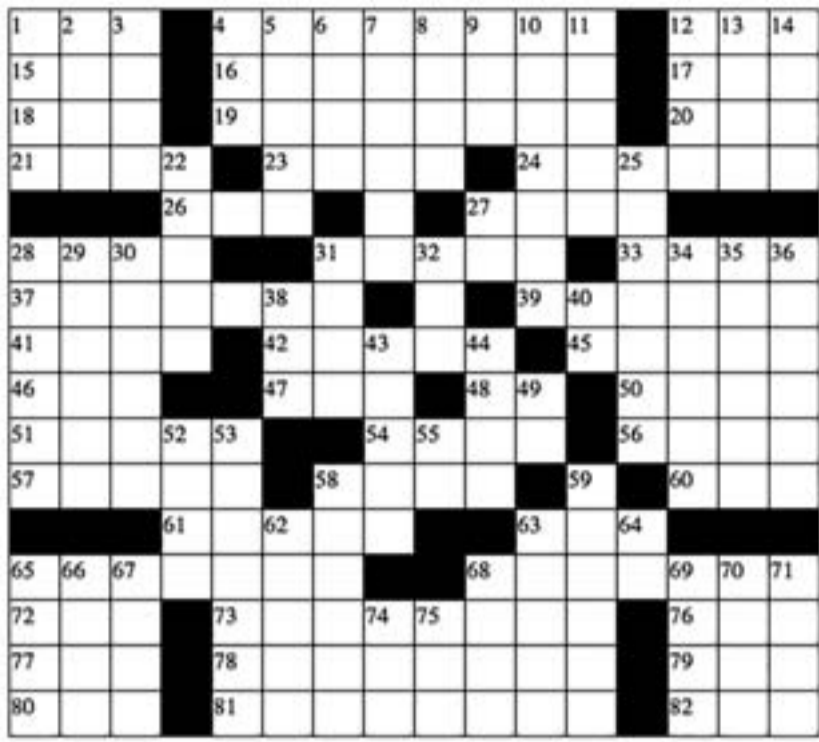
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ACROSS

1. What you can repeat immediately after perceiving it.
4. Any plant of the genus Phacelia.
12. The compass point that is midway between north and northeast.
15. Someone who is morally reprehensible.
16. Singing joyful religious songs (especially at Christmas).
17. The fatty flesh of eel.
18. A human limb.
19. An assembly (including one or more judges) to conduct judicial business.
20. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
21. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
23. A hinged catch that fits into a notch of a ratchet to move a wheel forward or prevent it from moving backward.
24. The aggregate of actively swimming animals in a body of water ranging from microscopic organisms to whales.
26. A member of the Siouan people living in the Yazoo river valley in Mississippi.
28. A cylindrical tower used for storing silage.
33. American political cartoonist (1840-1902).
37. Crested ill-smelling South American bird whose young have claws on the first and second digits of the wings.
39. Used by southerners for an inhabitant of a northern state in the United States (especially a Union soldier).
41. A system of one or more computers and associated software with common storage.
42. A telegram sent abroad.
45. Any of several plants of the genus Camassia.
46. Used in combination to denote the middle.
47. North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
48. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
50. A person who is not very bright.
51. (Philippine) A dish of marinated vegetables and meat or fish.
54. Remove with or as if with a ladle.
56. On or toward the lee.
57. A desert in southern Israel.
60. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
61. (medicine) A grossly malformed and usually nonviable fetus.
65. The brightest star in Scorpius.
72. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
73. Small tree or shrub of New Zealand having a profusion of axillary clusters of honey-scented paper-white flowers and whose bark is used for cordage.
76. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
77. A loud harsh or strident noise.
78. The absence of mental stress or anxiety.
79. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
80. Large northern deer with enormous flattened antlers in the male.
81. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
82. A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.

DOWN

1. A fraudulent business scheme.
2. A village in eastern Ireland (northwest of Dublin).
3. Designer drug designed to have the effects of amphetamines (it floods the brain with serotonin) but to avoid the drug laws.
4. A proportion multiplied by 100.
5. United States comedian.
6. An elaborate song for solo voice.
7. Filaments from a cobweb.
8. The twelfth month of the civil year.
9. United States sculptor and architect whose public works include the memorial to veterans of the Vietnam War in Washington (born in 1959).
10. Total lack of meaning or ideas.
11. Metal or plastic sheath over the end of a shoelace or ribbon.
12. Clean or orderly.
13. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
14. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
22. The condition of belonging to a particular place or group by virtue of social or ethnic or cultural lineage.
25. A Dravidian language spoken in southern India.
27. An uproarious party.
29. A salt or ester of hydriodic acid.
30. A dog small and tame enough to be held in the lap.
31. Type genus of the Anatidae.
32. Any of various units of capacity.
34. Remote city of Kazakhstan that (ostensibly for security reasons) was made the capital in 1998.
35. Established irrevocably.
36. Tested and proved useful or correct.
38. A hospital unit staffed and equipped to provide intensive care.
40. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
43. A pale rose-colored variety of the ruby spinel.
44. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
49. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
52. The 2nd letter of the Greek alphabet.
53. A representation of common ground between theories or phenomena.
55. Before noon.
58. An East Indian sailor.
59. A derogatory term used by Jews to refer to non-Jewish women.
62. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
63. A member of an American Indian peoples of NE South America and the Lesser Antilles.
64. Being nine more than forty.
66. Horny plate covering and protecting part of the dorsal surface of the digits.
67. An enclosed armored military vehicle.
68. A car driven by a person whose job is to take passengers where they want to go in exchange for money.
69. The content of cognition.
70. A lawman concerned with narcotics violations.
71. Stairway in India leading down to a landing on the water.
74. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
75. The cry made by sheep.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find this to be one of those days you are in true admiration of the beauty that surrounds you. You may see beauty in everything and everyone you encounter today. This brings a sense of peace and harmony into your world and you may find this to be a delightful day. Be careful not to overspend today because this mood tends to make you want to bring home every beautiful treasure you find. Not the best day for a trip to the mall. You will want everything you see! Take a stroll in the park and enjoy the beauty of the nature that surrounds you. This will keep your money in your wallet and a sense of peace in your heart.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

After much thought and reflection you may come to realize how much you truly appreciate where you are in life. Through many challenging situations, and past you may not be very proud of, you have successfully been able to turn the stumbling blocks you have encountered into stepping stones. Seeing others go through some of the same hard times you have drawn you to them and gives you a desire to reach out and help. You may feel especially kind to a close friend in need. This is a person you are led to take under your wing. You may find this person looks up to you. Your kind words will have more of an impact than you can ever imagine.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

It may seem if your sexual needs are coming to mind quite frequently. You crave power and control. The great mysteries of life and death seem are subjects you find intriguing. This is a time you long to mend fences and let bygones be bygones. This is a time you crave peace and lasting friendships.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

If you could snap your fingers and disappear that is just what you would do today. You need an escape from reality. Always being responsible is starting to wear you down. You work hard and never take any time for yourself. A massage, a good book, even a night out at a quiet restaurant would be a welcome break for you. You work hard and need to always remember to take a break. Take to reward yourself for all you do. You will find spoiling yourself a little will help you be much more productive in the long run.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have always had that strong shoulder that others seem to lean on. Today is no exception. You may find your phone ringing off of the hook with friends in need. Your advice is in high demand. The level of respect your friends have for you is to be envied. You are the friend others wish to have. Being the one everyone turns to in their time of need can be exhausting. Who is there when you need a friend to confide in? You may find someone older or in authority can offer you the support you need today.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Variety is the spice of life. This seems to be your motto at this time. You may find yourself drawn in different directions or drawn to new experiences. You can't seem to sit still. You are finding you are happiest when on the go. You have a desire for knowledge and you are gathering it from all new experiences. You may find others being drawn to you and expressing admiration toward your desire for knowledge and for the wisdom you possess. This day could bring a variety of emotions as well. You may go from feeling on top of the world to feeling misunderstood. Remember, Virgo, this day is about your pursuit knowledge and it is ok to do just what makes you happy.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

A desire for the unusual seems to overcome you today. A desire to broaden your horizons and experience more of what this world has to offer you. The in and outs of your regular world seem to have you bored and unsatisfied. Planning a trip or planning an outing with friends will satisfy your needs. Spend time with friends from different cultures and religions. A new outlook on the same day to day issues will be enlightening. Your eccentric ways could bring a new outlook into their lives as well. Spend some time learning to appreciate the beauty that surrounds you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

It seems the more independent you become the more you face conflict with those close to you. This is a time you may be trying too hard to be different. This could be met with disapproval from your peers. Not everyone is fond of the changes they see you making. This could cause a great deal of pressure in your life. You well know when making decisions under pressure you seem to freeze and never seem to do the right thing. Take your time. Relax and wait until some of the stress passes. Save the decision making for later. These issues are not matters of life and death.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Communication is important. When it is put in writing, what you thought was a compliment could be interpreted as criticism. Something you thought was completely innocent or innocuous may be seen as derogatory. Misunderstandings that are in writing are difficult to overcome. They can result in a lifetime of hard feelings. Be thoughtful about what you put on social media. Consider the possible reactions before you send a text, a tweet, or an email.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This may be a great day to enjoy a good book or catch a movie. An escape from reality may be just what you need. This could clear your mind and leave you feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. You feel your most secure when surrounded by friends. You may be feeling a real need for a change in your life. You may feel as if you want to throw out the old and bring in the new. You have had this on your mind for a while and today seems the day you really begin to act on it. It seems a change in the right direction may bring great reward into your life. You will send enjoy world you have no desire to escape from.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Sexual needs seem to be a major focus for you now. There are just some things and some one you can not seem to get off of your mind. This is a great desire for some special time to be spent with a special someone. You desire power and control. These thoughts have your mind racing and you start focusing on a plan to accomplish your goals and satisfy your desires. The great mysteries of life and death fascinate you and you have a desire to live each day to the fullest. You may appear to be at ease and loose today. Everything seems to be working together, and you will be able to communicate and express yourself well.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is day you may feel as if you are spinning your wheels. It seems to be a very superficial day for you. Everything and everyone seems fake to you. It seems as if you are going through the motions, it is a very repetitive and senseless day for you. You find no depth nor meaning in your actions nor the ones around you. You can not seem to get beneath the surface. It may seem as if your feelings are going against what you value. You could find this difficult for you to deal with.

Wordsearch Puzzle

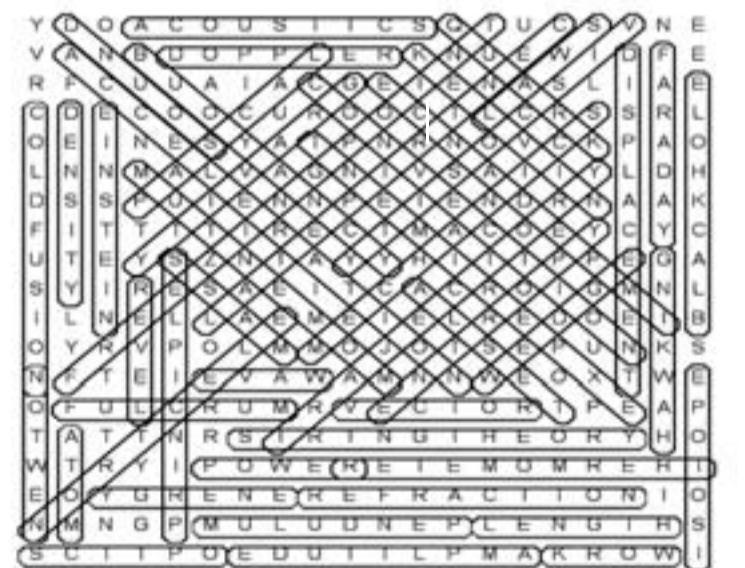
Physics 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 58 letters spell a Bruce Feirstein quotation.



- | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| ABSOLUTE ZERO | DRAG | IONIZATION | PROTON |
| ADHESION | ELASTICITY | JOULE | PULLEY |
| AERODYNAMICS | ELECTRONICS | KINETICS | REFLECTION |
| AIR MASS | ENTROPY | LIGHT | SCIENCE |
| AMPLIFIER | FARADAY | MATTER | SPEED |
| BIG BANG | FORCE | MOLECULE | TEMPERATURE |
| BOILING POINT | FRICTION | MOTION | TORQUE |
| CENTRIFUGAL | FUNCTION | NEUTRON | VACUUM |
| CHAIN REACTION | GALILEO | NIELS BOHR | VELOCITY |
| DECIBEL | HALF LIFE | PARTICLE | VOLUME |
| DIFFRACTION | HEAT | PHOTON | WAVELENGTH |
| DISTANCE | INERTIA | PRESSURE | WEIGHT |

Physics 1



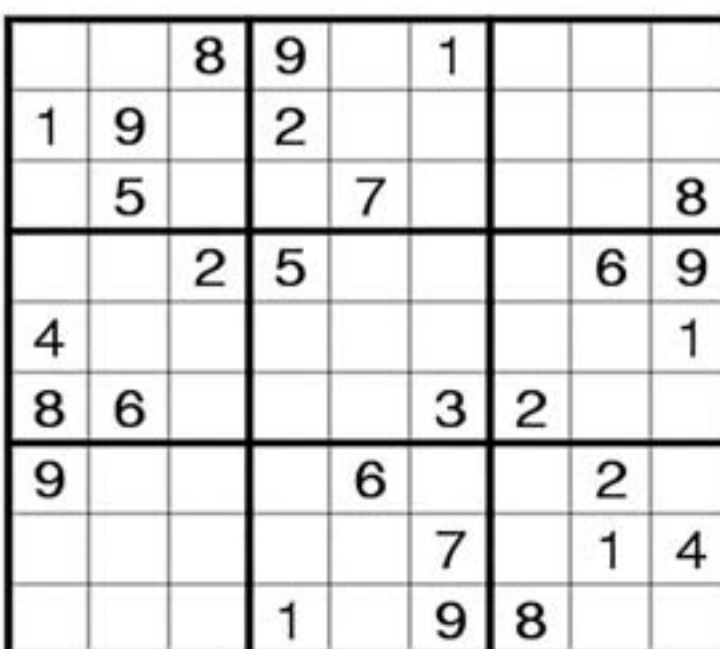
- | | | | |
|--------------|----------------|------------|---------------|
| ACCELERATION | ELECTRON | LAWS | QUARK |
| ACOUSTICS | ENERGY | LENGTH | REFRACTION |
| AMPLITUDE | ENTROPY | LEVER | SOUND |
| ATOM | EXPERIMENT | MASS | STRING THEORY |
| BLACK HOLE | FARADAY | MECHANICS | TESLA |
| BUOYANCY | FREEZING POINT | MOMENTUM | THERMOMETER |
| CENTRIPETAL | FULCRUM | NEWTON | TRAJECTORY |
| COLD FUSION | GRAVITY | OPTICS | VECTOR |
| CONVECTION | HAWKING | PASCAL | VISCOSITY |
| DENSITY | IMPEDANCE | PENDULUM | WAVE |
| DISPLACEMENT | ISOTOPE | POWER | WEDGE |
| DOPPLER | KELVIN | PRINCIPLES | WORK |
| EINSTEIN | | | |

The hidden message is: YOU NEVER FAIL UNTIL YOU STOP TRYING

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2019



People walk around the temporary installation 'Order of Importance' from the artist Leandro Erlich in Miami Beach, Florida. — AFP Photos

Sand cars replace sand castles at Miami art festival Art Basel

On Miami Beach, more than 60 cars sculpted out of sand are drawing attention at this year's Art Basel international festival, but the aim of their creator is as much about raising awareness of climate change as tickling art lovers' palates. The sand cars, which form what looks like a traffic jam sinking into the world-famous beach, have proven a favorite with visitors who snap selfies in front of the installation, entitled "Order of Importance" and created by 46-year-old Argentine sculptor Leandro Erlich. Erlich told reporters Monday the work is a reflection on the crisis the world is facing due to climate change and "our responsibility, our implication in the events that are starting to happen to the planet."

The title "has to do with understanding what our priorities are right now and thinking about our future," he said. The artist was walking among the sand cars with Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber,

who congratulated Erlich on capturing the contradictory nature of Miami Beach, which is built on a fragile barrier island and facing numerous challenges from climate change, yet also reliant on tourism.

"For someone to be able to create a confluence of these things, the environment, the urbanization, the ecology, so that a person walking by can see it and experience it and think about it in his own way is something spectacular," said Gelber. Erlich is best known for his work Dalston House, an optical illusion in which he placed a huge mirror at an angle in front of the life-sized replica of a house's facade, giving visitors the sense they were hanging off the building's wall. Another work featured an illusory swimming pool that allowed people to look like they were walking, fully clothed, under water. — AFP



A Botero sculpture is seen on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach.



A car made with sand is seen on the temporary installation 'Order of Importance' from the artist Leandro Erlich in Miami Beach.



A Botero sculpture is pictured on Lincoln Road in Miami Beach.

Japan anti-high heels campaigner steps up to fight 'glasses ban'

A Japanese woman whose campaign against mandatory high heels in the workplace won broad public support has stepped up her fight against strict corporate dress codes—including a de-facto ban on women wearing glasses. Actress and freelance writer Yumi Ishikawa shot to prominence this year with her drive against Japanese office culture, in which high heels are seen as near-obligatory when job-hunting or working in the office.

Known by the slogan "#KuToo"—a play on words from the Japanese word "kutsu", meaning shoes, and "kutsuu", meaning "pain"—the campaign was chosen on Monday as one of the buzzwords of the year. Ishikawa's latest petition to relax the rules, delivered to the labor ministry on Tuesday, has attracted more than 31,000 signatures.

"The root cause of the problem is that (there are companies) that have rules for women only—such as a ban on wearing glasses or a requirement to wear make-up," the 32-year-old told reporters. "This practice has to be reviewed," she added. Campaigners had already submitted a petition to the government in June which called for legislation to declare the obligatory wearing of high heels as harassment.

But Ishikawa said progress had been lukewarm and she was "shocked to see there was no mention of high heels" in the government's draft rules published in October. An official who received the petition said the labour ministry would "consider the petition as one of the opinions" before making a final decision on new government rules to counter harassment in workplace. One 28-year-old woman contacted by AFP, who asked to remain anonymous, said glasses were banned at her workplace because they give a "cold facial expression".

"I've been wearing glasses for more than a decade because I suffer from dry eye syndrome. I feel uncomfortable wearing contact lenses and am worried that my eye disease may get worse," said the receptionist. An official at a major employment agency told AFP that some companies asked receptionists to "refrain from wearing glasses" as part of dress codes that also included a ban on dyed hair or unmanicured nails. Campaigners have said high heels are akin to modern foot-binding while others have urged other dress codes, such as the near-total donning of business suits for men, to be loosened in the Japanese workplace.— AFP





Gabrielle Union to meet with NBC

The 47-year-old actress has left the program after just one season and will sit with the outside legal team recently retained by the network to talk about her concerns over the "toxicity" surrounding the show, following reports she had complained about racial bias and discrimination. The purpose of the meeting is to improve

the culture and atmosphere on the set of the show and even if she's offered her job back, Gabrielle won't be returning. A source told Deadline: "Gabrielle believes there is a toxicity that has become normalized at Talent. She wants to help fix that, because she loved a lot of her time on the show last season, even with the issues with Simon [Cowell] and what have you.

"But she could never go back, even if they did a [180] and asked her to for another season - no." NBC were said to have been caught by surprise by many of the claims surrounding the exits of Gabrielle and Julianne Hough so have opted to use an external legal firm in order to show any investigations are independent and unbiased.

Brad Pitt growing more 'moved' by life as he gets older



The 56-year-old actor - who has Maddox, 18, Pax, 16, Zahara, 14, Shiloh, 13, and 11-year-old twins Knox and Vivienne with former wife Angelina Jolie - hasn't cried for 20 years but admitted he's getting increasingly emotional, which he thinks is a good thing. Speaking to Sir Anthony Hopkins for Interview magazine, he said: "I am quite famously a not-crier. Is that a term? I hadn't cried in, like, 20 years, and now I find myself, at this latter stage, much more moved - moved by my kids, moved by friends, moved by the news. Just moved. "I think it's a good sign. I don't know where it's going, but I think it's a good sign." His 'Meet Joe Black' co-star replied: "You'll find, as you get older, that you just want to weep. It's not even about grief. It's about the glory of life." And the 'Ad Astra' actor admitted he sees more of the "beauty and the wonder" of the world now he's getting older.



Khloe Kardashian not interested in reuniting with Tristan Thompson

The 'Revenge Body' host split from the 28-year-old basketball player - with whom she has daughter True, 20 months - in February amid claims he'd kissed family friend Jordyn Woods, but he's left a series of flirty comments on her Instagram posts and recent scenes on 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' showed he gifted her a diamond 'promise ring' and matching necklace for her birthday in June. However, insiders claim the 35-year-old beauty is "staying strong" and not giving in to any advances he makes to rekindle their romance. A source told People maga-

zine: "Yes, he was trying to get her back but that footage from the show is old. He knows how to pull out all the stops, and it's a bit of an ego thing for him too. She's holding strong for now and not letting him back in romantically." Khloe admitted on the show she felt "conflicted" after Tristan gave her the jewelry because although it was the "kindest" gesture, she didn't want the sportsman to think her acceptance of the gift meant she wanted to get back together.

Howard Stern slams Simon Cowell over Gabrielle Union



Gabrielle and her co-judge Julianne Hough left the show recently after just one season and Howard claims Simon has turned 'AGT' into the "ultimate example of a boys' club," where men are treated better than women. During his SiriusXM show, Howard - who was a judge on the show for four seasons until 2015 - said: "He sets it up that the men stay no matter how ugly [the men] are, no matter how old they are, no matter how fat they are, no matter how talentless

they are. He replaces the hot chicks with hotter chicks and younger chicks. Howie's [Mandell] doing a fine, serviceable job - why don't they change him? And why don't they change Simon? This is the ultimate example of a boys' club." Gabrielle, 47, reportedly had concerns over racially insensitive acts and personal remarks about her appearance before she left the show but Julianne, 31, has denied experiencing any problems on set.

Adam Driver plans to scale back working commitments

The 'Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker' actor admitted it is growing increasingly difficult to leave home for long periods of time now his and wife Joanne Tucker's three-year-old son is getting older so he'll only take on new projects if he thinks they are "worth it". He said: "I'm trying to not work a lot. The stakes are different now. It really has to be worth it, because you have to be gone a lot." Adam admitted he needs more time away from work to "be a person" because he gets so focused on his work. He told Rolling Stone magazine: "[I have] a problem with multitasking - I see one thing and obsess about that thing until it's over..." [It] can be helpful sometimes. It's also a hamster wheel of wasted energy." The 36-year-old actor was recently given a Silver Medallion award for acting greatness at the Telluride Film Festival from his 'Silence' director Martin Scorsese and he feels pressure from the accolade.



All assault charges against Remy Ma dropped

The 39-year-old rapper - whose real name is Reminisce Mackie - had been accused of punching 'Love & Hip Hop: New York' star Brittney Taylor during the Pretty Lou Benefit Concert in April and as a result was charged with two counts of assault, one count of aggravated harassment and another of harassment in the second degree. However, when she and her legal team attended court in New York on Monday, a judge dismissed the case after learning from prosecutors they couldn't prove beyond reasonable doubt that she had committed the alleged assault. According to TMZ, the judge heard there was no surveillance footage of the alleged incident and no witnesses who had seen an altercation between the two women. Remy had always insisted she was not only innocent, but had been at home with husband Papoose and their daughter Reminisce, now 11 months, at the time of the alleged altercation.



Chrisell Stause takes a swipe at estranged husband Harley

It was revealed last week the couple had gone their separate ways after two years of marriage and now the 'Selling Sunset' actress has shared a cryptic post on Instagram about how hard it can be to see people change. The post featured a quote by Nishan Panwar which read: "It's hard to watch people change right in front of you. But it's even harder remembering who they used to be." A number of Chrisell's famous friends including Molly Burnett, Brittany Cartwright, Alicia Minshew and Tracey Bregman posted messages of support such as "stay strong" and "sending love", or simply just heart emojis, underneath the post. The 'This Is Us' actor filed for divorce in November, citing irreconcilable differences, and listed the date of separation as July 8, 2019.



Jenna Dewan has an 'unspoken chemistry' with Steve Kazee

The 'Step Up' actress is full of praise for her partner, admitting they knew straight away that there was something special. She said: "It was an unspoken chemistry. You just know if you have it. It's the sparks that fly and it just works really well. I am in a really great place and totally in love. It's nice." And the 39-year-old actress and dancer - who has Everly, six, with her ex-husband Channing Tatum and is expecting a child with partner Steve - says her daughter has been very caring and is "so excited" about the new arrival. She added to Entertainment Tonight: "She's really excited. She's really protective. It's been cute. She's worried about what I'm eating, making sure it's healthy. When I say, 'Mommy needs to sit down and take a break,' she totally gets it.



Lifestyle | Features

Japanese chef at the top of La Liste says he's not great-yet

Yosuke Suga does not believe he is a great chef-not yet anyway. The statistics tell a different story. The fresh-faced Japanese cook is at the very top of La Liste, the most scientific of all the world's culinary rankings. Suga shares the top spot with culinary gods such as France's Guy Savoy and Eric Ripert of Le Bernardin in New York, the best friend of the late legendary food icon Anthony Bourdain.

While both Savoy and Ripert have the maximum three Michelin stars, Suga doesn't even have one yet for Sugalab, his tiny 20-seat restaurant hidden away behind a coffee house in Tokyo's Azabudai district. Which makes his rapid rise all the more remarkable given that La Liste aggregates reviews from the world's top guides, newspapers and websites.

But Suga, 43, insists he is not quite there yet. "I don't have a signature dish so I am not yet a great chef," he told AFP without a hint of false modesty just before he was honored at La Liste's gala dinner in Paris on Monday. Having been an assistant to the late French superchef Joel Robuchon-the most starred ever-the bar has been set high. "One day I hope to be

one," he added. But for now Suga is on a quest. Shrugging off the financial hit, every month he closes his restaurant for three or four days so he can travel Japan with his team looking for new ingredients and producers.

Robuchon's 'right arm'

He is after hyper-seasonality, to get the very best ingredients and cook them at just the right moment. "It is not like going to the market. We try to understand why we should use a product now and not in a month's time," he said. Last month that meant going to the Ishikawa peninsula in the west of Japan for a particular type of squid. While there they found a variety of lotus root just coming into season. "We made a stuffing from wild Japanese duck stew reduced with Madeira wine and foie gras and then fried it wrapped in the grated lotus root. Had we not gone and met the farmer, we probably would never have made this," he said.

He never quite says it, but Sugalab's small size and fierce local focus seem also to be something of a reaction to the 17 years Suga spent globetrotting as Robuchon's "right arm"-which included

being put in charge of the 100-strong team of his two-star Tokyo restaurant at just 25. "Age is very important in Japan and it is not easy to give orders to people who are older than me," the chef admitted. But Robuchon, a man of very few words, clearly saw some of his own steel and passion in his young protegee.

'I am quite demanding'

"He didn't explain much, he would just look at you, and it would pass like that, unsaid," Suga recalled. "He was my master. He taught me so much," he said, from the cut and texture of a perfect steak tartare to the clear beef and shellfish consommés that took a devilish amount of technique. But most of all, "I learned that it was about working so the customers come back". Suga struck out on his own in 2014 with a team of just five cooks, which has since grown to 12. "I didn't know what I was going to do at Sugalab," he admitted. "I just wanted to make the most simple, essential food-things I would want to eat myself."

That meant largely turning his back on French haute cuisine and going on a voyage of discovery back to his roots, seek-

ing out the best of a country he had left at 18. "I love French food, but it just didn't feel natural without the same products you would find in France." There were some things French, however, that he could not bear to forgo-foie gras, wine and truffles. "I learned so many things in France," said Suga, who comes from three generations of chefs trained in the French classical tradition.

"It's a happy marriage" of food cultures, he added. Indeed he has tempted back a former colleague, Ryo Nagashima, one of many young Japanese chefs who have made a name for themselves in France, to head up a new restaurant he is opening in Louis Vuitton's new boutique in Osaka in February. "He accepted because he is the only person who can work with me," Suga said, only half joking. "I am quite demanding, like my master, and I put a lot of passion and emotion into what I do." — AFP



Japanese chef Yosuke Suga poses during a photo session in Paris. Japanese chef Yosuke Suga's is topping the La Liste ranking for 2019 with his restaurant Sugalabo in Tokyo. — AFP

Battle of the biscuits; Ferrero aims to take a bite out of Barilla

In the red corner is Italy's reigning cookie champion, Barilla's Gocciola. Across the ring in the blue corner is the challenger, Ferrero's Nutella Biscuit. Fight! After clashing over chocolate spreads, Italy's two biggest food companies, Barilla and Ferrero, are now battling about biscuits. Ferrero is the challenger this time, launching the Nutella cookie in an attempt to crack Barilla's leadership of the biscuit sector in Italy, where the latter has a 37% market share with products including top-seller Gocciola. The newcomer is made of pastry and filled with Ferrero's flagship chocolate spread, which was invented by the family-owned food company in 1964.

But Barilla is defending its corner, and is itself preparing to launch a new cookie in a similar vein to Nutella Biscuit: Biscocrema, made of a cocoa cookie covered with Barilla's own spread and topped with a chocolate disk with a white star. The showdown is the reverse of the state of play in the spreads sector, where Barilla introduced chocolate spread Crema di Pan di Stelle in January to challenge the dominance of Nutella, which has a market share of more than 80% in Italy.

Ferrero's fighting talk

"We want Nutella Biscuit to be the best-selling cookie in Italy, reaching annual sales of around 80 million euros," Ferrero Chief Executive for Italy Alessandro d'Este said when he presented the cookie last month. But Barilla, which is known worldwide for its pasta, does not want to talk about a battle among cookies.

"Biscocrema is more an indulgence product than a biscuit for breakfast ... that's why we are looking at expanding the overall cookie category with it more than competing with others," Barilla's senior marketing executive Julia Schwoerer said at an event to present the new product on Friday. For Italians, who normally eat biscuits at breakfast, the two cookies offer a sweet snack between meals and could expand the overall biscuit market, which is currently worth 1.2 billion euros (\$1.32 billion) in annual sales.

Next up: World champ Oreo

The two new cookies could also appeal to customers outside Italy, where biscuits are more often eaten as snacks. The global market for cookies, worth \$73.7 billion according to market research provider Euromonitor International, is dominated by Mondelez with its creme-filled Oreo. Ferrero's Nutella Biscuits went on sale in Italy last month and the company has already started to sell them in France and aims to gradually spread them across Europe. Barilla, which will start selling Biscocrema in Italy in January, does not as yet have concrete plans for foreign markets. — Reuters



This combination of file pictures shows US First Lady Melania Trump. Melania Trump has a White House suite of her own and uses her wardrobe to make statements, a new biography about the US first lady says. — AFP

New Melania book takes on first lady's clothes, rooms and family ties

Melania Trump has a White House suite of her own, is less than chummy with first daughter Ivanka, and uses her wardrobe to make statements, a new biography about the US first lady says. "Free, Melania," an unauthorized look at President Donald Trump's wife by CNN reporter Kate Bennett, is set for release on Tuesday, but official Washington is already buzzing about its contents. At 49, and three years into her husband's administration, the Slovenia-born ex-model remains genuinely private and "mysterious" to much of the public, while acutely aware of all that is said about her and her husband, says Bennett.

But she is hardly the docile third wife of an extremely powerful man accused of being a serial womanizer, the author writes. Instead, Melania is prepared to let her husband know what she thinks - and to use her sharp elbows

when she feels slighted. The first lady is "way more powerful and influential with her husband" than the public knows, Bennett says. The author confirms reports last year that Melania was responsible for the firing of a senior White House national security official, Mira Ricardel, after the first lady felt slighted during a October 2018 trip to Africa.

The book also confirms that the first lady lives in a two-room suite on the third floor of the White House - one floor up from the president's master bedroom. The suite offers Melania extra space to do her hair and make-up. She also has an exercise room with a Pilates machine. In another revelation, Bennett said the kidney treatment that led to Melania's 25-day absence from public view last year was much more serious and painful than previously revealed.

The language of fashion

While she speaks little in public, Melania finds her voice in her clothes, Bennett says. That was clear when she donned an olive green Zara coat in June 2018 with the words "I REALLY DON'T CARE, DO U?" on the back. Some thought it was an attack on President Trump's policies toward migrant children, and by others as a brickbat for the press.

But Bennett says it in fact was directed at step-daughter Ivanka Trump, who Melania sees as sometimes usurping the first lady's role. Their relationship is described in the book as "cordial, not close." Bennett also says that when Melania wears pantsuits and other menswear styles, it signals unhappiness with her husband, "because Trump notoriously likes to see women in tight, short, ubersexy and feminine dresses." "Each thing she does

has meaning to it, even the clothing she wears," writes Bennett.

The book does not have any direct input from Melania, whose husband has declared Bennett's network an enemy of his administration. It labels the first lady's "Be Best" campaign against bullying a poorly executed flop, but otherwise is generally positive. Bennett, whose beat is first lady and the Trump family, appears to be deeply sympathetic to Melania, who is often painted as a prisoner of her husband by his critics. That view spawned the online meme "Free Melania" - and inspired the book's more cryptically punctuated title. "She doesn't need freeing of any kind," says Bennett. — AFP

Sudan cinema flickers back to life after Bashir ouster

Talal Afifi has worked for years to revive Sudanese cinema which has languished through decades of authoritarian rule. With the fall of longtime autocrat Omar Al-Bashir, he sees new hope. Bashir's Islamist-backed rule of 30 years had seen cinemas shuttered and US sanctions prevent imports of vital equipment in a country once known as a pioneer for film-making in Africa.

When Afifi attended a 2008 short film festival in Munich, the winning film - an



Sudanese director Mahira Selim looks on during an interview in the capital Khartoum. — AFP photos

Iraqi documentary shot on a handycam - inspired him to return home and set up a training centre and production house. "I wanted to remind people that there is a place called Sudan, which was once renowned in the field of cinema, and that it still has its heart beating for this art," he told AFP. The Sudan Film Factory, based in



Ahmad Faysal, Logistics manager of the 'Sudan Film Factory', adjusts a poster as he speaks to AFP in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.

a suburban Khartoum villa, has since trained more than 300 young men and women in various aspects of film-making.

Today, following Bashir's ouster in April, 42-year-old Afifi and his colleagues are hoping film-making will get a fresh boost in the northeast African country. Sudanese cinema dates back to the shooting of the first silent

film in 1898, a few years after the invention of moving images, according to veteran director Ibrahim Shaddad. By 1946, a fleet of mobile cinemas were travelling across the country showing films under the evening sky. "There were no closed cinema halls at that time because of extreme heat and lack of air conditioners," said Shaddad.

Legendary film-maker Jadallah Jubara, who recorded such key moments as Sudan's 1956 independence, later made his mark across the continent. By the 1980s, Sudan had more than 60 cinemas screening Hollywood, Bollywood and Arabic movies. But Bashir's seizing of power on the back of an Islamist-backed coup in 1989 delivered the industry a powerful blow. "There were five or six different government agencies that had the power to monitor us. That was nerve-racking," said Afifi. — AFP

Ballet's foreign legion reaches for the stars



Australian ballet dancer of the Paris Opera Ballet Bianca Scudamore poses during a photo session in Paris. — AFP Photos

Watching YouTube as a child in Australia, the idea of one day joining the ranks of the hallowed Paris Opera Ballet seemed nothing short of an impossible dream. It didn't stop Bianca Scudamore daydreaming about it, though. And now, having just turned 19, she's the rising star at the world renowned company, where a

without having first trained at the company's prestigious ballet school - unthinkable, at one time. In 2012, Argentina's Ludmila Pagliero became its first dancer from Latin America to be named an "etoile", a term reserved for a select few, equivalent to principal dancer. There have been a few other non-European "etoiles". AFP met four of the current performers

English-style classical ballet of The Royal Academy of Dance, aged 13. But her goal was Paris and she would watch YouTube videos of the Paris Opera Ballet. At 14, she auditioned for the Paris company's ballet school, despite her teacher's reservations.

"My teacher told me, 'foreigners don't really get to this school, you don't really have any chance,' so I said I am going to take my chance," she said. It paid off. Nevertheless, she had to adapt to the French school of dance, a style of ballet rooted in tradition and quite different from what she had learned in Australia. The foot movements are much faster and more difficult and another difference is in the epaulement, or use of head and shoulders in ballet, Scudamore said, of the Paris technique.

She faced other challenges too. "In the beginning it was very hard because I am very close to my family," she said. "The whole year I cried almost every night. But it was the ballet that kept me going, kept me motivated when I was feeling down," she added. Now she feels at home in Paris and has a strong social media presence, with 16,000 Instagram followers. "I look at videos to get different ideas because I don't want to copy anybody. Because dance, you should feel it from inside," she said.

South Korea's Sae Eun Park

For Sae Eun Park, a 29-year-old South Korean, arriving in Paris was something of a rude awakening. "I was a soloist with the Korean National Ballet and I danced all the principal roles. "When I arrived at the Opera I was on a limited contract and in the wings the whole time," she said. "But I learned a lot." The daughter of an employee at the Korean conglomerate Samsung and a pianist, her love affair with ballet started when her father took her to see the "Nutcracker". She

was trained by Russian dancers - there not being an Asian style of ballet as such - in her home city of Seoul.

At 17, she won the Prix de Lausanne, the most prestigious ballet competition in the world, and discovered the French style of dance during lessons given by a former Korean Paris Opera dancer, describing it as a revelation. In 2015, she was invited to dance at the celebrated Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg. "One of my former teachers was there. It was unforgettable. She said, 'I can see you have changed a lot, but don't forget that despite the differences in style, the important thing is to express yourself from the inside,'" she recalled.

Chun-Wing Lam from China

In 2015, Chun-Wing Lam caused a sensation in his native Hong Kong when he became the first Chinese to join the Paris ballet. "Dance is valued more in France. In Hong Kong, they found my story astonishing. "I was a boy who did classical dance," the 22-year-old said. He is a "quadrille", the most junior rank at the Paris company. Encouraged by his mother, at the age of seven he felt a bit like "Billy Elliot", the main character of the film about a boy who learns to dance.

"In the studio, there was just little girls in a tutu. I was shocked. But after 15 minutes at the barre, it gave me huge pleasure," he said. His teacher sent a video of him to the Paris school and a week later, he was given a test, aged 14. "The first two years were really hard. At the school, where I was a resident, the use of the telephone was forbidden in the day and with the time difference I found it hard to talk to my parents," he recalled. He also had to get used to new ways of dancing - more rounded arms than in the Hong Kong style and a more precise way of holding the head, he said.

Hannah O'Neill, New Zealand

The moment she'll never forget was seeing a video of the ballet "Cinderella" starring Rudolf Nureyev, the legendary Russian dancer who led the Paris Opera ballet troupe, and star Paris dancers Sylvie Guillem and Charles Jude. "From that moment on, for me, Paris Opera was ballet," said Hannah O'Neill, now a first dancer, one step away from "etoile". Born in Tokyo, the daughter of an ex-rugby player from New Zealand and a Japanese mother, the 26-year-old inherited a strong physique and love of dance.

She later moved to Auckland and trained under Marilyn Rowe, who had worked with Nureyev. At 14, she suffered a setback by failing the external competition for a place at the Paris school. Instead, she joined the Australian Ballet School in Melbourne and won the Prix de Lausanne and Youth America Grand Prix. But she never gave up on her dream and was accepted by the Paris Opera at 18, arriving in the city without a word of French. "I tried to copy as much as possible. I am quite good at mimicking. It was quite handy," she laughed.

She, too, had to adapt to the French technique. "The footwork is accentuated, everything is more sophisticated and so stylish." And she got her big break when Benjamin Millepied, head of dance from 2015 to 2016 who called for more diversity in the company, gave her the title role in "Swan Lake". "I moved up every year," she said. "I completely consider myself as a French dancer in terms of style. "It is the way I want to move, the way I want to dance. I feel I found my place." — AFP

New Zealand's ballet dancer and first soloist of the Paris Opera Ballet Hannah O'Neill, poses during a photo session in Paris.



cosmopolitan generation of young dancers are making names for themselves. Unlike the Royal Ballet in London or the New York City-based American Ballet Theatre, the Paris Opera Ballet has very few foreign dancers - of its 154, only 25 are not from France.

That's more than was traditionally the case, as dancers from elsewhere have in recent years been accepted into its hierarchical ranks, some even

from further afield who have joined the Paris company founded by Louis XIV and which has its own very particular French style.

Bianca Scudamore from Australia

Described as the "baby ballerina" because of her tender age, today she is just two steps away from the lofty "etoile" title. Scudamore started dancing when she was three at home in Brisbane, and threw herself into the

Chinese ballet dancer Chun Wing Lam poses during a photo session in Paris.



Korean ballet dancer Sae-Eun Park, a 'premiere danseuse' at the Paris Opera Ballet, poses during a photo session in Paris.



In Jerusalem hotel, eviction fears dampen Xmas cheer

JERUSALEM: The Christmas tree is up at the entrance to the Imperial Hotel in Jerusalem, but for its Palestinian hosts there is little festive cheer amid fears they could be evicted in favor of Israeli settlers. The hotel, at the corner of Jaffa Gate in the Christian Quarter of the walled Old City, is at the center of a years-long ownership dispute between the settlers and the Palestinian tenants. In June, Israel's Supreme Court finally concluded that the settler organization Ateret Cohanim had legally bought the hotel, along with two other nearby buildings, from the Greek Orthodox Church in a controversial and secret 2004 deal.

The church has long denied this, however, and the tenants say they have continued to pay rent monthly to the church authorities. Amid fears they could be turfed out at any moment, the tenants were last week given a temporary reprieve when another court froze the sale for at least 30 days, the Imperial's lawyer, Maher Hanna, said.

While it appears he will still be there at least for Christmas, the proprietor of the 48-room hotel, Abu Walid Dajani, said he didn't know whether the decision would be a turning point or just another obstacle in the 15-year legal battle. "The story can end forever and go to the garbage of history," he said, or "the settlers complete the process for their own benefit."

The family has rented the hotel since 1949 and currently pays 200,000 shekels (\$57,000) a year to the Greek Orthodox Church, he said. But Dajani says Ateret Cohanim is now demanding he pay rent retroactively for the past 15 years, 10 million shekels (2.62 million euros) in all - money he says he simply doesn't have. Ateret Cohanim said it didn't comment on an ongoing court case, while the church said it believed the ruling meant the entire eviction notice should be annulled.

Tricky property market

Property sales in Jerusalem are some of the most politically fraught in the world. Israel seized then entirely Palestinian east Jerusalem in the Six-Day War

of 1967 and later annexed it in a move never recognised by the international community. It now considers the whole city its capital, citing Jewish historical and biblical links. The Palestinians see east Jerusalem, including the Old City, as the capital of their future state, and view the growing Israeli Jewish presence as an existential threat.

The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest and wealthiest church in the Holy Land, commanding massive riches, largely in land portfolios dating back hundreds of years. It has faced repeated accusations of facilitating settlement growth by selling or leasing properties in Palestinian areas to Israel. In the 2004 deal, it is alleged to sold properties to Ateret Cohanim, which works to "Judaize" east Jerusalem by purchasing real estate through front companies and then moving Jewish settlers in.

When it was revealed, the sale triggered widespread Palestinian anger and led to the 2005 dismissal of Patriarch Irineos I. The Church and the tenants have been fighting back ever since. Many Greek Orthodox Palestinians still accuse their Church's leadership of undermining Palestinian connections to Jerusalem by selling property.

Christmas gift

The Israeli government is often wary of angering the Christian population in the city, aware both of Jerusalem's delicate balance and the need to retain the support of Christians in the United States and other countries. Hanna said the freeze is for only 30 days and was ordered due to Ateret Cohanim's failure to file some court papers in time. The Orthodox Church said in a statement it believed the court's latest decision means that "all decisions and demands by settlers to Palestinian tenants to vacate the property became null and void" as the original supreme court ruling was "based on invalid court decisions."

Elif Sabbagh, a researcher specializing in the investments of the Greek Orthodox Church, said the

The horrific crime has triggered protests across India, with demonstrators urging authorities to ensure rape cases are tried quickly and those convicted punished without delay. Yesterday, hundreds of protesters gathered in the heart of capital New Delhi demanding speedier punishments for rapists. Cases in India often languish for years under the country's labyrinthine judicial system despite recent efforts to set up fast-track courts.

Some of the protesters yesterday called for violent and instant reprisals. "If women chop off the heads of a few of these rapists, then automatically we'll see the society change for the better," said protester Kanchan Giri who was carrying a sword. "I think women should take a sword when they step out of their houses so that if they encounter a rapist they should behead him."

Swati Maliwal, head of the Delhi Women's Commission, announced she was going on hunger strike to demand a law stipulating that those who rape minors are hanged within six months of conviction. "I am demanding strict and swift punishment," she said, sat with the protesters. Sexual violence against women was thrown under the spotlight after the fatal gang-rape of a physiotherapy student on a New Delhi bus in 2012. More than 33,000 women were raped in India in 2017, according to the latest official figures. — AFP

India girl shot dead in gang-rape as fury mounts

PATNA: A girl in eastern India was allegedly gang-raped and shot dead, police said yesterday, the latest in a string of sexual assaults that has triggered angry protests across the country. Police suspect that the victim, whose age and identity was not known, was gang-raped, killed and her body burnt before being dumped in a deserted field in Buxar town in Bihar state. "We received (her) burnt body yesterday, a day after she went missing from her house in Buxar town," a police official told AFP. The officer said they were still awaiting a medical report.

The incident comes on the heels of the brutal gang-rape and murder of a 27-year-old veterinary doctor in southern Hyderabad city last week. A gang of four men deflated a tyre on her scooter and lured her to a truck yard with the promise of fixing it. Police say that the men then raped and murdered her before setting the body on fire under an isolated bridge.

Iran rejects as 'lies' unrest death tolls

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday rejected as "utter lies" unofficial casualty figures given for street violence that erupted last month during demonstrations against a shock decision to hike fuel prices. US President Donald Trump, speaking in London, told reporters that "the word is that thousands of people are being killed in Iran that are protesting," without providing details. "That's why they cut off the Internet. They cut off the Internet so people can't see what's going on," he said ahead of a NATO summit.

Iran's economy has been battered since last year when Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from a 2015 nuclear agreement and reimposed crippling sanctions. The days of unrest in Iran from Nov 15 saw protesters attack police stations, loot shops and torch banks and petrol stations as authorities imposed a week-long Internet blackout.

Videos that have surfaced since purport to

show scenes from the crackdown that followed, including footage of security forces firing at unarmed demonstrators or beating them with batons. The United States, France and Germany have all condemned Iran over the bloodshed, which human rights group Amnesty International estimates claimed more than 200 lives. Tehran has not yet given any overall death toll, but yesterday strongly rejected such reports and figures as enemy "propaganda".

Iran's judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said: "I explicitly announce that the numbers and figures that are being given by hostile groups are utter lies and the statistics have serious differences with what they announced. "They announced some numbers as well as some names... Their claimed numbers are sheer lies and fabricated," he said in remarks aired on state television. "The names they have given are also lies," Esmaili said, adding that they included people who were still alive and others who had passed away from other causes.

Esmaili said 300 people arrested over the unrest were still in custody in Tehran, without

giving a country-wide figure. Many had already been released after they were found to have been innocent, he added. "We as the judiciary branch in no way consider as thugs or rioters those who took to the streets to merely voice their objections, even though they didn't have a legal permit for their street gatherings," he said. State television on Monday night had also charged that foreign media had been "hyping up" the death toll. The report said that "the security forces had no choice but to resort to authoritative and tough confrontation in order to save people from the hands of the rioters, and a number of rioters were killed".

The broadcaster said "thugs and rioters" had attacked sensitive sites, including military bases, with firearms and machetes and "in some areas had taken people hostage". It said the incidents occurred in the cities of Bandar Mahshahr, Fardis, Malard, Sadra, Sirjan, Shahriar and Shahr-e Qods. The report categorised those who had died in the unrest into different categories: "thugs and rioters", peaceful protesters, the security forces, and passers-by. — AFP

23 killed as fire engulfs...

Continued from Page 1

"There were also inflammable materials improperly stored, which led to the spread of the fire," the government said, adding that an investigation has been launched.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah offered yesterday in a cable his condo-

lences to head of the Transitional Council of Sudan Abdelfattah Al-Burhan over the fire. The Amir expressed deepest condolences for those killed in the incident and wished swift recovery for the wounded. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

A doctors committee linked to Sudan's protest movement said the casualties were taken to several hospitals and urged off-duty doctors to help out. "The explosion was loud. Several cars that were parked in the compound of the factory also caught fire," an employee of an adjacent factory told AFP. — Agencies

minister Faisal Maqdad thanked the UAE for its support. "We cannot forget that the United Arab Emirates stood by Syria in its war against terrorism," he said.

Earlier in the war UAE supported armed groups opposed to Assad. But its role was less prominent than that of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and mainly centered on ensuring that Islamist forces did not dominate the uprising. Damascus has restored control over most of the country's territory since support from Russian air strikes began in 2015, tipping the war in Assad's favor. — Agencies

Saudi King invites Qatari Amir...

Continued from Page 1

Washington has lobbied Gulf states including the UAE to hold off restoring ties, sources told Reuters earlier this year. At the ceremony, Syria's deputy foreign



JERUSALEM: People walk past the New Imperial Hotel located next to the Jaffa Gate in the Christian quarter of Jerusalem's Old City on Nov 29, 2019. — AFP

delay was convenient for the current Patriarch Theophilos III. "It allows him to appear as a victor on the eve of Christmas celebrations," he said. Yet Sabbagh said it may yet prove a pyrrhic victory, and a source close to Ateret Cohanim said the organization was confident that the settlers would ultimately still take control of the buildings.

A few metres from The Imperial, the Petra Hostel, another hotel in the case, is rapidly sliding into disrepair. The walls are peeling, the tiles broken and the

bathrooms smell of mould. There are hardly any guests, and the few there are look unimpressed. The Israeli authorities have banned all repairs until the case is finalized, a representative of the Petra Hostel said. Speaking on condition of anonymity, he said he didn't hold out much hope the latest decision would mean an end to their woes, saying he no longer trusted any party. "They are all liars, from 2004 until today we are fighting," he said. "We may have won this battle, but not the war." — AFP



BANGALORE: Students of Maharani Women's College hold placards and shout slogans to protest against the alleged rape and murder of a 27-year-old veterinary doctor in Hyderabad during a demonstration yesterday. — AFP

Bangladesh shuts recruitment agencies after abuse claims

DHAKA: Bangladesh said yesterday that it has shut down 166 recruiting agencies hiring people to work in Saudi Arabia after a spate of sexual abuse and torture allegations at the hands of employers in the Gulf kingdom. Since 1991, some 300,000 Bangladeshi women have travelled to Saudi Arabia, according to the Dhaka government, mostly to work as household staff. But a string of them have returned to Bangladesh in recent months levelling allegations of sexual abuse and torture and even that recruiters had sold them as sex slaves.

Last month videos secretly shot by Bangladeshi female workers were shared hundreds of thousands of times on social media and sparked protests across Bangladesh. Government spokesman

Munir Saleheen said that the agencies that were shut down had failed to provide safeguards to the migrant workers and in some cases sent them back to their employers. "Our campaign will continue," Saleheen told AFP.

Their closure followed talks between Bangladeshi and Saudi officials in Riyadh. Both countries also decided to update an online database of the female workers to ensure their safety, a statement issued by the Bangladesh expatriate welfare ministry said. Saudi police have also agreed not to hand back any Bangladeshi woman who escaped from a Saudi employer to her workplace, it said. The ministry also said that the Saudi Department of Protection and Support "will take prompt action if a female worker falls in danger." — AFP

UN: 2010s hottest decade in history...

Continued from Page 1

The world's seas are now a quarter more acidic than 150 years ago, threatening vital marine ecosystems upon which billions of people rely for food and jobs. In October, the global mean sea level reached its highest on record, fuelled by the 329 billion tonnes of ice lost from the Greenland ice sheet in 12 months.

Each of the last four decades has been hotter than the last. And far from climate change being a phenomenon for future generations to confront, the effects of humanity's insatiable, growth-at-any cost consumption means millions are already counting the damage. The report said more than 10 million people were internally displaced in the first half of 2019 - seven million directly due to extreme weather events such as storms, flooding and drought.

By the end of the year, the WMO said new displacements due to weather extremes could reach 22 million. "Once again in 2019 weather and climate related risks hit hard," said WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas. "Heatwaves and floods which used to be 'once in a century' events are becoming more regular occurrences." At just

1°C hotter than pre-industrial times, 2019 has already seen deadly heatwaves in Europe, Australia and Japan, super-storms devastate southeast Africa, and wildfires rage out of control in Australia and California.

Nations are currently in crucial talks in Madrid aimed at finalizing rules for the 2015 Paris climate accord, which enjoins countries to work to limit global temperature rises to "well below" 2°C. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) last year outlined how vital it was for mankind to aim for a safer cap of 1.5°C - ideally by slashing greenhouse gas emissions and retooling the global economy towards renewable energy.

The UN said last week in its annual "emissions gap" assessment that the world needed to cut carbon emissions by 7.6 per cent each year, every year, until 2030 to hit 1.5°C. Instead, emissions are rising. And while governments spend hundreds of billions of dollars subsidising fossil fuels, there appears to be no consensus in Madrid over how countries already dealing with climate-related catastrophe can fund efforts to adapt to the new reality.

"Our economic activities continue to use the atmosphere as a waste dump for greenhouse gases," said Joeri Rogelj, Grantham Lecturer in Climate Change at Imperial College London. Even if all Paris pledges were honored, Earth is still on course to be more than 3°C warmer by the end of the century. "There is no indication of a fade out of the warming," Taalas told reporters. "The numbers will be higher if we continue our current behavior." — AFP

Sports

Williamson hails 'hard work' to save Test, seal England series win

New Zealand head to Australia for a three-Test series

HAMILTON: Centuries from Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor ensured New Zealand drew the rain-hit second Test against England in Hamilton yesterday, sealing a 1-0 series win. New Zealand batted the final day needing a substantial innings to avoid defeat and were helped by sloppy England fielding.

Williamson, who had three lives including a howler of a dropped catch by Joe Denly, described it as a "good effort" to end up with a draw. "A lot of hard work had to go into saving the match when time didn't allow us an opportunity to win it," he said.

However, England captain Joe Root felt the Test was always heading for a draw, saying even if the weather and fielding had gone England's way "we still couldn't have forced a result." Heavy rain arrived soon after lunch to end play on the fifth day when New Zealand were 241 for two in their second innings, 140 ahead with Taylor on 105 and Williamson on 104.

It ensured the spoils went to New Zealand after their innings victory in the first Test, and improved their record to eight wins, a draw and one loss to South Africa in their past 10 Test series. Williamson brought up his 21st Test century with a four off Joe Root in the third over after lunch, while Taylor reached century number 19 with a flourish in Root's next over when he smacked a four and two sixes in consecutive balls.

Two balls after Taylor had raised his bat and poked his tongue out in his signature celebration, the rain arrived to wash out England's faint hopes. New Zealand resumed the day at 96 for two with England hunting early wickets but their plans went off track when Ollie Pope and then Denly spilled simple chances from Williamson.

The New Zealand skipper was on 39 when wicket-keeper Pope put down a regulation offering off the gloves, much to bowler Ben Stokes annoyance, and on 62 Denly inexplicably dropped an even easier chance.

'ONE-OFF GOOBER'

Williamson gently chipped a slower delivery from Jofra Archer straight to Denly at short midwicket and, as the bowler leapt in celebration and Williamson made an apologetic gesture to Taylor, the ball popped out of Denly's hands.

"It was a one-off goober," said Root using cricketing slang for a shocking error. There were comparisons drawn on social media to the widely regarded worst dropped catch in Test history when England's Mike Gatting put down a sitter off the gloves of India batsman Kiran More in 1993.

"We worked very hard to try and create chances on a very flat wicket and they don't come around very often. It's very frustrating and I'm sure Joe will not hear the end of it for a long while," added Root.

Williamson had another life when he should have been run out on 97 but Sam Curran's shy at the bowler's end from mid-off was so far wide of the



HAMILTON: New Zealand players pose with the trophy after winning the cricket Test series between England and New Zealand at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

stumps that the batsmen had time to return for a second run.

Despite the errors, Root saw the improved England performance between the two Tests as "very pleasing" ahead of a four-Test tour of South Africa. Root enjoyed a return to form with his man-

of-the-match 226 at the end a poor year when the skipper averaged below 30.

New Zealand, meanwhile, head to Australia on Saturday for a three-Test series with the 1-0 win over England cementing their number two world ranking behind India. — AFP

Pakistan look to learn from Australia drubbing

MELBOURNE: Bringing two uncapped teenage pace bowlers to Australia, a nation unconquered by the greatest of Pakistan sides, was never going to end well for Azhar Ali's team. For coach Misbah-ul-Haq, the selections of 16-year-old Naseem Shah and 19-year-old Muhammad Musa reflected a need for "boldness" in a team that has fallen steadily down the world rankings in recent years.

The 2-0 whitewash by Tim Paine's side, completed with another innings defeat in Adelaide on Monday, exposed all that for bravado, and Pakistan return home with more regrets than highlights. Their bowlers had only two cracks at the Australian batsmen and may well have been glad for that, having leaked nearly 1,200 runs in two innings for the return of 13 wickets.

Naseem and Musa managed one wicket between them, legspinner Yasir Shah conceded 100 runs for each of his four scalps and the team's most experienced quick, Mohammad Abbas, was worryingly down on pace when recalled at Adelaide Oval.

Of the bowlers, only Shaheen Afridi leaves Australia with reputation enhanced, the 19-year-old talent having produced some fiery spells to top his team's wicket-takers with five victims. While Pakistan have rarely looked less capable of breaking their Test series drought in Australia, a rueful Azhar could at least see a brighter future as the squad's raw talent matures.

"We didn't live up to the expectations that were based around this young team," the skipper told reporters. "But we felt that these guys were in the best shape to deal with the conditions here, and that'll be the case in the future."



ADELAIDE: File photo shows Australia's cricket team coach Justin Langer (R) speaks to Pakistan's players Imam-ul-Haq (L) and Babar Azam (C) after Australia defeated Pakistan on the fourth day of the second cricket Test match in Adelaide. — AFP

"We shouldn't get too disappointed about this and keep in mind that young bowlers like these will only play more cricket and get better. We need to show some patience."

Pakistan will take some solace that the future has already arrived in the form of Babar Azam, who came to Australia as the world's top T20 batsman and departs as a proven test performer.

The 25-year-old has been a slow-burning talent in the longest format, but after carving out 104 in Brisbane and 97 in Adelaide on the home pitches of one of the world's

most potent attacks, he will head into the upcoming series against Sri Lanka brimming with confidence.

"He's been tremendous in white-ball cricket and in the recent past, he's been gradually building up his test stats as well," Azhar said of Babar. "But this series definitely will be the breakthrough he wanted."

Disappointment for Azhar's team will soon turn into an unfamiliar joy when they play Sri Lanka in Rawalpindi and Karachi later this month, the first tests in Pakistan since militants attacked a bus convoy carrying the Sri Lanka team in Lahore in 2009. — Reuters

Australia stick to winning formula for New Zealand

ADELAIDE: Australia heavily hinted yesterday they will field the same XI for their opening Test against New Zealand to the one that thrashed Pakistan, with selectors keen to build a core group of players.

Tim Paine's men have proven too far more consistent in recent months, having retained the Ashes in England before a 2-0 series sweep against Pakistan, culminating in their thumping innings and 48-run win in Adelaide on Monday.

Tough opposition awaits with the arrival this month of New Zealand for three Tests — in Perth, Melbourne and Sydney — and selectors named an unchanged 13-man squad. "As we said prior to the Pakistan series we are striving to maintain a core group of players," said national selector Trevor Hohns.

"The performance of the team against Pakistan was very impressive across all areas." The only omission from the squad was spare batsman Cameron Bancroft, who was on standby but did not play against Pakistan.

That means the same batting line-up will start against New Zealand in Perth on December 12, spearheaded by David Warner who made a monumental 335 not out in Adelaide, ably supported by Marnus Labuschagne who hit a second successive century.

"David Warner has been in exceptional form with the bat. The support he received from Joe Burns in Brisbane and Marnus Labuschagne in Adelaide was exactly what we had been asking for from the top order," said Hohns.

"They delivered, setting up both matches in what was an outstanding all-round performance. We are backing the current batting line-up to continue their form across the next three Tests." A fiery six-wicket haul from Mitchell Starc in Adelaide all but ensured he will start in Perth alongside Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon with Hohns saying squad members Michael Neser and James Pattinson "will continue as cover".

Australia reserved the right to add another player to the squad, particularly if conditions in Melbourne or Sydney call for an allrounder or second spinner.

Australia: Tim Paine (capt), Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Neser, James Pattinson, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Matthew Wade, David Warner. — AFP

Ganguly wants India to play pink-ball Tests in every series

NEW DELHI: Indian cricket board chief Sourav Ganguly believes pink-ball Tests are here to stay and wants the team under Virat Kohli to play at least one such match in every series. India became the last major cricket nation to embrace day-night Tests when they hosted neighbours Bangladesh in front of a sellout crowd at Kolkata's Eden Gardens last month.

As the president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), Ganguly's nudge prompted India to take the plunge into day-night Tests, which pundits believe can address test cricket's dwindling attendance in most venues.

"I am pretty upbeat about it," Ganguly told 'The Week' magazine. "I feel this is the way forward. Not every Test, but at least one Test in a series."

The world's richest cricket board aggressively marketed India's maiden pink-ball Test, illuminating prominent city landmarks in pink and overall creating a buzz around the match.

Encouraged by the turnout in Kolkata, other Indian venues are now ready to host day-night Tests, Ganguly said. "I will share my experiences with the board and we will try and implement it in other places."

"After this, everyone is ready. Nobody wants to play test cricket in front of 5,000 people," added the former India captain. Kohli has welcomed the innovation but said pink-ball tests should be an exception and not the rule. "I think (day-night Tests) can be a one-off thing, it should not be a regular scenario," Kohli said in Kolkata on the eve of the Test match. — Reuters

NZ Cricket file complaint with police over Archer abuse

WELLINGTON: New Zealand Cricket have filed a complaint with police after their own investigation failed to "conclusively identify" a spectator who England fast bowler Jofra Archer said had racially abused him during the first Test at Mt. Maunganui.

Archer said on social media at the end of the match at Bay Oval last week that he was abused while batting in England's second innings. NZC condemned the behaviour and formally apologised to Archer ahead of the second test at Seddon Park in Hamilton, which ended in a draw on Tuesday.

"What happened to Jofra was reprehensible and has led to a general upscaling of security around the area of racial abuse at all our international venues," NZC Chief Executive David White said in a statement yesterday.

"Should the person responsible ever reoffend, we believe we have enough information to link him to the Bay Oval incident." NZC added they had examined CCTV footage, reviewed audio, interviewed spectators and monitored social media in an effort to identify the person responsible for the abuse.



Jofra Archer

"While the information-gathering exercise was useful, NZC has been unable to conclusively identify the person responsible," the organisation said in the statement. "Despite this, NZC's David White believed there was enough material garnered from the inquiry to justify lodging a complaint with the police."

White said they would look to impose a lengthy ban from attending cricket in the country if a positive identification was made. He said last week it would likely be a lifetime ban. — Reuters

Sports

Allen stops 38 shots as Blues shut out host Blackhawks

Grant nets pair as Anaheim hands Kings another road loss

CHICAGO: Jaden Schwartz had a goal and an assist, Jake Allen stopped all 38 shots he faced, and the St. Louis Blues skated to a 4-0 win over the host Chicago Blackhawks on Monday night, the reigning champions' fourth straight win. Mackenzie MacEachern, Brayden Schenn and Tyler Bozak also scored for the Blues, who have earned at least one point in seven of their past eight contests. Patrick Kane led the Blackhawks with six shots on goal while Brandon Saad finished with five shots. Chicago lost its third consecutive game and was blanked for the third time this season. Allen recorded his first shutout of the season and the 20th of his career. The seventh-year veteran stopped 10 shots in the first period, 11 in the second and 17 in the third as he improved to 5-1-2 in 2019-20.

SABRES 7, DEVILS 1

Jack Eichel's goal less than three minutes after face-off sparked a five-goal first period for host Buffalo, which continued its dominance of the Devils with an easy rout. Conor Sheary scored twice in the first for the Sabres, who led 5-0 after one period and 6-0 fewer than five minutes into the second. Jeff Skinner and Rasmus Asplund added first-period goals before Victor Olofsson and Henri Jokiharju scored in the second. The Sabres have beaten the Devils twice this season by a combined score of 14-3. Buffalo's five-goal first period was its biggest outburst since it scored five against New Jersey in the second period of a 5-1 win on Jan. 8.

DUCKS 4, KINGS 2

Derek Grant scored twice, including an empty-net-

ter, as Anaheim defeated visiting Los Angeles in the first Freeway Faceoff of the season between the NHL's Southern California rivals. Carter Rowney added a goal and an assist, Jakob Silfverberg also scored, and Hampus Lindholm had three assists for the Ducks. Goaltender Ryan Miller, 39, who started because John Gibson was sidelined by an illness, made 34 saves to improve to 4-1-0 this season. Kurtis MacDermid and Nikolai Prokhorin scored, and Jack Campbell stopped 16 of the 19 shots he faced for the Kings, whose winless streak on the road reached nine games (0-8-1). Los Angeles last won an away game on Oct. 22 at Winnipeg.

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 4, RANGERS 1

Alex Tuch scored two first-period goals and Malcolm Subban finished with 29 saves as Vegas skated to its third consecutive win with a solid showing in New York. It was Tuch's third career two-goal game. Reilly Smith and Max Pacioretty also scored goals for the Golden Knights, who improved to 4-1-0 in franchise history against the Rangers. It marked the first time this season that Vegas has won three games in a row, all with Subban in net. Brendan Lemieux scored for New York, which had a five-game points streak snapped (4-0-1). Henrik Lundqvist finished with 28 saves in defeat.

ISLANDERS 4, RED WINGS 1

Jordan Eberle scored his first two goals of the season as New York handed host Detroit its 10th consecutive loss. Eberle was appearing in his 15th game this season. He scored 19 goals last season. Anders Lee and



CHICAGO: Alex Nylander #92 of the Chicago Blackhawks chases the puck under pressure from Vince Dunn #29 (L) and Jacob de la Rose #61 of the St. Louis Blues at the United Center in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

Anthony Beauvillier also scored for the Islanders while Semyon Varlamov made 30 saves. New York earned its second win in a row and improved to 7-2-1 in its past

10 games. Dylan Larkin scored for the Red Wings, whose past eight defeats have come in regulation. Jonathan Bernier made 21 saves. — Reuters

Wilson repels Vikings as Seahawks boost playoff hopes

LOS ANGELES: Russell Wilson threw for two touchdowns as the Seattle Seahawks boosted their playoff hopes with a 37-30 victory over the Minnesota Vikings on Monday.

Seahawks quarterback Wilson finished with 240 passing yards after making 21 completions from 31 attempts in a thrilling duel at Seattle's CenturyLink Field. Running back Chris Carson rushed for 102 yards and one touchdown from 23 carries as the Seahawks secured a win that elevated them to the top of the NFC West standings.

The Seahawks are now level with divisional rivals San Francisco, with 10 wins and two losses, but move into top spot after winning their head-to-head with the 49ers last month.

The Vikings meanwhile fell to 8-4 with the defeat but remain firmly in contention for a wildcard spot from the NFC North.

Minnesota had started Monday's game brightly, with Dalvin Cook going over from two yards out to cap a six-play 83-yard Vikings drive.

Seattle responded immediately in the final seconds of the first quarter however, with Wilson finding D.K. Metcalf with a 19-yard pass to take the Seahawks to the one yard line. Carson then skipped through a huge gap in the Vikings defense make it 7-7 after the extra point. The Vikings regained the lead in the second quarter with a freak touchdown when Wilson's attempted pass was blocked by Minnesota defensive tackle Armon Watts.

Wilson tried to bat away the rebound from Watts' block but directed the loose ball only as far as safety Anthony Harris, who grabbed the interception and raced 20 yards into the endzone to make it 14-7.

Both teams exchanged field goals to leave Minnesota 17-10 ahead at half-time, but an early turnover after the restart set up a touchdown for Seattle's Rashaad Penny.

Seattle took a 20-17 lead with a Jason Myers field goal before Wilson picked out David Moore with a 60-yard bomb to put the Seahawks 27-17 ahead.

Wilson then found Penny from 13 yards early in the fourth quarter to leave Seattle in control at 34-17, and although Minnesota responded with touchdowns from Laquon Treadwell and Kyle Rudolph to cut the lead to four points, a final Seattle drive ate up valuable minutes and put Myers in position for a field goal to complete the scoring. — AFP

Chelsea will find out transfer ban decision 'very soon': Lampard

LONDON: Frank Lampard expects to find out "very soon" whether Chelsea will be free to make any January signings, with the club waiting to learn the outcome of their FIFA transfer ban appeal. Chelsea's appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) was heard last month, with the Blues contesting FIFA's two-window ban relating to the recruitment of minors.

When asked when he expects to discover the

Football coach proves deafness is no hindrance to career on touchline

LONDON: Ben Lampert is not a stereotypical football coach. Instead of yelling from the touchline, the deaf trainer issues his instructions in sign language. The 34-year-old, who is a coach with Brentford FC Community Sports Trust, is proving to be an inspirational mentor to both deaf and hearing children and has been nominated in one of the categories at the UK Coaching Awards tomorrow.

Lampert, a member of the British football squad that won the 2005 Deaflympics title in Australia, ultimately wants to coach a professional team. "The dream of mine is just to be coaching at the highest level of football, whether it be the academies or the club side," he told AFP before taking a session with a group of 10-year-old boys.

"Just to be that sort of living embodiment that these barriers can be broken down and can be overcome. The age group would not matter. "I don't know whether up to 18 or older. It's a matter of sort of achieving and becoming an example where deaf people can look up and say 'Ben's done it, why can't I?'"

Lampert, a father of two boys, said there is a perception that it is difficult for deaf people to get their message across but he believes this is misplaced. "They think that it's impossible for me to do it or any deaf person to do it," he said, speaking through an interpreter, who also helped him during the session in west London.

"You know, they think it's not something that can happen, but it is possible. When I have the opportunity to speak with these people, they realise this. "It's all just about communication. At the end of the day, there's other methods for communication, it's not just a one-way thing." Lampert, who took part in the 2012 Olympics torch relay, said communicating in sign language was a similar challenge to that faced by managers for whom English is not their native tongue.

"They have the skills or the requisite skills to be a top manager. It's just the language barrier," said Lampert, who is nominated for an award in the Changing Lives category.

"You know, that's the only thing getting in the way. There's no difference, in my view, to a deaf person in that sense." Lampert, who is also a coach with England's deaf football team, said his deafness is not an impediment to how he sees the game, describing it as a "very visual thing".

"As a deaf person it is absolutely perfect for me and thinking about people's positions on the pitch and tactics, where to place players."

Jamie Tompkins, football development manager for the trust at Brentford, who play in England's second-tier Championship, says Lampert's dream to coach professionally is realistic. "There's no reason why it cannot work in mainstream football as well, because he's still communicating with players in the right way," he said.

"He is still getting his message across to support them in their development and ultimately support the teams he's working with as well." Lampert believes

result of that appeal, Lampard replied: "Very soon I believe. Days, I think. "I haven't heard any more, so I would wait and reserve judgement (on Chelsea's plans for January) until we get the judgement and see where we want to go from there."

Fourth-placed Chelsea will give Tammy Abraham "every possible chance" to face Aston Villa yesterday as the England striker recovers from a hip injury. Lampard admitted the 22-year-old, who has scored 10 Premier League goals this season, is still battling pain from the problem he picked up in the 2-2 Champions League draw at Valencia.

"We're giving him every possible chance to be fit," said the Chelsea boss, whose side have lost their past two league matches after a fine run. "He's still got some pain in the area of the injury. (We will) make a judgement tomorrow. It's painful for him, so it's a pain threshold and whether it affects his movements. So I



LONDON: Ben Lampert, a coach with England's deaf football team and Brentford FC Community Sports Trust, poses for a picture at the training pitch in west London on November 26, 2019. Ben Lampert is not a stereotypical screaming football coach. Instead of yelling from the touchline, the deaf trainer issues his instructions in sign language. — AFP

Britain is lagging behind the United States when it comes to the awareness of deaf issues.

He cites the case of NFL fullback Derrick Coleman, who overcame deafness to win a Super Bowl with the Seattle Seahawks. "It's hats off to America for me as far as I'm concerned, because their awareness is outstanding in that respect," he said.

"In England, I think we should have it the same. If that can be done in the Super Bowl, then why can we not do it here? Awareness is the key thing here." A group of boys who were experiencing Lampert's coaching for the first time — a mix of showing them what he wants done by playing with the ball or through his interpreter — largely gave him a thumbs up.

Kuba Zygmunt admitted: "I would never understand sign language in 100 years" but he added there was plenty of scope for the relationship to develop. "As a community, it is really impressive," he said. "It's really impressive that we can communicate with this new coach and maybe learn about something new."

Lampert believes succeeding is all about being positive. "It's important to be confident and to be assertive and to fight for equality," he said. "You know, I want to get the message out there that deaf people can do anything and I am an example myself." — AFP

wouldn't want to commit today."

Olivier Groud, who led the line in last weekend's 1-0 defeat at West Ham, and Belgium's Michy Batshuayi are continuing to press their claims up front, while US forward Christian Pulisic could operate as a false nine in Abraham's absence.

Admitting the challenge of keeping his other strikers focused and happy given Abraham's form, Lampard said: "Yes, in the modern day every manager wants to have that situation."

"They are training well, supporting the group with a smile on their face and they are happy when we win," he added. "They are determined to help if we don't, whether they are starting or not."

"Those are the rules of modern football. Of course, it is a challenge and everyone is a human and they want to play every week. So I have to be aware of that at the same time." — AFP

Sprint star Blake lashes IAAF chief for 'killing' athletics

NEW DELHI: Ace Jamaican sprinter Yohan Blake has slammed world athletics chief Sebastian Coe for taking away track and field disciplines such as the 200 metres from next year's Diamond League.

The International Association of Athletics Associations (IAAF) dropped the 200m, 3,000m steeplechase, triple jump and discus from its list of "core" disciplines at Diamond League meetings in 2020. "I believe all the events are very important. This is people's careers, this is where they make their money," Blake said at a promotional event in Mumbai on Monday.

"If he can take away the 200 and triple jump, I don't know if he is trying to build it or trying to kill athletics but that's a stupid move. He must enhance the sport, but he is killing it. It is just madness."

The athletics world body said its decision was based on online research in China, France, South Africa and the United States and post-event surveys in Belgium, Britain and Switzerland. It said the aim was to reduce the length of the Diamond League meetings to fit a 90-minute international broadcast window. The 29-year-old Blake, who won 100m gold in the 2011 world championships, has had to settle with being the second fastest man behind countryman Usain Bolt in both 100m and 200m. But the two-time Olympic sprint relay gold medalist said he was confident of taking more gold in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

"I'm always the favourite, the second fastest man in the universe. Everyone has to look up to me," said Blake. "I think is going to be epic, this is the greatest show on earth and everyone is looking for that blue-carpet event, which is the 100m."

"If you take Bolt away from the picture, I will be the fastest man in the world. I was born in the wrong time. Nevertheless, I am happy with what I have achieved." — AFP

La Liga chief steps down to restand for election

MADRID: Javier Tebas has announced that he will stand down as head of the Spanish football league (LFP) in a bid to win a third term as president in new elections.

"I have presented my resignation as president of La Liga in order to begin new presidential elections, in which I will be a candidate," Tebas said on Twitter.

Tebas, 57, was first named president of the LFP, which runs Spain's two professional divisions, in 2013 before being re-elected three years later after resigning and then standing unopposed.

Elections to decide the new president were initially scheduled for October next year, but Tebas said in a letter to Spanish clubs that he had forced an early poll in order to "give the greatest level of stability" to the LFP.

Tebas cites the bidding for TV rights for 2022-25, which will begin "between March and June 2021 ... too close to the original election schedule".

"Over the years, we have followed a genuine strategy for our TV rights (it's not simply a case of results on the day of the competition, we are working with this in mind, we are preparing the market... and to do that we need time and stability within the institution)," said Tebas.

"We are talking about more than 1.2 billion euros (\$1.33 billion)," Tebas also said that he was concerned about LFP being able to negotiate with the Spanish government and European Union over policy "that affect our institution and interests". "I don't think it's a very good idea to have dialogue with other actors with a mandate that expires in a few months," he said. "The person who has to do it should do so with the backing of the clubs at least for four years." — AFP

Sports

Solskjaer does not fear for his future at Man Utd despite sackings

Prepares to face his predecessor Jose Mourinho

MANCHESTER: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says he does not fear for his future as Manchester United manager despite a spate of Premier League sackings as he prepares to face his predecessor Jose Mourinho.

Spurs turned to Mourinho after dismissing Mauricio Pochettino last month, while Arsenal and Watford have subsequently sacked Unai Emery and Quique Sanchez Flores. Solskjaer is under increasing pressure, with United ninth in the Premier League, 22 points behind leaders Liverpool and eight off a top-four spot as they prepare for Wednesday's match against Tottenham.

"No, it doesn't make me more concerned," Solskjaer said at his pre-match press conference on Tuesday. "I'm just focusing on my job and that's just doing as well as I can, and look forward to the next game, and look long-term, plan things with board."

"It's that time of year. It's never nice to

see your colleagues lose your jobs — three in a very short space of time. "It's a game of margins," he added. "Sometimes you have luck, sometimes you don't, but it doesn't make me any more concerned that it's December. I'm good, absolutely no problem. Sometimes you laugh when you read stories about what I've said and stuff, at least I know the sources are just made up, blatant lies."

The United boss bemoaned his team's failure to turn draws into wins, saying they were not getting the results their football deserved. The club are winless in three games and Solskjaer's job will not get any easier with a derby against Manchester City on Saturday to follow the game against Mourinho's Spurs side.

The Norwegian, though, dismissed any need for crisis talks with the United board. "Three days or four days are not going to change a whole lot, but these two games are great chances for us to prove things and prove to ourselves that we can continue in

the vein we have had against some of the better sides," he said.

Solskjaer expects Mourinho to receive a warm welcome when he returns to Old Trafford a year after being sacked, having won the League Cup and Europa League during his time in charge. "We know we have to improve, we are working hard to do that right and when you change a manager halfway through the season (it) isn't where it is supposed to be," said the Norwegian.

"I don't think whoever the manager of the opposition team is will change their motivation (of the players)," he said. "They are motivated to do well for Man Utd, because they know it's about improving every day in training and every time you step on that pitch it's a chance to prove you can be part of this long term. That has always been the case at Man Utd." United will still be without the injured Paul Pogba but Scott McTominay and Nemanja Matic will be assessed as Solskjaer looks at his midfield options. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Norwegian manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer applauds supporters as he leaves after the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Aston Villa at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, on December 1, 2019. The game finished 2-2. — AFP

Liverpool belief is sky-high, says Oxlade-Chamberlain

LONDON: Liverpool midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain says the Premier League leaders are going into every game believing they can win after racking up 13 victories in 14 games.

Jürgen Klopp's unbeaten side have dropped just two points this season and established an eight-point advantage over second-placed Leicester. But even the pressure of maintaining their winning run, which

appears to grow with every game for a club searching for their first league title since 1990, has not affected the mentality within the club, according to Oxlade-Chamberlain.

"I'm going into it (a game) with the mindset that we're going to win. I think that's how we all feel," the England international told the PA news agency. "We're going into the games expecting ourselves to win and anything else we're disappointed with."

He added: "I think that's the mentality you need to be successful, to have those high standards that nothing else is acceptable. Then you've got to let history take its course." Liverpool are firm favourites to end their title drought but midfielder Oxlade-Chamberlain said they needed to remain mentally strong.

"You've got to just keep going out and churning

out results," he said. "There might be a time where results don't go so well and people maybe close the gap a little bit. "We've got to be also ready for those moments mentally as a team to just keep going and see what happens."

Liverpool's next match is the Merseyside derby at home to struggling Everton on Wednesday, with the Reds unbeaten against their local rivals at Anfield since 1999. But Klopp's side have not kept a clean sheet at home all season and are without suspended first-choice goalkeeper Alisson Becker.

"I don't think we're leaking loads of goals but probably just a few little silly mistakes here and there all over the pitch," said Oxlade-Chamberlain. "But even when we have been conceding, we're still finding a way to come up with the goods and most of the time at the minute it's been winning the game." — AFP

Man Utd 'a closed chapter': Mourinho

LONDON: Jose Mourinho says his time at Manchester United is "a closed chapter" and he is only interested in beating them when he takes his in-form side to Old Trafford today. It is the new Tottenham manager's first return to the touchline at United's home ground since his sacking by the club last December.

"This is a closed chapter for me," said Mourinho, who has won all three of his matches in charge of Spurs. "I left the club, I took my time to process everything that happened, I took my time to prepare myself for the next challenge."

"Honestly, United for me is in my book of experiences, it's in my history book." United are struggling under Mourinho's successor, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, but go into the game just two points behind fifth-placed Spurs.

"It is not for me to analyse United now," Mourinho said at his pre-match press conference. "I analyse them as an opponent, how they play. How can we beat them? How can they beat us? For me that is the important thing."

Mourinho is excited about the prospect of returning to Old Trafford. He said: "I feel good, I like to play big matches, I like to play against the best teams and go back to a place where I was happy."

"I have a great relationship with the Manchester United supporters. I went back as a pundit and I was humbled by such a beautiful reception. "Tomorrow I go back as the coach of the team that will try and beat Manchester United."

"I understand that what they want is the exact opposite of what I want. Of course during the match I expect them to forget me." — AFP

Guardiola rules out Man City January spree

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola says he will not be splashing out in January to revive Manchester City's flagging Premier League title fortunes despite the yawning gap to leaders Liverpool.

The champions, in third place and trailing Jürgen Klopp's men by 11 points after 14 matches, visit Burnley yesterday. City have gone seven games without a clean sheet, which Guardiola said was not "good enough" and the club have been linked with Leicester City defender Caglar Soyuncu.

But he played down the idea of buying a centre-back when the transfer window re-opens next month. Instead he will keep his faith in Fernandinho and await the return of Aymeric Laporte after a lengthy absence with a knee injury.

Asked if City's transfer strategy had changed, Guardiola said: "No. I don't want any players in January. "If we cannot do it in summer, we cannot do in January. When they come for an incredible opportunity in January for the next four, five, six years, maybe we could think about it, but that is not possible."

"Normally the players we could think it would be interesting to add something for our squad, they are not going to sell." Since losing Laporte in August, and following the exit of captain Vincent Kompany, Guardiola has deployed Fernandinho, usually a holding midfielder, in defence.

And he will turn to the Brazilian again at Turf Moor despite the direct approach of the hosts and aerial and physical threat of Burnley forward pair Ashley Barnes and Chris Wood.

"Fernandinho is not the reason why we win or lose. When we beat Chelsea, everyone said how fantastic Fernandinho was," said Guardiola. "When we don't win it's because of Fernandinho. It will be my decision."

Chelsea to take late call on Abraham for Villa clash

LONDON: Chelsea striker Tammy Abraham faces a late fitness test before today Premier League match against Aston Villa as the 22-year-old recovers from a hip issue, manager Frank Lampard said yesterday.

England international Abraham, who is Chelsea's top scorer this season with 11 goals in all competitions, sustained the injury after falling awkwardly in his team's 2-2 Champions League draw at Valencia last week.

Although Abraham played down concerns over the injury, he missed Chelsea's 1-0 defeat by West Ham United last Saturday, with his replacement Olivier Giroud looking rusty. "We're giving (Abraham) every opportunity to play tomorrow," Lampard told a news conference. "We will make the call tomorrow, he has a bit of pain."

"You can't isolate it to one player and game. He can't just be the reason for losing the game (against West Ham)." Midfielder

Ross Barkley (illness) will miss the match while defender Antonio Rudiger (groin) could return in the next 10 days.

Today's match will mark the first time former Chelsea captain and current Villa assistant manager John Terry returns to Stamford Bridge as an opponent. Former Derby County boss Lampard, who faced his former team mate in the Championship (second tier) last season, said he had great respect for Terry's work under Villa manager Dean Smith.

"It's more about John and the reception he'll quite rightly get from Chelsea fans - greatest captain, won everything," Lampard said. "The fans will certainly show their appreciation and it'll be emotional for John. I'll be pleased to see his face. We spoke last week, we're regularly in conversation, but both working hard on our jobs." Fourth-placed Chelsea are looking to return to winning ways following defeats by champions Manchester City and West Ham. — Reuters



LONDON: File photo shows Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola reacts during the English Premier League football match between Newcastle United and Manchester City at St James' Park in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, north east England. — AFP

I like him in that position because of the build-up for the fast, for the long balls, many things."

City will be without the suspended Ilkay Gundogan in midfield and striker Sergio Aguero, the matchwinner at Burnley last season, with a thigh injury that will also rule him out of Saturday's Manchester derby.

City have won just one of their past five games in all competitions but England defender John Stones believes leaders Liverpool will now face added pressure to stay at the top. "It's very difficult to be out in front and you can sometimes be complacent and not do things you should do. That's when you can slip up," he said.

"We put a healthy pressure on our shoulders to say we can achieve this, and we can claw back points and close the gap. We're still the champions and we should have that healthy arrogance about it." — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Chelsea v Aston Villa	22:30
beIN Sports HD 3	
Leicester City v Watford	22:30
beIN Sports HD 4	
Manchester United v Tottenham	22:30
beIN Sports HD 2	
Southampton v Norwich City	22:30
beIN Sports HD 5	
Wolverhampton v W Ham United	22:30
beIN Sports HD 7	
Liverpool v Everton	23:15
beIN Sports HD 1	

Ballon d'Or showing can spur Liverpool to more success: Van Dijk

PARIS: Virgil van Dijk said that seeing four Liverpool players finish in the top 10 in the ranking for this year's Ballon d'Or can be an extra source of motivation for the Anfield club in their quest for more on-field success this season.

"Obviously the season we had was outstanding. We had even more players than that on the total shortlist so everyone can be proud of the achievement," said Van Dijk after coming second behind Lionel Messi at the awards ceremony in Paris on Monday.

Sadio Mane finished fourth, Mohamed Salah was fifth, and goalkeeper Alisson Becker came seventh in the voting by journalists from around the world for the prize organised by France Football magazine.

Roberto Firmino, Trent Alexander-Arnold and Georginio Wijnaldum had also been nominated after starring as Jürgen Klopp's side won the Champions League last season. In addition, Alisson won the new Yashin Trophy awarded to the best goalkeeper of the year. "I think we could have even have had a couple more players in it, but we had a fantastic season last year and it should help motivate us to keep doing what we are doing, working even harder and try to achieve even more than we did last year," added Van Dijk.

Liverpool are eight points clear at the top of the Premier League, raising expectations that they will finally go on to win a first league title in three decades. Netherlands defender Van Dijk, 28, has been an inspired signing by Liverpool, and his second place in the Ballon d'Or voting comes after he also finished second to Messi in the voting for FIFA's The Best prize in September.

He had been hoping to become the first defender to win the Ballon d'Or since Fabio Cannavaro in 2006. "To be absolutely honest I never thought I would be up for a Ballon d'Or until I was actually nominated," said the former Celtic and Southampton player.

"It says a lot about how my career has been. It has never been easy. My career is just different than the winner here. "I came late but I never gave up on my dreams. I had to work very hard every step of the way. Where I am right now is just something I am very proud of." — AFP



VALENCIA: File photo shows Chelsea's English striker Tammy Abraham is helped after resulting injured during the UEFA Champions League Group H football match between Valencia CF and Chelsea FC at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia on November 27, 2019. — AFP

25 Williamson hails 'hard work' to save Test, seal England series win



26 Football coach proves deafness is no hindrance to career on touchline



27 Solskjaer does not fear for his future at Man Utd despite sackings



Messi wins sixth Ballon d'Or

USA World Cup superstar Megan Rapinoe takes women's prize



PARIS: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi reacts after winning the Ballon d'Or France Football 2019 trophy at the Chatelet Theatre in Paris. Lionel Messi won a record-breaking sixth Ballon d'Or on Monday after another sublime year for the Argentinian, whose familiar brilliance remained undimmed even through difficult times for club and country. — AFP photos

PARIS: Lionel Messi said he hoped to carry on undimmed by age after claiming a record sixth men's Ballon d'Or award at the age of 32 in Paris on Monday, while USA World Cup superstar Megan Rapinoe took the women's prize. Rapinoe was not at the Chatelet Theatre in the French capital, unable to make the trip back to the country where she led the USA to victory in July. However, Messi was there with his wife, Antonella Rocuzzo, and two of their children. It is Messi's first Ballon d'Or since 2015 and his sixth overall as he moves one ahead of old rival Cristiano Ronaldo.

"It is 10 years since I won my first Ballon d'Or here in Paris and I remember coming here with my three brothers, I was 22 and it was all unthinkable for me what I was going through," Messi said on stage after receiving the award from last year's winner Luka Modric. "I hope I have several years left to keep enjoying my football. I am aware of the age I have and these moments are all the more enjoyable because the moment when I have to retire is getting closer and that is difficult."

"All going well I'll have several years left but at the moment time seems to be flying and everything is happening very quickly. "I hope to keep enjoying my football, my family, facing my rivals and all of this life that I have."

VAN DIJK COMES SECOND

The Barcelona number 10 won this year's prize — organised by France Football magazine and voted for by a panel of journalists from around the world — ahead of Liverpool defender Virgil van Dijk, with Ronaldo third.

It is the first time since 2010 that Ronaldo has failed to rank in the top two. Having starred in the Liverpool team that won the Champions League, Van Dijk finished second to Messi just as he did in the voting for FIFA's equivalent prize, The Best, in September.

"Unfortunately there are a couple of players like him who are a bit unnatural. Six times Ballon d'Or — you need to respect greatness as well," said Van Dijk. Van Dijk was one of four Liverpool players in the top 10, with Sadio Mane fourth, Mohamed Salah fifth and goalkeeper Alisson seventh. The latter won a new prize for the goalkeeper of the year, named after former USSR icon Lev Yashin.

Messi has scored 46 goals in 54 matches so far in 2019, and netted 36 times in total in 34 La Liga matches last season as Barcelona won the title. He did not enjoy a successful Copa America with Argentina but was also the top scorer in last season's Champions League with 12 goals. As if any reminder of his brilliance were required, on Sunday he scored a wonderful late winner for Barcelona against Atletico Madrid.

'INCREDIBLE YEAR' FOR RAPINOE

This is just the second year that a women's Ballon d'Or — voted for by 48 journalists — has been awarded, with Rapinoe succeeding Norway's Ada Hegerberg. Rapinoe was the star of the Women's World Cup on, and off, the field, winning the Golden Boot for top scorer, with six goals, and Golden Ball for best player.

She scored the opening goal as the USA beat the Netherlands 2-0 in the final. But the 34-year-old feminist icon made headlines with her outspoken criticism of US President Donald Trump during the tournament and has led calls for her team to be paid the same as their male counterparts.

"It's been an incredible year," said Rapinoe in a recorded video message. "I want to say a huge thank you to my team-mates, the coaches, the US Soccer Federation, for all of the support to allow me to be who I am and do what I do on the field but also be the person who I am off the field." Rapinoe was one of four members of the US side that lifted the World Cup to be nominated for the prize, along with Tobin Heath, Rose Lavelle and Alex Morgan, who finished third on Monday. England's Lucy Bronze came second. Dutch defender Matthijs de Ligt, the ex-Ajax star now at Juventus, succeeded Kylian Mbappe as the winner of the Kopa Trophy for the best player aged under 21. — AFP



PARIS: A video of Reign FC's US midfielder Megan Rapinoe is displayed after she won the Ballon d'Or France Football 2019 women's trophy at the Chatelet Theatre in Paris.

Bucks' winning streak reaches twelve games

MILWAUKEE: Giannis Antetokounmpo totaled 29 points and 15 rebounds in 22 minutes Monday night as the host Milwaukee Bucks easily extended their winning streak to 12 games with a wire-to-wire, 132-88 rout of the New York Knicks. Antetokounmpo recorded his 20th double-double in 21 games, getting his latest one in 15 minutes into the first half when the Bucks asserted their will. The only time Antetokounmpo failed to get a double-double was two nights ago, when he finished a rebound shy on Saturday in Milwaukee's 41-point win over Charlotte. Antetokounmpo shot 10 of 14 from the floor, hit three 3-pointers and did not play for the final 16:54, spending the entire fourth quarter cheering on his teammates, including his brother Thanasis. D.J. Wilson added a career-high 19 points and Khris Middleton finished with 16 points for Milwaukee, which shot 55.8 percent and hit 16 3-point-

ers. Julius Randle led the Knicks with 19 points, but New York's other four starters — Kevin Knox, Taj Gibson, RJ Barrett, and Dennis Smith Jr. — combined for 18 points on 5-of-33 shooting. The Knicks lost their seventh game in a row.

SUNS 109, HORNETS 104

Kelly Oubre Jr. hit two 3-point baskets in the final minute to rescue Phoenix, which blew a big lead and then recovered to win at Charlotte. Oubre finished with 23 points, missing the first seven of his 3-point attempts before hitting twice from long range in the last minute. Booker also had 23 points, while Dario Saric posted 16 points and 10 rebounds and Frank Kaminsky and Mikal Bridges both had 12 points. Marvin Williams scored 22 points off the bench for Charlotte. The Hornets received 15 points and 13 assists from Graham. Terry Rozier had 13 points while P.J. Washington and Cody Zeller both finished with 11 points.

76ERS 103, JAZZ 94

Tobias Harris scored 26 points and grabbed nine rebounds, and Al Horford added 17 points to lift host Philadelphia past Utah. Joel Embiid contributed 16 points and 11 rebounds while Ben Simmons had 14 points, nine

assists, eight rebounds and four steals for the Sixers, who improved to a league-best 10-0 at home. The Sixers won their fourth game in a row. Rudy Gobert paced the Jazz with a season-high 27 points to go along with 12 rebounds while Donovan Mitchell added 18 points. Joe Ingles had 13 points, eight assists and eight rebounds.

HAWKS 104, WARRIORS 79

Trae Young scored 24 points and helped Atlanta break its 10-game losing streak with a win over visiting Golden State. It was the largest margin of victory for Atlanta this season, easily besting the previous high of 17 points against Detroit on Oct. 24. Young reached the 20-point mark for the 18th time this season, and extended his streak of making at least 10 field goals to six games. Rookie De'Andre Hunter scored 18 points but left the game with five minutes remaining and went to the locker room with a hand injury. Golden State got 24 points from Eric Paschall, who has scored in double figures in 11 straight games, the most by a Warriors rookie since Klay Thompson went 14 straight in 2012. Paschall added nine rebounds and six assists.

PACERS 117, GRIZZLIES 104

Seven Pacers players scored in double figures,

Domantas Sabonis flirted with a triple-double, and visiting Indiana defeated Memphis. The Pacers shot 50 percent from the floor, and 16 of 38 (42.1 percent) from behind the 3-point arc. Central to the outstanding night from long range, reserves Justin Holiday and Aaron Holiday had 15 and 11 points, respectively. They combined to make eight of Indiana's 3-pointers. Malcolm Brogdon, who scored a team-high 19 points, also led the squad with nine assists. Grizzlies center Jaren Jackson Jr. led all scorers with 31 points, marking his first 30-plus-point effort of the season.

BULLS 113, KINGS 106

Lauri Markkanen stalled a Sacramento flurry with four free throws, and Zach LaVine buried a rally-killing 3-pointer with 1:15 remaining as visiting Chicago held off the Kings. In ending a three-game losing streak, the Bulls led by as many as 19 points and were still up 92-79 with 9:01 remaining before Sacramento, much as it had done Saturday in a dramatic win over Denver, came on strong. LaVine had a game-high 28 points and Markkanen 20 to pace the Bulls, who lost at Golden State and Portland to begin a three-game western swing. Buddy Hield totaled a team-high 26 points for the Kings. — Reuters