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Premier visits Audit Bureau as part of fight against corruption

Lawmakers, clerics launch amnesty campaign

Volvo Cars changes hands from Al-Mutawa to Al-Kharafi



KUWAIT: Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi (left) and Ahmad A Aziz Al-Mutawa shake hands after signing the Volvo Cars transfer agreement.

KUWAIT: Al-Qurain Automotive, part of the A Aziz Ali Al-Mutawa Group of Companies, announced that it has mutually agreed with Volvo Cars and BNK Automotive, owned by Bader Al-Kharafi, the transfer of the Volvo Cars agency while retaining the Volvo truck and bus businesses. Earlier this year, following a rigorous selection process by the Swedish manufacturer, BNK Automotive was selected as the new official exclusive importer of the Swedish emblem.

The epitome of true Kuwaiti family tradition and culture, Ahmad A Aziz Al-Mutawa and Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi ensured that from the onset of the process, respect and professionalism were at the highest standard. Following the signing of the new agency agreement in September 2019, both parties entered into an agreement which would secure a smooth transition of the agency while protecting the interest of Volvo Cars as well as its customers in Kuwait. (See Page 11)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah yesterday visited the Audit Bureau as part of his efforts to beef up the fight against corruption. He said that his visit comes in implementation of HH the Amir's directives to fight corruption and protect public funds. He held talks with head of the Audit Bureau Faisal Al-Shaye and his deputy Abdulaziz Al-Saraawi.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled commended the vital role of the bureau in safeguarding public funds. He said he agreed with the head of the bureau to strengthen cooperation in the coming period and follow up all issues that constitute a flagrant violation against public funds, saying it will be accorded special importance. The premier, who has already visited the judicial council and the National Assembly before forming his first Cabinet, said he will visit the tenders committee and the legal and legislative department in a bid to strengthen their respective roles.

Meanwhile, a number of opposition MPs and clerics launched a campaign titled "we want a comprehensive pardon" and issued a document asking people to sign it. The campaign was launched at a public rally held by



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets Audit Bureau chief Faisal Al-Shaye and his deputy Abdulaziz Al-Saraawi yesterday during a visit to the Audit Bureau. — KUNA

MP Mohammad Al-Mutair, who placed the document at his residence for people to sign. The document appeals to the government and HH the Amir to issue a pardon against a number of opposition activists and former MPs who were handed heavy jail sentences for

storming the Assembly building or for writing comments deemed offensive on social media. Several MPs have urged the new prime minister to begin his new term in office by agreeing to an amnesty law and work for national reconciliation.

Qatar, Saudi edge towards thaw despite hurdles

DOHA: The Saudi monarch's personal invitation to Qatar's amir to take part in a Gulf summit in Riyadh next week is the latest sign of a highly anticipated thaw in a damaging two-year row. Observers are eagerly awaiting Qatar's response, which could pave the way for a "reconciliation conference" despite the many hurdles that obstruct the path to a detente. "Signs that a reconciliation is

impending are multiplying," said Kristian Ulrichsen, a fellow at Rice University's Baker Institute in the United States.

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. Doha vehemently denies the charges. Fittingly for a spat that involves the host nation of the 2022 World Cup, many of the peace overtures center on football.

The three Gulf boycott countries are currently taking part in a regional tournament in Qatar after they announced their participation at the last minute, leading to speculation about an imminent diplomatic breakthrough. Saudi

Arabia, which has also sealed its land border with Qatar, will play the hosts at the Gulf Cup semi-finals today. The Saudi team symbolically flew straight to Doha despite the ban on direct flights, although the UAE team still made the obligatory stop in a third country.

And in the latest olive branch, Bahrain's football association said it will fly two plane-loads of supporters to see their semi-final clash against Iraq today. "The way the tournament is being covered by media and prominent commentators in the blockading states is strikingly different in tone from anything we've seen over the past two years," said Ulrichsen. "(It) may be indicative of a deeper shift in attitudes toward the rift."

Continued on Page 24

News in brief

Terminal 3 closes next month

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Airport's Sheikh Saad Terminal 3 (T3) will be closed for construction of a new passenger terminal (T2) starting in January, the country's civil aviation authority said yesterday. The road leading to T3 will also be closed, while all flights of Dubai-based budget carrier Flydubai will shift to Terminal 1 from Dec 15 onwards, it added. — KUNA

India cabinet clears nationality bill

NEW DELHI: India's cabinet signed off yesterday on legislation that stands to give citizenship to certain religious minorities but not Muslims, in what critics say is a fresh attempt to sideline the 200-million-strong Islamic community. Shashi Tharoor from the main opposition Congress party told reporters yesterday that the bill "violated" the basic idea of a secular India as pushed by Mahatma Gandhi. "It is simple. Citizenship CAN NOT be determined by or linked to religion," tweeted Sitaram Yechury, a senior politician from Communist Party of India. — AFP

Early cholesterol treatment key

PARIS: Treating younger people with high cholesterol levels may help reduce their risk of heart attack or stroke in later life, a major study showed yesterday. The study in *The Lancet* said that starting with the same cholesterol level and additional cardiovascular risk factors - such as obesity or smoking - men under 45 years faced a 29 percent risk of fatal or non-fatal heart disease or stroke by the age of 75. For women, the risk level was 16 percent. However, if their non-HDL (ie "bad") cholesterol levels were halved, typically by the use of statins, the men's risk came down to 6.0 percent and women fell to just 4.0 percent. — AFP

'Brain dead' NATO summit hit by feuds

WATFORD, United Kingdom: The leaders of the world's most powerful military alliance clashed over personality and policy yesterday as NATO's summit ended with an effort to paper over their sharp divisions. Meeting outside London to mark the 70th year of the Atlantic alliance, the members vowed to stick together against threats from Russia and terrorism and recognized the challenge of a rising China.

But the bad blood continued to the end of the two-day get together, with US President Donald Trump branding Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau "two-faced" after a group of allied lead-

ers were caught on video at a Buckingham Palace reception mocking the US leaders' rambling press appearances. Trump cancelled his planned final news conference to fly directly back to Washington and into a political storm as opposition Democrat lawmakers issued a report calling for his impeachment.

Despite his anger, he appeared content with the result of the summit, boasting of having convinced his European allies to boost defense spending and Turkey to drop its objections to the adoption of an updated defense plan for the Baltic states and Poland.

The second day of the get together began with the release of a video showing Trudeau, France's President Emmanuel Macron, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the Netherlands' Mark Rutte joking together about how Trump had delayed the previous days meetings.

Continued on Page 24

Japanese firm develops fine spray-on skin

TOKYO: A Japanese cosmetics company yesterday unveiled what it said was the world's first spray-on skin, a moisturizing facemask made of fibers one-100th the thickness of a human hair. After applying an absorbent lotion, users spray the fibers onto their face and a thin translucent sheet is quickly formed, acting as a "greenhouse" for the real skin below to soak up the moisture and still be able to breathe. The "second skin" can be worn overnight or peeled off after about a minute.

"This is the world's first cosmetic product using such technology," according to Masayuki Uchiyama, skincare researcher at Kao, the firm behind the innovation. The hand-held diffuser was 10 years in the making, said Uchiyama, who admitted: "We struggled to make the device small." Kao researchers did not initially think of using the technology of ultra-thin fibers to create a layer on the skin, he said, adding that the precise material from which they were made was a secret.

"But we learned that the skin can still breathe under the thin fibers for many hours" in an environment akin to a greenhouse. Such cutting-edge tech does not come cheap though, with each diffuser costing 50,000 yen (\$460). Nevertheless, Kao predicts cosmetic sales could reach 100 billion yen if the technology is applied to the medical field. — AFP



WATFORD: NATO heads of government pose for a family photo at the NATO summit at the Grove Hotel yesterday. — AFP



TOKYO: An employee of Japanese cosmetics company Kao removes a super thin transparent layer after using a palm-sized diffuser on her face yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwait calls Iraq to exercise more control to stop violence

Confront those who seek to harm Iraq and its people: Kuwait's envoy

NEW YORK: Kuwait called for more self-control and refrain from using violence during demonstrations in Iraq, expressing hope that fellow Arab country will overcome the current exceptional circumstances. This came in a speech by Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi on Tuesday evening during a session of the Security Council on the situation in Iraq.

Otaibi called for confronting all those who seek to harm Iraq and its people, provoke sedition, destabilize security and stability, target demonstrators and destroy public and private property. "What happened in the past was a sign of the unity of the Iraqi people in all political orientations and ethnic and sectarian affiliations to eliminate the so-called Islamic State (IS) and overcome the darkest and most difficult circumstances," he said. He wished the Iraqi people continued stability and prosperity and welcomed the steps taken by the Iraqi government to meet the aspirations of the Iraqi people, ease the tension by forming a commission of inquiry into the use of force against demonstrators, and bring those responsible for violations to justice.

Great interest

"As a neighboring country, we are following with great interest the developments in Iraq after demonstrations erupted several weeks ago," Otaibi added, expressing regret to the loss of thousands of civilian and security forces, and extended condolences to the families of the victims. "Iraq is on an important stage to recover, and fully aware of the great circumstances and challenges facing it, it is important to address

them through a peaceful and constructive dialogue," he said.

Otaibi stressed that Kuwait is well aware of the difficulty of this stage and will spare no effort to stand by Iraq and help provide support in the context of their efforts to address internal challenges. In this regard, he welcomed the vital role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) to strengthen those efforts through consultation with the three Iraqi presidencies to find reforms in line with the legal and constitutional frameworks, and meets the demands of the Iraqi people.

On the other hand, Otaibi reaffirmed the importance of resolving the issue of missing Kuwaitis and missing of other nationals, which has been going on for nearly 29 years. He urged the members of the Security Council to continue their supportive stances and serious efforts to find a solution to end the suffering of the families of missing persons. He pointed to the positive contribution of the United Kingdom, France and the United States in providing UNAMI with maps and archival materials dating from 1990-1991. He expressed Kuwait appreciation to the constructive cooperation shown by the Iraqi government within the framework of the tripartite committee and its technical committee, headed by the International Committee of the Red

Cross (ICRC).

With regard to Kuwaiti properties, Otaibi praised the efforts of the Iraqi authorities and those who contributed to facilitating the return of Kuwaiti property, which reached 200,000 books. He pointed out many lists that have been submitted in previous periods and have not been retrieved, the most important of which is the National Archives of the Amiri Diwan, the Crown Prince's Court, His Highness the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that were looted during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Some date back to the 19th century. "While expressing our appreciation for the commitment shown by Iraq in fulfilling all its remaining international

obligations, we also express our sincere desire to terminate the remaining of those obligations," he said. "We are confident that Iraq's implementation of its remaining international obligations under the umbrella of the United Nations will broaden the horizon of a solid relationship based on respect for relevant Security Council resolutions," he proceeded.

Kuwait's stance

In the meantime, Iraq expressed its gratitude towards the State of Kuwait's stance within the UNSC on issues pertaining to the Arab world — an effort, which bol-



BASRA: An Iraqi demonstrator with make-up to represent violence takes part in an anti-government march in the center of the southern city of Basra on December 2, 2019. —AFP

stered regional and international stability and security. Iraq's permanent representative to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mohammad Bahr Al-Ulum delivered this praise during a UNSC session on the situation in Iraq. The Iraqi diplomat said that cooperation with Kuwait was within the top priorities for Iraq, stressing that his country was willing to fulfill its commitment to the UNSC and its resolutions.

Relations with Kuwait witnessed positive developments recently especially with the holding of joint committee meetings aimed

at overcoming obstacles and bolstering ties, affirmed Ambassador Bahr Al-Ulum. In regards to the internal situation in Iraq, the Iraqi diplomat denied that security forces had used excessive force against protestors in the country, blaming "outlaw groups" for steering controversy. He affirmed that Iraq would look into the demands of the protestors, focusing on efforts to rectify the political and economic situation in the country through reforms. Popular protests began in Iraq on October first and resumed since the 25th of the month, forcing the Iraqi government to resign last Friday. —KUNA



Iraq lauds Kuwait's UNSC stance

Kuwait underlines commitment to UN, multilateralism

BRUSSELS: Kuwait has repeated its strong support to the United Nations Organization and Multilateralism in order to contribute in fostering to international peace and security. This position was expressed by Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium, the EU and NATO Jassem Al-Budaiwi at a meeting of the 10 non-permanent members of the UNSC (called E10 Dialogue) co-hosted by Belgium, Kuwait and Tunisia in Brussels Tuesday evening.

"All of us who are privileged to become members of the UN Security Council, shoulder the responsibility of contributing to the maintenance of international Peace and Security, by working together," he said. "Kuwait believes that it is our responsibility all as elected members to continue to find avenues that are unexplored, foster dialogue, and work towards finding solutions armed with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations," stressed Budaiwi.

"Kuwait is honored to co-host this dialogue with the Kingdom of Belgium and the Republic of Tunisia in order to share with you all our experiences and the ways in which Kuwait tried to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Security Council," said Budaiwi who led the Kuwait delegation to the two-day meeting. While Kuwait has had many experiences in the Security Council, said Budaiwi, he highlighted three points: working towards a more equitable and fair division of labor, foster greater collaboration amongst all its members and to ensure the unity of the UNSC.

"Kuwait would like to once again congratulate the incoming elected members of the Security Council, some of whom are veterans and some who will join the Council for the first time and assure you all of Kuwait's readiness to assist you and your teams throughout your membership," said Budaiwi. Philippe Goffin, the new Belgian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defense, opened the 'E10 Dialogue' saying the meeting aims to increase cooperation between elected members and to contribute as such to the efficient functioning of the Security Council. "Our country is organizing the meeting together with Kuwait, which will complete



BRUSSELS: Belgian foreign minister Philippe Goffin (left) with Kuwait's Ambassador Jassem Al-Budaiwi. — KUNA

its two-year mandate on December 31, and Tunisia, which will join on January 1, 2020," he said. This is only the second time that a similar initiative has been taken, he noted.

Goffin spoke of "positive cooperation" with Kuwait at the UN Security Council, noting that this two-day meeting brings together the 10 current elected members of the UN Security Council and the five incoming elected members. "In the current context of uncertainty and struggles between superpowers, the efforts of elected members to work in a consensual manner are only becoming more important," Goffin said. "With the organization of the E10 consultations, our country contributes to the increasing cooperation between the elected members of the UNSC and tries to strengthen the transfer of knowledge and to exchange experiences," said the Belgian top diplomat. The second edition of the E10 Dialogue was titled "advancing the efficiency and credibility of the UN Security Council, sharing knowledge and experiences." South Africa and Sweden organized the first E10 Dialogue in Pretoria in November last year.

In the meantime, acting Tunisian foreign minister Sabri Bachlobji in a video message from Tunisia, congratulated Kuwait for its "successful mandate in the Security Council," commending Kuwait's efforts to improve the working methods of the Council. He praised Belgium and Kuwait for creating and strengthening this E10 group. Ambassador Sahbi Khalfallah, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tunisia, who attended the Brussels meeting said that "we see cooperation with Kuwait as very, very important."

"Actually the cooperation and consultations between the two countries has already started. We look forward to continue the good work as our Kuwaiti brothers did and are still doing in New York and hopefully we will continue this cooperation even after our mandate starts," he noted. The 10 elected members of the UNSC are currently: Belgium, Dominican Republic, Germany, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, Ivory Coast, Kuwait, Peru, Poland, and South Africa. The incoming members are Estonia, Niger, Saint-Vincent and the Grenadines, Tunisia, Vietnam. — KUNA

Kuwaiti students take part in UN simulation program

GENEVA: A group of six Kuwaiti students participated in the Model UN simulation program in Geneva during the period from November 29 to December 2. In a statement on Tuesday, Kuwait's Representative to the UN Office and other International Organizations in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim hailed the effective participation of the Kuwaiti students in the program. He noted that that Kuwaiti students Radhab Marzouq and Abdullah Khuraibet were honored by the program for their outstanding research papers on elimination of all forms of racial and religious discrimination and monitoring compliance with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Moreover, students Abdulwahab Al-Othman and Lian Al-Ayoubi were elected to the posts of UN secretary general and president of the Security Council Committee respectively. — KUNA



GENEVA: Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim with Kuwaiti students. — KUNA

Kuwait supports Palestinians' rights



HEBRON: Palestinian youths run from tear gas smoke fired by Israeli security forces on November 26, 2019 during clashes in the West Bank city of Hebron. — AFP

NEW YORK: Kuwait praised steadfastness of struggled Palestinians and affirmed its solidarity as well as full support for them to regain their legitimate political rights. This came during a speech delivered by Advisor of the Kuwaiti permanent mission in the UN Nawaf Al-Ahmad before UN General Assembly session on the question of Palestine. Ahmad reaffirmed Kuwait's support of the Palestinian people to establish an independent state, with East Jerusalem as its capital and setting a deadline to end the Israeli occupation according to international laws and regulations. He reiterated Kuwait's call on sponsors of the Middle East peace process, to intensify efforts to pressure Israel to abide by the resolutions of international legitimacy.

Ahmad also stressed the UN responsibility to find solutions towards Palestinians and refugees. Also, hoping that Palestine would soon be the 194th member of the UN. Kuwait position on Palestinian issue is

a great importance, which is discussed every year on UN General Assembly agenda, and coincides with the celebration of the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, he added. Ahmad pointed out that "after half a century of practices contrary to all humane, moral and legal principles, the policy of barbarism adopted by the Israeli occupation authorities to bring about a change in the demographic nature of the Palestinian territories is renewed."

In addition, the Israel aggression through forced displacement, land and property confiscation and expansion, as well as construction of settlements and ignoring all international norms, blocks the peace process between the two sides, he noted. Israel must abide by all resolutions relating to the protection of civilians in armed conflict, including recommendations of the report of the Secretary General in this regard, as well as its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 as an occupying power, he concluded. —KUNA

Gaza launches Kuwait-funded wastewater plant

GAZA: A Kuwait-funded wastewater treatment station in Khan Yunis City in the southern Gaza Strip has commenced trial operation, the Palestinian Water Authority (PWA) said yesterday. The first phase of the project was launched in early 2017 with a capacity of roughly 27,000 cubic meters of water per day, the PWA's Chairman Mazen Ghuneim said in a press statement carried by the Palestinian News

and Information Agency (Wafa). Funded by the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED), the plant costs a total \$55 million, he said, adding that the facility would be officially launched in the first quarter of next year. The plant will contribute to providing treated wastewater to more than 200,000 people in Khan Yunis City, which has suffered so much due to poor basic services. — KUNA

Local

Prime Minister meets audit, fatwa, tenders authorities' officials

In implementation of Amir's directives to fight corruption, protect public funds

Minister echoes Kuwait compliance with oil cut deal

VIENNA: Kuwaiti Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fahdel yesterday restated his country's compliance with an oil production cut agreement concluded by OPEC and non-OPEC members. Speaking upon arrival in Vienna to attend the 177th Meeting of the OPEC Conference, the Kuwaiti minister stressed that it is important to ensure a balanced global oil policy. He said the agenda of the meeting due on Thursday involves a bevy of issues, mainly deepening oil production cuts, reaffirming Kuwait's eagerness to keep oil markets balanced in a way that serves the interests of producers and consumers alike. The Kuwaiti minister believed that a \$60-70 price per oil barrel is fair to producers and consumers, underlining that it is necessary to

maintain stable prices and fend off fluctuations. Fadhel is in Vienna to partake in several OPEC meetings, along with a meeting between OPEC and non-OPEC officials. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) meets today in Vienna followed by a meeting with Russia and others, a grouping known as OPEC+, tomorrow. OPEC+ has been trying to curtail oil output since 2017 to counter oversupply as a result of booming output in the United States, which has become the world's biggest producer and is not taking part in OPEC output cuts. Hammered out in July, the current output cut deal expires in March 2020 and is expected to be extended at least until June. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in a group photo with State Audit Bureau officials. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday at Seif Palace the Head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department Salah Hussein Al-Mesad. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also received separately yesterday the Chairman of the Central Tenders Committee (CTC) Abdullah Saud Al-

Abdulrazzaq, before paying a visit to the State Audit Bureau. These visits and receptions came in implementation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's directives to fight corruption and protect public funds, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said in a statement to the press. His Highness

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled had earlier met with Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa, as well as National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem to coordinate on efforts to fight corruption in implementation of His Highness the Amir's directives. — KUNA

Palestinian official honors Kuwaiti Speaker



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem receives a commemorative plaque from Director of the Palestinian Judicial Institute (PJI) Judge Kifah Al-Shouli. — KUNA

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem received yesterday Director of the Palestinian Judicial Institute (PJI) Judge Kifah Al-Shouli, on his visit to the country. Shouli presented to Ghanem a com-

memorative plaque in honor of latter's principled stance on the Palestinian cause at regional and international parliamentary forums, supporting Palestinians struggle against the Israeli occupation. — KUNA

KIPCO diamond sponsor of New Kuwait Summit

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - has announced that it will be the Diamond Sponsor of the New Kuwait Summit 2019. The event, held under the auspices of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, will take place on December 10-11. Borgan Bank, Gulf Insurance Group and Qurain Petrochemical Industries Company will also be supporting the summit, titled 'Steering Kuwait towards a better tomorrow.'

The summit seeks to present a platform from which the world can view Kuwait, as it will attract insightful debate and information around the seven pillars identified in the National Development Plan, namely Kuwait's global position, infrastructure, human capital, public



Faisal Al-Ayyar

administration, healthcare, economy and living environment.

Speaking on this occasion, Faisal Al-Ayyar, KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive), said: "We are delighted to be supporting this nation's vision, New Kuwait 2035, through this sponsorship. In order to realize this vision, it is vital to bring together all stakeholders so that they may engage and create partnerships that will serve to propel Kuwait forward and realize its potential. The panels will be an opportunity to shed light on the efforts of the government and the public sector and outline the instrumental role that

private sector will play in the National Development Plan, which holds the keys to a prosperous future for our future generations."

Kuwaitis partake in Qatar dhow festival

DOHA: Kuwaitis are taking part in a traditional dhow festival in Qatar, organized by local cultural center 'Katara.' The two-week event, which kicked off on Tuesday, includes an 11-nation line-up and aims, specifically, to "showcase the authentic maritime traditions inspired by Qatar's past ancestors." At their own booth, Kuwaitis are displaying traditional

diving equipment, antiques and manuscripts common to their own culture, which are closely related to their Arabian Gulf neighbors. Coinciding with the nation's hosting of the Arabian Gulf Cup, the event will look to entice attending fans of the much-loved regional football tournament, Katara Director Khaled Al-Selaiti said. — KUNA



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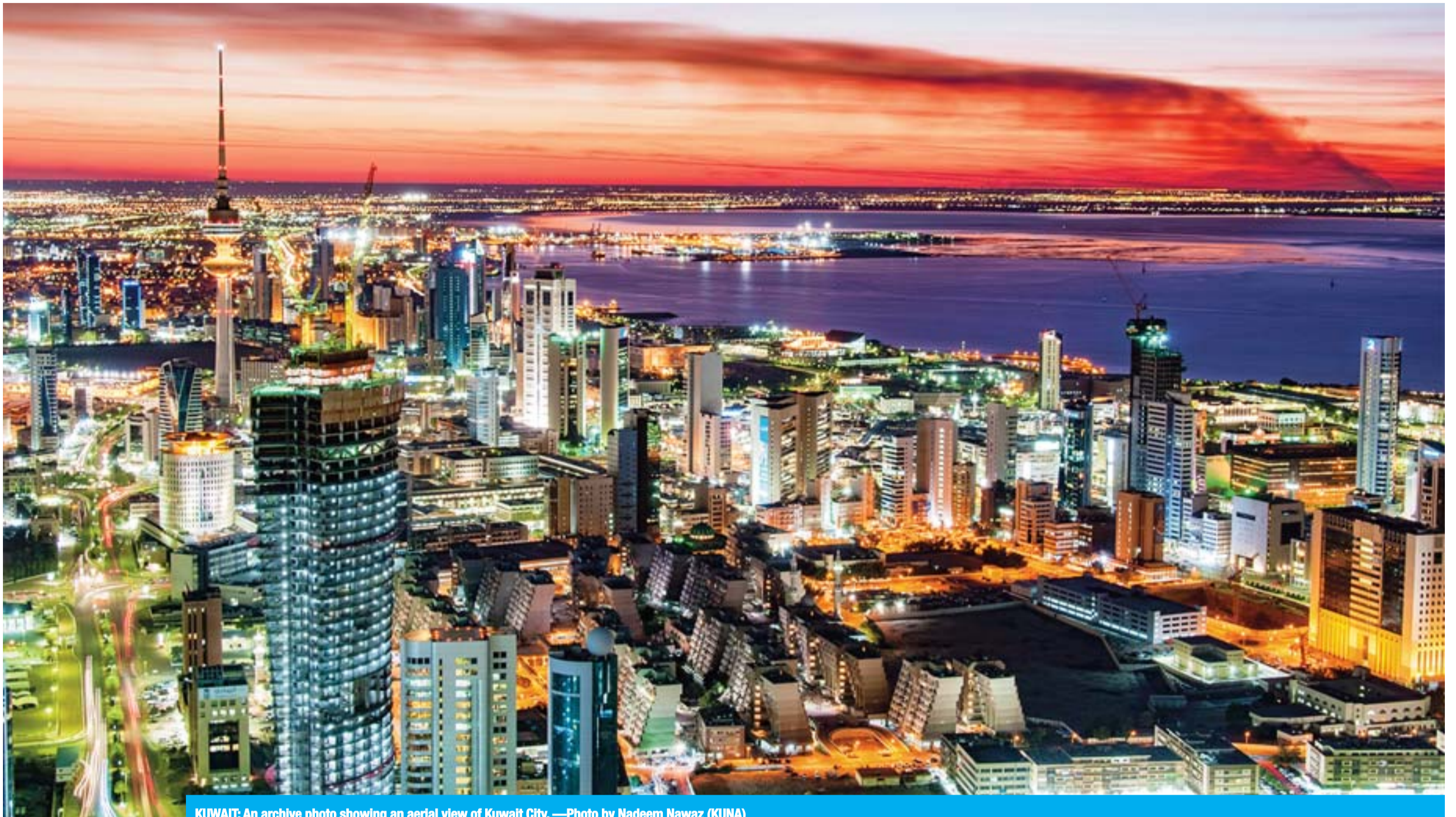
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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: An archive photo showing an aerial view of Kuwait City. —Photo by Nadeem Nawaz (KUNA)

Zain community partner of Qout Market's seventh season

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KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its Community Partnership of the seventh season of Qout Market; Kuwait's largest artisanal farmers gathering. This year, the event will take place at Abraj Park in Adailiya starting Saturday, December 7, 2019 from 9 am - 5 pm, and will continue until March 2020.

Zain is eager to play a vital role by partnering with Qout Market as part of its ongoing efforts of empowering local talents who contribute to shouldering the national economy. The company's solid and well-focused Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy continuously works towards identifying initiatives like Qout Market that carry a clear objective of developing local talents.

As it does every year, Zain will be participating in the event via its own dedicated booth, where the company will showcase its latest promotions for the enterprise sector, mainly small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) from the market's vendors and visitors. Zain will also dedicate a section of its booth for interactive video games, exciting competitions, and valuable prizes.

Qout, the community-based farmers market, helps and supports local farmers and artisans to exchange thoughts and ideas while offering the opportunity for visitors to express their opinions towards the products available. Qout Market has a proven record of success, having attracted nearly 18,000 visitors in previous years per season. The market's selection of vendors includes a combination of fresh produced items as well as handmade items where people can stop by to enjoy on the spot.

Gulf Bank partners with Qout Market

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing efforts to support the community and the development of the local economy, Gulf Bank is sponsoring this year's Qout Market. This Market, which is currently in its seventh season, will take place this Saturday, December 7, 2019 at Abraj Park in Adailiya. As a title sponsor, Gulf Bank will be hosting an exciting entertainment area with a variety of activities in which guests can win prizes and more.

Qout Market will host a variety of artisanal crafts, restaurants, farm produce, and other businesses owned by young entrepreneurs, who use this opportunity to showcase their fresh goods to the market's visitors. Local chefs are also often present at the market, offering freshly prepared meals to market-goers. Qout Market is set to take place at Abraj Park in Adailiya over the course of four Saturdays from December to March, and will be open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. The first market will take place this weekend on December 7 followed by markets on January 11, February 8, and March 7.

Commenting on this year's Qout Market, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of External



Zain expressed its ongoing keenness in supporting events that uplift local talents to higher levels, by encouraging outstanding projects and ideas. Zain's support is aimed at investing in the creative abilities of Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, preparing them to engage in the business world by encouraging them further and nurturing innovation within their businesses.

Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "Last year, we had the incredible opportunity of partnering with Qout Market, and were fortunate to meet so many inspiring young and local talents in the process. After witnessing the tremendous success of last year's Qout Market nothing makes us prouder than being a part of such a vibrant and creative local community, and an event that is looked forward to by kids and adults alike. Much like how Qout Market has managed to create this safe, creative space through their seasonal markets, we also recognize our role as larger enterprises to nourish this sense of community and engage with small businesses. We're anticipating yet another beautiful day out in the park, and are looking forward to checking out all the unique concepts this year's vendors are bringing to the table."

Qout Market, an artisanal farmer's market established in 2013 with the aim of empowering the local community through seasonal initiatives, focuses on small and medium-sized vendors specializing in farm produce, artisanal crafts and locally made food products.



Ahmad Al-Amir

Local

KFAED signs agreement to develop 400-kV transmission network in Bahrain

Part of GCC program to improve Bahrain's economic situation

MANAMA: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed yesterday a KD 29.5 million (\$100 million) loan agreement with Bahrain to help finance the development of a 400-kilovolt (kV) transmission network. Present at the signing of the loan agreement was KFAED's Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader, Bahraini Minister of Finance and Economy Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa and Bahraini Minister of Electricity and Water Affairs Wael Al-Mubarak.

Bader told the press on the sidelines of the signing that this agreement came within the financial balance program signed by Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and UAE last year with Bahrain, for the next five years to improve the economic situation.

KFAED is administering grants provided by Kuwait's government worth \$1.5 billion, under the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Development Program, he added. The Fund's loan covers about 10.5 percent of the project's total cost, he said, stressing that the project was financed under loan agreement No. 1/62 of \$261 million. The total contribution of the fund to the project is equivalent to about KD 140.8 million. He explained that the project aims to reduce the high short currents for the safe operation of equipment, provide greater flexibility in the network, and

transfer electricity power reliably and economically.

Bader added that it aimed to raise the capacity and efficiency of the electricity transmission network, as well as exchange electricity with the Gulf interconnection network economically. The project includes the construction of three substations of 220/400 kV in Al-Hidd, Umm Al-Hassam and Riffa areas and a 400 kV substation in Ras Legrain area, he added. It contributes to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7 on attaining clean energy at affordable prices, he noted.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa thanked Kuwait for its great and unlimited support to the development process in his country. He commended the

historic ties between both sides, noting the role played by KFAED in supporting various economic development processes in Arab countries. KFAED's loan for the 400kV power transmission networks project represents the Fund's 18th loan to finance projects in Bahrain. It is worth mentioning that KFAED provided 17 loans with a total value of about KD 150 million (about \$510 million) to finance projects in various sectors, in addition to 13 grants worth KD 33.7 million (approximately \$115 million). Withdrawals from loans amounted to KD 149 million

Loan covers 10.5% of project's cost



MANAMA: KFAED's Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader (left), Bahraini Minister of Finance and Economy Sheikh Salman bin Khalifa (center) and Bahraini Minister of Electricity and Water Affairs Wael Al-Mubarak sign the agreement. — KUNA

and repayments amounted to KD 98 million, or 66 percent of repayment obligations.

The signing ceremony was attended by Bahraini Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Khaled bin Abdullah Al-Khalifa and Kuwait's Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The finance minis-

ters of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and UAE signed last year the framework arrangements for financial cooperation between their governments and Bahrain's government by contributing \$10 billion in financing and soft loans to the financial balance program aimed at stabilizing the public finances of Bahrain. — KUNA

100% Kuwaitization of social ministry's supervisory posts

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs is looking to replace expatriate experts on its payroll with retired Kuwaiti experts as part of its efforts to 'Kuwaitize' its staff in supervisory posts by 100 percent in the near future, official ministry sources said. "The policy of replacing expats with citizens was a decision made by the Cabinet, with a few exceptions given to hiring experts," said the sources who spoke on the condition of

anonymity. "But the ministry is now working on replacing those expat employees with retired Kuwaiti expert."

This step comes after senior ministry officials gave orders to cut down the number of expats in supervision, administrative and legal positions, and fill those vacancies with Kuwaitis in order to achieve full 'Kuwaitization' of these posts within three years at most, the sources explained. "It is not hard to reach that percentage," the sources remarked, noting that many graduates are awaiting recruitment whereas there are plenty of sectors which are already overcrowded with unnecessary employees who could be redeployed and used in understaffed sectors.

However, the sources stressed that expats providing service in various social care houses would keep their jobs, especially since there is not enough qualified Kuwaiti staff ready to replace them at the moment. "All supervisors and administrative staff members in social care houses are filled with citizens, and the expats cur-

rently working there will be dismissed within the three-year period," the sources said, noting that 600 citizens had so far been appointed in co-op societies, that co-ops are fully cooperating in this regard and that the ball is now in the courts of citizens willing to work there.

In other news, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said owners of financial and non-financial businesses (precious metals, jewelry, insurance, money exchange and real estate) must establish a commercial and electronic contracting system according to the requirements of fighting money laundering and terrorism financing before the start of the new year. The ministry urged them to comply with ministerial decree 323 for 2019 and related decisions. The ministry warned that in case of not complying with the procedures in law 106 for 2013 with regards to fighting money laundering and terrorism financing, penalties may reach up to revocation of the license and referral to the public prosecution.

36 truckloads of trash removed in Jleeb campaign

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Joint Ministerial Committee for the follow up of the current situation in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, headed by Kuwait Municipality's Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi, continued its intense campaign in the area, especially in street 55 in Block 5. In this regard, supervisors at Farwaniya municipality branch, in cooperation with the Public Authority for Manpower and Interior Ministry, carried out a campaign yesterday which resulted in the removal of 36 truckloads of trash, 15 truckloads of used tires, as well as two truckloads of vegetables and fruits that were being sold in unlicensed markets, besides arresting a number of unlicensed butchers. Meanwhile, 16 shops and cafes were closed, while five citations were issued against shops whose owners started their businesses before obtaining municipality approvals. The campaign was headed by Farwaniya branch director Mohammad Sarkhouth, Director of Cleanliness and Road Occupancy Saad Al-Khuraiej.

Kuwait police arrest trio for forging banknotes

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Criminal investigation detectives recently arrested a gang of three; two Africans and one European, for forging money and circulating the fake notes in the local market. Detectives were tipped off concerning the suspects' activities, before a special investigation team verified the tip and managed to identify and locate the suspects. They were later on arrested with possession of fake KD 20 and \$100 bills, in addition to special tools they used in the forgery process, the Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Media Department said in a statement. The suspects were sent to the proper authorities for further action.

Visa trafficking

Criminal detectives busted a six-member gang for trading in visas by bringing in Asian laborers in exchange of money. The head of the gang was arrested at Kuwait International Airport while leaving the country. The six had several passports, entry visas, work permits and signature authorizations, all believed to be forged. They were sent to concerned authorities.



KUWAIT: Forged banknotes found with the suspects.

Sentence commuted

The second circuit of the appeals court commuted to four years a 17-year jail sentence against a Kuwaiti suspect who beat an Egyptian store worker named Waheed and attempted to kill him. The court upheld the ruling that Waheed is innocent of insulting and beating the citizen.

KFSD conducts fire drills in various locations

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) conducted a number of fire drills in various locations recently to make sure the concerned installations were ready in case of any fires or catastrophes. The first drill was made in a building under construction in Merqab in a bid to train firemen on handling fires in high towers.

The second fire drill was at Shaikha Hassan Al-Ibrahim polyclinic in Nuzha, where clinic staff were trained on how to react in case a fire breaks out in the registers room and spread to the lab. The third drill was carried out at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) headquarters in Shuwaikh while the fourth was carried out in Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company bakery in Khaitan.



Legalese

Right to travel

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed



There are many people who came to Kuwait (we refer to as expats, but I am not an advocate of that word) and have made new plans for the New Year or holiday season, whether it is to travel for the holidays or to start a new life outside of Kuwait. Before I discuss the right to travel for what we refer to as expats in Kuwait, I just want to say thank you to everyone that is here working in Kuwait. By being here, you are making Kuwait a better place, so thank you kindly and Happy Holidays.

Keeping the passport

Question: Does my employer have the right to keep my passport? And if they are, what can I do about it?

Fajer: No. Your employer does not have the right to keep your passport. This is illegal, but unfortunately seems to be a more common than expected practice in Kuwait. I have seen international companies keep passports of thousands of employees. There are monetary punishments for companies that do keep passports, yet these companies unfortunately know that it is too expensive for employees to take the companies to court.

You need to go and file a complaint in the Public Authority for Manpower. This can be a lengthy and difficult process and everything is in Arabic, so you will need a translator or lawyer. You will need to obtain different documents before you can file a complaint. Please keep in mind that it will take some time and that your employer might even be more unfair towards you knowing that you have filed a complaint. Unfortunately the best way to deal with this is through a lawyer.

Visa cancellation

Question: I am working as a contractor in my company and I have my passport, but someone told me that I need to cancel my visa before I travel, since I am leaving for good. The company is not giving me my rights such as my salary, so I want to leave. Can you please advise me what is the best solution?

Fajer: I think it is best that you cancel your work visa officially and file these complaints so you are not later on accused of absconding. Even if you are not able to cancel your visa, at least file a complaint for your rights such as your salary at the Public Authority for Manpower.

Husband's permission

Question: I am a 40-year-old Kuwaiti mother of four and I want to travel without my husband or his permission. Do I still need his permission? What about my children: do I need his permission for their travels?

Fajer: No you do not need his permission for your own travels, but you will need his permission for your children's travel even if he is no longer your husband and you have custody of your children.

For questions or queries, please email us at info@ftl-legal.com.



Kim in new horse ride through winter snows

Germany kicks out Russian diplomats over Berlin murder

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LONDON: Leaders of NATO alliance countries and its secretary general join Queen Elizabeth II and the Prince of Wales for a group picture to mark 70 years of the alliance on Tuesday. (Inset) Britain's Princess Anne talks to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson, France's President Emmanuel Macron and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg during the reception at Buckingham Palace. — AFP



NATO leaders anger Trump with mockery

US President says Trudeau 'two-faced' after hot mic row, cancels press conference

WATFORD: The leaders of Britain, Canada, France and the Netherlands were caught on camera at a Buckingham Palace reception mocking US President Donald Trump's lengthy media appearances at the NATO summit. The footage, shot by the British host's camera pool on Tuesday evening and spotted and subtitled by Canadian broadcaster CBC, set the tone for the allies' summit in Watford, just outside London.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson can be heard asking France's President Emmanuel Macron: "Is that why you were late?" Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau interjects: "He was late because he takes a 40 minute press conference off the top." Earlier Tuesday, Macron's one-on-one pre-summit meeting with Trump

had been preceded by a lengthy question and answer session with the media, as the leaders publicly disagreed about NATO strategy and trade.

In the video, Macron appears to tell an anecdote about the encounter as Britain's Princess Anne and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte look on, but the French leader's back is to camera and he is inaudible amid the hubbub. "Oh, yeah, yeah, he announced..." an amused Trudeau declares, adding: "You just watched his team's jaw drop to the floor."

As he did at last year's NATO meeting, Trump has thrown out normal summit protocol and used his appearances with allied leaders to field dozens of questions from the world's media. He has condemned as

"nasty" Macron's criticism of NATO as brain dead, branded European countries that have failed to meet military spending targets "delinquent" and railed against moves in Washington to impeach him.

After the summit, a flustered Johnson insisted that reports of the exchange were "nonsense", but Trump had clearly seen it and he was angry, particularly with the apparent ringleader, Trudeau. "He's two-faced," Trump told reporters, in yet another press appearance, this time before his head-to-head with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. "With Trudeau, he's a nice guy. I find him to be a nice guy, but the truth is, I called him out on the fact that he's not paying two percent and I guess he's not very happy about it," he said.

NATO members have a target of spending two percent of their GDP on defence, and Canada is among the majority in failing to do so. Trump had been due to give another news conference, this time on his own, later yesterday after the 29 NATO leaders hold a full three-hour closed-door summit session and issue a statement to celebrate their unity. But, despite having been only too happy to talk to the press for the two days of the meetings, he abruptly cancelled this scheduled appearance. "When today's meetings are over, I will be heading back to Washington. We won't be doing a press conference at the close of NATO because we did so many over the past two days. Safe travels to all!" he tweeted. — AFP

Japanese doctor who helped Afghans among six killed

KABUL: A Japanese doctor whose long career was dedicated to helping some of Afghanistan's poorest people was among six people killed yesterday in an attack in the east of the country, officials said. The armed assault in Jalalabad city, the capital of Nangarhar province, was the second deadly incident involving aid workers in recent days and prompted appalled reaction in Afghanistan and internationally. Tetsu Nakamura, 73, was the head of Peace Japan Medical Services - known as Peshawar Kai in Japanese - and had been working in the region since the 1980s, when he began treating patients with leprosy in Peshawar in neighbouring Pakistan.

A spokesman for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani called Nakamura "one of the closest friends of Afghanistan". He



JALALABAD: Hospital staff transfer Japanese doctor Tetsu Nakamura on a stretcher for treatment after he was injured in an attack yesterday. — AFP

"dedicated his life to helping and cooperating with our people", spokesman Sediq Seddiqi said. Attaullah Khogyani, a spokesman for Nangarhar's governor, said Nakamura, who had been shot in the chest, was in the process of being transferred to a hospital in Bagram near Kabul when he died. Five Afghans were also killed - three of Nakamura's security

guards, a driver and another colleague, Khogyani said.

The attack comes as humanitarian groups are on high alert just days after an aid worker for the UN was killed in a bombing in Kabul. On Nov 24, Anil Raj, an American who worked for the UN Development Program in Afghanistan, died when his vehicle was

targeted. In a statement condemning yesterday's incident, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan expressed "revulsion" at Nakamura's killing. It was "a senseless act of violence against a man who dedicated much of his life to helping" Afghanistan's most vulnerable, UNAMA said.

Mitsuji Fukumoto, an official with Nakamura's organization, told reporters in Tokyo the motive for the attack was unclear. "We have no idea what was the reason behind the attack, whether it was a simple robbery or whether it was conflict of interest," Fukumoto said.

War opponent

Nakamura was famous in Japan for his aid work, which dates back decades. Peshawar-kai was founded by associates of Nakamura, who had lived and worked in Afghanistan and Pakistan since 1984. In 2003 Nakamura, a native of the southwestern Japanese city of Fukuoka, won the Philippines' Ramon Magsaysay Award for peace and international understanding - often called Asia's Nobel Prize. Fond of sporting Pashtun dress, Nakamura was an outspoken opponent of the 2001 US-led war that ousted the Taliban regime, whom he defended as able administrators. — AFP

Musk defends 'pedo guy' tweet in defamation trial

LOS ANGELES: Tesla co-founder Elon Musk said Tuesday he did not literally call a British caver a pedophile during their infamous spat on Twitter, telling a Los Angeles federal court that he had simply defended himself from unprovoked insults. The tech billionaire told the defamation trial jury he had been "upset" when he described British diver Vernon Unsworth - who helped rescue youth soccer players trapped in a cave in Thailand - as "pedo guy" in a tweet.

During the July 2018 row, Unsworth had described the 48-year-old entrepreneur's proposal to build a mini-submarine to rescue the boys as a "PR stunt". "It was an unprovoked attack on a good-natured attempt to rescue the kids," Musk, dressed in a black suit and dark tie, told the courtroom Tuesday. "I was upset. It was wrong and insulting and so I insulted him back," he said.

Musk was questioned by Unsworth's attorney Lin Wood about comments made by the caver, who had said the custom-built device would never have fit in the cave and suggested that Musk could "stick his submarine where it hurts". "It's idiomatic, just as I was not literally meaning he was a pedophile," replied Musk.

Asked why he failed to specifically say that Unsworth was not a pedophile in his apology, Musk said it seemed obvious to him that this was his intent. "For me, that did not require any clarification ... (which) would have been worse," he said. "I apologized and I say again 'I apologize Mr Unsworth'," he added, as the British caver looked on across the courtroom, visibly uncomfortable under the media spotlight.

Musk's testimony was to continue yesterday. His attorney Alex Spiro earlier Tuesday told the jury of six women and two men that his client meant no harm when he hit out at Unsworth and that his words were spoken in anger. "The tweets are not allegations of crimes. They are joking, taunting tweets in a fight between two men," Spiro told the court. He also repeated his clients' claim that "pedo guy" was a common insult in South Africa, where Musk grew up. "Pedo guy (means) creepy old guy" in South Africa, Spiro said. — AFP

Democrat Kamala Harris ends 2020 White House bid

WASHINGTON: Democrat trailblazer Kamala Harris pulled the plug on her US presidential campaign Tuesday after a promising start to her bid was eroded by underperforming in a crowded field and a failure to raise sufficient funds. The exit of the progressive senator leaves 15 candidates in the battle to see who challenges President Donald Trump in the Nov 2020 election. Harris has been a fierce Trump critic, repeatedly calling for his impeachment. He reacted to her withdrawal by tweeting, "Too bad. We will miss you" - to which Harris quickly replied, "Don't worry, Mr President. I'll see you at your trial."

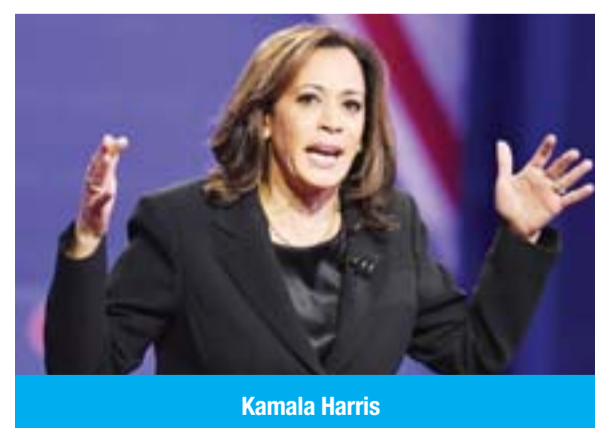
Her departure, following weeks of campaign turmoil, shines a light on the disruptive potential of a self-funding candidate like billionaire Mike Bloomberg, the for-

mer mayor of New York. Having stagnated in fifth place in polling, with under four percent support, Harris was bumped to sixth spot after Bloomberg's recent entry. "I've taken stock and looked at this from every angle, and over the last few days have come to one of the hardest decisions of my life," the 55-year-old Californian told supporters in an email. "My campaign for president simply doesn't have the financial resources we need to continue. I'm not a billionaire. I can't fund my own campaign."

It was a parting swat at Bloomberg and billionaire activist Tom Steyer, both of whom have spent millions of dollars in broadcast and online advertising. It was also a telling revelation about the piles of cash that candidates need to mount a viable campaign. "Kamala is right - our system is deeply broken when billionaires can buy their way in," tweeted liberal Senator Elizabeth Warren, one of several presidential hopefuls to quickly thank Harris for her campaign. Harris has been a political ground-breaker, only the second black woman elected to the US Senate.

'Mixed emotions'

She rocketed into White House contention with a



Kamala Harris

stirring campaign launch in January, on Martin Luther King Jr's birthday, before 20,000 onlookers. But her prospects slid in recent months as she struggled to define her positions on domestic issues including health care. She antagonized voters by suggesting in January, and again in a debate, that she sought to eliminate private health insurance to make way for universal health coverage. — AFP

International

In Sahel, French troops hunt hidden menace of landmines

Roadside bombs militants' favored means of attack

GAO, Mali: The unit commander's order crackles over the radio and the column of French armored vehicles en route between Burkina Faso and Mali comes to a sudden halt. In the Sahel scrub some 50 km from Deou, in northern Burkina Faso, the vehicles fall into a semi-circle. Eight military engineers step out and walk in an inverted-V formation, metal detectors in hand, in a routine performed so often that its life-or-death importance is easily forgotten.

They are searching for IEDs, or Improvised Explosive Devices - a major threat to civilians and soldiers in a region struggling with a growing jihadist insurgency. "We look for possible traces," says Tanguy, an officer and section leader who only gives his first name. The hidden homemade bombs - simple to make, and highly effective - kill and maim scores of victims every year. Thousands of civilians and soldiers have died in violence across the Sahel which began when armed Islamists revolted in northern Mali in 2012.

The conflict has since spread to the centre of Mali and to neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger. Attacks abound, despite the 4,500 French troops deployed in the region as part of Operation Barkhane to help local forces. Numbering in the low thousands, according to some estimates, the jihadists are linked to a mosaic of different groups, such as Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State and Ansarul Islam. Laying roadside bombs has become one of the militants' favored means of attack against the tens of thousands of local and foreign troops operating in the region.

It's an effective tactic. The bombs have killed 13 out of the 41 French soldiers who have died in Mali since 2013. Only on Monday, an IED killed two Malian soldiers. Four Malian soldiers in total have died in road-

side bombings since last month, as well as two soldiers from Burkina Faso and one French soldier. Civilians are not spared the carnage. According to a United Nations report from October, IEDs caused some 110 civilian casualties in Mali in the first half of 2019.

Bomb lab

"They don't dare attack us head on, they're too poorly equipped," says Thierry, a French officer and demolition-control expert. A Burkina Faso officer named Etienne said the IEDs "drive us crazy from not being able to do anything (in response)". Barkhane runs a special laboratory to analyze the bombs, in Gao, a town in northeastern Mali which is the French army's main operational base in the Sahel.

Called the Counter-IED Exploitation Laboratory (CIEL), it is one of only two such facilities in the Sahel. There is a similar American lab in Burkina Faso's capital Ouagadougou. In Gao, four soldiers sift through dozens of objects every week, gathered during ground operations. From motorbike parts to bullet casings and the remains of IEDs, everything is deconstructed, analyzed and studied.

The objects are first x-rayed to see how dangerous they are. Then, fingerprints are taken and the components undergo chemical analysis before, finally, the soldiers investigate the detonator mechanism. "We can get DNA samples from the bombers which will then be forwarded to other services," says Lionel, an officer, ultraviolet lamp in hand, referring to military intelligence.

A cartridge is placed before him inside his cramped office. He switches off the light and turns on the ultraviolet lamp. Fingerprints appear on the cartridge in fluorescent green. "It's like at a discotheque," he says, smiling.



SOUIM, Burkina Faso: Soldiers from the French army hold detectors while searching for the presence of IEDs during the Burkane Operation on Nov 12, 2019. — AFP

Pascal, a captain in charge of the lab, says that the aim of the facility is to get "quick results to report to the hierarchy, and to adapt to attacks". Militants tended to use remote detonators between 2017 and 2018, he said, until the French began installing signal scramblers on their vehicles.

Now they tend to use pressure plates, which detonate a charge when pressure - such as the weight of a vehicle

- is applied to them. "Telephones are used less and less, often because phone networks send out spam SMS messages that can trigger the (detonation) mechanism," says David, an officer and lab electrician. Demining alone is not a long term solution, however. "Today, we fight the IEDs to avoid becoming targets," says Thierry, the officer. "But tomorrow, we will have to attack the network, the bombers, the traffickers". — AFP

Gaza 'American hospital' fuels suspicions

EREZ: Volunteers with a US Christian charity group pose for a selfie in front of tents and crates of equipment to build a contentious new field hospital on the Israel-Gaza border. The facility, to be located right next to a crossing into Israel, has rare joint support from the Jewish state and Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas as part of an informal truce deal. But its existence, and the way it has been advertised by the US non-government group running it, is fuelling suspicions and rumors among some Palestinians.

Nicknamed the "American hospital" by Palestinians, it is funded by the evangelical Friend Ships organization based in the US state of Louisiana. Pictures posted on the Christian group's Facebook page show young volunteers in dark t-shirts hammering pegs into the ground and erecting a row of tents. The dusty 10-acre site is right next to the Erez Israel-Gaza crossing, making access possible from both sides - though likely only with Israeli permission.

The charity website said the hospital would offer telemedicine for remote

consultations with specialists worldwide. It could later include cancer care as well as less conventional offers, including treatments that involve horse-riding. The medical camp would be staffed heavily by volunteers after they have received 12 weeks training, it said, urging Christians to sign up. "We will offer services to the public four days a week," the website said - promising that on their days off volunteers can also enjoy cultural experiences.

"For those who would like to tour, you will have the option of making your own arrangements to spend three days on your own, experiencing Israel." A post on Facebook by the group said volunteers would learn about the region and "become part of what God is doing there today". The organization, which previously operated a tent hospital on the Israeli side of its disputed border with Syria, did not respond to a request for comment and AFP was not permitted to visit. The timeline for opening was unclear. COGAT, the Israeli body responsible for coordinating access to Gaza, said the hospital was "not connected to Israel".

'Not needed'

Israel and Hamas have fought three wars since 2008. Hamas does not recognize Israel's right to exist, while Israel's new defense minister, Naftali Bennett,



BEIT HANUN: Palestinian construction workers lay out a wire fence at the site of a future medical facility, nicknamed the "American Hospital", next to the Erez Israel-Gaza crossing in the northern Gaza strip on Oct 3, 2019. — AFP

has pledged a hard line. Yet the hospital is indicative of a thawing after a longer-term truce was brokered this year by Qatar, the United Nations and others. Gaza, which has been blockaded by Israel for a decade, suffers crippling energy shortages and high poverty. Its medical sector is overstretched, with hospitals chronically short of drugs and others goods, many of which are restricted by Israel.

If successful, the new tent hospital could provide an alternative for those in need, while its close proximity to Israel would assuage the Jewish state's fears over imports being siphoned off by Hamas. Khalil Al-Hayya, Hamas's deputy head in Gaza, told journalists in a recent briefing they would "evaluate the work of the hospital and its services to the public". "If it is not the required level we will work to close it," he warned. — AFP

Museveni leads derided walk against graft



KAMPALA: Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni (center) walks during the march against corruption yesterday. — AFP

KAMPALA: Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni led thousands of civil servants, supporters and police officers on an anti-corruption walk through the capital Wednesday in move derided by critics as a meaningless stunt. Central Kampala was locked down with businesses shuttered and roads closed, causing traffic chaos across the city as soldiers deployed heavily to protect the walking dignitaries including the speaker of parliament and the chief justice.

"Corrupt people are parasites," Museveni said at a rally following the walk, damning corruption as a "spiritual problem". The corruption walk attracted criticism and mockery, with critics pointing out that Museveni has taken little action over several corruption scandals during his time in office. "When the president of a country decides to walk against corruption instead of taking action, that country is doomed," Joseph

Sabiti a spokesman for Action Aid Uganda, which has led civil society efforts to hold corrupt public officials to account told AFP. "It's a mockery of the people of Uganda."

Since taking power in 1986, Museveni's scandal-plagued government has been repeatedly accused of corruptly extracting hundreds of millions of dollars from the public purse. In 2018 a US court convicted a former Hong Kong government official over a multi-million-dollar bribery scheme in which a \$500,000 bribe was paid into an account designated by Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa. In 2012, the US and European governments were forced to temporarily suspend aid after allegations that \$12.7 million in donor funds - allocated to help some of the poorest areas of Uganda following a devastating 20-year war - had been embezzled from Uganda's Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). — AFP

Iraqis say poverty main problem

DIWANIYAH, Iraq: Chants demanding complete regime change have echoed across Iraq for weeks, but what first brought demonstrators onto the street was the profound poverty of one of the world's most oil-rich countries. And that is what has kept them there, with protesters brushing off the resignation of Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi as failing to root out the rampant corruption that denies them jobs and public services.

In the southern protest hotspot of Diwaniyah, one of the poorest agricultural areas in the country, Umm Salah has joined rallies every day outside the provincial council. "I've suffered in my country, even though it's a rich country," she told AFP, carrying an Iraqi tricolor. The 57-year-old widow has been protesting every day since October with her seven children, none of whom are employed. They walk four kilometres to reach the protest camp as they cannot afford a taxi from the worn-down informal shelter where they live. "My husband died four years ago because we are poor and couldn't afford medical treatment in private clinics or hospitals abroad," Umm Salah says. Iraq suffers from an extremely dilapidated health care system, with hospitals severely under-equipped and doctors often threatened on the basis of political or tribal disputes.

A bleak future
Despite Iraq being OPEC's second-

largest crude producer, one in five of its people live in poverty and youth unemployment stands at one quarter, the World Bank says. The government has been the largest employer by far for decades but has recently struggled to provide jobs for a growing number of graduates. Already, youths make up 60 percent of the 40 million-strong population, which is set to grow by 10 million more before 2030.

The future looks even bleaker given predictions that heavy crude exports - which fund more than 90 percent of Iraq's state budget - will become less profitable as the world shifts to other energy sources. For now, protesters blame the staggering joblessness rates on a patronage system that hands out work based on bribes, family connections or party affiliation instead of merit.

Muhannad Fadel, 30, dreamt of a government post when he graduated years ago with a degree in physical education, but his diploma opened few doors for him. After a brief stint as a university lecturer, Fadel sought other work but his monthly income didn't rise above \$100. "I started to drive a taxi but I was afraid some of my students would recognize me," he told AFP. "Then I opened a little confectionary store on the ground floor of our home and I make around 5,000 dinars a day," or just \$3, he added.

Scraping together some savings, Fadel could marry but not buy a house, so his new wife moved in with his family. "Our whole family together earns \$150 per month. How is that possible in one of the countries with the most oil in the world?" he said. For him and many protesters, the root of the problem is a political class more interested in earning money and paying homage to regional backers than in improving Iraqi infrastructure, or people's lives. — AFP

News in brief

Turkey jails 2 in 'femicide' case

ANKARA: An Ankara court yesterday jailed two men for raping and murdering a colleague in a case which became a rallying cry for in the campaign to end violence against women. Wealthy businessman Cagatay Aksu was sentenced to life for the murder and sexual assault in May 2018 of 23-year-old Sule Cet, state news agency Anadolu reported. His colleague Berk Akand was sentenced to 18 years and nine months for assisting in the crimes, the agency said. The case sparked anger across Turkish society after the men claimed the university student committed suicide by throwing herself from the 20th floor of a building in Ankara. There was also an attempt to suggest Sule was somehow to blame because she drank alcohol, and there was uproar at a hearing earlier this year when the defense lawyers speculated over Sule's virginity. — AFP

US hands Hezb operative 40 years

NEW YORK: An American of Lebanese descent was sentenced to 40 years in prison on Tuesday for buying weapons and plotting attacks on behalf of the Lebanese Shiite group Hezbollah. Ali Kourani, 34, was found guilty in May of gathering intelligence on potential attack targets, including New York's JFK International Airport and a federal building in Manhattan. A federal court in America's financial capital convicted him of eight allegations including conspiracy to use weapons in a violent crime. Born in Lebanon but naturalized by the United States in 2009, Kourani attended several Hezbollah training camps in his country of birth and took orders from agents of the Iran-backed organization after his 2003 arrival in the United States. — AFP

Moroccan YouTuber arrested

RABAT: A Moroccan YouTuber was arrested and appeared in court yesterday for "insulting Moroccans and constitutional institutions" in a video, the kingdom's public prosecutor announced. Mohamed Sekkaki, known as Moul Kaskita, was detained on Sunday after publishing a video in which he criticized King Mohammed VI, considered "inviolable" by the kingdom's constitution. The public prosecutor said it had "received several complaints" from citizens concerned by the video, which "included insults and degrading descriptions". When Sekkaki was arrested in the city of Seltat south of Casablanca, "a small amount of drugs" was found in his possession, the prosecutor said. Sekkaki "received significant transfers of money from abroad in return for his activities", the prosecutor claimed. — AFP

Handcuffed ex-minister paraded on TV

ASHGABAT: Turkmen state television yesterday paraded a former top security official in handcuffs and confessing to corruption after he was sacked by all-powerful President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov. The Central Asian country's tightly controlled television showed the president and security chiefs watching footage of former interior minister Isgender Mulikov in prison uniform and with his head shaved. In office for 10 years, Mulikov was the longest-serving of the heads of Turkmenistan's security bloc when his sacking was announced in October. The television report said Mulikov, who bowed his head and spoke in a monotone, has been convicted and sentenced to jail, but did not say for how long. The report included footage of a huge stack of dollars allegedly received as bribes as well as jewelry, gold bars, watches and several large houses. — AFP

International

Lawmakers considering drawing up Trump impeachment charges

Democrat report makes forceful case for impeachment

WASHINGTON: The next phase of impeachment began yesterday in the US Congress as lawmakers weigh charges against Donald Trump, after the high-stakes inquiry into the president detailed "overwhelming" evidence of abuse of power and obstruction. Four constitutional scholars were to testify before the House Judiciary Committee in the first of a series of hearings to establish the gravity of Trump's alleged crimes.

On Tuesday, congressional Democrats made a forceful case that Trump should be removed from office for abusing his powers by pressuring Ukraine for dirt on a Democratic election rival. "The president placed his personal political interests above the national interests of the United States, sought to undermine the integrity of the US presidential election process and endangered US national security," said the final report on the House Intelligence Committee's probe, led by lawmaker Adam Schiff.

"President Trump and his senior officials may see nothing wrong with using the power of the office of the president to pressure a foreign country to help the president's reelection campaign," it said. "However, the Founding Fathers prescribed a remedy for a chief executive who places his personal interests above those of the country: Impeachment."

Articles of impeachment

The report is expected to form the basis for the Judiciary Committee to draw up formal charges - articles of impeachment - that could include bribery, abuse of power, obstruction and contempt of Congress. Democrats reportedly aim to have the articles presented for a vote to the entire House of Representatives before Christmas on Dec 25. If they pass as expected, Trump would then stand trial for removal in the Republican-controlled Senate, where he is expected to be exonerated.

On Tuesday, White House spokeswoman Stephanie Grisham dismissed both the report and the impeachment process. "At the end of a one-sided sham process, Chairman Schiff and the Democrats utterly failed to produce any evidence of wrongdoing by President Trump," she said in a statement. The report mapped out a months-long scheme by Trump, his personal lawyer Rudy Giuliani and senior diplomats and White House staffers to pressure Ukraine's president into investigating Joe Biden, the current favorite to win the Democratic White House nomination in 2020.

Trump also pressured President Volodymyr Zelensky to investigate a "conspiracy theory" that it was Ukraine - not Russia - that interfered in the 2016 US election, to benefit the Democrats. In both cases, the report said, Trump conditioned nearly \$400 million in US military aid and a high-profile summit with Zelensky on Kiev opening the investigations, which Democrats have said amounts to bribery. The report also makes a strong case for charges of obstruction against Trump, for refusing to provide documents to investigators, preventing witnesses from appearing and threatening some of those who did appear.

Legal scholars to testify

To counter Republican attacks on the impeachment process, Judiciary Committee chair Jerry Nadler invited a mix of liberal and conservative constitutional scholars to testify yesterday. They included Noah Feldman of Harvard Law School, Pamela Karlan of Stanford Law School, Jonathan Turley of The George Washington University Law School and Michael Gerhardt from The University of North Carolina School of Law.

Turley, a conservative, has called Trump's behavior inappropriate but said Democrats need much more evidence to prove their case. "Abuse of power is impeachable, but it is the most difficult of potential



WASHINGTON: House Judiciary Chairman Jerrold Nadler (left), Democrat of New York, speaks with Ranking Member Doug Collins, Republican of Georgia, during a House Judiciary Committee hearing on the impeachment of US President Donald Trump on Capitol Hill yesterday. —AFP

impeachment claims," he wrote on his website. "If Democrats continue with their plan to impeach Trump by the end of December, they would be presenting the thinnest record and fastest impeachment investigation in history."

Gerhardt told Slate that the allegations against the president appear impeachable. However, he said,

whatever the Constitution says, politics and public opinion are involved, especially with an election coming up next year. The authors of the Constitution "thought that the American people would care about facts, the American people would largely become educated, and they would care about the constitution," he said. "And it's not entirely clear that they do." —AFP

News in brief

French engineer killed in Bogota

BOGOTA: An engineer working for French aerospace and defense company Thales has been shot dead in the Colombian capital Bogota in an apparent targeted assassination, officials said Tuesday. The 45-year-old victim was shot late Monday as he left a restaurant with a French colleague in the city's upscale northern district of Chapinero, the police and Thales said. "We reject the hypothesis of a robbery. According to the evidence we have, this is an assassination perpetrated by a hitman," police Major Robert Mendez told reporters. The killing occurred in a street close to the French embassy. The killer had approached from behind after the men left the restaurant and targeted only the victim before fleeing, a police source said. —AFP

Grenade hits Belfast police vehicle

LONDON: Northern Irish police said one of their patrol vehicles was hit in a grenade attack in Belfast yesterday, in an attempt to kill or injure officers. The vehicle was struck overnight, the Police Service of Northern Ireland said, as it drove on a routine patrol through Republican heartland in west Belfast. The Land Rover was hit, officers heard a loud bang but no officers were injured and the vehicle was undamaged, Chief Superintendent Jonathan Roberts said. "The remnants of a suspected grenade have been recovered and taken away for forensic testing," he said. "This was undoubtedly an attempt to kill or injure police officers." —AFP

NY mulls 'virginity test' ban

NEW YORK: New York state is considering banning so-called virginity tests after an American rapper sparked outcry by saying he takes his daughter to a gynecologist every year to check her hymen is still intact. Democratic legislator Michaele Solages has tabled a bill proposing the ban, saying the examination, which the World Health Organization (WHO) says has no scientific basis, amounted to sexual violence. "Hymen exams are not medically necessary. They are often painful and humiliating," Solages told AFP. The hymen is a thin tissue that surrounds or partially covers the entrance to the vagina. It can be damaged in many ways, such as riding a horse, and not all women are born with them. —AFP

Dozens held in global swoop

THE HAGUE: More than 200 people have been arrested in 31 countries as part of a global crackdown on money laundering, the European Union's police agency Europol said yesterday. The swoop during September and November resulted in 228 arrests of people involved in so-called money muling - when people often unwittingly help transfer illegally obtained money between accounts or countries - Europol said in statement. "More than 650 banks, 17 bank associations and other financial institutions helped to report 7,520 fraudulent money mule transactions, preventing a total loss of 12.9 million euros," the statement said. The organization said recruiters of money mules were increasingly using online dating sites and social media to groom their victims and convince them to open bank accounts under the guise of sending or receiving funds. —AFP

UK PM denies dodging Trump

WATFORD: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson denied yesterday he was avoiding being pictured with Donald Trump ahead of a UK election next week, as footage emerged of other leaders mocking the US president. Johnson met Trump away from the cameras on Tuesday before a two-day NATO summit, avoiding the media fanfare that normally accompanies such talks. He also failed to publicly greet Trump and his wife Melania on the doorstep of Downing Street before a reception with other NATO leaders.

Johnson's team are wary of what Trump might say during his two-day visit, with Britain set to go to the polls on Dec 12. Johnson's Conservatives are leading opinion polls but the rival Labour party has sought to whip up public opinion against Trump, who is deeply unpopular in Britain. In a press

conference on Tuesday, the president promised to "stay out" of the election campaign and most of his remarks were about divisions within NATO. But he still managed to endorse Johnson as "very capable" and intervene in a row over US interests in Britain's state-run National Health Service (NHS) after Brexit.

Arriving for the formal NATO talks in Watford, north of London, yesterday, Johnson denied he was trying to avoid being seen with Trump. "I'm going to be photographed with every possible leader," he insisted, and later posed with the president for an official welcome alongside NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg. Downing Street said Trump and Johnson had discussed the NATO summit and an earlier meeting between Britain, France, Germany and Turkey about the situation in Syria.

Trump wrote on Twitter that he "enjoyed" the talks, which he said covered "numerous subjects including NATO and trade". Johnson is campaigning for re-election on a promise to get Britain out of the European

Germany kicks out Russian diplomats over Berlin murder

BERLIN: Germany expelled two Russian diplomats yesterday after prosecutors said Moscow could be behind the killing of a former Chechen rebel commander in a Berlin park. Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian national, was shot twice in the head at close range in Kleiner Tiergarten park on August 23, allegedly by a Russian man who was arrested shortly afterwards. The case has been compared with the poi-

soning of former Russian agent Sergei Skripal in Britain last year with a Soviet-era nerve agent, widely blamed on Russian intelligence.

The attempted murder plunged relations between Britain and Russia into a deep freeze, leading to tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions. After Germany's move yesterday, a Russian foreign ministry representative pledged "retaliatory measures". "A politicized approach to investigation issues is unacceptable," said the representative, adding that Germany's statements were "groundless and hostile".

The suspect in the Berlin killing was said to be riding a bicycle and was seen by witnesses afterwards throwing the bike and a stone-laden bag with a gun into a river. He has until now been named by police only as Vadim S but evidence revealed by German prosecutors

"rightly a major election issue in a way we have never seen before". "It's a crisis and we have to act decisively," he added. "However, politicians are not responding equally to that demand."

Proper convert'

The government says Britain is a world leader in tackling climate change but according to Greenpeace it is on track to miss a whole range of targets in the early 2020s. Channel 4 television hosted the country's first-ever leaders' debate on climate change last week but Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson failed to even show up. Other party leaders have also been criticized for offering up policies too timid for the scale of the problem. "The climate issue is huge and I don't feel like it's high enough up on their agendas," said one 38-year-old voter in Hove, who declined to give his name. "No more just talking, we need to take proper action."

The Greens are hoping to lure in dismayed voters with their well-established brand and eco-centric policies. Ollie Sykes, candidate for the Hove constituency, recalled a resident told him recently that he viewed the party as like tech company Apple: geeky and weird 30 years ago. Now it was mainstream and vital. "Obviously we totally welcome 'green' policies wherever they come from," Sykes told AFP. "But I do worry about the extent to which the commitments of other political parties are genuine in this regard." —AFP



WATFORD: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (left) greets US President Donald Trump upon his arrival for the NATO summit at the Grove Hotel yesterday. —AFP

Union next month, more than three years after the 2016 Brexit referendum. He has held up a new US trade deal as one of the prizes of Brexit but has faced accusations from Labour that this

will open up the much loved NHS to US firms. Johnson denies this, and Trump said his country would not be interested in the NHS "if you handed it to us on a silver platter". —AFP

yesterday indicated a possible fake identity. "The foreign ministry has today declared two employees of the Russian embassy in Berlin as *personae non gratae* with immediate effect," the ministry said in a statement. "Despite repeated high-ranking and persistent demands, Russian authorities have not cooperated sufficiently in the investigation into the murder."

Federal prosecutors in charge of intelligence cases earlier yesterday said they had taken over the investigation. "There is sufficient factual evidence to suggest that the killing... was carried out either on behalf of state agencies of the Russian Federation or those of the Autonomous Chechen Republic," the prosecutor's office said in a statement. Chechnya has been led with an iron fist since 2007 by Ramzan Kadyrov, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin. —AFP

Blinded student becomes rallying point for protesters

SANTIAGO: Protesters against Chile President Sebastian Piner's government have rallied around a student blinded by police rubber bullets and his family hopes a photo capturing his injuries will increase international pressure on the administration. Gustavo Gatica's name is shouted at police, borne on placards and scrawled on walls around the city.

Gatica, 22, was taking pictures of a protest when he was hit on Nov 8. His case became a lightning rod in Chile for fury directed at police for alleged widespread human rights abuses during more than six weeks of demonstrations over social inequality that have left at least 26 people dead and 13,000 injured, according to prosecutors and human rights organizations. He is one of two known cases of people left completely blind but at least 241 Chileans have suffered from eye injuries during the protests, according to Chile's Institute for Human Rights (INDH). Piner has sought to mollify protesters with a spending package and a vote on a new constitution, but the marches continue and spiked last week when doctors confirmed in a statement they had been unable to save Gatica's eyes.

The interior minister Gonzalo Blumel said last week that the Gatica case was "deeply painful" and made clear police protocols around the use of force needed to be revised. Piner was not immediately available for comment. Police have suspended the use of rubber bullets except in cases of threat to life. —Reuters



Ollie Sykes

International

Kim sends defiant signals with horse ride, rare party meeting

Unusual meeting scheduled ahead of deadline set for US talks

SEOUL: Kim Jong Un mounted a white horse again as North Korea announced yesterday it would soon convene a rare meeting of the ruling party's top leaders, steps analysts say signal preparations for a more confrontational stance. For the second time in two months, Kim visited North Korea's sacred Mt Paektu on horseback, this time accompanied by senior military officers, aimed at instilling a "revolutionary spirit" in the people, state news agency KCNA reported.

Kim has warned the United States it has until the end of the year to offer more concessions to restart stalled denuclearization talks or North Korea will pursue an unspecified "new path" that analysts say may include a resumption of intercontinental ballistic missile launches or nuclear tests. The United States has called for North Korea to give up significant portions of its nuclear arsenal before punishing international sanctions are eased, while Pyongyang has accused the United States of "gangster-like" demands for unilateral disarmament.

US officials have downplayed the year-end deadline, calling it "artificial" but North Korean state media have carried a steady chorus of statements in recent weeks, saying Washington should not ignore the warning and dismissing US calls for talks as a stalling tactic. The announcement that a Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea would meet sometime in late December underscores how North Korea is serious about making a major decision, analysts said.

Such meetings have often been when North Korea has announced major policy shifts. The timing of this plenum is unusual because it comes before the year-end deadline, as well as before Kim's expected New Year's address, said Rachel Minyoung Lee, an analyst with NK News, a website that monitors North Korea. "That Pyongyang is opting to hold this meeting before the end of the year indicates its strong resolve," she

said. "Taking the party plenum announcement and the Mount Paektu visit together, the 'resolve' seems to be that North Korea will not cave in to the US, and that it will keep charging on despite the difficulties."

'Prepare for harshness'

KCNA reported Kim was joined by top military aides as he rode a white horse in a tour of historic battlefields near Mount Paektu. Kim has often visited the sacred mountain around the time of major developments in North Korea, including missile launches, and his horseback visit in October sparked speculation of a change in North Korea's nuclear negotiation strategy.

State media photos yesterday showed the saddle and harness on Kim's horse adorned with more intricate gold-colored fittings and government emblems. The ride was aimed at instilling in North Koreans the mountain's "indefatigable revolutionary spirit" in the face of "unprecedented blockade and pressure imposed by the imperialists," KCNA reported. Kim said there was a need to prepare for "the harshness and protracted character of our revolution," according to KCNA.

Analysts say that pictures of Kim at Mount Paektu - a physically dramatic location that is ubiquitous in North Korean imagery - represent assertions of leadership and legitimacy, given the historical background. According to Pyongyang's propaganda, his father was born at a secret camp in the area, where his own father, the North's founder Kim Il Sung, was fighting Korea's Japanese colonial occupiers. According to independent historians and Soviet records, however, Kim Jong Il was born in Russia, where his father was in exile.

While Kim's plans are still unclear, the signals suggest the window for diplomacy is closing fast, if not already shut, said John Delury of Seoul's Yonsei University. "The message is buckle up, it's going to be a big year for us next year," he said. "And not a year of



MOUNT PAEKTU, North Korea: This undated picture released yesterday shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un riding a horse as he visits battle sites at Mount Paektu. —AFP

diplomacy and summitry, but rather of national strength." The ride is full of symbolism for North Koreans, and sending strident messages to domestic audiences more fully commits Kim to following through on his declarations, Delury said.

Lee noted the fact Kim was accompanied by senior army officers rather than party officials, combined with other recent military-related announcements by state

media, suggests North Korea "will likely transition to a more militaristic line". The plenum meeting would mark the first time such a gathering has occurred twice in one year under Kim Jong Un, Delury said. "This is not a standard meeting," he said. "How many details will actually come out of that meeting in anyone's guess. But it signals that diplomacy could be off and they are really going to act on this." —Agencies

'When will things change?' India rallies after rape

NEW DELHI: Seven years after the gang rape of a student on a Delhi bus sparked global outrage, her mother yesterday demanded justice for a new rape victim, whose murder has triggered mass protests over women's place in modern India. "When will things change?" asked Asha Singh, the mother of the 23-year-old woman whose death in 2012 shocked the world and led to tougher laws against sexual abuse in India. "Nothing has changed - despite everything."

She spoke to the Thomson Reuters Foundation a week after a 27-year-old vet was raped, suffocated and her dead body set alight on the outskirts of the southern city of Hyderabad, according to police. Four men have been arrested in connection with the crime. But nationwide outcry over her death - demonstrators have taken to the streets in their thousands - will change nothing absent concrete action from the top, Singh said.

"Until strict steps are taken by the government and until laws are actually implemented, nothing will come of our screaming, protesting and candle marches. We need speedy justice now," she said in a phone interview. She spoke as police said they had discovered the charred bodies of two more women in eastern Bihar state within 24 hours.

Grim record

India has a grim record of sexual violence against women, with an average of some 90 rapes reported each day in 2017, according to latest federal data. A Thomson Reuters Foundation poll of gender experts in 2018 rated India as the world's most dangerous country for women. Outrage over the vet's murder - her charred body was found on scrubland under a flyover - is running high, with protesters and lawmakers demanding tough and quick punishments, including public lynchings.



KOLKATA: A demonstrator holds a placard to protest against sexual assaults on women during a march yesterday. —AFP

The mother of the vet, who cannot be named for legal reasons, told local media she wanted her daughter's attackers to be burnt alive. "I can completely understand what her parents are going through. I want them to know that they are not alone," said Singh, who lives in Delhi. "We may be far by distance but we are together in our fight for justice."

What next?

Just as her daughter's rape shone a light on women's place in Indian society, the current case has provoked outrage on social media with #HangRapists trending on Twitter in India. But Singh said that was not enough. She urged India to fix its notoriously slow and creaking criminal justice system, noting her daughter's attackers were still alive despite being sentenced to death. Cases take at least six years on average to final ruling,

according to governance tracking group Daksh.

As in the 2012 gang rape, a special fast-track court will hold the trial for the latest case. "I have been fighting for my daughter's justice for seven years now, but I hope this family does not have to wait as long," she said. "Our law and order - from the police to the courts - have to function effectively, transparently and quickly. Only then can we hope for any change. Otherwise, everything just remains on paper."

India's National Commission for Women has condemned the attack and vowed it "won't leave any stone unturned till these perpetrators get the punishment they deserve". The commission advises government but has no powers. On Monday, India's defense minister condemned the attack and told parliament the government was "open to every suggestion to curb such heinous crimes". —AFP

Malaysian Muslims handed jail terms for missing prayers

KUALA LUMPUR: Six Malaysian Muslims have reportedly been handed one-month jail terms for skipping prayers in violation of Islamic laws, sparking fresh concern yesterday about rising religious conservatism in the multi-ethnic

country. Attending Friday prayers is obligatory for Muslim men in Malaysia, but it is rare for such harsh punishments to be meted out for missing them. Aged 17 to 35, the men had been caught having a picnic by a waterfall instead of taking part in prayers on a Friday, the holiest day of the week for Muslims, newspaper Harian Metro reported.

They were also fined between 2,400 and 2,500 ringgit (\$575-\$600) each after pleading guilty Sunday in a sharia court in the conservative northeastern state of Terengganu. They are still free on bail

while they appeal the sentences. They could have been jailed for a maximum of two years under Muslim-majority Malaysia's sharia laws.

"The alleged failure to attend Friday prayers is a personal matter," Zaid Malek, from rights group Lawyers for Liberty, said in a statement. "While such acts may be considered improper by some in Muslim society, criminal punishment is excessive and not the way to address them." He also said the sentences ran counter to pledges from the religious affairs minister to focus on rehabilitation

of criminals, rather than punishment.

Critics said the case highlighted that a traditionally tolerant brand of Islam in Malaysia was being eroded, and it came weeks after four men were caned for having gay sex in violation of sharia laws. Malaysia has a dual-track legal system, with sharia courts handling some cases for Muslim citizens. Some 60 percent of Malaysia's 32 million people are ethnic Malay Muslims and the country is also home to substantial ethnic Indian and Chinese communities, who do not usually follow Islam. —AFP

Body of woman found after 2 weeks lost in the outback

SYDNEY: A body has been found in the search for a woman lost for more than two weeks in Australia's arid outback, police said yesterday after two of her friends were rescued. The three friends had set out to explore the country's vast interior near Alice Springs on Nov 19 when their car became bogged down in a riverbed. 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 in the hope of finding help.

The lone person to stay back, Tamra

McBeath-Riley, 52, was found on Sunday less than two kilometres from the same vehicle suffering from dehydration. She 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.

A local rancher then on Tuesday found 40-year-old male Phu Tran, "slightly disoriented" but in a "good condition" a two-day walk from the vehicle. Phu had split two days earlier from the third person Claire Hockridge, who was said to be "still fine" at that point, as police continued an aerial search for the 46-year-old. Northern Territory police said yesterday they had located a body "which is believed to be that of Claire Hockridge during search efforts". Police were conducting "formal identification" as they prepared a report for the coroner. —AFP

Former Indian finance minister granted bail

NEW DELHI: Indian ex-finance minister Paliappan Chidambaram was granted bail yesterday, 106 days after his dramatic arrest on corruption charges that he says are part of a government witch-hunt against political opponents. Chidambaram, 73, a political veteran from the main opposition Congress party, was told to submit a bond of 200,000 rupees (\$2,800), not make any public statements on the issue and to surrender his passport.

Congress had earlier described Chidambaram's arrest in August by the

Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's equivalent to the FBI, as a "shameless witch-hunt" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. Chidambaram, a wealthy lawyer from a land-owning family from Tamil Nadu state, served twice as finance minister and once as home minister during Manmohan Singh's 2004-14 tenure as premier. He is accused of receiving bribes, money-laundering and approving illegal investments.

His son Karti Chidambaram and several government officials are also being investigated over their role in the scandals when Singh's Congress-led alliance was in power. His arrest saw CBI officers scale the boundary wall of his upscale residence in central New Delhi before escorting him to their headquarters for questioning. The Congress party welcomed the court decision, tweeting, "Truth Finally Prevails". —AFP

News in brief

Indian cop kills 5 colleagues

RAIPUR: A policeman from India's armed border force opened fire on his colleagues yesterday, killing five of them before turning the gun on himself, police said. Constable Musdul Rehman of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (IPBP) opened fire on his comrades in Chhattisgarh, a restive central state long wracked by a leftwing insurgency. "He later shot himself after shooting seven personnel," according to a statement issued by the ITBP. The two injured were being airlifted to state capital Raipur. There have been over 300 suicides in the Indian military and a string of so-called "fratricide" incidents since 2016, prompting government initiatives including counselors, helplines and even yoga. —AFP

US envoy in Kabul

KABUL: Zalmay Khalilzad, the US envoy leading the push for a deal with the Taleban, arrived in Kabul yesterday, an Afghan official said, days after President Donald Trump suggested stalled talks were back on. "Khalilzad is in Kabul and will meet with the president and other senior Afghan officials later," a senior Afghan official told AFP, adding that the resumption of talks would be on the agenda. The US embassy in Kabul declined to comment. During a surprise visit to an American military base in Afghanistan last week, Trump said the Taleban "wants to make a deal". But the insurgents later said it was "way too early" to speak of resuming direct talks with Washington. —AFP

TikTok drops bullying policy

HONG KONG: TikTok has dropped a "blunt" cyberbullying policy, the Chinese-owned video sharing app said yesterday after a report it hid posts by disabled, gay and overweight people. People deemed "susceptible to harassment or cyberbullying based on their physical or mental condition" had the reach of their posts restricted, German site NetzPolitik.org reported, citing leaked documents from TikTok. People with facial disfigurements, autism and Down syndrome along with gay and overweight people were among those to have their posts dumped down TikTok's algorithm so others on the social network would not see them, the report said. When asked about the report, TikTok told AFP yesterday that it now recognized "the approach was wrong" and said it had dropped the policy. —AFP

Typhoon toll rises to four

MANILA: At least four people are known to have died after a powerful typhoon ripped through the Philippines, officials said yesterday, with high-speed winds prompting large-scale evacuations, tearing off roofs and shutting down Manila airport. Typhoon Kammuri wreaked havoc on islands and provinces south of the capital Manila on Tuesday, sending nearly 600,000 people fleeing their homes, civil defense officials said. Three people died on the islands of Mindoro and Marinduque after being hit by falling trees and other objects, and a fourth drowned on the island of Leyte, police and officials reported. The impact could have been worse if not for the preparations made by communities and local governments, civil defense official Mark Timbal said, with several provinces reporting zero casualties. —AFP

Analysis

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P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
E mail: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Trading water: Can water shares help save Calif aquifers?

California is by far the United States' most populous state, as well as its largest agricultural producer. Increasingly, it is also one of the country's most parched places. But Edgar Terry, a fourth-generation farmer in Ventura County, just outside Los Angeles, thinks he has a key to reversing worsening water stress: establishing tradeable rights to shares of fast-depleting groundwater aquifers. Doing so would turn aquifer water into a more valuable asset that could be traded on a market, similar to "cap-and-trade" systems that have been set up to regulate air pollution, conserve fisheries and manage other such common resources.

Such a system would put a price on what has essentially been a free resource, and create a powerful incentive to use it more sparingly, backers say. "If you can buy and sell stocks, why not trade water? It's an asset, we can't live without it, and I can't grow without it," Terry told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone. "When you assign something a value, you tend to take care of it much more," he said.

An incipient local initiative spurred by Terry's idea - the Fox Canyon groundwater market - is set to become the first such system created under landmark state water legislation passed in 2014. It is set to start formally trading next month. At first the market will be open only to farmers within a single groundwater basin, but eventually it could extend to towns and cities and throughout the three areas that drain into the Fox Canyon aquifer. Under the market, participants will receive long-term shares to draw from the aquifer based on previous pumping needs and monitored by cutting-edge meters that gauge their use in almost real time.

Going underground

US water regulations have long focused almost exclusively on surface water - rivers, streams and lakes - rather than groundwater water. Hidden out of view, groundwater has tended to flow under the public radar as well, water experts said. But as pressures on water supplies from climate change and rapid urbanization grow, along with data showing that groundwater aquifers are quickly being depleted across the globe, that has begun to change.

The Fox Canyon project is the tip of a burgeoning public discussion in California, after the state in 2014 mandated that water districts be sustainable by 2040. Initial plans to ensure that sustainability are due by January. Previously the state was one of the most unregulated in the parched U.S. West on groundwater, said Karina Schoengold, an associate professor of agricultural economics at the University of Nebraska.

While water markets are just one potential strategy for conservation, they are receiving major interest across the state - and that in turn is drawing attention nationally, she said. "It's a big change that could really drive changes in how we think about managing groundwater," she said. Effective groundwater markets are complicated to set up, and Schoengold estimated that fewer than 10 "true" systems exist in the United States or abroad.

But technological advances and other changes mean they are increasingly feasible, and "are going to become really important in the future", she said. One primary obstacle remains skepticism of the fairness of such systems, particularly among agricultural producers keen not to allow outside control over their ability to grow a crop. "We have to show that this is something that has benefits for the people who are using groundwater. And we're not at that point everywhere," she said.

Higher property value

Economists in California feel they now have new evidence for one important benefit - higher land values. In a working paper published in September, economists with the University of California's Bren School of Environmental Science and Management found that establishing groundwater markets appears to have major positive effect on property values. Three researchers looked at a groundwater market set up in the 1990s in the state's Mojave Desert, one of the driest places on the continent and, with its intensive agriculture, "a poster child of inefficient water use", said co-author Kyle Meng. — Reuters

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



A Palestinian farmer works in a field next to the border fence with Israel (background), east of Gaza City, on Oct 16, 2019. — AFP

Gaza fields, ravaged by Israel, bloom again

From his field of aubergines in the Gaza Strip Massud Habib gazes at the nearby Israeli border security barrier, squinting in the late autumn sun. For four years, he said, Israeli planes regularly sprayed herbicides along the border which scorched his crops, and he fears it could resume at any time. Israel says it sprays only on its side of the border, to clear a buffer zone of hiding places for potential Palestinian attackers.

Israel and the Islamist Palestinian movement Hamas, which controls the strip, have fought three wars since 2008, with regular cross-border clashes since the last round in 2014. "They sprayed early in the morning," said Habib, his blue workshirt speckled with mud. "Why? Because the wind was in their favour, it carried everything to our side."

All the Gazan farmers said the Israelis checked the wind was with them before spraying - meaning that each April and December for four years the air stank like a sewer. "It caught in your throat and left you short of breath," Habib added. Moutia Habib, a colleague, said the chemicals stripped the ground of foliage, leaving just the brick-red soil. "After two or three days all that was green was gone," he said. "We had to start all over again, plant afresh, with no help from anybody."

Israeli NGO Gisha says that between 2014 to 2018 Israel sprayed defoliant nearly 30 times along the border fence. In 2015 several NGOs launched legal action to stop the practice. The Israeli defence ministry confirmed to AFP it carried out "weed control in which the

material is sprayed from the air" along the Gaza border. "The spraying is carried out from time to time, in accordance with operational requirements, and is conducted only over the territory of the State of Israel," it said in a statement.

It added the spraying was carried out by specialist companies, in accordance with Israeli law using materials approved by the ministry of agriculture. The chemicals "are used in agricultural fields across Israel, as well as by other countries."

'Above EU guidelines'

An analysis of a single spraying operation by Forensic Architecture, a research group based within the University of London, found that the chemicals travelled well into Gaza and at levels above recommended European Union guidelines. "Agricultural lands more than 300m from Gaza's eastern border (with Israel) experienced damage, and with concentrations of herbicides above the recommended (EU) amounts," it wrote.

The materials used included glyphosate, which is potentially harmful for humans, the report said. Glyphosate is classified as "probably carcinogenic" by the World Health Organization, but the EU in December 2017 renewed the weedkiller's licence across Europe for five years. This spring there was no spraying, but the Israeli defense ministry did not confirm that it has abandoned the practice.

His fields green once again, Habib caressed a dark purple eggplant. "Thank God, it's much better," he said. "Look!" Neither Israel or Gaza's agriculture ministry have offered him compensation for financial loss over the spraying, he said. NGOs continue to press Israel to call a permanent halt to border defoliation. "There is no justification or legal basis for continuing this extremely destructive practice," said Gisha's Shay Grunberg. Samir Zaqout of the Palestinian human rights group Al-Mezan said such behavior dates from Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. "They started going back with bulldozers to clear ground or use planes for spraying," with the aim of creating a buffer zone, he said.

Risk of shots

Despite the current lull in the spraying other hazards remain for farmers. Those getting too close to the border fence risk being shot by Israeli troops, as Riad Al-Nasser can testify. "On June 9, 2017, I was wounded in the hand, I cannot close it, look," he shows, trying to clench his fingers with evident pain, his wrist marked by a deep scar. He also puts forward his foot, where two toes were amputated after he was hit again in May 2018. A clearly-visible white cap on his head, Nasser watches his workers carefully picking peppers. He can help, but certain tasks are beyond him and his nerves are frayed. "I'm scared, I'm uneasy when I come to work," he said, protesting he poses no threat. "I'm only on my land." — AFP

'Usually unheard'

Rights groups in Africa's most populous nation often complain of a culture of impunity, where the wealthy easily skew the system in their favor and officials rarely have to answer for their misdeeds. "The voices of the masses in Nigeria are usually unheard because they don't have the financial muscle or connections to be able to project their views especially when in need of justice," said Daniel Soe tan, from the Goodwill Ambassadors of Nigeria civil society organization.

He is a regular listener to Isah's show and lauds it for "helping to project the voices of ordinary people" in a way that makes it difficult for officials to ignore. "When these issues are projected, it attracts the attention of the authorities to attend to their plights," Soe tan said. "It is a forum that allows people to speak because if they are left with authorities alone, there can be bureaucracies and attempts to silence them."

Human Rights radio has been on air since 2006 and while Isah did not give precise audience figures he insisted it even had listeners outside Nigeria. In a country where confidence scams are rife, the show has a checklist of requirements people must go through before they can bring their cases for resolution. They first need to depose to an affidavit at the High Court in Nigeria in which they swear they are telling the truth. — AFP

Radio show helps ordinary Nigerians take on officials

Early each morning, a crowd gathers outside Ahmad Isah's radio studio in Nigeria's capital Abuja hoping to share their problems over the airwaves. For those waiting - men and women, young and old - Isah's Brekete (very big in Pidgin English) Family show offers a rare chance try to hold officials to account in a country where rampant graft and abuses of the justice system often frustrate citizens. The lucky few who Isah picks each day get to make themselves heard on issues ranging from their struggles against the authorities to medical needs and requests for financial assistance.

The others will have to come back another time. "My goal is to give a voice to the voiceless, facilitate arbitration, expose wrongdoings and force those in power to respect rights," Isah told AFP. "The inspiration is about justice, kindness, and support to humanity." Nicknamed the "Ordinary President", Isah begins his live show on Human Rights radio with a call and



Ahmad Isah speaks during his Isah's Brekete Family radio show, where listeners hope to share their problems over the airwaves in Abuja, on Nov 20, 2019. — AFP

response in pidgin, the language widely spoken in Nigeria, to get his audience fired up.

Teacher Winifred Oguh has come to try to get some redress after she says a local court wrongly auctioned off her car for failing to pay rent on her house. "I believe that the justice you get here, you can't get it outside," she told AFP. "I have been listening to the program and was encouraged by how other people's problems were being resolved."

Babies born on floor as Zimbabwe health system totters

The floor is dusty, the walls filthy and the furniture decrepit, but for two weeks last month a tiny flat in a Harare township was transformed into a maternity clinic where scores of babies were born. Its owner, 69-year-old Esther Gwena, says she helped to deliver 250 infants as Zimbabwe's health sector tottered - a feat that earned comparisons to Florence Nightingale, the pioneer of modern nursing. Hundreds of junior medics at state hospitals began a strike three months ago because their salaries - less than \$200 a month - are not enough to live on in a country gripped by 500 percent inflation.

Nurses are only working two days a week. Those who can't afford private care - the majority of the 14 million people reeling under an economic crisis compounded by acute food shortages - suffer at home or seek help from people like Gwena. Senior doctors, in a letter last week, said state hospitals had become a "death trap" and warned of a "slow genocide". Gwena, a widow and member of the local Apostolic Faith sect, is a self-taught midwife. When the health services strike peaked last month, she came to the rescue.

'I had to do something'

"A man came to me and said there were two women in advanced labor at (a nearby clinic) but the place was

closed because the nurses were on strike," she told AFP in her two-room flat in Mbare township. She rushed there and found that one of the women had a baby which had died. "I took the other one to my place, where I helped her. The baby survived. From that time, I knew I had to do something," she said.

Word that she was helping deliver babies for free spread quickly. The state-owned television ZBC described her as "a modern Zimbabwean version of Florence Nightingale" and First Lady Auxillia Mnangagwa visited Gwena and donated food, detergents and blankets. A funeral services company chipped in with a mobile water tank and pitched a tent outside to serve as a waiting room for women before they went into advanced labor. "I helped to deliver 250 babies ... (they) are alive and kicking and at home with their mothers," Gwena said. Two weeks later, the government asked her to stop after a nearby maternity clinic reopened. Winnie Denhere, 35, cradled her two-day-old baby boy outside the clinic, where she had taken him for an immunization injection. "Everything went very well, she didn't ask us for money," she said, speaking of Gwena, who brought her child into the world.

'Patients are dying'

But while some laud Gwena as a selfless do-gooder, doctors worry that she exposed herself, the mothers, the babies to infection. "We need to do something about our facilities so no one goes to her," Harare's director of medical services Prosper Chonzi, said. Medicines have been in short supply and broken machines go unrepaired. The government has fired 448 junior doctors for striking. Senior doctors last week also stopped work in protest over the sacking of junior colleagues.



Sixty-nine-year-old Esther Gwena prepares herself for a long day ahead at her two-room apartment in Mbare high-density suburb in Harare on Nov 21, 2019. — AFP

A senior doctor, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the situation has become untenable. "There is no public health in Zimbabwe at the moment; everything has come to a standstill," he said, adding: "Patients are dying". Even the scarce equipment is often not right. "One needs gloves that fit just right when performing delicate operations, but we get old gloves that are too big," said another doctor. A UN special rapporteur Hilal Elver on food security last week spoke of "disturbing information" that public hospitals had exhausted food stocks, forcing them to seek humanitarian aid and that medical equipment in some cases was "no longer operational". In the second largest city of Bulawayo, Zimbabweans living abroad are helping in a small way by crowdfunding and sending money back home to offer health care for the vulnerable. — AFP

Business

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Volvo Cars changes hands from Al-Mutawa to Al-Kharafi

Setting a new standard for smooth transitions between Kuwaiti families

KUWAIT: Al-Qurain Automotive, part of the A Aziz Al-Mutawa Group of Companies, announced that it has mutually agreed with Volvo Cars and BNK Automotive, owned by Bader Al-Kharafi, the transfer of the Volvo Cars agency while retaining the Volvo truck and bus businesses. Earlier this year, following a rigorous selection process by the Swedish manufacturer, BNK Automotive was selected as the new official exclusive importer of the Swedish emblem.

The epitome of true Kuwaiti family tradition and culture, Ahmad A Aziz Al-Mutawa and Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi ensured that from the onset of the process, respect and professionalism were at the highest standard. Following the signing of the new agency agreement in September 2019, both parties entered into an agreement which would secure a smooth transition of the agency while protecting the interest of Volvo Cars as well as its customers in Kuwait.

Bader Al-Kharafi commented: "I would like to thank Mr Ahmed Al-Mutawa and his team on their professionalism and work ethic during this lengthy process which led to a mutual agreement on the transfer of the agency and the way forward. It is truly my pleasure to represent a brand like Volvo in Kuwait and we appreciate all the hard work of Al-Mutawa over the past 60 years to build the brand and we aim to continue doing so".

Ahmed A Aziz Al-Mutawa, Chairman and CEO of Al-Qurain Automotive, stated: "On behalf of myself, the board of directors and the Mutawa's Volvo team, we wish BNK Automotive, the new importer of Volvo Cars in Kuwait, the best of luck and success in this new endeavor, and would also like to highlight the highest standard of professionalism and respect of Mr Al-Kharafi and his team during this friendly process. The bond between our families definitely played a role in smoothening the process and ensuring agreeable terms for both parties with a focus on providing the best service to all customers".

Al-Kharafi added: "The automotive industry is rapidly changing amid this fourth industrial revolution as are



KUWAIT: Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi (left) and Ahmad A Aziz Al-Mutawa sign the Volvo Cars transfer agreement.

many other industries. Volvo Cars has proven over the last 3 years a clear strategy to rebuild its products, brand and technology in line with evolution. I am a believer in the future of connected cars, autonomous driving and electric cars and we have aligned with the Volvo team on these themes in the near future. We plan to disrupt and to offer a new and different experience for our customers in Kuwait. Our ultimate goal is to provide the best customer experience as we have done in many other businesses".

On the other hand, Volvo Cars stated: "We thank Al-Mutawa family for their dedication and passion for the Volvo brand over the last 60 years and we are proud to have completed a transition process which was concluded smoothly between Al-Mutawa and Al-Kharafi. Both parties showcased utmost respect and professionalism and we are delighted that the Volvo customer's interests were the focal point on both sides."

Finally, BNK Automotive and Al-Qurain Automotive are delighted to announce that as of the 15th of January 2020, the Volvo Cars agency will officially change home within the State of Kuwait. All customers will be reached in due time and the parties are committed to serve any new or existing customers.

About Volvo Car Group

Volvo Cars was founded in 1927. Today, it is one of the most well-known and respected premium car brands in the world with sales of 642,253 cars in 2018 in about 100 countries. Volvo Cars has been under the ownership of the Zhejiang Geely Holding of China since 2010.

Under its new company purpose, Volvo Cars aims to provide customers with the Freedom to Move in a personal, sustainable and safe way. This purpose is reflected into a number of business ambitions: By the middle of next decade it aims for half of its global sales to be fully electric cars and to offer half of all cars to customers via its subscription service. By then, it also expects one-third of its cars sold to be autonomous.

Bids for 'oversubscribed' Aramco IPO to conclude

RIYADH: Saudi Aramco is set to conclude yesterday the bidding period for what is expected to be the world's biggest share sale, with the energy giant pinning its hopes on regional sovereign investors. The world's most profitable company is seeking to raise up to \$25.6 billion - a fraction of the \$100 billion it once sought - from its much-delayed initial public offering that is heavily focused on domestic and Gulf investors.

The sale of 1.5 percent of the energy giant has so far been oversubscribed, financial advisers say, with bidding

for institutional investors set to close at 1400 GMT yesterday. Retail subscriptions, which concluded last week, reached \$12.6 billion with almost five million subscribers, advisers said.

The share sale is on course to beat Chinese retail giant Alibaba's \$25 billion world-record IPO of 2014, but "the proceeds would barely cover the kingdom's budget deficit for a year", Capital Economics said. International investors have balked at Aramco's valuation of between \$1.6 trillion and \$1.7 trillion - a figure still well short of the valuation of \$2 trillion targeted by the kingdom's de facto ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Amid tepid demand, Aramco executives have cancelled IPO roadshows in the United States and Europe. However Gulf ally Abu Dhabi plans to stump up as much

as \$1.5 billion, while the Kuwait Investment Authority will invest \$1 billion, Bloomberg News reported. Saudi Arabia has pulled out all the stops to ensure the success of the IPO, a crucial part of Prince Mohammed's plan to wean the economy away from oil by pumping funds into megaprojects and non-energy industries.

Saudi banks have offered citizens easy "IPO loans" and nationalists have called for investment as a patriotic duty. Aramco also dangled sweeteners for local investors, including promises of higher dividends and the possibility of bonus shares if they hold on to the stock. The economic jewel of Saudi Arabia produces about 10 percent of the world's oil and is considered the pillar of the kingdom's economic and social stability. — AFP

Google co-founders step aside as Pichai takes helm of Alphabet

SAN FRANCISCO: Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin are stepping aside as leaders of the Internet behemoth they founded 21 years ago, ending an extraordinary run that saw them build one of the world's most valuable and influential companies. Trusted lieutenant Sundar Pichai, who has run the core Google search business since 2015, will immediately take the reins as CEO of parent Alphabet Inc.

"While it has been a tremendous privilege to be deeply involved in the day-to-day management of the company for so long, we believe it's time to assume the role of proud parents - offering advice and love, but not daily nagging!" Page and Brin wrote in a blog <https://bit.ly/2sA9tGb> post on Tuesday. Page, Brin and Pichai have shared an emphasis on developing artificial intelligence software to make web searching faster and more personalized, while expanding the range of information and services available from a simple text query.

But their vision faces unprecedented scrutiny, with governments on five continents demanding better safeguards, an end to what many view as anticompetitive conduct, and more taxes from the world's largest online advertising company. Thousands of employees have protested, and some have even resigned, over ongoing concern that Google's famous "don't be evil" mantra - once embraced by Page and Brin - may be cracking. Streamlining Alphabet's unorthodox

management structure could help the company better respond to the challenges and focus on growing profits, investors said.

"This signals a shift away from the more fringy efforts ... and more towards a company focused on technology that makes money," said Kim Caughey Forrest, chief investment officer at Bokeh Capital Partners. Alphabet, which owns more than a dozen companies including self-driving car business Waymo and health care software company Verily, was created in 2015 as part of a restructuring. The Google unit retained control of major businesses including video giant YouTube, the Android smartphone software and hardware operations, and cloud computing.

Page had wanted to focus on developing the newer businesses, which collectively lose money. He left Google, by far the biggest and most profitable part of Alphabet, to Pichai, who in turn delegates a lot of authority to deputies who manage the various product lines. Brin had stayed on as Alphabet's president, spending time on robotics, health ventures and other research projects.

But Page and Brin, once regular sights at public events and at Google headquarters, had become much less visible in recent years. Page's retreat into the background drew increasing criticism from employees and U.S. lawmakers, who demanded answers from him rather than Pichai about controversial projects such as an experimental search app for



SAN FRANCISCO: Google CEO Sundar Pichai speaks on-stage during the annual Game Developers Conference at Moscone Center in San Francisco, California. — AFP

Chinese users.

Page and Brin, both 46, remain directors of the parent company but will cede their respective CEO and president titles immediately, Alphabet said. The president role will not be filled, it said, describing the changes as long discussed. Page's voice has been impaired for years because of a chronic condition, but his health did not play a role in the decision to step aside, Alphabet said.

"With Alphabet now well-established, and Google and the Other Bets operating effectively as independent companies, it's the natural time to simplify our management structure," the co-founders said. "We are deeply committed to Google and Alphabet for the

long term." The co-founders still control the company through their ownership of preferred shares. As of April, Page held 26.1% of Alphabet's total voting power, Brin 25.25% and Pichai less than 1%. Alphabet shares rose 0.56% following the after-hours announcement to \$1,302.

Page and Brin developed the core Google search technology while they were still graduate students at Stanford, and it quickly proved far superior to competing search engines of the early Internet era. By the time it went public in 2004, Google dominated Web search and was on its way to becoming a household name and the most powerful force in the global advertising business. — Reuters

United Airlines orders 50 Airbus aircraft to replace Boeing 757s

NEW YORK: United Airlines said Tuesday it had ordered 50 Airbus A321XLR aircraft, worth an estimated \$6.5 billion, to replace an existing fleet of aging Boeings. The new Airbus planes, to be delivered starting in 2024, will allow United to retire its Boeing 757-200s, the company said. The Airbus order is the latest blow to the American manufacturer, already deeply mired in the crisis surrounding its 737 MAX, which has been grounded worldwide after two crashes that resulted in 346 deaths.

Boeing has no new aircraft to compete with the Airbus A321XLR in the mid-market range. Airbus launched the A321XLR only this year, at the Paris Air Show in June. The single-aisle aircraft's range is 15 percent above that of its predecessor, the A321LR, making it a cost-effective alternative to long-haul wide-body planes. Its larger fuel tanks allow it to cover up to 5,400 miles in nine hours - significantly more than the Boeing 737 MAX. United said it intends to use the new aircraft to serve additional European destinations from US East Coast hubs in Newark/New York and Washington.

Gap in Boeing products

The airline turned to Airbus for the purchase because Boeing does not have an aircraft in the mid-market range, a source close to the matter told AFP on condition of anonymity. "There are no aircraft currently offered by Boeing that can replace the 757," the source said, adding that negotiations between Airbus and United began several months ago. Boeing, which is currently focused on returning its MAX aircraft to the sky, has already postponed until next year the possible announcement of a new model aircraft (NMA) intended to replace the 757 and 767. The manufacturer recently presented the design to various airlines, including United, industrial sources said.

Boeing still aims to have the NMA enter service in 2025, the sources said. "We will take a close look at this aircraft," said Andrew Nocella, United chief commercial officer, during a call with reporters. He added that United has not ruled out the possibility of buying the NMA should Boeing build it. United's international fleet is made up mainly of Boeing models: the 757, 767, 777 and 787 Dreamliner. The airline also has 14 737 MAX planes, which are currently grounded. — AFP

Business

Stocks in a tentative rebound after Trump's trade war scare

Asian Market, Wall Street fall; European stocks open higher

LONDON: European stocks opened higher yesterday, recovering some of the losses made in the previous session when US President Donald Trump surprised world markets by saying a trade deal with China could wait until after the 2020 presidential election. US stocks sold off for a third consecutive session overnight, while Asian shares extended losses as hopes for a quick preliminary agreement between the world's two biggest economies were dashed.

A full-blown global trade war is currently seen as the biggest threat to world markets. Fresh US tariffs on Argentina and Brazil, plus a threat to impose duties on French goods, are fuelling fears that risks are tilting towards an escalation of the crisis. "Any doubts about the vulnerability of equity markets to the mood of the US President should have been dispelled, as his recent tweets and comments have nearly wiped out the entirety of November's gains," said Ian Williams, economics & strategy analyst at Peel Hunt.

The pan-European equity index STOXX 600, which had slumped 2.2% since the beginning of the month, rose 0.4% but futures markets were still pointing to a slightly negative open on Wall Street. The mood on European trading floor is subject to change, with investors awaiting a salvo of surveys on the health of the service sector of major European countries.

"For some months now there has been a concern that the weakness in the manufacturing sector might start to

weigh on services activity and there has been some evidence of that in recent months, though not quite to the same extent," wrote Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets, to clients. The latest trade war scare has put the brakes on a rally that had lifted the S&P 500 since early October, when top diplomats from China and the United States met and outlined an initial agreement that Trump said he hoped could be sealed within weeks.

US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said that if no substantial progress was made soon, another round of duties on Chinese imports including cell phones, laptops and toys would take effect on Dec 15. The US House of Representatives' passage of a bill proposing a stronger response to a crackdown on Muslims in China's west also added yet another layer of tension, drawing swift condemnation from Beijing yesterday.

Beijing's handling of civil unrest in Hong Kong has also drawn criticism from Washington. "The market was too complacent, thinking both superpowers would be able to compartmentalize these issues away from the broader trade narrative," Stephen Innes chief Asia market strategist at AxiTrader, said in a note. In currency markets, the euro was flat against the dollar at 1.1081. The Japanese yen and Swiss franc, seen as safe havens stood during market storms were making gains, up 0.17% and 0.13% respectively.

European yields continued their descent yesterday as



COLOMBO: A street vendor selling cooked chickpeas pushes his cart on a road in Colombo. —AFP

investors continued to fret about the impact of America's trade war, falling between one and two basis points. The yield on benchmark 10-year US Treasuries fell as low as 1.6930% overnight, the sharpest fall since May and was

trading at 1.7105% yesterday. Gold XAU= rose 0.4% to \$1,482.9 per ounce. Brent crude futures were up 0.58% at \$61.17 a barrel while US West Texas Intermediate crude gained 0.52% to \$56.39 per barrel. —Reuters



Safe havens currencies rise

Major brands failing to help Thai seafood sector tackle slavery

BANGKOK: Efforts to protect Thai seafood workers from labor exploitation and modern slavery risk stalling as most international brands and retailers refuse to pay their suppliers more to comply with new anti-slavery policies, researchers said yesterday. Thai seafood suppliers are struggling with rising production costs as they seek to improve labor conditions and meet new anti-slavery laws and regulations, with little or no financial help from big buyers.

"The disconnect between what buyers purport to want and what they're willing to pay ... comes through sharply," said Sarah Mount of anti-slavery group The Freedom Fund, which co-funded the study based on the policies and actions of 28 companies. "The costs of protecting workers from exploitation and forced labor should be distributed equitably across the value chain," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Over the last four years, Thailand has sought to clean up its multi-billion dollar fishing industry after investigations revealed widespread abuses and the European Union threatened to ban imports from the country.

New laws that tackle human trafficking and the treatment of migrant workers have been introduced to help the industry meet demand from buyers for more ethically-produced seafood.

The Thai government has in recent years overhauled the legal framework governing fishing, regulated recruitment agents, updated anti-trafficking laws to cover forced labor, and implemented more stringent monitoring of fisheries. But the report said that complying with new laws and regulations has increased production costs, while most international buyers were refusing to increase their prices.

"Thai suppliers note haphazard financial support for social auditing but none for improving working conditions and report no increase in price," the researchers said in the report. Panisuan Jannarwej, president emeritus of the Thai Frozen Foods Association, which represents over 100 seafood processing companies, said most buyers were only concerned about meeting the minimum ethical standards and were more focused on pricing. —Reuters

Central bank instructs Lebanese banks to cap their interest rates

BEIRUT: Lebanon's central bank told commercial banks yesterday to cap their interest rates on deposits in foreign currencies at 5% and to cap the rate on Lebanese pound deposits at 8.5%. The central bank also said it would pay interest due on US dollars deposited with it by Lebanese banks half in US dollars and half in Lebanese pounds as an exceptional measure. It said the same applied to

US dollar certificates of deposit issued by the central bank.

In a circular seen by Reuters, it said the cap on interest rates would apply to all new deposits and those renewed from Dec 4. It said banks should pay interest on foreign currency deposits half in the currency of the account and half in Lebanese pounds. The measures would be valid for six months, it said. All deposits made before Dec 5 would remain subject to the agreement between the bank and the customer, it said. The central bank circular said the decisions aimed to "preserve the public interest amid the exceptional circumstances that the country is presently going through and to safeguard the interests of depositors by not decreasing their bank deposits". —Reuters

Tunisia grapples with post-revolution economic slide

TUNIS: Tunisia's designated prime minister Habib Jemli expects to pull together a new coalition government next week after an election in October produced a fractured parliament. Since the 2011 revolution that overthrew the autocracy and introduced democratic rule, most economic indicators have weakened and the state has fallen further into debt. Economists say a strong government with a clear economic vision is essential to continue efforts to stabilize state finances and address the frustrations which threaten to undermine trust in the young democracy's politics.

How bad are the numbers?

Economic growth, averaging 4.7% in the decade to 2010, has averaged 1.8% since then, World Bank figures show. The uprising hit Tunisia's tourism industry and created intense pressure for the new democracy to create public sector jobs, raise pay and increase subsidies. Tunisia recorded a primary surplus in 2010, with a net deficit of just 1%. Since then, government debt has climbed from 41% of gross domestic product to more than 70%. The government expects a deficit this year of 3.9% of GDP, down from 7.4% of GDP in 2016, 6% in

2017 and 4.5% last year. The national current account declined, foreign currency reserves fell, the exchange rate for the dinar dropped and inflation rose to more than 7% in 2017, and was still 6.5% in September.

What is the impact on Tunisians?

Unemployment, 12% before the revolution, is now 15% nationally but far worse in Tunisia's impoverished interior, where it exceeds 30% in some cities. Tourism was just starting to recover in 2015 when militants killed scores of foreign visitors in two attacks, sending the sector back into collapse. Visitor numbers only returned to their earlier levels this year but the collapse of Thomas Cook in September showed how vulnerable Tunisia remains to any sudden shock in the sector.

What are the other problems?

A sudden surge in hiring by state-owned companies after the revolution contributed to a steep decline in both their performance and profitability. Their losses cost the government \$2 billion last year. The state phosphate company contributed 10% of Tunisian exports before 2011 but only 4% now. It is located in a poor region and the post-revolution government increased its workforce by 21,000 people to 30,000.

Tunis Air, which has 8,000 staff for only 27 planes, has been losing money since the revolution. It said last week it would lay off 400 jobs next year. However the powerful UGTT union has resisted many such reforms and says other problems such as corruption and mismanagement

should be addressed first. Well-connected private businesses also dominate in some sectors, acting like cartels and leaving smaller businesses unable to raise financing for investment, diplomats say.

What has the state tried so far?

Tunisia is half way through a \$2.8 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan program, which began in 2016. The IMF required the government to rein in spending, especially on public sector wages which doubled in cost to about 16 billion dinars (\$5.5 billion) in 2018 from 7.6 billion dinars in 2010, and on subsidies. Its fuel price rises in March were the fifth in a year, and increases are expected to resume. However the spending cuts, though adding to the public frustrations that led voters to punish coalition partners in October's election, failed to meet deficit reduction targets.

What next?

The foreign lenders who finance Tunisia's deficit expect it to deepen its spending cuts - an unpopular and potentially difficult process for the next coalition government. However, any structural reforms to reduce bureaucracy, improve the performance of government departments and services, and cut corruption would strengthen the business climate and could raise income. President Kais Saied, an independent elected in October, has already pushed several anti-corruption programs, something that could help the new government win support for less appealing policies. —Reuters



BEIRUT: Lebanese people queue in front of a petrol station in Beirut's Cola district. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.600
Euro	337.650
Sterling Pound	395.680
Canadian dollar	231.760
Turkish lira	54.200
Swiss Franc	307.370
US Dollar Buying	297.150

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.779
Indian Rupees	4.250
Pakistani Rupees	1.969
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.678
Nepali Rupees	2.650
Singapore Dollar	223.970
Hongkong Dollar	38.909
Bangladesh Taka	3.553
Philippine Peso	5.999
Thai Baht	10.098
Malaysian ringgit	77.903

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.281
Qatari Riyal	83.716
Omani Riyal	791.683
Bahraini Dinar	809.350
UAE Dirham	82.986

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.350
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.938
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223
Tunisian Dinar	111.170
Jordanian Dinar	430.070
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.199

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.990
Canadian Dollar	229.205
Sterling Pound	394.840
Euro	338.230
Swiss Frank	304.250
Bahrain Dinar	808.420
UAE Dirhams	83.170
Qatari Riyals	84.405
Saudi Riyals	81.960
Jordanian Dinar	430.045
Egyptian Pound	18.865
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.677
Indian Rupees	4.251
Pakistani Rupees	1.958
Bangladesh Taka	3.534
Philippines Peso	5.948
Cyprus pound	18.085
Japanese Yen	3.785
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.664
Malaysian Ringgit	73.805

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.625
Thai Bhat	11.025
Turkish Lira	53.300
Singapore dollars	223.228

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.387963	0.401863
Czech Korune	0.005168	0.014468
Danish Krone	0.040994	0.045994
Euro	0.329212	0.342912
Georgian Lari	0.102412	0.102412
Hungarian 0.000924	0.029028	0.034228
Norwegian Krone	0.053524	0.070374
Romanian Leu	0.004731	0.004731
Russian Ruble	0.009092	0.019092
Slovakia	0.027837	0.032837
Swedish Krona	0.301392	0.312392
Swiss Franc		
Australian Dollar	0.199143	0.211143
New Zealand Dollar	0.191732	0.201232
Canada Dollar	0.223396	0.232396
US Dollars	0.300150	0.305450
US Dollars Mint	0.300650	0.305450
Bangladesh Taka	0.002990	0.003791

Chinese Yuan	0.041772	0.045272
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036777	0.039527
Indian Rupee	0.003604	0.004376
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002715	0.002895
Korean Won	0.000244	0.000259
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069101	0.075101
Nepalese Rupee	0.002623	0.002963
Pakistan Rupee	0.001293	0.002063
Philippine Peso	0.005962	0.006262
Singapore Dollar	0.217479	0.227479
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001318	0.001898
Taiwan	0.009843	0.010023
Thai Baht	0.009708	0.010258
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013
Bahraini Dinar	0.800881	0.808933
Egyptian Pound	0.018930	0.021670
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000211	0.000271
Jordanian Dinar	0.423139	0.432139
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000101	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021175	0.045175
Omani Riyal	0.785133	0.793026
Qatar Riyal	0.082915	0.083749
Saudi Riyal	0.080047	0.081347
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.102929	0.110929
Turkish Lira	0.046161	0.056006
UAE Dirhams	0.082204	0.083030
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.010169

Business

Trump's trade whiplash tests partners, markets, own aides

Trump's mercurial nature injects huge dose of uncertainty, volatility

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump hailed a breakthrough in trade talks with China in mid-October, but seven weeks later says the deal may actually have to wait until after next year's US presidential elections. In a surprise tweet, he re-imposed stinging metal tariffs on Brazil and Argentina, which the struggling Latin American economies thought were safely behind them.

And the night before important multilateral talks this week, he announced eye-watering new tariffs on French exports, instantly escalating a confrontation with the EU. With just 12 days before fresh US tariffs on major Chinese imports are due to take effect, the whiplash of Trump's trade strategy appears to be driving up the stress level for economic partners and markets alike. "Trump's mercurial nature injects a huge dose of uncertainty and volatility into trade negotiations between the US and its major trading partners," Cornell University economist Eswar Prasad told AFP.

Trump's "sharp pivots" also undercut his own negotiating team, Prasad added, and mean other countries are less likely to offer real concessions "since any potential deal risks being blown up by a Trump tweet or random statement." Tuesday's remarks left Trump aides in the awkward position of explaining why the president announced a "very substantial phase one deal" on October 11 if at the time the cat was in fact not already in the bag.

Trump Senior Counselor Kellyanne Conway on Tuesday sparred with the press, answering questions with more questions. "Why do you think we don't have a deal? Because you haven't seen it?" she said, according to a back-and-forth posted to Twitter by CNBC correspondent Eamon Javers. "Is there a deal we haven't seen?" Javers replied. "Are you saying the president lied that we don't have a phase one deal?" "We haven't seen the deal." "So?"

Plan B?

Stocks in recent weeks were also buffeted by the divergent tone of other White House officials. Trump last month himself shot down an announcement by the Chinese Commerce Ministry that both sides had agreed to a tariff rollback. Wall Street on Tuesday touched its lowest levels since October as investors took profits from the rally of recent weeks—one lifted by hopes for lasting trade peace between Washington and Beijing. Karl Haeling of LBBW told AFP stocks were likely due to drop a little after repeatedly breaking records since Trump's "phase one" announcement. But it was unclear whether lower prices would entice bargain hunting or convince investors "the world's coming to an end," he said. Trump, for his part, told reporters the sell-off was "peanuts."

Cedric O, France's secretary of state for the digital economy, told AFP in Washington on Tuesday that Trump's threat to blast France with another \$2.4 billion in tariffs next month was "unworthy" of an ally and economic partner. As for the United States and China, the world's two largest economies have imposed steep tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars in two-way trade, and another round of US duties are set to hit \$160 billion in Chinese goods on December 15.

Though it is slowing in part due to the trade war, the US economy appears to be mostly weathering the storm so far, held aloft by steady consumer spending and low unemployment. China has called for a rollback of existing tariffs, and analysts say Beijing is unlikely to agree to the massive purchases of US farm exports that Trump is demanding—principal holdups in the deal.

"He's realized they're not going to give him what he wants," William Reinsch, a former president of the



NEW YORK: Executives from Intercontinental Exchange and Advisory Committee firms ring the closing bell at the New York Stock Exchange. The Dow Jones Industrial Average dipped over 280 points by the end of trading, losing roughly 1 percent of its value as traders reacted to President Donald Trump's latest remarks on a continuing American trade war with China. —AFP

National Foreign Trade Council, told AFP, adding that this could tempt Trump "to pull the plug and blame the Chinese." That would spare Trump the embarrassment of appearing to fail to clinch a deal just before

the 2020 elections, said Reinsch. "That's a decision that he's not gonna make at this point in the process but he's sort of inoculating himself against a Democratic attack which is: 'you failed.'" —AFP

Trade war targets: The list lengthens

PARIS: Donald Trump's high-profile trade war with China may be the biggest threat to the world economy among current trade disputes waged or threatened by the US President, but the list of Washington's targets is lengthening. Chinese chronicle: The bedrock of Trump's trade policy disputes is the relation with China. The world's two biggest economies have spent two years levying trade tariffs on each other along with threats of more tariffs.

Washington has already hit more than half of the roughly \$500 billion in annual US imports from China with increased duties, while Beijing has done the same to around \$110 billion worth of US goods. Trump wants the Chinese to halt massive state industrial subsidies, to curtail its policy of forcing foreign companies to transfer technology to Chinese partners, and to stop alleged theft of intellectual property.

The next key date is December 15, when new US tariffs could take effect. Meanwhile, dangled prospects of a modest trade deal that could mark a truce and which have kept financial markets on tenterhooks appeared to be in off-again mode on Tuesday. Trump told a press conference in London: "I have no deadline. In some ways I like the idea of waiting until after the election for the China deal," a reference to his bid for a second term in November 2020.

France and European Union

The EU has long been a US ally, but Trump regularly threatens to slap tariffs on European goods. German automakers have been spared so far, but French products are now on the front line. That is because France passed a law taxing digital giants like Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon on revenues earned inside the country. On Monday, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said Washington might impose tariffs of up to 100 percent on \$2.4 billion in French goods like sparkling wine, yoghurt and Roquefort cheese in retaliation. French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire has vowed that Paris will only give up the digital tax if a global one being mulled by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development replaces it.

He said Tuesday that "if there are new American tariffs there will be a European response, a strong response". An EU spokesman said the bloc would respond "as one" to the US threat. A separate front involves an ongoing spat over subsidies for Boeing and European planemaker Airbus. On Monday, a World Trade Organization panel found that the EU had failed to remove illegal subsidies to Airbus, reinforcing an earlier WTO decision that allowed the US to retaliate with tariffs on \$7.5 billion in EU exports.

Argentina and Brazil

Trump on Monday said steel and aluminum tariffs would be reinstated on Argentina and Brazil, accusing them of manipulating their currencies and hurting US farmers. "Brazil and Argentina have been presiding over a massive devaluation of their currencies," which was hurting American farmers, Trump said on Twitter. Trump



GUIZHOU: Workers check fermented wheat paste at a food processing factory in Bijie, in southwest China's Guizhou province. —AFP

last year announced global tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum but later approved exemptions for some countries, including Argentina and Brazil—after they agreed to quotas. Brazil is the second-largest supplier of steel to the US market behind Canada. Brazil and Argentina have benefitted from the US trade war with China, as they have stepped in to replace American exports of soybeans and other agricultural goods to the Asian giant.

Canada and Mexico

Following months of tense talks, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) took a major step towards replacing the NAFTA trade pact that had ensured free trade in North America for the past quarter century when Mexico ratified the deal

in June. Both the US and Canada have yet to follow suit, and Democratic lawmakers in the US are seeking a number of changes. Meanwhile, Trump has cast doubt on the agreement by threatening Mexico with tariffs to force the country to stem the flow of migrants to the US.

India

India is another target of Trump's wrath, with the US halting in June trade advantages that Indian goods had enjoyed. Washington removed India from a list of countries that received duty-free access for billions of dollars worth of imports after Trump said the US did not receive comparable treatment in return. The move came on the back of higher US tariffs on Indian steel and aluminum. India replied with duties on 28 goods from the United States, including almonds and apples. —AFP

US retailers report Banner kickoff to holiday season

NEW YORK: US retailers on Tuesday reported a banner kickoff weekend to the holiday shopping season and expressed confidence about sales in the coming weeks, despite escalating trade conflicts. In the five-day period from Thanksgiving Day through "Cyber Monday," shoppers spent an average of \$361.90, up 16 percent from the year-ago period, according to the National Retail Federation.

Nearly 190 million people shopped over the stretch, up from last year's level, and equal to about 57 percent of the entire US population, according to the NRF. "This was an outstanding weekend," said NRF Chief Executive Matthew Shay. "People are feeling more confident and maybe that confidence is reflected in their behavior." Survey data showed impressive growth in online shopping on "Black Friday" as well as strong sales among younger consumers, more of whom shopped at department stores and other brick-and-mortar stores than in recent seasons.

The NRF has projected overall holiday sales growth of between 3.8 percent and 4.2 percent in 2019 to as much as \$730.7 billion, basing the forecast on data that includes consumer spending trends in recent months, energy costs and payroll trends. Analysts have cautioned that some of the boost in this year's early sales figures is due to the shortness of the 2019 season due to the lateness of the Thanksgiving holiday. In any case, the NRF is hoping to avoid a repeat of the 2018 season, which fizzled after a solid start.

A grain of salt?

Last year's season sharply underperformed forecasts due to a number of factors, including a Federal Reserve interest rate hike in December, a government shutdown and escalations in the US-China trade war that contributed to a late-year swoon in the stock market. On Tuesday, US stocks were down about one percent in the aftermath new punitive trade announcements by US President Donald Trump on France, Argentina and Brazil and as the US-China trade dispute remained unsettled with new tariffs on Chinese goods potentially going into effect later this month.

Survey data shows consumers are worried about tariffs but shoppers "have the ability to bifurcate their attitude, which is knowing they have a con-



CALIFORNIA: Shoppers at a clothing store, look for early bargains as the Black Friday sales begin on Thanksgiving Day in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

cern about it and their actions and activities, which is that they're still out shopping and behaving in a very confident way," Shay said. NRF Chief Economist Jack Kleinhenz said the 2018 season was plagued by a "very unusual December" and that "we don't have necessarily that same set of factors today that we saw a year ago."

But Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics cautioned that early sales results should be taken with a

grain of salt. "The holiday shopping season has changed beyond all recognition over the past decade and the new patterns are not yet fully established and stable," he wrote in a note to clients. "The unfortunate truth for impatient markets is that we just won't know how retailers fared over the holiday season as a whole, and how much spending rose in Q4, until we have both the November and December data." —AFP

Brazil economy grows 0.6% in third quarter

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's economy - Latin America's largest - picked up pace in the third quarter, official figures showed Tuesday, beating expectations and offering relief to President Jair Bolsonaro who has made reviving growth a priority. After stalling in the first three months of the year, the economy has now had two consecutive quarters of growth, the statistics agency said, steering clear of a recession that had seemed likely only months ago. Gross domestic product expanded by 0.6 percent in the July-to-September period, compared with the revised 0.5 percent in the previous three-month period.

It rose 1.2 percent from the same quarter last year. An initial reading showing the economy contracted by 0.2 percent in the first quarter has also been revised to zero. The third-quarter figure beat expectations of analysts surveyed by the Brazilian economic daily Valor, who had predicted 0.4 percent growth. Driving the acceleration was agriculture, industry and services, which grew 1.3 percent, 0.8 percent and 0.4 percent, respectively, from the previous quarter.

Bolsonaro tweeted that the results showed "we're on the right path," referring to the ambitious economic reforms his ultraconservative government has been pushing through Congress since taking power in January. Bolsonaro's government and outside analysts both anticipate 1.0 percent growth for 2019, edging down from 1.1 percent in 2017 and a revised 1.3 percent in 2018. That will be too little to put a dent in unemployment which currently affects 12.4 million Brazilians. But analysts expect stronger growth next year, and have raised their 2020 GDP estimates to 2.2 percent from 2.0 percent. —AFP

Hedge funds pile into petroleum on rosier economic outlook

LONDON: Hedge funds resumed heavy buying of crude oil and petroleum products last week, with the previous week's bout of profit-taking halted by increasing optimism over the global economy and hopes for more output cuts by Saudi Arabia. Futures and options equivalent to 144 million barrels in the six major petroleum contracts were purchased by hedge funds and other money managers in the week to Nov. 26, the most in a single week for more than two years.

Portfolio managers have added to their positions in six of the past seven weeks, by a total of 291 million barrels, according to records published by ICE Futures Europe and the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission. Last week's buying was concentrated in crude, with big purchases in NYMEX and ICE WTI, amounting to 67 million barrels, plus 38 million barrels of ICE Brent.

Funds bought the most crude for almost three years after the December 2016 production pact agreed by OPEC and non-OPEC countries. But the latest week featured purchases across the board, including US gasoline (14 million barrels), US diesel (7 million) and European gasoil (17 million). In a sign of increasing bullishness, most of the NYMEX WTI short positions initiated in late September and early October had been closed out. WTI short positions had been cut back to only 40 million barrels, the same as on Sept 17, down from a peak of 126 million on Oct 22. —Reuters

Business

Death and debt: Ethical companies find ways to tackle funeral poverty

Average funeral costs edging toward 4,000 pounds

LONDON: With average funeral costs edging toward 4,000 pounds (\$5,100), dying in Britain has become an expensive proposition - at least for those left behind to pay the bills. When Laura Cunningham's brother died this year, she was still paying for her mother's funeral from more than two years earlier, and had no idea how she would afford another one.

Cunningham's story is not uncommon. Even a simple service such as her mother's can cost more than 3,000 pounds. But social enterprises have begun springing up to tackle "funeral poverty", often brought on by upselling of products and services such as flowers and cars that can send grieving families deep into debt. "We didn't have any savings," Cunningham told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone. "We just work month to month to pay our bills and live basically. We didn't have any money at all."

Cunningham did not qualify for government support because she works as a cleaner. But a non-profit funeral director helped Cunningham through with a simple, cut-price cremation for her brother. Glasgow-based Caledonia Cremation is just one social enterprise exploring alternative business models to traditional funeral providers, which are sometimes accused of profiteering. Similar businesses have sprung up in Canada and Australia, including community-owned businesses and funeral services for the homeless.

With the average cost of a basic funeral at an all-

time high of 3,785 pounds, nearly one in eight people in Britain go into debt to bury or cremate loved ones, according to a 2019 study by insurer Royal London. The average debt is almost 2,000 pounds and pushes many into poverty, the annual study found.

"It's a nightmare scenario ... with a long-lasting impact," said Paul McColgan, who founded Caledonia Cremation in 2018 after seeing his sister struggle to pay for her husband's funeral. "It's not just a normal grieving process of losing a loved one," he said. "You're dealing with all of that and you are dealing with the worry and torment of not knowing how you are going to pay for it." Caledonia Cremation has carried out about 250 direct cremations, which are carried out without a funeral service and with no mourners in attendance.

At a flat 995 pounds with no deposit, it offers a safety net for those who cannot afford a more expensive funeral. Still, about half its customers are not struggling financially. As a social enterprise, Caledonia Cremation will reinvest profits into its mission of preventing funeral poverty, although so far McColgan said it has only

just broken even. The cost of a funeral has risen 6% a year - double the rate of inflation - for more than a decade due to rising crematorium fees, a lack of burial plots and the practice of upselling, and Britain's competition watchdog is investigating the industry.

It has accused some funeral directors of not being transparent about pricing and of taking advantage of people at their most vulnerable, with grieving customers less likely to shop around. The profit margins of the largest industry players such as Dignity are high by international standards, the watchdog said. Dignity said that since 2016 it has offered more options and price ranges to meet growing demand for lower-cost funerals, including a direct cremation service.

Last taboo

Compounding the difficulties wrought by funeral poverty is a reticence to even speak of its two main components - death and money. "It's the last great taboo," said Liz Rothschild, co-founder of Westmill Woodland Burial Ground, a natural burial ground in the south of England. "And they come together really

poisonously, when you put when you put death and money together," she added. Like Caledonia Cremation, Westmill is registered as a community interest company, a type of social enterprise that reinvests or donates profits and must demonstrate its service to the community - a detail customers appreciate, Rothschild said.

Westmill suggests ways for its customers to reduce costs, such as carrying and lowering coffins themselves, but Rothschild said that the business has recently had to raise prices as margins were so tight. Lucy Coultbert, who runs the Individual Funeral Company, said the squeeze was felt across the industry regardless of social enterprise status. While she says big companies that seek to maximize profits are "industrializing funerals", Coultbert does not believe that the social enterprise model is necessarily the solution, calling instead for more government support.

Currently it takes weeks for the government to assess and award funeral cost benefits, but Coultbert suggested paying before the funeral could be a simple way to prevent people going into debt. "The market does not need disrupting," she said. "What the market needs is for people to stop thinking that we are here to get money out of people - we're not. "What we're here to do is support somebody, be as transparent and as ethical as we possibly can and let people make their own decisions." —Reuters



Dying in Britain has become expensive proposition

Jointly with other lead managers, Warba Bank arranged \$750 million sukuk issuance for DIB

KUWAIT: Warba Bank acted as Joint Lead Arranger and Book-runner on the successfully placed Sukuk issuance for Dubai Islamic Bank PJSC ("DIB"), rated A3 by Moody's and A by Fitch (both stable). The five-year US\$ 750 million issuance followed DIB's Tier Sukuk issuance early 2019 and was issued at a discount of \$ 99.752, with a coupon rate of 2.95% to produce a 3.02% yield and structured based on the principles of Islamic Wakalah.

Warba Bank was appointed alongside other regional and international financial institutions to manage the Bank's second sukuk issuance this year listed on Euronext Dublin and NASDAQ Dubai under its \$ 7.5 billion program. Thuwaini Khalid Al-Thuwaini, Chief Investment Banking Officer at Warba Bank said that the Sukuk issuance attracted remarkable demand. The issuance was successful in generating 2.7 times over subscription with the order book reaching over US\$ 2 billion.

We, at Warba bank, are pleased play such a lead role in this Sukuk issuance for Dubai Islamic Bank under the Wakala-based Sukuk program of \$7.5 billion. The Sukuk's profit rate of 2.95% is the tightest achieved by a Financial Institution for Sukuk in 2019. The deal was made following a marketing plan and roadshows to introduce the Bank to investors of the global US\$ in Hong Kong and London, as well as several investor calls.

The meetings were arranged to demonstrate management's ability to deliver on its strategy and showcase the strong credit fundamentals of the bank. The roadshow resulted in significant demand from Middle Eastern, Asian and European investors. In terms of distribution, 69% of the Sukuk was allocated to MENA region with 15% to Asian and 16% to European investors.

The breakdown by type was, 48% banks and private banks, 40% fund managers, and 12% multilateral and other institutions. Al-Thuwaini pointed out that the Transaction was successfully led by Bank ABC, Dubai Islamic Bank, Emirates NBD Capital, First Abu Dhabi Bank, HSBC, Maybank, Sharjah Islamic Bank, Standard Chartered Bank and Warba Bank acted as Joint Lead Managers and Book runners on this transaction. The Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector acted as a Joint Lead Manager and Kuwait International Bank acted as a Co-manager.

He elaborated that the law firm Clifford Chance acted as legal counsel for the banks, while Allen and Overy represented DIB. Al-Thuwaini added: "Warba Bank continues to support the business sector in emerging markets by providing them with premium financing and investment solutions marked by flexibility and efficiency based on the Bank's strategy to position Warba Bank as a Islamic champion bank in the corporate and investment sector both in Kuwait and in international markets.



Thuwaini Al-Thuwaini

Jazeera Airways launches direct flights to Dammam

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, will start its service to Dammam in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on December 19, 2019, flying to the capital of the Eastern Province three times a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. With over 10.4 million passengers in 2018, Dammam's King Fahd International Airport is the third largest

airport in Saudi.

The service will be Jazeera Airways' fifth destination in the Kingdom, following Riyadh, Jeddah, Medinah and Taif. The airline will provide residents of Dammam with flight connections to Hyderabad, Alexandria, Amman, Mumbai, Cochin and Kathmandu, mainly catering to the large expatriate segment and expanding trade relations. Jazeera Airways CEO, Rohit Ramachandran, said: "We are very glad to be connecting our customers to the sixth largest city of Saudi Arabia with direct and connecting flights at value fares.

With its status as the capital of the Eastern Province and a major administrative centre for the Saudi oil industry, Dammam connects our customers to the larger Eastern Province where around 15% of the Kingdom's population live. I



take this opportunity to thank local authorities for supporting the expansion of Jazeera Airways to serve the growing

number of passengers through the King Fahd International Airport with a new and reliable service."

Warba Bank grabs two awards from CPI Financial

KUWAIT: Warba Bank announced that it has been awarded with two awards on Kuwait level from CPI Financial for its remarkable performance during last years, they are: "Distinguished Achievement in Digital Innovation" and "Best Digital Banking services". Mohamed Atef Al Shareef, Chief Officer of Strategic and Digital Group at Warba Bank, attended the awards' ceremony event at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Dubai, and received the two awards on behalf of the Bank in presence of an elite participants of high-ranked bankers representing banking institutions from GCC, the ME and the world.

"The awards reaped by Warba Bank this year are indicators of the progressed stage of development the Bank has reached; we pride ourselves to be awarded the Best Digital Banking Services award on Kuwait level and the "Distinguished Achievement in Digital Innovation", commented Mohamed Atef Al Shareef/ Chief Office of Strategic & Digital Group at Warba Bank.

Al Shareef asserted on the importance of these two awards as given by and international authentic institution well renowned for its neutrality; moreover, to be given these awards from the most credible institution in banking ratings tops-up our extensive efforts during the last three years where we have heavily injected investments in infor-

mation technology and digital banking services". Al Shareef elaborated that Warba Bank was amongst few banks on regional level that met the terms to apply for the award; it has fulfilled all the criteria of CPI Financial related to the Bank experience during the last three years.

He explained: "the two awards are a tangible proof that the Bank's strategy, launched in 2017 with prime focus to adopt the digital transformation has been fruitful; today, we apply the digital transformation in the Banks' different operations to meet the digital trend and cater to customers' growing needs, the fact that paved the way for us to accomplish several achievements which have resulted the nomination of the Bank as one of the candidates to receive these awards; in particular, Al Wateen, our

digital factory has been the main drive behind the Bank's nomination as being an unparalleled exclusive digital center with distinguished outputs of remarkable digital services such as: Jam3eya, Hassala, My Budget to name a few".

Al Shareef pointed out that during the last period, an impressive increase in customers' data has been recorded among those who use the digital banking solutions via Warba Online and Warba application hence the number of online banking transaction has been doubled during last years.

He continued: "Warba honorable achievements continues to affirm our honest and extensive efforts to enhance its offerings of banking services and products to meet customers' expectations; we are deeply committed to keep on with the innovation

which will result unique features with each update we release". CPI Financial is one of the best international institutions specialized in evaluating and surveilling the performance of different financial institutions. It manages both of banking performance and finance awards and publish a number of best financial magazines in the world including the Banker Middle East.

Winners as chosen according to judges' committee recommendations; it is formed of independent experts in the banking sector, what adds credibility and transparency on the given awards. Once candidates are selected, the committee starts the evaluation process according to a series of criteria and financial indicators then opens the floor for voting to choose winners from the candidates' list.



Get a 25% discount on your bill with NBK

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to reward its customers and add value to their banking experience with a new campaign that gives them the opportunity to redeem 25% cashback from the amount of their bill at any of Alshaya Group participating dining outlets. The campaign is valid to holders of an eligible NBK Mastercard Credit Card with the NBK Tap & Pay feature and at Alshaya Group dining outlets at Kuwait's largest shopping center, The Avenues.

The exclusive offer also enables customers to enjoy 10% NBK Rewards Points, in addition to a cashback limit of up to KD 30 per month. Customers can learn more about the exclusive offer by visiting nbk.com. Speaking of NBK's latest campaign, Hesham Al Nusif, Deputy General Manager of Consumer Banking Group,

National Bank of Kuwait said: "We are committed to rewarding our valued customers at NBK, giving them access to exclusive campaigns all year long. This most recent campaign is unique and combines between 25% cashback and NBK Rewards Points."

He added: "These campaigns and exclusive offers come as part of our efforts to meet the needs of our customers and to ensure we tailor products and services that meet their aspirations and in line with their lifestyle. Cashback campaigns have received great response from our customers and we promise to launch new and exclusive offers and rewards."

Al Nusif then reaffirmed that NBK Credit Cards provide customers with the opportunity to participate in the campaigns launched by the bank throughout the year, while the credit cards also ensure they enjoy a distinctive lifestyle and rich banking experience thanks to the many benefits they offer to cardholders." NBK offers a wide variety of banking products and services that are tailored to the lifestyle of customers. Customers can choose between NBK Credit Cards that are designed to meet their different needs and provide them with an array of benefits and rewards, including discounts, concierge

services, international services and much more.

NBK Credit Cards are the best and convenient method to make payments and give customers access to many benefits, especially when using their credit card for shopping, including the NBK Rewards Program, NBK Miles Program, NBK Secure Shopping, travel insurance, in addition to the opportunity to enter valuable draws held during the year.

The NBK Tap & Pay feature is a convenient and fast method to make payments without the need to enter the PIN code or sign the receipt for transactions less than KD 10. NBK Tap & Pay is a technologically advanced feature that allows customers to complete transactions with a tap on the point of sale device and make payments fast and securely.



Hesham Al Nusif

What's On



US Embassy's three pioneering English programs conclude at AIC

By Ben Garcia

A graduation ceremony was held on Tuesday for three pioneering English programs - Access English Microscholarship Program, Crossing the Digital Divide, and the Jahra Afterschool and Summer Program, which the US Embassy had sponsored. The event was held at the American International College (AIC) in Naseem, Jahra and attended by US Embassy Cultural Attache Nelson Wen.

He thanked AIC President Jackie Shaw, Associate Vice President Muneer Barakat and Director of Student Engagement Olivia Henderson for allowing them to use the AIC auditorium.

"This program was the first time the US Embassy tried to sponsor a long-term educational program in Jahra, and the results have exceeded all our hopes and expectations. We couldn't have done this without you and your generous support for the program, staff and students. Together, we have now launched three pioneering education programs in Jahra, and we hope to work together on many



more," Wen said.

Wen thanked Dana Winner, Khalid Julail and the staff at Atlas Training Institute and The English Center for their dedication teaching the students and managing the program. "To the Access students, it's great to see you all again. You are joining a community of thousands of students around the world who have finished Access, including almost 1,000 students here in Kuwait who have gone

through the program since 2003," he pointed out. "We had a movie night at the embassy last summer, an outing at the Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Centre last fall, and we got to play football with some American football coaches in May," he said.

"Studies don't end here. Learning a language is like a muscle - once you stop using it, it withers away. Don't let your English muscles turn flabby! Look for any chance you can



get to read, speak and write. Watch TV and movies - good quality ones, of course!" Wen quipped. "You only have to look around you to see what you can accomplish. The Access students were once like you - they were not able to read or write much English and did not feel comfortable speaking. Once you become a great English speaker, reader and writer, so many doors will open for you," he added.

Wen urged them to stay focused and com-

mitted to what they started. "If you do so, you will reap the rewards throughout your life. For the adults who took the Crossing the Digital Divide course, congratulations! Learning is not just for young students - we all have to dedicate ourselves to keep learning new things. So, I thank you for taking this opportunity to try to improve your skills in English and computer literacy," he concluded.



Dr Khaled Mahdi



LOYAC holds disabled day anniversary

In collaboration with the supreme council for planning and development, the public authority for the disabled affairs and UNDP in Kuwait, LOYAC recently held a special symposium to commemorate the anniversary of the International Day for People with Disabilities.

The symposium titled 'Bridging Gaps Towards Sustainable Development' was attended by LOYAC's board member, Fetouh Al-Dalali, the development council secretary general, Dr Khaled Mahdi, the disabled authority director, Dr Shafiq

Al-Awadhi and UNDP resident representative, Hideko Hadzialic.

Speaking on the occasion, Al-Dalali stressed the importance of joining all efforts to pave the way to give the disabled equal opportunities and protect their rights, she added that a lot had been made but stressed that a lot more is still needed through joining the efforts of the public, private sectors with NGOs. "Which we are trying to do in LOYAC", she underlined.

On her part, Dr Al-Awadhi expressed her joy on holding such an event to shed some light on the merg-

ing public and private sectors efforts with those of NGO to take care of the disabled.

Dr Khaled Mahdi stressed that the symposium is held with the aim of improving the lives of the disabled as part of New Kuwait's vision 2035 and achieve sustainable development.

Notably, the two-day symposium will be dedicated to discuss integration, empowering, the resources needed to face different challenges, hold workshops on developing kinetic skills, painting and music for disabled children.

Ooredoo Kuwait continues to support entrepreneurs in Murouj

Ooredoo Kuwait, first to launch innovated digital services in Kuwait is proudly partnered with AlSouq Murouj for the fourth consecutive year. The second market was held last Friday, 29 November in which Ooredoo supported local entrepreneurs and businesses. The market, which was held at AlMurouj Complex, included an Ooredoo dedicated booth, local farm produce, artisanal food products and crafts, with a 'street food' section aimed at highlighting the culinary diversity of Kuwait's local food community. The market also offered a section dedicated for children's activities. It will be held once a month on weekends, until March 2020.

Commenting on this sponsorship, Ooredoo Kuwait Senior Director of Corporate Communications Mijbil AlAyoub said: "We're happy to be supporting local businesses and



entrepreneurs through this engaging project. This sponsorship comes in tandem with our social responsibility strategy, which in turn is based on our core values of caring,

connecting and challenging. We look forward to meeting those young enthusiastic small business owners as well as our valued customers at the next market".



Modern Heritage music festival

Within the activities of the Modern Heritage Music festival organized by LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) in collaboration with Al-Shaheed Park and at its amphitheatre, a special concert was recently held for artist, Faya Yonan and her band.

The concert attracted a large audience who enjoyed 17 of Faya's most famous songs and kept calling or repetition for various songs, especially Palestinian folkloric ones.

Speaking at the concert's sidelines, Al-Shaheed Park manager, Salman Al-Reshoud said that the Syrian singer Faya's concert concluded the Modern Heritage Festival and that the next festival would be held next march under the title of Arab Youth Festival.

On her part, Yonan expressed her joy for singing in Kuwait for the second time in her career and noted that most of her song have special messages to convey.



Health & Science

In nations rich and poor, climate related disasters on the uptick

MADRID: Japan, the Philippines and Germany top a list of countries worst hit by climate-enhanced extreme weather last year, with Madagascar and India close behind, researchers said yesterday. Flood-inducing rains, two deadly heatwaves, and the worst typhoon to hit Japan in a quarter century — all in 2018 — left hundreds dead, thousands homeless and more than \$35 billion (31.5 billion euros) in damage nationwide, according to a report from environmental thinktank Germanwatch.

Category 5 Typhoon Manghut — the most powerful tropical storm of the year — ripped through northern Philippines in September, displacing a quarter of a million people and unleashing lethal landslides, according to the group's updated Global Climate Risk Index.

In Germany, meanwhile, a sustained summer heatwave and drought along with average temperatures nearly three degrees Celsius (5.4 degrees Fahrenheit) above normal over a four-month stretch resulted in 1,250 premature deaths and losses of \$5 billion, mostly in agriculture. 2018's top weather disasters showed that even the world's most advanced and resilient economies can

find themselves at the mercy of meteorological events amplified by global warming. "Recent science has confirmed the long established link between climate change, on one side, and the frequency and severity of extreme heat, on the other," said Germanwatch researcher Laura Schafer.

"In Europe, for example, extreme heat spells are now 100 times more likely than a century ago." A sustained heatwave in 2003 claimed 70,000 lives across western Europe, mostly in France. India was also ravaged by crippling heat in 2018, along with the worst flooding in over 100 years and a pair of cyclones. Total damages: nearly \$38 billion. Across the last 20 years, it is still the poorest regions that have suffered the most, the report found. Puerto Rico, Myanmar and Haiti were hit hardest, mostly due to tropical storms that have grown more destructive due to sea-level rise.

From once-a-century to all the time

A single cyclone, Nargis, claimed some 140,000 lives and destroyed the property of 2.4 million people along coastal areas in Myanmar in 2008. The new report came a day after the UN's World Meteorological

Organization (WMO) confirmed that the last decade is the hottest on record, and up to 22 million people will have been displaced by extreme weather this year alone. "Once again, in 2019 weather and climate-related risks hit hard," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said. "Heatwaves and floods which used to be 'once in a century' events are becoming more regular occurrences."

While it is hard to calculate how much climate change contributes in each case, its signature fingerprint has become unmistakable with barely 1C (1.8F) warming above preindustrial levels. On current trends, the planet is on track to heat up an additional three degrees, and even if the world's nations — gathered this week in Madrid for UN climate talks — honor carbon cutting pledges under the Paris climate treaty, Earth will see its surface warm another 2C. "We are not even adapted to 1.1 degree of warming," noted Friederike Otto, Deputy Director of the Environmental Change Institute at the University of Oxford.

In their 25th year, the UN climate talks have so far failed to secure the commitments needed to drawdown the greenhouse gases fuelling global warming. "It's shocking how



NAMKHANA, INDIA: A woman cleans her house damaged by Cyclone Bulbul in Bakkhali on November 10, 2019. — AFP

much climate change in 2019 has already led to lives lost, poor health, food insecurity and displaced populations," commented Joanna House, a reader in environmental science and policy at the University of Bristol.

"What is more shocking is how long very little has been done about this." The index — based on deaths and economic damages — focuses on extreme weather events but does not take into account slow-onset processes such as rising sea-levels, glacier melting or more acidic and warmer seas. — AFP

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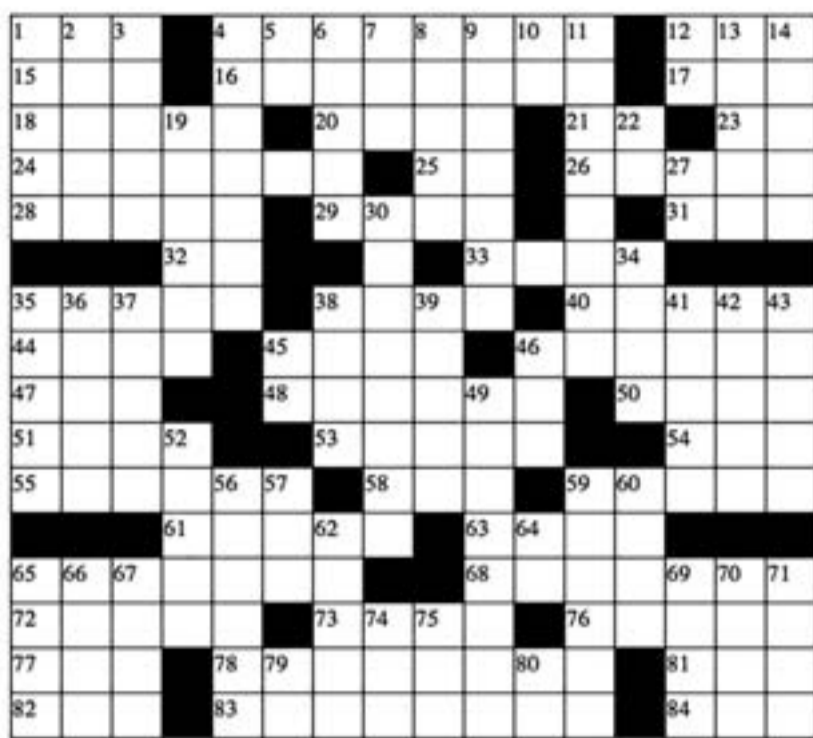
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2377



ACROSS

- A proportion multiplied by 100.
- A step to one side (as in boxing or dancing).
- The federal agency that insures residential mortgages.
- A strong emotion.
- Make a half turn on a horse, in dressage.
- A boy or man.
- An archaic name for Easter or Passover.
- A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- Unknown god.
- Of or relating to or supporting Islamism.
- A heavy precious metallic element.
- Realistic Norwegian author who wrote plays on social and political themes (1828-1906).
- A feudal lord or baron in Scotland.
- Evergreen trees and shrubs having oily one-seeded fruits.
- The cry made by sheep.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- Lacking or deprive of the sense of hearing wholly or in part.
- An Arab country on the peninsula of Qatar.
- An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
- Very dark black.
- Seed vessel having hooks or prickles.
- Hungarian playwright (1878-1952).
- Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
- Slightly open.
- In full operation.
- A diagrammatic representation of the earth's surface (or part of it).
- The dialect of Malay used as the national language of the Republic of Indonesia or of Malaysia.
- (informal) Roused to anger.
- An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
- Tear down so as to make flat with the ground.
- Italian astronomer and mathematician who was the first to use a telescope to study the stars.
- Capable of resuming original shape after stretching or compression.
- A member of a seafaring group of North American Indians who lived on the Pacific coast of British Columbia and southwestern Alaska.
- Type genus of the family Uvaceae.
- The sacred city of Lamaism.
- A human limb.
- Be earlier in time.
- Thickening of tissue in the motor tracts of the lateral columns and anterior horns of the spinal cord.
- A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
- A great raja.
- Of flax, hemp, or jute, so as to promote loosening of the fibers form the woody tissue.

DOWN

- Small songbirds resembling larks.
- Highly concentrated or intense.
- A unit of magnetic flux density equal to one weber per square meter.
- (slang) A batch of things that go together.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- Athenian lawmaker whose code of laws prescribed death for almost every offense (circa 7th century BC).
- The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
- Erect leafless flower stalk growing directly from the ground as in a tulip.
- A flat tortilla with various fillings piled on it.
- Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
- The ripened and variously modified walls of a plant ovary.
- A state in southeastern United States between the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.
- Australian shrubs and small trees with evergreen usually spiny leaves and dense clusters of showy flowers.
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- A high-kicking dance of French origin performed by a female chorus line.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- A metallic element having four allotropic forms.
- Small genus of tropical American trees and shrubs with pinnate leaves and flat straight pods.
- Having made preparations.
- Capital of Nigeria in the center of the country.
- The first of three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures comprising the first five books of the Old Testament considered as a unit.
- Highly excited.
- Region of western Asia Minor colonized by Ancient Greeks.
- Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinged fruit.
- A yellow quartz.
- With the mouth wide open as in wonder or awe.
- Before noon.
- A egg unit of work or energy.
- Brown or blackish Alpine mosses having a dehiscent capsule with 4 longitudinal slits.
- Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
- A deep bow.
- (informal) Of the highest quality.
- Any of numerous ornamental shrubs grown for their showy flowers of various colors.
- Flat tableland with steep edges.
- Used facetiously.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- Capital and largest city and economic center of Peru.
- A male monarch or emperor (especially of Russia prior to 1917).
- A small island.
- (of molten metal or glass) Formed by pouring or pressing into a mold n 1.
- A unit of length of thread or yarn.
- A magnetic tape recorder for recording (and playing back) TV programs.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It seems as if you are entering a period of emotional change. You may have mixed emotions about some situations in your life, but you are torn between right and wrong and good and bad. You feel a great need to make some kind of changes in your lifestyle. The only thing that is bringing you any sense of peace is staying on the go and keeping your mind preoccupied to prevent dwelling on the problems at hand. Do whatever you need to do to keep peace in your world and stress at arm's length. This may be a time you have a great desire to further your education and gain as much knowledge as possible. We have always been told knowledge is power and it seems you long for power now. Spend your time taking in all this world brings your way.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Eternity is a measure of time you can not even begin to understand. Your thoughts are drawn to an imaginative and dreamy state. Your mind is a million miles away. The future is where you are focused. You want to know what tomorrow brings. You actually want to know you have total control of what tomorrow brings. To ensure a stable future you also know you need to make amends with your past. Your focus may drift to mending fences and repairing relationships. This is a very spiritual time in your life.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may experience dissatisfaction with what you have or the people you are surrounded right now. Love may be absent from your vocabulary today. You may feel unloved or unloving. This is a time you feel as if you could escape to a desert island and no one would miss you. You feel as if there is no one you would miss either and the thought actually sounds appealing to you. We all need breaks and escapes from time to time and today is your time for that feeling.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You seem to have a desire to become more involved with friends, family, and your neighbors. Exchanging stories and life experiences with each other seem to really satisfy a need for gaining knowledge. You may feel as if communicating your feelings to others and the support you receive is very rewarding for you now. You may find yourself more understanding of the "why's" and "how's" of the world around you. Knowing what makes me people tick and what emotions they are hiding beneath the surface seems to intrigue you. Once you open up and let your walls down for love ones you may find they are more open with you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

It seems like you have a few skeletons in your closet. Things could come back to haunt you from your past. You may find yourself realizing the past is just that. The past. Leave it where it belongs. You may find yourself emotional. Be sure to not let past experience prevent you from moving forward and bettering yourself. You deserve the best and now is a time to believe in yourself and move forward.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Being the center of attention may be very appealing to you today. Romance is in the air for you also. Remember the memories you make today can be looked back on for years to come with pride and adoration. Be sure and keep your emotions in check today and practice a bit of self-control when it comes to dealing with others. You may find it difficult to relax to day but take a deep breath and always remind yourself actions have consequences. Take each problem you encounter today and chalk it up to a new lesson learned. Today's issues may be best handled in a conservative manner even if that means taking some time to regroup and reorganize. Virgo, this small effort could help your day run more smoothly.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may feel your own inner need for change is facing opposition from someone in your life. It is a good time to keep watch over your shoulder. There may be some devious or underhanded things going on behind your back. Choose your company wisely and keep your circle small. Not everyone always has your best interest at heart. Jealousy seems to rear it's ugly head when it comes to someone who is close to you. This will pass but handle them with care. The tension in the air will soon clear. Try to be understanding of other's feelings. Take time to weed out the fake and spend more time with those who are real in your life.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

When it comes to fitting in with the younger crowd, you don't! You may find yourself at odds with a younger group. Wisdom is gained through experience. You know all too well until you have lived it you can not understand. How many times have you said, "If I knew then, what I know now?" No one could have convinced you back then. You have to realize you are speaking to deaf ears when giving advice to the younger generation. This could cause frustration but remember, it is through your mistakes that you gained your wisdom. Let them live. Let them learn.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You tend to live one day at a time with little thought for the future. It works for you. But, it may cause conflict with someone you care about who is a controller and needs structure and long-term planning. If you need that person in your life, you may want to consider compromise. (It's not an ugly word.) Don't expect too much. Controllers rarely make major changes. You adapt more easily. You could consider asking what you can do to make the relationship work better. That may mean adjusting your schedule occasionally, even when it is inconvenient.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This is a great time to surround yourself with friends. You may find much encouragement and the support you are needing to move forward towards your goals. Others may begin to show much admiration toward you. You are noticed for your ambition and drive. You may find that others begin to come to you for advice. This is very flattering to you. They say imitation is the most sincere form of flattery and you are flattered that your peers seek your advice to become more like you. You may find yourself having a great appreciation of your thoughts and ideas. This is a great time to put some of this down on paper. Whether keeping notes or beginning a blog, keep a record of the thoughts that are running through your mind now. This may be very profitable for you in the future.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may be feeling two ways at once, you may not be truly sure just how you feel. There is a blur between right and wrong and you may not be able to tell the difference. You may feel a deep need for change. This may be a time you start to focus on developing new healthy habits. You may find yourself full of energy and drawn to see all the world has to offer. You are hungry for knowledge and may start to consider enrolling in classes or starting online studies. You are ready for a new venture. A new outlook and a new adventure may be about to begin for you.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You feel as though there is a place for everything and everything has a place. Anything out of place seems to really bother you. You are organized and not only able to organize things, but you really have a knack for organizing people. Your management skills are high. You know just the right person for the job. You are ambitious and determined to get things done. You have no shortage of self-respect. This is a time you seem to demand respect from others. You may find yourself torn between two worlds now. You can use these organizational skills to find a peaceful balance between your career and home life. Remember, happiness will begin at home.

Wordsearch Puzzle

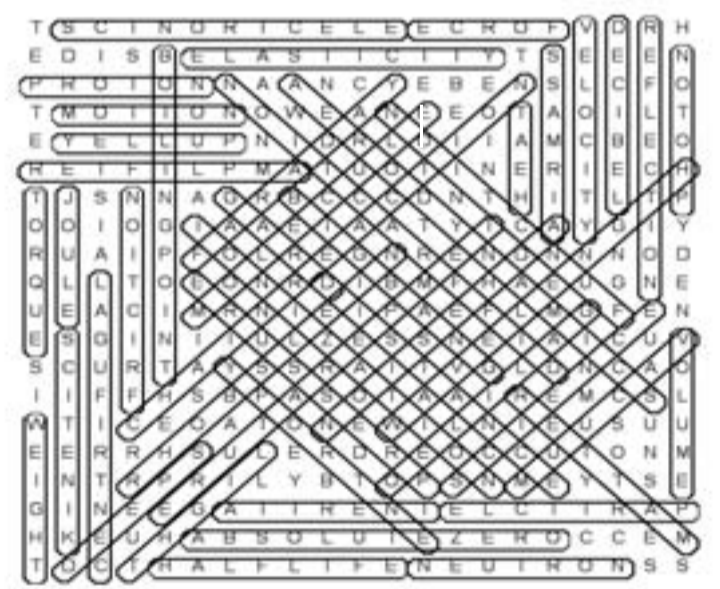
Pizza

Find and circle all of the pizza ingredients and toppings that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell four additional pizza toppings.



- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| ARTICHOKE HEARTS | CRUST | JALAPENOS | PROVOLONE |
| ASAGO | EGGPLANT | MONTEREY JACK | RICOTTA |
| ASPARAGUS | FETA | MOZZARELLA | SALAMI |
| BACON | GARLIC | MUSHROOMS | SAUSAGE |
| BANANA PEPPERS | GOAT CHEESE | OLIVE OIL | SHRIMP |
| BASIL | GOUDA | ONIONS | SPINACH |
| BELL PEPPERS | GREEN OLIVES | OYSTERS | TOMATO SAUCE |
| BLACK OLIVES | GROUND BEEF | PARMESAN | TOMATOES |
| BROCCOLI | HAM | PEPPERONI | ZUCCHINI |

Physics 2



- | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
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| 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 | NEELS BOHR | VELOCITY |
| DECIBEL | HALF LIFE | PARTICLE | VOLUME |
| DIFFRACTION | HEAT | PHOTON | WAVELENGTH |
| DISTANCE | INERTIA | PRESSURE | WEIGHT |

The hidden message is: THE DISTANCE BETWEEN INSANITY AND GENIUS IS MEASURED ONLY BY SUCCESS

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2019



Palestinian Christians watch as fireworks light the sky to mark the lighting of a Christmas tree at the Manger Square near the Church of the Nativity, revered as the site of Jesus Christ's birth, in the biblical West Bank town of Bethlehem. — AFP Photos

Bethlehem set for a Happy Christmas

As the Christmas decorations go up in Manger Square, Bethlehem is preparing for its best Christmas for two decades, the town's mayor and hoteliers say. Five new hotels are in the pipeline and existing ones are expanding. The town has even extended the opening hours of the Church of the Nativity, revered by Christians worldwide as the place of Jesus' birth. But even after three years of relative peace and prosperity, people are still nervous in the small Palestinian town, a few miles south of Jerusalem in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

So dependent has Bethlehem become on tourist income that an upsurge of violence anywhere in the volatile Middle East - not just in its near vicinity - spells financial disaster, with nervous tour groups prone to cancelling months ahead. Sitting in his municipality office overlooking the newly lit Christmas tree in Manger Square, Mayor Anton Salman said Bethlehem looked set to improve upon the 1.5 million visitors it received last year.

"Since three years (ago), things are going up, this year is better than 2018 and 2018 was better than 2017 and it is a continuous increase in the number of tourists who are coming to the city," Salman told Reuters. The main bottleneck, he said, was the tiny front door of the Nativity church, through which pilgrims must crouch to enter. Once vast, it was reduced in size centuries ago by the Crusaders, then again during the Mamluk and Ottoman Turkish eras to prevent looters driving carts into the church.

For the first time this year the authorities extended the church's opening hours from sunset to 8 p.m., Salman said, and in 2020 they plan to enlarge the town's coach station and to

address heavy congestion on the narrow road to Manger Square. They will even consider asking tourist groups to register in advance in future. "If the number will be high and the church can't receive all of them we need to look for other plans that can be helpful," he said.

Ghosts of Christmas past

This year townsfolk are abuzz about a new attraction - a wooden relic reputed to be from



the manger used by the infant Jesus and sent back last week to Bethlehem from Rome. But the town remains wary. Bethlehem enjoyed good times until the outbreak of the second Palestinian uprising in 2000, which saw years of mutual blood-letting between Israelis and Palestinians, leading tourism to collapse. Scars remain - most visibly Israel's high concrete wall that towers over the northern entrance to Bethlehem, and separates it from Jerusalem. Palestinians call Israel's military barrier a land grab. Israel says the cordon of fences, ditches and walls has drastically reduced attacks on its citizens.

The manager of the Alexander Hotel in Bethlehem, Joey Canavati, said his family had nearly given up on the town during the lean years, but now had bookings through to 2021. The hotel plans to nearly double in size from 58 to 110 rooms. "Business has been booming, we have never seen it like this ever before," he said. "(With) the number of tourists that have been coming in this year we have a huge lack of rooms here in Bethlehem." But he added a familiar note of caution: "It's always about stability." — Reuters

A Palestinian nun poses for a picture with the Christmas tree at the Manger Square near the Church of the Nativity.



Palestinian scout troops perform during a parade ahead of the arrival of the Relic of the Holy Crib of the Child Jesus at the Church of the Nativity compound in Bethlehem.



A Catholic clergyman swings a censer during a ceremony for the reception of the Relic of the Holy Crib of the Child Jesus at the Church of the Nativity compound in Bethlehem.

Baby Yoda breaks internet - a thousand memes, it launched



The wax figure of Star Wars character Yoda is pictured at the Star Wars At Madame Tussauds attraction in London. — AFP

Baby Yoda may stand only a few inches tall, communicating with high-pitched squeaks and mischievous gestures, but the adorable green creature has loomed large online, causing a global social media meltdown. The cute, wide-eyed tyke, unveiled three weeks ago in the premiere of Disney's live-action Star Wars series "The Mandalorian", has stolen both the show and millions of hearts.

One parody account, @BabyYodaBaby, has amassed more than 120,000 followers with paraphrased Yoda quotes such as, "Fear leads to hate. Hate leads to anger. Cuteness leads to snuggling." Countless screengrabs, short video clips and other memes of the tiny creature nonchalantly sipping from a cup, fiddling with spaceship control switches and generally causing a nuisance have gone viral.

News stories mentioning Baby Yoda had 2.28 million interactions on Facebook and Twitter in the first two weeks of the show alone, according to NewsWhip data cited by the website Axios. Hollywood celebrities are getting in on the action too. Action star Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson posted an image of himself cradling the newborn creature to his 160 million followers, while A-listers such as Jennifer Lopez have been singing the character's praises to reporters on Los Angeles's red carpets.

The inevitable flood of Disney merchandise has been surprisingly slow to emerge, as creator Jon Favreau insisted the character be kept secret before its reveal on "Mandalorian." But Baby Yoda toys available for pre-order now appear prominently on Disney's online store, and a

series of T-shirts, mugs and bags are trending online. Few details have been revealed in the show so far about the character itself, portrayed by an animatronic puppet and referred to only as "the Child" despite being 50 years old.



Japan's T-Arts Company displays a three-dimensional layered model of Star Wars fictional character Yoda at the International Tokyo Toy Show. — AFP

Its online nickname stems from its obvious resemblance to Yoda from the original trilogy. But as "Mandalorian" is set years after those films, it appears to be a new character. Either way, nostalgic buzz for all things Star Wars comes at a handy time for Disney. In addition to "Mandalorian" launching on Disney's new, on-demand TV streaming platform Disney+ last month, blockbuster "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker" will hit movie theaters worldwide from December 18. — AFP



Lionel Richie

'accepted' daughter's relationship with
Scott Disick

The 'Dancing on the Ceiling' hitmaker has had his reservations over the couple's romance because at 21, the model is 15 years younger than the 'Flip It Like Disick' star - who has three children with former partner Kourtney Kardashian - and though he isn't "entirely on board" with the couple, he is resigned to the fact they are staying together. She told E! News: "Scott and Sofia are still together and all is well for now. They spent Thanksgiving with Lionel Richie and they all flew together on his private jet for their holiday

trip. "Lionel has accepted their relationship but still isn't entirely 100 percent on board with Scott mostly because of the age difference and how young Sofia is." And the 'Hello' hitmaker is making "more of an effort" with the 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' star because, after two years together, he can see how happy Scott makes his daughter. The insider added: "Lionel can see how happy Sofia is though so he is definitely making more of an effort with Scott."

Ashley Graham

undergoes
'rollercoaster of emotions'

The 32-year-old model - who is expecting a baby boy with husband Justin Ervin - has gained 40lbs and though people have told her she has a "cute bump", she still has "really terrible" days where she feels bad about the way she looks. Speaking on her podcast 'Pretty Big Deal', she told her guest Rosie Huntington-Whiteley: "I have had really terrible days, I've really good days. I mean everybody can tell you how cute your bump is, but when your body is changing so rapidly it's like, you kind of have to succumb to it." Ashley relished having a "real conversation" about pregnancy weight gain with Rosie, who admitted she had piled on 55lbs while carrying her son Jack, now two. Promoting the podcast on Instagram, she wrote: "It was amazing to have a real conversation with @rosiehw about all the changes your body goes through during pregnancy on the latest episode of @prettybigdealpod."



Lea Michele's husband gave her a 'wedding survival guide'

The 33-year-old actress was delighted with the "cute" present she received from her then-fiance Zandy Reich because it helped take out all the stress of planning in the lead up to their big day this March. She said: "I just told my husband what I want for Christmas, which I've never done before and he is such a great gift giver." Last year, he gave me a wedding survival guide, which was the cutest thing ever. He made this beautiful box [with] labels and photos and it was all of my favorite things to help me get through wedding planning - a gift certificate to a massage, a membership to this yoga place I love, a Sugarfish [restaurant] certificate. How cute is that?" The 'Same Time, Next Christmas' actress admitted she and her spouse haven't yet established many holiday traditions but are looking forward to spending the festive season with her family.



Laverne Cox

'lives in wigs'

The 'Orange Is the New Black' actress loves to experiment with a variety of hair pieces and says she usually keeps her natural hair in cornrows for easy maintenance. She told Refinery29: "I live in wigs, and having a product to take care of my wigs is essential. I've recently committed to oiling my scalp daily. I keep coconut oil next to my toothbrush, so I brush, floss, and get it done." Laverne, 47, also revealed that she used to be afraid to stand out but now

she loves to try different looks and styles. She said: "For many years, I would hide parts of myself. I would think that no one wanted to hear, see, or experience certain parts of who I am in fear of being rejected, but now I am at a point in my life where I want to embrace every shade of the Laverne rainbow." The star is working with hair brand Matrix and praised the company for hiring her as its first openly transgender ambassador.

Giorgio Armani doesn't believe one person is capable of replacing him



The 85-year-old fashion designer shows no signs of retiring and says when it comes to eventually choosing a successor for him, he thinks it will take more than one person. He told The Guardian newspaper: "I don't think one person will work - I think it's somebody on fashion, somebody on commercial, someone on financial." "Obviously, nowadays, it's my decision what will happen, but when I won't be here anymore they will decide what's best. "It's my first thought every morning. It's not a nice feeling. But

you have to be strong. The company has to go on, aside from my person. But I don't see the alter ego of Armani out there. I also think it's not fashionable any more. Now companies are done by good people working together. Once upon a time, there was a big boss. Maybe the future won't be like that." Meanwhile, Giorgio also admitted he is worried about sustainability but does not have a complete solution.

MENA MASSOUD HASN'T HAD AN AUDITION SINCE 'ALADDIN'



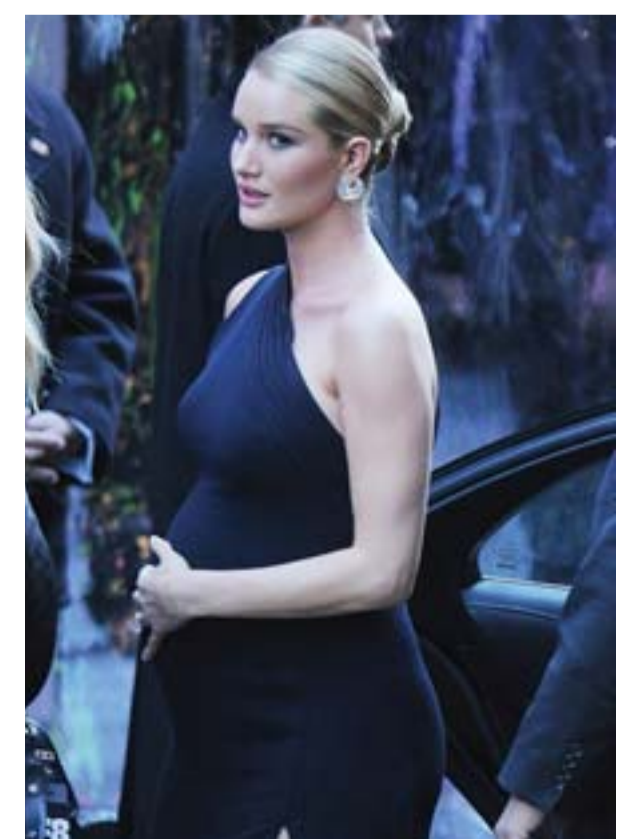
The 28-year-old actor admitted people expect him to have made "millions" thanks to his work on the Disney blockbuster - which made more than \$1 billion at the global box office - but he's struggled to find work since the film came out and he's expecting to continue to be "overlooked and underestimated" for some time. He told The Daily Beast: "I'm kind of tired of staying quiet about it. I want people to know that it's not always dandelions and roses when you're doing something like

'Aladdin'. "He must have made millions. He must be getting all these offers." It's none of those things. I haven't had a single audition since 'Aladdin' came out. "I feel like I'm going to be overlooked and underestimated for a long time because I am a young actor. I'm an up and comer in the sense that I've been doing this for 10 years, but to a lot of people, 'Aladdin's the first thing they've seen me in. So I think I'm going to be viewed that way for a long time. I'm going to have to work at chipping away at that."

Rosie Huntington

spent last month of pregnancy walking around naked

The 32-year-old model admitted she "enjoyed herself" and didn't worry about her food intake when she was expecting her and fiance Jason Statham's son Jack, now two, resulting in her gaining 55lbs but enjoying the "magical" changes to her body. Speaking to Ashley Graham on her 'Pretty Big Deal' podcast, she said: "Listen, I enjoyed myself. I let the reins go. It's a new experience, so you're kind of like, 'Well, let's see how this goes.' "And six months in I was like 'What! Like, this is crazy'. It was an intense journey and the same thing. It was so magical to see. "Towards the end I basically walked around naked for the last month. At home, I was in the pool all day and I just walked around and I was like f**k it. Clothes don't fit anymore, they don't look cute. "By the end I just felt really empowered in my body, but it took a minute to get there."



Lifestyle | Gossip



Camila Morrone used to be ashamed of her past career as model

The 22-year-old actress revealed she tried to hide her previous career when she first started acting because she didn't want to be seen as "too sexy for a role". Camila told *The Los Angeles Times*: "I felt so ashamed of my modeling history when I first got into acting, so I tried to hide that part of my life, because I didn't want to be looked at as too sexy for a role. I've heard, 'Oh, she's not homey-

looking,' or 'too voluptuous' or - I don't want to say sexy, because then I sound like I think of myself that way - which I don't - but that's oftentimes it." Camila moved to New York to work as a model when she was a teenager but admitted she didn't enjoy it as she was pressured to lose weight, and "forced to network with these people and sell a part of my soul to them".



Rita Ora is dating **Rafferty Law**

The 29-year-old singer and the 23-year-old actor son of Jude Law and Sadie Frost began seeing each other after meeting on the set of new movie 'Twist', where she plays the Artful Dodger and he is starring as Oliver. A source told *The Sun* newspaper's Bizarre column: "It has been simmering for some time after they started working together. People made a few comments about the chemistry straight away and the gossip started from there. But it

was only after a while that the attraction really grew into something meaningful between them." Rita and Rafferty have reportedly been keeping their romance a secret until now but decided to go public by holding hands as they left the British Fashion Awards after-party on Monday. The loved up couple were spotted leaving Giorgio Armani's bash at Harry's Bar together.



Justin Bieber regrets making racist remarks when he was younger

The 25-year-old singer was caught on camera using offensive terms when he was just 14 years old - including one clip where he changed the chorus to his song 'One Less Lonely Girl' by substituting 'girl' for the N-word - and he has admitted he didn't truly realize "the power" of what he had to say. Alongside an Instagram post bearing the words 'STAND AGAINST RACISM', he wrote: "When I was young I was uneducated and found myself saying really hurtful things not knowing the power of my words. Racism is still very prevalent and I

want to use my voice to remind we are all human being and all of EQUAL VALUE BEFORE GOD!" The 'Love Yourself' hitmaker - who is married to model Hailey Bieber - previously issued an apology five years ago after TMZ shared a video of him telling a racist joke when he was 15. The website explained they had received the clip - which was shot backstage at a promotional event - four years prior to that but decided not to post it because of Justin's age and because he "immediately told his friends what he did was stupid."

Tommy Hilfiger feels 'lucky' to be with **Zendaya**

The 68-year-old designer worked with Zendaya, 23, on her debut collection for his brand in March and they followed up with a second drop in September and Tommy is happy that they snapped her up before her role in critically acclaimed TV show 'Euphoria' helped her pro-

file to skyrocket. He told *Footwear News*: "When she started collaborating with us, we thought, 'OK, this is great. She's a TV star, she's a movie star, she's a musician'. But what we didn't know was that she was going to come out with a new show called 'Euphoria' that was going to skyrocket. I think that it was maybe

luck that we engaged with her at that time. Tommy also believes the young actress is mature "beyond her years" and he praised her for being "very present".



Julia Louis-Dreyfus has obtained a restraining order

The 'Veep' actress - who has sons Henry, 27, and Charles, 22, with husband Brad Hall - claimed "obsessed fanatic and complete stranger" Alisa Pearlman had made her family "victims of a course of conduct that has included stalking, cyberstalking, harassment and other annoying and alarming misconduct" and left her "frightened" for her safety. She said in a declaration for the case obtained by *The Blast*: "I am frightened for my safety when

leaving my house or coming home at night. "Based upon (her) comments, threats, and stalking activities as summarized above, I am anxious and fearful that Ms. Pearlman's delusional obsession will not only result in continued harassment of me but also manifest into additional forms of abuse and harassment, including harming (or attempting to harm) my husband or me physically."



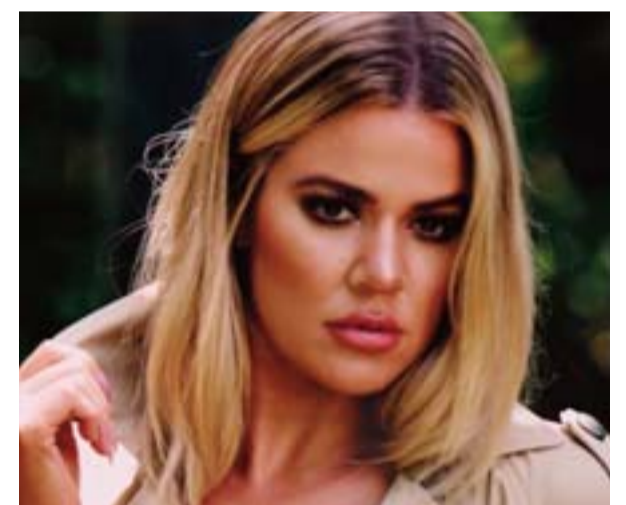
Willie Nelson has given up smoking

The 86-year-old country music legend says smoking almost killed him so he recently decided to start looking after himself as he feels "lucky" to be alive. He told *KSAT TV*: "I have abused my lungs quite a bit in the past, so breathing is a little more difficult these days and I have to be careful. "I started smoking cedar bark, went from that to cigarettes to whatever. And that almost killed me. I don't smoke anymore - take better care of myself. I'm

here, I'm glad to be here. I'm lucky to be here." Willie also cited touring as the key to his health and happiness and says he will never retire from performing for his fans. He explained: I love the bus. This is my home. [Performing] is an energy exchange. They give me a lot of positive energy and I hope to give them a lot of positive energy. "For an hour they get away from everything they don't like."



Khloe Kardashian insists fans don't 'know it all' about her life



The 35-year-old star has hit out at 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' viewers after they criticized her friends Khadijah and Malika Haqq for helping Tristan Thompson choose a diamond necklace for his ex-girlfriend in scenes aired last weekend. Khloe insisted the show didn't show the "entire story" and people are wrong to judge because she knows her pals would never do anything to hurt or upset her. She tweeted: "I keep seeing people criticizing my best friends. My best friends would never do anything to hurt me. I can say that with full confidence! "You guys don't know the entire story. EVER!! You watch 44 minutes of an episode and really think you know it all. "Stop talking about my friends. Focus on your own lives, which I'm pretty sure is NOT perfect. People love to have an opinion when they're behind a computer screen. I'm fine with opinions. Just make sure you live the life you so quickly judge others about."



Sharon Osbourne blasts 'America's Got Talent' as 'a boys' club'

The 67-year-old star - who was a member of the show's judging panel between seasons two and seven - has claimed that men were treated better than women on the show and received higher salaries. Speaking on 'The Talk', she fumed: "It is a boys' club, okay, it is. And the boys take care of each other and the women are not paid as much as the men." Sharon also claimed that Howie Mandel was treated better than she was when he joined the panel after her. She explained: "I was on the show before Howie. I was one of them that helped put the show where it was. Simon wasn't on the show. Simon owns the show and the time I was there, Simon was never on the show. So when the show was doing 16 million, 14 million, Simon was never there."

Lifestyle | Features

In a gesture of unity, Turner Prize nominees share British art award

In a gesture of unity at what they called a time of political crisis, four British artists broke with tradition by choosing to share the 2019 Turner Prize. The nominees for the country's most prestigious award for young artists - Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Helen

Cammock, Oscar Murillo and Tai Shani - made their request in a letter to judges ahead of Tuesday evening's ceremony in the southeastern coastal town of Margate. "At this time of political crisis in Britain and much of the world... we feel strongly motivated to use the occa-

sion of the prize to make a collective statement," they wrote. The panel agreed they should split the 40,000 pound (\$51,300) prize - awarded annually for an outstanding exhibition by an artist born or working in Britain - equally. The spirit of collectivity was also in

evidence at this year's Booker Prize for English-language fiction, which was jointly awarded to Canadian Margaret Atwood and Briton Bernardine Evaristo in October. — Reuters



Actor Ahmed Best arrives at the Premiere Of Warner Bros.



A Star Wars logo sign is seen atop a popcorn machine inside Rancho Obi-Wan, the world's largest private collection of Star Wars memorabilia, in Petaluma, California. —AFP photos

Jar Jar Binks actor to host 'Star Wars' TV game show

Star Wars fans will get a chance to enter the Jedi ranks in a new Disney+ TV game show - if they can stomach the return of the much-maligned Jar Jar Binks. "Star Wars: Jedi Temple Challenge" will be hosted by Ahmed Best, who played the bumbling, comedic alien sidekick regularly voted the sci-fi franchise's most hated character. The live-action game show will appear on Disney's new on-demand streaming platform Disney+, which launched in the US last month with a

flagship new scripted Star Wars series "The Mandalorian."

Young contestants will take on challenges in three locations including a forest planet, on board a star cruiser, and inside a Jedi temple, Disney said Tuesday. The competition will test "core Jedi principles of strength, knowledge, and bravery," and will feature iconic Star Wars elements such as lightsabers, hyperspace, the Force and the dark side, a statement said.

However Best - a musician and former "Stomp" cast member - will shun his Jar Jar Binks character this time, and instead play a Jedi master who will serve as host and mentor to contestants. Mary Holland ("Veep") will co-host as a "humanoid droid companion." Disney+ executive Dan Silver described the show, launching in 2020, as "a totally new format for the franchise." It is produced by Disney-owned Lucasfilm and Endeavor Content. — AFP



An artwork entitled 'Collective Conscience' by Colombian artist Oscar Murillo, is pictured during the press view of the four artists shortlisted for the Turner Prize 2019, at the Turner Contemporary in Margate, southeast England. — AFP

Four artists join forces to share 2019 Turner Prize

This year's prestigious Turner Prize will be shared by all four shortlisted artists after they formed a collective to show solidarity at a time of global "political crisis", in a shock win announced Tuesday. Oscar Murillo, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Helen Cammock and Tai Shani were all named winners on Tuesday evening at a ceremony at the Turner Contemporary gallery in the seaside town of Margate, in southeast England.

The four - who had not met each other before being shortlisted - will split the £40,000 (\$52,000, 47,000 euros) prize money for one of the world's most prestigious awards for visual and contemporary art. British Vogue magazine editor Edward Enninful, who announced the prize, called the decision "incredible".

Ahead of the announcement, the four had sent a plea to the judges explaining their reasons for forming the collective. "At this time of political crisis in Britain and much of the world, when there is already so much that divides and isolates people and communities, we feel strongly motivated to use the occasion of the Prize to make a collective statement in the name of commonality, multiplicity and solidarity — in art as in society," they wrote.

More than 60,000 people have already seen the works by the four shortlisted artists since they went on display at the gallery in Margate in September. "We each work with specific issues, but it doesn't mean that we see those things in separation from each other," said Abu Hamdan. "The condition of a competition would actually turn the messages away from each other."

Turner Contemporary director Victoria Pomery has described their work as "fantastic exhibitions". Murillo had been the favorite to win. His work draws on his experiences of growing up in Colombia, before moving to London aged 11. He combines his roots in Latin America with Western art, to create sculptures, models and vividly painted abstract canvases for multimedia installations. After the announcement, he said: "We have very strong individual voices, but somehow the prize needed to be concluded in this way."

Controversy

Abu Hamdan, who is based in Beirut, bills himself a "private ear", rather than a "private eye" investigating and trying to analyze sounds and how they contribute to identity. Part of his submission for the coveted prize involved recreating the acoustic memories of former inmates of a Syrian prison, where they were held shackled and blindfolded. Cammock, who is based in London, is a multimedia artist working in film, photography and text, who uses social history to examine power structures.

Her film "The Long Note" examines the different roles and involvement of women in the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland in 1968. She said the idea of forming a collective "literally came out of the first meeting with each other." London-based Shani described her submission as an "expanded psychodelic" adaptation of Christine de Pizan's 15th work "The Book of the City of Ladies". Her work, which was nearly five years in the making, features 12 imagined characters on film and live performance to explore feminism and power structures.

The coveted Turner Prize is named after the great British land and seascape painter JMW Turner and is designed to promote public interest in contemporary art. The Margate gallery is built on the site of his lodging house, an image of which will feature on the new £20 note due out in February next year, alongside a depiction of the artist. Controversy has often swirled around the Turner, which is awarded to a young British artist for an outstanding exhibition or other presentation of their work in past year.

In 2016, the shortlisted works included a giant gold sculpture of a pair of buttocks and chastity belts. Other famous installations over the years include Tracey Emin's unmade bed, works made from elephant dung, clippings of human hair and a pile of bricks. Last year's winner was video artist Charlotte Prodger, who shot a film on her iPhone about coming out as gay in rural Scotland. Next year's prize will be awarded at Tate Britain gallery on the banks of the River Thames in London. —AFP

FRENCH CHEF WHO 'INVENTED' MAGRET DE CANARD DIES

French chef Andre Daguin, credited with inventing the magret de canard dish emblematic of southwestern France and making the rich duck delicacy famous worldwide, has died aged 84, his family said. He died peacefully on Tuesday at his home in Auch, near Toulouse, after a struggle with cancer, his daughter Ariane Daguin said. He took over the Hotel de France restaurant in Auch from his father, receiving his first Michelin star in 1960 and another a decade later. It was there that he dreamt up the magret de canard dish, made from the breast of a duck (or a goose) that has been fattened for foie gras.

The extra fat gives the meat a

succulent, melt-in-the-mouth taste that rapidly won over diners in France as well as abroad. "He was the one who 'invented' the magret de canard, promoting it through his restaurant," said Roland Heguy, the president of France's union of hoteliers UMIH. "He had a personality and unique charisma. He had a great presence, always with a beret on his head, and gave a lot of color to his profession," he added. "A great chef has left us. He was a man committed to defending home-grown produce and French cuisine," wrote Guillaume Gomez, the head chef at the Elysee Palace, on Twitter. — AFP



This file photo shows French hotel business union's president Andre Daguin, 84, died in Auch on December 3, 2019, according to his daughter. — AFP

South Korean actor found dead in latest K-pop tragedy

South Korean actor Cha In-ha was found dead in his home, police said yesterday, the country's third young celebrity to die in the past two months amid growing debate about the intense social pressures artists face. In an unrelated case, K-pop star Kang Daniel's management agency Konnect Entertainment said the former member of the hit boy band Wanna One had decided to take a break from his performing schedules due to "depression and panic attacks."

The agency said the 22-year-old has recently been showing "frequent signs of worsening health and anxiety." Kang was a former member of the 11-member Wanna One which went on to become one of the biggest K-pop acts after its debut in 2017. He went solo in 2018. While South Korea's pop culture mostly projects a wholesome image on stage and screen, it has recently been marred by a series of untimely deaths and criminal cases that have revealed a darker side of the industry.

A police official told Reuters that Cha, 27, was found dead on Tuesday and that the cause of the death was not immediately known. Cha, whose real name is Lee Jae-ho, made his film debut in 2017 and was previously a member of the five-member boy band Surprise U, which released two albums. The singer-actor had left an Instagram post the day before he was found dead, a single line message to his fans: "Everyone be careful not to catch the cold."

There were no reports to suggest he had been subjected to the kind of personal attacks and cyber bullying that other K-pop artists have received. His talent agency

Fantagio in a statement expressed "the deepest mourning for his passing" and asked the public and the media to refrain from spreading stories about his death. Cha's death comes after a popular K-pop singer, Koo Hara, 28, was found dead at her home last month. She had been subjected to personal attacks on social media.

Her death followed the apparent suicide of a fellow K-pop star, Sulli, a former member of girl group f(x), in October. Sulli, 25, had spoken out against cyber bullying. The cases have cast a dark cloud over the K-pop craze, one of South Korea's most successful soft power exports, and brought a renewed focus on personal attacks and cyber bullying of young stars that goes largely unpunished.



South Korean actor Cha In-ha

Lee Maria, a 52-year-old office worker, said it was heartbreaking to see talented young artists making "tragic choices" but what was more alarming was the prospect of their fans seeking to emulate their actions. Kim Dae-han, a Seoul resident who said he was the same age as Cha, said his view of the celebrities had changed after the recent deaths: "I think they might be in pain even though their life looks very fancy." The industry has also been hit by a series of sex scandals. Last week, two male former K-pop band members were convicted of sexual assaults and sentenced to prison terms. — Reuters



Matt Smith and Lily James reportedly split

The 'Crown' star and the 30-year-old actress began dating in 2014, but it has now been reported that after five years together, they've decided to go their separate ways, after a long period of things not being "right" between them. A source told The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column: "Things haven't been right for a while, and a few months ago they decided to finally end it properly." It has been difficult because they have many mutual friends, so hopefully it will all stay civilized. But for now the relationship is formally off." Matt, 37, was spotted with the 'Downton Abbey' star at The Spaniards Inn in Hampstead, North London, this week, but insiders claim things looked tense between the pair. Meanwhile, the former 'Doctor Who' star previously hinted he wants to start a family in the near future, as he said the purpose of life is to "procreate". Asked what he thinks is the purpose of life, he said: "F**k knows! You're asking the wrong guy. But for me it's my family and friends, getting involved. Taking risks, not looking back. Laughing as much as you can. I don't know. Who knows?" —Agencies

Classifieds

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Rather cool with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 22 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 04/12/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	23 °C	16 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23 °C	12 °C			
ABDALY	20 °C	13 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	22 °C	12 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	22 °C	17 °C			
AHMADI	23 °C	15 °C			
NUWAISSIB	24 °C	13 °C			
WAFRA	22 °C	11 °C			
SALMY	20 °C	08 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	12/05	Mostly Sunny	22 °C	10 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Friday	12/06	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on	25 °C	14 °C	SE	15 - 45 km/h
Saturday	12/07	Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery	22 °C	16 °C	SE-NW	15 - 50 km/h
Sunday	12/08	Fair and Clouds will decrease gradually	20 °C	12 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:03
Sunrise	06:27
Zuhr	11:38
Asr	14:30
Sunset	16:49
Isha	18:11

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	23 °C
MIN. Temp.	15 °C
MAX. RH	81 %
MIN. RH	50 %
MAX. Wind	NW 43 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I. Joymon Paulose son of Paulose holder of Indian Passport No. J5343908 issued at Kuwait on 04.03.2011 permanent resident of Vithayathil house, Ayroor, Ernakulam Dist. Kerala, India and presently residing building No. 12, Block-2, Abuhalfia, Kuwait. Do hereby split my name from Heba Joymon Vithayathil to Heba as given name and Joymon Vithayathil as surname with immediate effect. (C.5692) 3-12-2019

I. Heba Joymon daughter of Joymon holder of Indian Passport No. T0711766 issued at

EMERGENCY

112

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493

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

Flight Schedule

Arrival Flights on Thursday 5/12/2019				Departure Flights on Thursday 5/12/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	KAC	541	Cairo	13:45
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
KAC	102	London	00:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
KAC	504	Beirut	01:05	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	FDB	8066	Dubai	15:40
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	KAC	773	Riyadh	15:45
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	KAC	675	Dubai	15:50
KAC	5624	Doha	02:05	SVB	501	Jeddah	16:00
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	JZR	125	Dubai	16:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	JZR	735	Cairo	16:50
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KNE	532	Jeddah	16:55
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:00
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	KAC	503	Beirut	17:05
KAC	796	Madinah	04:40	IRA	666	Esfahan	17:25
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	FEG	242	Alexandria	17:35
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	KAC	619	Doha	17:35
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	KAC	357	Kochi	17:40
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	JZR	405	Kochi	17:45
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	KAC	563	Amman	17:55
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	KAC	562	Asyut	18:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:55	KAC	675	Dubai	18:10
KAC	106	London	06:00	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:05	FEG	342	Sohag	18:20
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	511	Riyadh	18:20
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	362	Colombo	06:30	KAC	127	Dubai	18:35
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35
BAW	157	London	07:05	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	KAC	381	Delhi	18:45
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:10	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
JZR	120	Dubai	07:35	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
QTR	8511	Doha	08:00	KAC	691	Muscat	19:30
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	RJA	641	Amman	20:10
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	NIA	162	Cairo	20:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	FDB	058	Dubai	20:45
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	OMS	266	Muscat	20:45
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	333	Trivandrum	20:50
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
NIA	361	Alexandria	09:50	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45
SVB	512	Riyadh	10:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	JZR	507	Khif	22:00
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	JZR	701	Asyut	22:15
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	352	Kochi	11:35	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
SYR	341	Damascus	12:00	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	RBG	552	Alexandria	23:00
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	MSC	502	Alexandria	23:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	RBG	214	Sohag	23:10
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:15
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50	KAC	383	Delhi	23:20
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	KAC	543	Cairo	23:30
GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40



Indian navy sailors take part in Navy Day celebrations at the Gateway of India in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

‘The end’: Poverty bites in remote Egyptian village

AL-NEHAYA, Egypt: The name of the remote Egyptian village Al-Nehaya sounds much like the Arabic word for “the end”, which is sadly fitting given the grinding poverty endured by most of its people. Years of political and economic turmoil since the 2011 Arab Spring have worsened hardship in a country where one in three people live below the poverty line.

One of them is 75-year-old Hanem Al-Zanati, who, sitting under the straw roof of her bare-brick home, talked about life in the destitute settlement of 10,000 people in the remote Upper Nile region. “All I want is a fridge and a small bed,” she said, as if these objects were fantastic luxuries. Zanati has a broken wrist but said she can’t afford to see a doctor because her husband’s pension comes to just 700 Egyptian pounds (\$43) a month.

Nehaya lacks its own health care center as well as a middle or secondary school, a reliable water or electricity supply or a sewage system. Most people survive on hardscrabble agriculture, growing mostly maize and wheat, here in Assiut province, Egypt’s poorest, some 400 km south of Cairo. With typical day wages around 80 pounds, or \$4, many have abandoned the village in search of better lives in urban centers such as Alexandria and the mega-city of Cairo.

Many tourists and investors have shunned Egypt since the upheaval that overthrew long-time president Hosni Mubarak. Since 2014, former army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has ruled. A sharp fall in the pound has driven up costs of everyday goods, the pain made worse by austerity measures in line with demands from the International Monetary Fund. There may be simmering discontent but few open expressions of anger in a country with a massive, feared security apparatus and overcrowded prisons.

The poverty rate among Egypt’s 100 million people jumped to 32.5 percent last year, up from 27.8 percent in 2015, says official statistics agency CAPMAS. The government has launched family income support programs such as the 2014 “Solidarity and Dignity” initiative, which targeted more than nine million people. In July, Sisi launched another plan for those in most need called “Decent Life”.

The residents of Nehaya say state officials from the project came to visit the village, promising to build a new school and to restore old houses. But so far, little



AL-NEHAYA, Egypt: Egyptian men pose for a picture in an alley in this village in the province of Assiut in central Egypt on Nov 16, 2019. — AFP

has been done and conditions have remained the same, they say. “Conditions here are beyond bad,” said a 20-year-old public servant in Nehaya’s only elementary school. Pupils use “dilapidated seats” and there are not enough teachers, she said.

Near the rickety elementary school building, mayor Gamal Thabet was sitting on a simple wooden bench. “Officials from the ‘Decent Life’ initiative visited, inspected homes and reviewed the demands,” he told AFP. “But nothing has changed so far.” In the village “there is only one elementary school, and the bakery’s products do not cover the needs” of the

population, he said. Unable to afford transport to schools outside the village, families have long called for the allocation of land to build their own middle or secondary school, he added.

Khaled Abdel Nasser, head of the presidential initiative in Assiut, blamed the delayed aid on red tape. But he insisted the project is on track in Nehaya, saying that “all those in need have been identified... and a plot has been allocated for the school building”.

Elsewhere in the village, 31-year-old Mohamed Mustafa appeared troubled as he stood outside his small grocery shop, where goods lay on dusty shelves.

“My family and I live in a run-down house,” said the father of five, leaning against a window to ease his back pain. “All I need is two rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. “I get 400 pounds (about \$25) in (social) allowances but it is not even enough for my back treatment.” Behind the village school stand two unfinished buildings, one of them a mosque. A sign asking for donations reads: “with God’s blessing the mosque of Sayyidina Al-Hussein is under construction in Nehaya village”. “There has been no progress in construction for four months,” said one villager. “Nobody has the money.” — AFP

Qatar, Saudi edge towards thaw...

Continued from Page 1

Some Saudi observers have downplayed the king’s invitation to the amir, saying he was only following protocol and he had invited the Qatari leader to last year’s summit as well. But signs of a thaw have emerged despite Doha refusing to bow to the boycotting countries’ demands that it shutter Doha-based broadcaster Al-Jazeera, downgrade ties with Iran and close a Turkish military base in Qatar.

Off the pitch, Qatar’s Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani met with officials in Saudi for talks last month, according to an Arab diplomatic source, raising the prospect of a breakthrough at the Riyadh summit. Qatar’s Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani has been represented by senior officials at GCC summits since the economic embargo was imposed in June 2017, despite having received invitations.

“For the amir to attend will depend on whether the Saudis can keep their side of the bargain, which would be to lift at least the flight ban or open their side of the border,” said King’s College London assistant professor Andreas Krieg. The regional schism has seen families divided and Qatari businesses face increased costs as well as complicated regional travel and diplomatic efforts. But despite apparent enthusiasm for a resolution, a face-saving way out still needs to be devised.

Gulf powerhouse Saudi Arabia has adopted aggressive policies under de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman - from a bombing campaign in Yemen to confrontation with Shiite rival Iran, in addition to the Qatar rift. Recent attacks on the kingdom’s oil facilities and the blowback from Washington’s combative stance towards Iran appear to have prompted Saudi Arabia and its allies to moderate their stance in the region. Riyadh’s plan to float state oil giant Aramco on the stock market this month, generating billions to fund an ambitious economic transformation plan, is another impetus towards fence-mending and stability.

Several diplomats in Doha have suggested that the Saudi-led coalition seeking to pressure Doha may diverge, with Riyadh pursuing reconciliation while the UAE keeps its distance from Qatar. “So much animosity has been directed against Qatar from (the UAE capital) Abu Dhabi that those ties may be harder to repair than the ones with Saudi Arabia,” said Ulrichsen. “It may be that the terms of an agreement to put the past 30 months behind them are worked out in secret.”

Outside of Qatar, there have been glimmers of a possible end-game to the spat which has seen the two sides trade barbs on everything from access to the Muslim holy city of Makkah to alleged Twitter hacking. Leading Emirati politics professor Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, an authority on the UAE’s political thinking, tweeted that the end of the boycott could be in sight following the Gulf Cup announcement. Abdulla called the decision “as political as it is sporting”. “Football... may open the door for the travel of sports fans to Qatar to support their teams, which means necessarily lifting the travel ban to Qatar and the return of Gulf cohesion.” — AFP

‘Brain dead’ NATO summit...

Continued from Page 1

Trump was furious, and criticized the Canadian leader for not meeting NATO members’ target of spending two percent of GDP on defense.

The run-up to the summit had been marked by Macron branding the alliance “brain dead” and demanding a new strategy, reopening a dialogue with Russia and refocusing on the fight against Islamist terrorism. Afterwards Macron stony by his incendiary language, declaring: “I am happy to have launched the debate, it seemed to me indispensable.”

Turkey’s President Recep Tayyip Erdogan withdrew a threat to block the updated Baltic defense plan unless his allies agreed to brand the Kurdish militias of north-eastern Syria that helped defeat the Islamic State group “terrorists”. Macron rejected Ankara’s call, saying that while he was sensitive to Turkish concerns about terror, he would not conflate “different political and military groups”.

Despite the rancor, the 29 managed to agree a “London Declaration” and Erdogan withdrew his objections after an unscheduled side meeting with Trump. “In challenging times, we are stronger as an alliance, and our people safer,” the declaration said. “Our bond and mutual commitment have guaranteed our freedoms, our values, and our security for 70 years.”

The statement was the first from NATO to acknowledge the growing strategic challenge posed by China, and also stressed the need for a stronger coordinated response against terrorism. It held out the possibility of “a constructive relationship with Russia when Russia’s actions make that possible” but stressed the threat posed by Moscow’s deployment of intermediate range nuclear missiles. And, in a nod to French and German concerns about NATO’s strategic direction, the members asked Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to consult experts to strengthen the alliance’s “political dimension”.

In recent weeks Macron tried to shake up the agenda by demanding a review of alliance strategy, but Trump hit back. “I think that’s very insulting,” Trump said of Macron’s assertion last month that NATO is experiencing “brain death”. “Nobody needs NATO more than France,” he warned. “It’s a very dangerous statement for them to make.”

Macron also turned his fire on Turkey, noting that its forces have attacked the Kurdish militia that backed the allies against the Islamic State in Syria - and he accused Ankara of working with “ISIS proxies”. Trump has defended Stoltenberg’s record of pushing allies for increased defense spending, but he reiterated his own long-standing complaints. Only nine of NATO’s 29 members have reached the target agreed at its 2014 summit to spend two percent of their GDP on defense before 2024. Trump, who cited in particular Germany as falling short for spending only 1.2 percent of GDP, held lunch talks with the so-called “two percenters”. — AFP

Sports

Yury Ganus, Russia's anti-doping tsar who openly accuses Moscow

Russia needs to put its own house in order: Ganus

MOSCOW: In Russia, where criticism of the authorities can lead to dire consequences, the head of the country's anti-doping agency Yury Ganus has openly accused officials of tampering with data handed to the global watchdog.

"It's dangerous but it's my mission," the head of RUSADA told AFP, asked if he felt afraid after assigning blame to the sports ministry and Russian law enforcement.

The executive of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is to meet in Lausanne, Switzerland on Monday to decide on a proposed four-year international ban of Russian athletes over the handling of doping allegations.

A WADA panel has accused Moscow of falsifying data handed over to investigators, including evidence under the control of the country's powerful Investigative Committee. Russia has reacted to the proposal with allegations of a Western conspiracy, but Ganus — who took the helm of RUSADA in 2017 — has emerged as a surprising critic of the authorities.

In speeches and articles, he has called for President Vladimir Putin to intervene and attacked the sports minister, Pavel Kolobkov. This despite the fact that two ex-

chiefs of RUSADA, Vyacheslav Sinev and Nikita Kamayev, died suddenly within two weeks of each other in 2016 and the former head of Russia's anti-doping laboratory, Grigory Rodchenkov, lives in hiding in the United States.

"Russia needs to put its own house in order," Ganus told AFP in late October, predicting that the ban — which would see Russia out of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo and the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing — would be upheld. Sports minister Kolobkov doesn't hide his irritation at Ganus, a compelling communicator who is comfortable dealing with the media.

"The manipulation the head of RUSADA is talking about does not exist," Kolobkov said last month. In his Moscow office, Ganus showed off a poster representing RUSADA as an icebreaker ship clearing a path for a crowd of clean athletes. The tall, grey-haired 55-year-old, who can easily switch from a charming smile to an intimidating glare, did not come from a sports background.

REALLY 'MR CLEAN'?

"In my youth I did some wrestling and played handball," he said, displaying his big

hands. After studying law, he planned to work in law enforcement but ended up in business, including shipping and heavy industry. He took the helm of RUSADA without any special knowledge of sports or science.

He was chosen as a candidate who could inspire confidence in a renewed RUSADA and was untarnished by its central role in the doping scandal. He said he applied for the job after seeing an ad on a recruitment site. A committee of experts chose him out of hundreds of candidates.

Ganus said he was moved by the plight of clean athletes, particularly those with dreams of competing in the Paralympics that were being thwarted by dishonesty.

Not everyone in anti-doping circles accepts this "Mr Clean" image at face value, with some suggesting that Ganus is part of a Machiavellian plot by devious Moscow.

They say that Ganus, by stressing RUSADA's innocence and lack of involvement in the latest tampering, makes the Russian agency unlikely to be punished as non-compliant by the Court of Arbitration for Sport. This could pave the way for Russian athletes to participate in the Olympic Games. "The best defence, if the



MOSCOW: In this file photo taken on October 22, 2019 Russia's anti-doping agency (RUSADA) director general Yury Ganus gestures during an interview with AFP in Moscow. — AFP

data has been manipulated, is to give the appearance that he is independent... But he is not independent," Travis Tygart, the head of the US Anti-Doping Agency, told AFP.

"I think it's a game and it's a well-orchestrated game." But another source involved in

anti-doping gave the opposite view. "I want to believe Yuri Ganus is sincere," the source said on condition of anonymity, praising the RUSADA chief for "enormous progress in these proceedings and towards greater independence". — AFP

Two days left for NBK Walkathon



KUWAIT: Two days left for the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) walkathon. The Walkathon will be held on Saturday, 7th December 2019.

NBK Group CEO Issam J. Al Sager, NBK-Kuwait Deputy CEO Sulaiman Barrak Al Marzouq, and other NBK executives were welcomed at the NBK Walkathon center as they prepared to take part in the

7th of December event.

19,600 of participants have signed up for this annual festival. NBK's Walkathon is marked by a variety of fun, entertainment and health awareness activities. NBK will award the top 10 winners in each category, and will give away two brand new Renault cars from Al Babbain Group, as grand prizes during the

Walkathon along with many other valuable prizes.

Ten winners will be selected from each of the 10 categories of participants. The walk for both the female and male participants will start from the Green Island on the Gulf Road to the Shuwaikh Beach Park, parallel to the Gulf Road, next to KPC building for a distance of 11 Km.

NBK strongly supports sporting events and encourages various sporting activities as means to promote a healthier and more active lifestyle for members of the community. Throughout the year, NBK also organizes several social awareness programs including Educational, Environmental, Health and many other active initiatives.

Tiger Woods' 'aura' has dimmed, says Els

SYDNEY: Ernie Els yesterday said Tiger Woods has lost some of his aura but the skipper of the International team will not be under-estimating his superstar counterpart at the Presidents Cup next week.

Woods is captaining and playing for the United States at the biennial matchplay showdown at Royal Melbourne, and one of Els' key decisions will be who plays the 15-time major-winner in the singles on Sunday. The big South African has seven rookies in his 12-man team, but he also has a core of experienced players such as Adam Scott, Louis Oosthuizen and Marc Leishman.

Els said he would decide who faces Woods after seeing how they perform in the three days of fourballs and foursomes, but suggested it would not be a newcomer. "I don't want to have a guy feel overwhelmed," he said in Sydney ahead of the Australian Open, where Els will play from Thursday alongside a handful of his Presidents Cup team.

"I will not put a guy in there that's going to feel that way. I'll see who is going to feel like he's really got the best chance against Tiger.

"I don't think today he has the same kind of aura he had in the past. It's different," added Els, himself a matchplay specialist but will only be captain in Melbourne. "It's more of a celebrity kind of aura. But he's still very competitive. He's won the Masters and he won in Japan (both this year).

"When Tiger is healthy, he can play at a very high level. But he's not what he used to be consistently. That's just what age does. But we'll see when we get to Melbourne." The United States go into the tournament as heavy favourites, boasting some of the world's top-ranked players such as Woods, Dustin Johnson and Justin Thomas.

They have won all but one edition in the event's 25-year history, with Melbourne in 1998 the exception.

Els said he had a good idea of what his pairings would be for the opening day of fourballs next Thursday, without giving anything away.

"There are a couple of pairings that are kind of natural pairings, if you can call it that, but I'm looking at it in a different way, not just a personality way," he said. "I'm looking at how the guys can really perform together. — AFP



Ernie Els

Tokyo 2020 marathon, race walk events rescheduled

TOKYO: The women's marathon at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics and all the race walks have been rescheduled, following the controversial decision taken in October to move the events out of the capital 800 kilometres north to the city of Sapporo.

Tokyo 2020 organisers announced the rescheduling yesterday, following discussions with the International Olympic Committee and World Athletics, to ease the burden on National Olympic Committees and athletes travelling to northern Japan. It now means that all the marathon and race walk events are scheduled to be held on four consecutive days, from August 6 to 9, with the men's marathon remaining on the final day of the Games, as per tradition.

"Athletes' health and well-being are always at the heart of our concerns, and the decision to move the marathon and race walk events to Sapporo shows how seriously we take such concerns," the IOC's Athletes' Commission chair, Kirsty Coventry, said in a statement.

Both marathons will start at 7.00 am local time (2200 GMT). The women's marathon was initially set for Aug. 2. The IOC stunned Games organisers in October by announcing the marathon, one of the most prestigious events at any Olympics and one especially beloved in Japan, would be moved to the northern Japanese city of Sapporo to avoid the worst of Tokyo's summer heat.

Tokyo temperatures in July and August, when the city will host the Games, regularly exceed 30 degrees Celsius with high humidity adding to the discomfort. Additionally, organisers wanted to make travelling to Sapporo as easy as possible for National Olympics Committees (NOCs).

"There are some countries with the same person (coaches and officials) taking charge of both marathon and race-walking, or the same person taking charge of both male and female events," explained Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshio Muto yesterday. "They (would) have to go back and forth (if marathon and race-walking are held in separate schedule)... and it produces extra costs. "So there was a request to make the schedule as consecutive as possible."

The October decision did not go down well with organisers, who had already done extensive planning for the events, including a series of cooling measures for the athletes, nor with the Tokyo governor, who reluctantly consented to the move. — Reuters

Shorts should be allowed at golf tournaments: Garcia

SYDNEY: Spanish great Sergio Garcia yesterday said players should be allowed to wear shorts at more golf tournaments after the European Tour permitted the move for the first time last week. With temperatures reaching 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) during the Alfred Dunhill Championship in South Africa, organisers relaxed their strict rules against shorts.

Former Masters champion Garcia said it was a long overdue move and should be introduced more widely.

"I would love to see that. I've said it many times — I think at the end of the day, having the possibility of playing with shorts it only kind of brings us together to the supporters," he said

ahead of the Australian Open in Sydney.

"Because when you go to a course, unless it's winter and it's really cold, if it's spring or summer and the temperatures are nice, when you go to a normal course, 90 percent of the people are wearing shorts.

"So I think the connection would feel even closer. It probably will happen but we don't know exactly when."

While golfers wear shorts during practice rounds and at pre-tournament pro-ams, they were not permitted during competitions until the searing heat in South Africa brought a change of heart.

Women can wear shorts on the various professional circuits, including Europe, Asia and the United States.

The European Tour said the relaxation in the rules only applied to the Alfred Dunhill Championship tournament for now. Some golfers took up the opportunity in South Africa, but many stuck with long trousers.

Garcia is in Sydney looking to add another Open title to his name, having already won his native Spanish Open, the Irish Open and this year's Dutch Open. — AFP

Tiger Woods turns down Saudi event, backs Mickelson

MIAMI: Former world number one Tiger Woods said on Tuesday he had turned down offers to play in the Saudi International golf tournament, but defended the right of players to participate in the event.

Speaking on the eve of the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas, Woods said he had rejected approaches to play in Saudi Arabia despite appearance fees reportedly in the region of \$3 million (2.7 million euros).

"I just don't want to go over there," Woods told ESPN. "It's a long way." Golfers participating in the Saudi International faced criticism at the inaugural event last year, which took place just months after the killing of US-based Saudi journalist Jamal

Khashoggi in October 2018.

ESPN reported Woods had first turned down an approach from organisers to play in the 2019 event prior to Khashoggi's murder, and rejected a second offer to play in the 2020 tournament, which takes place from January 30 to February 2.

Woods' comments came after Phil Mickelson became the latest golfer to confirm he would play the event next year. Mickelson's decision means he will miss next year's Phoenix Open for the first time since 1990. The move prompted dismay on social media.

"You're better than taking the money grab from a corrupt regime," wrote one commenter on Twitter. "Come on, Phil." Mickelson addressed the comment directly. "I'm excited to go play and see a place in the world I've never been," he wrote.

"I understand those who are upset or disappointed. You'll be ok. I'm excited to experience this for the first time." Asked about the criticism of Mickelson's decision on Tuesday, Woods said he believed the tournament could help grow golf in Saudi Arabia. — AFP

Sports

Devils lose to Knights after firing head coach John Hynes

Roussel scores in first game back as Canucks rout Senators

NEWARK: Jonathan Marchessault scored a natural hat trick in a span of less than nine minutes before the midway point of the third period Tuesday night for the visiting Vegas Golden Knights, who beat the New Jersey Devils 4-3 in Newark, N.J. — just hours after the Devils fired head coach John Hynes. The win was the season-high fourth in a row for the Golden Knights, who also received a second-period goal from Chandler Stephenson in his first game with the club. Stephenson was acquired from the Washington Capitals on Monday. Goalie Malcolm Subban made 32 saves for Vegas. Kyle Palmieri, Jesper Bratt and Nico Hischier scored for the Devils, who have lost three straight and six of eight. Goalie Mackenzie Blackwood recorded 26 saves. The Devils, whose 22 points leave them mired in 30th place in the 31-team NHL, replaced Hynes with Alain Nasreddine a day after the team allowed five goals in the first period of a 7-1 loss to the Buffalo Sabres. New Jersey lost Hynes' last two games by a combined 11-1 and gave up 11 goals over a two-game span five times this season.

CANUCKS 5, SENATORS 2

Antoine Roussel, Tanner Pearson, Elias Pettersson and Zack MacEwen scored first-period goals, and Thatcher Demko had a career-high 40 saves to lead host Vancouver past Ottawa. Oscar Fantenberg also scored a goal, and Adam Gaudette and Chris Tanev each had two assists for Vancouver on a night when the team inducted Alex Burrows into its Ring of Honour. Jean-Gabriel Pageau and Tyler Ennis scored goals for Ottawa, which lost its fifth straight game. Vancouver has won two of three. Senators goalie Anders Nilsson stopped just 11 of the 15 shots he faced before being replaced at the start of the second period by Marcus Hogberg, who finished with 13 saves.

CANADIENS 4, ISLANDERS 2

Phillip Danault, Shea Weber and Brendan Gallagher each had a goal and an assist as Montreal snapped an eight-game winless streak with a victory over visiting New York. After going 0-5-3 in their previous eight games, the Canadiens ended their slump with one of their best all-around efforts this season. Montreal also got a goal from Jeff Petry, and Carey Price made 21 saves. The Islanders took their first regulation loss in

their past 16 outings (14-1-1) against Eastern Conference opponents. New York got goals from Scott Mayfield and Mathew Barzal.

BRUINS 2, HURRICANES 0

Charlie Coyle and David Krejci scored late in the third period to back Jaroslav Halak in net as host Boston blanked Carolina. Halak made 24 saves to earn his second shutout of the season in his 500th NHL game as the Bruins extended their winning streak to eight. Boston also is riding a 12-game point streak (9-0-3) and remains the only team undefeated in regulation at home (12-0-4). James Reimer stopped 32 shots for the Hurricanes, who have lost three of four.

WILD 4, PANTHERS 2

Rookie defenseman Carson Soucy scored the go-ahead goal and Kaapo Kahkonen won a battle between newcomer goalies. Minnesota, which overcame a 2-0 second-period deficit to win its fourth straight game, also got goals from Jason Zucker, Mats Zuccarello and Luke Kunin (empty-netter). Zucker also had an assist, and Zuccarello has 24 points in 22 career games against the Panthers. It was the second career goal for Soucy, who gave Minnesota a 3-2 lead with 15:11 left in the third period.

FLYERS 6, MAPLE LEAFS 1

Travis Konecny had one goal and one assist to lift host Philadelphia. Scott Laughton, Claude Giroux, Joel Farabee, Shayne Gostisbehere and James van Riemsdyk each added a goal, while Phil Myers had three assists for the Flyers, who won their fifth in a row. The Flyers also improved to 9-1-4 at home. Flyers goaltender Carter Hart stopped 27 shots.

COYOTES 4, BLUE JACKETS 2

Carl Soderberg collected a goal and two assists and Darcy Kuemper made 33 saves as Arizona defeated host Columbus. Clayton Keller, Christian Fischer and Lawson Crouse also tallied for Arizona, which snapped a modest two-game skid overall and improved to 9-3-3 on the road this season. Defenseman Dean Kukan scored his first career NHL goal, Alexandre Texier also tallied, and Joonas Korpi also turned aside 24 shots for the Blue Jackets, who fell to 8-2-0 in their past 10 encounters with the Coyotes.



NEWARK: Chandler Stephenson #20 of the Vegas Golden Knights collides with Ryan Reaves #75 during the third period against the New Jersey Devils at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. — AFP

LIGHTNING 3, PREDATORS 2 (OT)

Nikita Kucherov scored 2:35 into overtime, and Tampa Bay ended a three-game losing streak. Kucherov, stationed to the right of Nashville goalie Pekka Rinne, tipped a pass from Steven Stamkos for his 10th goal of the season. The reigning Hart Memorial Trophy winner (MVP) also had an assist in the game, and he has four goals and eight assists during a six-game point streak. Victor Hedman and Ondrej Palat also scored for Tampa Bay. Stamkos had two assists, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 30 saves. Kyle Turris had a goal and an assist, and Calle Jankrok also scored for Nashville, which lost its second straight game. Rinne made 28 saves.

JETS 5, STARS 1

Kyle Connor had a goal and two assists to help host Winnipeg defeat Dallas. Nikolaj Ehlers, Josh Morrissey, Mark Scheifele and Patrik Laine each had a

goal and an assist for Winnipeg. Connor Hellebuyck, who came in tied with Boston's Tuukka Rask for the second-best save percentage in the NHL (.933), made 27 saves. Miro Heiskanen scored and Anton Khudobin made 25 saves for Dallas, which came into the game with the same record after 28 games as last season (15-10-3).

CAPITALS 5, SHARKS 2

Garnet Hathaway and Jakub Vrana both scored twice to pace Washington to a victory at San Jose. John Carlson added one goal and two assists, and Nic Dowd registered two assists for the Capitals. Braden Holtby provided a 23-save performance in the win. Melker Karlsson and Evander Kane scored for the Sharks. Kane, however, is likely facing a suspension after he was given a major penalty and game misconduct for a third-period elbow to the head of Radko Gudas. — Reuters

India's U-19 skipper pays tribute to 'superhero' dad

NEW DELHI: India's new Under-19 World Cup skipper Priyam Garg credits his rise to the captaincy to his "superhero" widower dad, who delivered newspapers and sold milk to fund his cricket training. The 19-year-old Garg, a top-order batsman, was appointed captain of the junior Indian team that will defend its title in the 50-over event starting January 17 in South Africa. But Garg, who hails from a small town near the northern city of Meerut, said the journey thus far would not have been possible without the sacrifices of his father Naresh. "My father sold milk, distributed newspapers and drove school vans to fund my training," Garg told AFP by phone from Bangalore.

"He used to give me money even when he did not have enough for himself. It is his hard work and blessing that made me see this day. He is my superhero." Garg has been a prolific run-scorer in junior and domestic cricket, hitting a first-class double century for his state side Uttar Pradesh last year.

The youngest of five siblings, Garg lost his mother in 2011 and admits that family support remained key in keeping his focus on playing professionally intact. "I lost my mother in 2011 and it was an emotional time for me. I was shattered and it was dad and family that made me get over that tough period," said Garg.

"We had trouble making both ends meet. It wasn't an easy life and mum's death made matters worse. But now things have improved. Dad has his transport business which is doing okay." It was either dad or his three sisters — their other brother is a pharmacist — who travelled with Garg to the cricket academy that was 20 kilometres



Priyam Garg with Rahul Dravid

(12 miles) from home. "I have been playing cricket since the age of six. At eight I joined Victoria Park (in Meerut) and started to pursue the game seriously," said Garg. "My father or my sisters would accompany me on bus rides which were long but fun because family was there. I was never alone."

Garg, a self-confessed Sachin Tendulkar fan, said he can never repay his father for what he has done and doing well for India in the World Cup will be the ultimate gift for his family. "I am just focusing on playing well for my team in the World Cup," he said.

"I am huge Sachin Tendulkar fan and he will always be my inspiration. In current cricket I follow Rohit Sharma." For Garg though there is no lack of inspiration in the U-19 World Cup with India winning the title four times under Mohammad Kaif, Virat Kohli, Unmukt Chand and Prithvi Shaw. The Indian team, which has put up a training camp in Bangalore, will begin their campaign against Sri Lanka on January 19 in Bloemfontein. The 16-team event will conclude with the finals in Potchefstroom on February 9. — AFP

Bob Willis dead



LONDON: Former England captain and fearsome pace bowler Bob Willis has died aged 70, his family announced yesterday. Willis, who captained his country between 1982 and 1984, played in 90 Test matches with his most memorable performance taking eight for 43 in the Australian second innings of the third Ashes Test in 1981.

"We are heartbroken to lose our beloved Bob, who was an incredible husband, father, brother and grandfather," read the Willis family statement. "He made a huge impact on everybody he knew and we will miss him terribly." — AFP

England's bowlers took huge lessons from NZ tour: Root

WELLINGTON: England's bowlers will have learned a lot from their series defeat to New Zealand, particularly in terms of how to battle through adversity on flat wickets, which will stand them in good stead for the tour of South Africa, captain Joe Root has said.

The England attack were heavily criticized in media back home for their lack of penetration and inability to adapt to two relatively benign pitches at Bay Oval and Seddon Park, which led to a 1-0 series loss on Tuesday.

"We've now seen what it can be like if the surfaces do get like this with the Kookaburra ball," Root told Britain's Sky Sports. "We have to learn very quickly and take that forward into those four games."

"You've got to learn from the opposition as well. You look at someone like Neil Wagner - he's got a big heart, a big engine, and keeps running."

"And that's what you want, you want guys who, time and time again, want to be putting themselves in that position, to keep wanting to create chances and keep trying to change the game."

New Zealand left-arm seamer Wagner was named man-of-the-series after he finished with 13 wickets, which included successive five-wicket hauls. Root said the series would have been a shock to the system for England fast bowler Jofra Archer, who made an explosive entrance to test cricket during the Ashes series at home against Australia earlier this year. — Reuters

CSA lurching from crisis to crisis ahead of England series

CAPE TOWN: Cricket South Africa (CSA) will host a special board meeting on Saturday as the governing body seeks to address a series of controversies that threaten to overshadow a high-profile four-test home series against England.

Tuesday's resignation of respected board member Shirley Zinn was the latest setback for CSA Chief Executive Officer Thabang Moroe, who has had to answer questions about its declining balance sheet and its treatment of the media after five journalists had their accreditations revoked.

The organisation has also yet to appoint a permanent director of cricket following the decision not to renew the contract of Otis Gibson in August, with a little over three weeks to go before the start of England series.

Zinn told South Africa's Daily Maverick she saw little way forward for the organisation under Moroe's leadership. "I came to the conclusion that after all sorts of efforts to try and improve, speak to the situation and to try and affect change at board level, I had to resign," the newspaper quoted her as saying yesterday.

"We fall from one crisis to another and there is no end in sight. I somehow felt if I put up my hand and took this step, for what it's worth, I might propel this forward in some way."

Standard Bank, a major CSA sponsor, called an urgent meeting with Moroe on Monday to discuss, among the things, why the organisation withdrew the accreditation of five journalists deemed critical of his leadership. — Reuters

Stead confident Raval will find form as NZ head to Australia

WELLINGTON: Jeet Raval's run of poor form is the only major concern for New Zealand as they head across the Tasman Sea looking to win a first test series in Australia since 1985 but coach Gary Stead still has confidence the opening batsman will come good. Raval scored 19, 5 and 0 in his three innings of New Zealand's 1-0 series victory over England, which the hosts clinched on Tuesday. The left-hander has scored a combined 88 runs, with a high of 33, in his last 10 innings since notching his maiden test century against Bangladesh in February.

Stead, however, said Raval was still their best option against an Australian pace battery that includes Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood. "Jeet didn't have a strong series but we've got confidence in him as an opening bat," he told reporters in Hamilton.

"He's got a very good record with Tom (Latham) and they've forged a really strong opening partnership for us. He eats into a good number of balls - 75 balls on average -

and he's done it over a good period of time so far. I'm confident he can get us away to the start that we want."

Despite his lack of form, Raval was never in danger of being dropped for the Australia series, which starts in Perth on Dec. 12, with the side having few other options to open the batting.

Martin Gupthill and Hamish Rutherford have failed to make the most of their opportunities while the uncapped Will Young had shoulder surgery earlier this year and is expected to be out of action for 10 months.

Some pundits have suggested middle order batsman Henry Nicholls or wicket-keeper BJ Watling, who started his career at the top of the order, could be promoted to open, with Tom Blundell taking the gloves from Watling.

However, both those options could upset the balance of the batting lineup, especially in the middle order where Nicholls, Watling, Colin de Grandhomme and Mitchell Santner have enjoyed success. — Reuters

Sports

Jesus finds goal touch as Man City bounce back to thrash Burnley

Strikers are there to score goals and we need him: Guardiola

BURNLEY: Gabriel Jesus scored twice as Manchester City showed no signs of giving up their Premier League title without a fight as a 4-1 victory at Burnley cut the gap on unbeaten leaders Liverpool to eight points.

Pep Guardiola's men have struggled to match the blistering standards they set in back-to-back title-winning seasons, but looked more like their old selves in what could have been a tricky trip to Turf Moor.

Jesus made the most of his chance to shine in the absence of the injured Sergio Aguero with two brilliant finishes either side of half-time to end an eight-game goal drought before long-range strikes from Rodrigo and Riyad Mahrez moved City above Leicester into second place on goal difference.

"The strikers are there to score goals and we need him," said Guardiola of Jesus's importance with Aguero also expected to miss Saturday's Manchester derby. "His effort, his commitment is always there but strikers like him and Sergio live for the goal and it's important."

Robbie Brady pulled a late goal back for Burnley, who remain in 11th. "City are a top-class side and they showed it tonight," said Burnley boss Sean Dyche. "We kept it tight first half and made it awkward but they were excellent second half and we never got to grips with it." The visitors were dominant from first minute to last and could have been far more convincing winners but for some wayward finishing and Nick Pope's resistance in the Burnley goal. "We played a good game, we controlled them and we didn't concede much apart from the goal in the last minutes," added Guardiola.

"Our level was so good in most of the games. I don't

have the feeling we played bad in certain games. In general, I'm more than satisfied with the level of the team." Jesus did not look like a striker searching for confidence as he opened the scoring with a sumptuous curling effort that found the far corner from David Silva's pass. Pope then stood up well to block with his feet from Raheem Sterling and Bernardo Silva to keep Burnley in the game until the break.

Jesus gave City a cushion five minutes into the second half with a thumping finish from Bernardo's inswinging cross. Rodrigo continued a night of fantastic finishes when he capped a brilliant individual display by drilling high past Pope 22 minutes from time.

The Spanish midfielder insisted City would be ceaseless as they attempt to chase down Liverpool in the title race. "Until the maths say something else, we are not going to give up on anything. We are going to fight until the end," Rodrigo told Amazon. Mahrez came off the bench to score his 50th Premier League goal with a precise strike on his weaker right foot from outside the box. Brady denied City a first clean sheet in eight games, but that was the only negative for the champions ahead of Manchester United's visit to the Etihad.

Crystal Palace moved up to fifth with a 1-0 win over Bournemouth despite playing for more than 70 minutes with 10 men at Selhurst Park. Mamadou Sakho was sent off for a wild challenge on Adam Smith, but Palace frustrated the Cherries and then struck 14 minutes from time when Jeffrey Schlupp burst through the Bournemouth defence and fired low and hard past Aaron Ramsdale. —AFP



BURNLEY: Burnley's English striker Jay Rodriguez (L) heads the ball during the English Premier League football match between Burnley and Manchester City at Turf Moor in Burnley, north west England. — AFP

I'm a better coach for United stint, says Mourinho

LONDON: Jose Mourinho's two-year stint at Manchester United was not always a happy one but the Portuguese harbours no bitterness at the club and says he is now a better manager as he prepares to return with Tottenham Hotspur later.

Mourinho spent around 400 million pounds (\$513 million) while in charge at United and won the Europa League and League Cup and they also finished runners-up in the Premier League in 2017-18.

Yet things turned sour as results declined and Mourinho was shown the door last December. The 56-year-old former Porto, Chelsea, Inter Milan and Real Madrid manager re-surfaced two weeks ago when he

took over at Tottenham in the wake of Mauricio Pochettino's sacking.

After three successive wins he takes the Londoners to Old Trafford in buoyant mood. Inevitably the build-up has been dominated by Mourinho's thoughts on his sacking, especially with United arguably in worse shape now under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer than when he left.

"No interest in speaking about it, I did the best I could," a relaxed Mourinho told reporters at Tottenham's plush training ground on Tuesday. "Of course I analysed it. I met my assistants and when we analysed it, it was in a positive, constructive way. I forbid them to analyse and blame anyone else but us."

"I said don't focus on the club or the players just on what we could do better and what could we do better in the future. "You win or you learn, you don't lose. Was good because we managed to win some nice things. But on the opposite side I learned and I feel that I'm a better coach now than I was then."

"The important thing is after you are sacked you don't blame. You try to prepare for the future by analysing what happened in the past." Tottenham have

shown an immediate improvement under Mourinho, scoring 10 goals in three games, albeit conceding six.

They dropped below Crystal Palace into sixth spot on Tuesday but a win at United would continue the momentum and fuel the belief that Tottenham can claw their way back into the top four.

Mourinho would rather not compare the dynamic at Tottenham with what he left behind at Old Trafford. "I don't want to do that," he said. "I'm very happy here. I'm getting to know the players as fast as I can. They have to analyse my character and personality as a coach. "The faster we learn the better." Mourinho attracted criticism in Manchester for never moving into a house, choosing instead to live in a hotel. He has also used the hotel in Tottenham's training complex.

"Being unhappy is coming home on my own, having to clean, iron, I don't know how to do it. I have to cook, I would cook fried egg and sausage, it's the only thing I can do," he said. "I lived in an amazing apartment (in the hotel). I had my TV, my books, my laptop. It was like a flat but I could ring and say 'can I have a cafe latte!', bring me dinner." — Reuters

Schlupp delivers for Palace on Amazon debut

LONDON: Jeffrey Schlupp delivered for 10-man Crystal Palace as he marked streaming giant Amazon's arrival into Premier League broadcasting with a late goal in his side's 1-0 victory over Bournemouth on Tuesday. Palace were a man down from the 19th minute when Mamadou Sakho was sent off for a reckless tackle but the hosts were the better team and substitute Schlupp sent the Selhurst Park faithful home happy with his 76th-minute winner.

While it was a great night for Palace, who moved fifth with 21 points before Wednesday's fixtures, the first live online stream of a Premier League match might have had some viewers clicking to the Christmas shopping options instead.

The first half was especially forgettable with the only talking point being Sakho's out-of-control attempted clearance that left Bournemouth's Adam Smith in a heap near the touchline.

Crystal Palace manager Roy Hodgson's defensive problems worsened soon afterwards when Patrick van Aanholt appeared to overstretch his hamstring, although his replacement Schlupp ended up being the match-winner.

"It's always difficult playing with 10 men and then we lost our right back, so we were hard pushed," a happy Hodgson, interviewed at pitchside by former Liverpool striker Michael Owen and former Arsenal defender Lee Dixon, part of a sizeable pundit team, said.

"It looked like we were doomed but the players showed they didn't think they were doomed with the character they showed."

Bournemouth, who have now lost four consecutive games to sit 12th with 16 points, failed to capitalise on their extra man though and Palace keeper Vicente Guaita was hardly troubled.

"It was not good enough," manager Eddie Howe said. "They are very well organised and we ran out of ideas. We just lacked a bit of intelligence and spark."

On a chilly night Palace's fans at least kept up a noisy chorus to add some atmosphere and they were rewarded when Schlupp advanced unopposed down the left and fired a powerful left-foot shot through keeper Aaron Ramsdale.

If anything they could have won by a bigger margin as James McArthur's dipping shot was turned away by Ramsdale soon after.

Amazon have paid 90 million pounds (\$115 million) to show 20 Premier League games for three seasons — the first time a streaming service has broadcast English top-flight football.

As part of their coverage viewers who subscribe to its Prime service can watch every one of this week's 15th round of games — the first time at least one game in a round of fixtures has not been screened live by a television channel. — Reuters

GRUPO A		GRUPO B	
1	ARGENTINA	1	COLOMBIA
2	AUSTRALIA	2	BRASIL
3	BOLIVIA	3	QATAR
4	URUGUAY	4	VENEZUELA
5	CHILE	5	ECUADOR
6	PARAGUAY	6	PERU

CARTAGENA, Colombia: A screen displays the groups of the Copa America 2020 football tournament taken at the end of the draw on Tuesday. — AFP

Socceroos to face Argentina at Copa America

CARTAGENA: Australia will face Lionel Messi and Argentina in next year's Copa America after being drawn alongside the tournament co-hosts on Tuesday. The Socceroos, one of two guest teams invited to the South American football championship, will also face Paraguay, Bolivia, Uruguay and Chile in Group A.

In Group B, Asian champions Qatar, the other guest nation, will face Colombia, Brazil, Venezuela, Ecuador and Peru, with all games taking place in Colombia. The first round designations for Australia and Qatar were the only major issue left to be decided at Tuesday's ceremonial draw. The other teams in the two groups had already been determined based on geographical proximity to co-hosts Argentina and Colombia, which are separated by some 4,350 miles (7,000 kilometers).

Australia coach Graham Arnold said his team was relishing the prospect of facing Argentina in Buenos Aires. "That's what it's all about, it's about testing ourselves at the highest level," Arnold said following the draw. "The players are so excited to have this great opportunity."

The former international striker speaks from experience: Arnold was a member of the Socceroos team which lost to a Diego Maradona-inspired Argentina in a 1993 playoff for a spot in the 1994 World Cup.

"In the old days in the 1990s we played Argentina and Maradona over there and if you speak to the players involved they'll tell you what a great experience it was,"

Arnold said. "Our boys haven't really had the experience of playing in South America. So to be able to play in South America in those great stadiums in that environment is going to be a buzz."

The 2020 Copa America marks the first time in the modern history of the tournament that the event is being co-hosted. Argentina and Colombia were chosen as hosts after South American football's governing body CONMEBOL turned down an offer from the United States Soccer Federation to hold an expanded 16-team edition of the Copa America.

The 2020 tournament will also see a change in format. At this year's Copa America, won by host nation Brazil, the 12 teams taking part in the event competed in three first round groups of four teams, with the top two in each group and the two best third placed teams advancing to the quarter-finals.

Next year, the tournament will instead see two first round groups of six teams. The top four finishers in each group will qualify for the quarter-finals. Tournament co-hosts Argentina will kick off the tournament against bitter rivals Chile on June 12 in Buenos Aires.

Chile scored back-to-back victories over Argentina in the finals of the Copa America in 2015 and 2016. Argentina defeated Chile in the third place play-off at this year's tournament. Australia will open their tournament against Uruguay on June 13. The Socceroos have a history with the two-time world champions, losing to the Uruguayans in a two-legged playoff for a place at the 2002 World Cup before eliminating the South Americans on penalties in 2005 to clinch a place at the 2006 tournament in Germany. Qatar, meanwhile, who finished bottom of their group at this year's Copa America to exit in the first round, will open their tournament against Peru on June 14. The June 12-July 12 tournament is the 47th edition of the Copa America, the oldest international competition in world football. — AFP

Maja hat-trick hammers Nimes, Marseille close gap on leaders PSG

PARIS: Nigeria international Josh Maja scored a hat-trick as Bordeaux hammered Nimes 6-0 to go third in Ligue 1 as Andre Villas-Boas' second-placed Marseille moved within two points of leaders Paris Saint-Germain on Tuesday with a 2-0 victory at Angers.

London-born Maja, 20, who joined the French club from Sunderland in January, netted three times in half an hour in a game delayed for 25 minutes as more than 20 Bordeaux fans invaded the pitch at the Matmut Stadium.

The supporters, who climbed down onto the field after 11 minutes, were targeting club president Frederic Longuepee after being refused from flying a banner calling for his resignation.

"It's an amazing feeling. I don't think it has sunk in yet," Maja told broadcasters Canal+.

"Once I get home and speak to my family will I realise what I've done and I'll be really happy," he added. Maja, who made his debut for the Super Eagles in October's friendly draw with Ukraine, claimed his first after 24 minutes and added a second to double his tally for the season 13 minutes later.

He saved his best finish for this third effort firing high above Paul Bernardoni eight minutes into the second half for his first hat-trick in senior football.

Nicolas De Preville and a double from Brazilian midfielder Otavio made sure of all three points moving Paulo Sousa's side up to third in the table, five points behind Marseille.

Midfielder Dimitri Payet was involved in both goals at Angers, setting up Morgan Sanson for the opener before converting from the penalty spot as Andre Villas-Boas' side extended their unbeaten run to five. "PSG's position doesn't occupy our minds, our goal is to finish second at the end of the season," Villas-Boas said. "If we can beat Bordeaux on Sunday it can allow for a bit of a gap on other teams before the Christmas break," he added.

The Portuguese boss kept faith with the side which beat Brest 2-1 on Friday electing against giving match-winner Nemanja Radonjic a spot in the starting lineup.

Angers boss Stephane Moulin made five changes from the weekend's loss to Nice as Ismail Traore took over the captaincy from Thomas Mangani.

Villas-Boas' men claimed the lead after 17 minutes as Sanson registered his second goal in four league games. Payet played his free-kick quickly to find midfielder Sanson who side-footed coolly past Ludovic Butelle.

The former West Ham playmaker doubled the advantage after 41 minutes slotting his third penalty of the season. Japan right-back Hiroki Sakai was tripped up in the Angers box and the France attacker scored his fifth goal of the season. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
Sheffield United v Newcastle United	beIN Sports HD 1	22:30	
Arsenal v Brighton & Hove Albion	beIN Sports HD 2	23:15	
ARABIAN GULF CUP			
Iraq v Bahrain	beIN Sports HD	17:30	
Saudi Arabia v Qatar	beIN Sports HD	20:00	

25 Yury Gansu, Russia's anti-doping tsar who openly accuses Moscow

26 Ex-England Captain Bob Willis dead

27 Socceroos to face Argentina at Copa America in Group A



Weightlifting gold for Philippines

SEA Games bounce back from deadly typhoon



MANILA: Hidilyn Diaz of the Philippines (C), Thuy Nguyen of Vietnam (L) and Juliana Klarisa of Indonesia pose for photos on the podium after winning gold, silver and bronze respectively during the medal ceremony for the women's 55kg weightlifting event at the SEA Games (Southeast Asian Games) in Manila. — AFP

MANILA: Philippines weightlifter Kristel Macrohon claimed a tearful Southeast Asian Games gold medal as the regional Olympics got back into full swing yesterday, a day after being battered by a deadly typhoon.

Macrohon posed alongside her "inspiration", Olympic silver medallist Hidilyn Diaz, after winning the women's 71-kg category in Manila in front of cheering Filipino fans. The 56-sport SEA Games resumed a full programme yesterday, organisers said, after Typhoon Kammuri forced about half of Tuesday's events to be rescheduled.

Four people were killed after the storm roared across the Philippines south of Manila, which is jointly

hosting the Games along with Clark and Subic, shearing off roofs, downing power poles and felling trees.

None of the 8,750 athletes and team officials or 12,000 volunteers was reported hurt, although some competitors were delayed by the closure of Manila's international airport.

"It was an inspiration for me, watching Hidilyn win," 23-year-old Macrohon told AFP through a translator, referring to Diaz's 55-kg victory on Monday. "I'm very happy to have contributed to the medal haul of weightlifting. It's a really important moment in weightlifting for the Philippines."

The home nation has quickly taken control of the medals table with 54 golds in the opening days of

competition — already outstripping the 24 it won in 2017. The Games, contested by 11 Southeast Asian countries, are traditionally heavily weighted towards the hosts who are free to decide much of the sporting programme.

The Philippines' success follows a chaotic build-up when unfinished infrastructure, transport delays and problems with food and accommodation were heavily criticised, prompting an apology from President Rodrigo Duterte.

Home athletes picked up 14 out of 20 golds in their national martial art of arnis, and on Wednesday romped to a four-gold sweep in the obstacle course race, an event that was making its SEA Games debut.

However, the Philippines' dominance has not gone without some criticism over alleged home bias. In pencak silat, a Southeast Asian martial art, Filipino fighter Dines Dumaan was declared a 5-0 winner over defending champion Mohd Faizul Mohd Nasir — despite kicking the Malaysian in the head as he lay prone on the ground.

Faizul was taken to hospital and Malaysian fans reacted angrily on social media, using #SEAGamesfail, a hashtag which was used to mock the tournament's turbulent build-up. Seven of the last 11 SEA Games hosts have finished top of the medals table, including Malaysia who were runaway winners at the last edition in 2017. — AFP

Spurs edge Rockets

SAN ANTONIO: DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points, including the game-winning free throws with 3.3 seconds to play in the second overtime, as the San Antonio Spurs came back from 16 points down in the fourth quarter to beat the visiting Houston Rockets 135-133 on Tuesday. Lonnie Walker IV scored a career-high 28 points, 19 of them in the fourth quarter, to pace the Spurs. Bryn Forbes added 25, Rudy Gay had 14 points, Derrick White scored 12 and Jakob Poeltl pulled down a career-high 15 rebounds. James Harden poured in 50 points, making all 24 of his free throws, to pace Houston. Clint Capela scored 22 points and grabbed 21 rebounds for the Rockets while Russell Westbrook contributed 19 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists. Austin Rivers added 19 points, Ben McLemore scored 11 and P.J. Tucker had 10.

HEAT 121, RAPTORS 110 (OT)

Jimmy Butler scored the first eight points of overtime and finished with 22 points, 13 rebounds and 12 assists as Miami rallied for a win at Toronto. Duncan Robinson added 22 points for the Heat, who have won three in a row and ended the Raptors' seven-game winning streak. It was also the Raptors' first home loss of

the season in 10 games. Bam Adebayo had 18 points for Miami, Justise Winslow added 17 points and nine rebounds, and Kelly Olynyk had 16 points. Norman Powell scored 23 points off the bench to lead the Raptors, who were held to two points in overtime. Fred VanVleet added 19 points, and Pascal Siakam had 15 points and 12 rebounds. Kyle Lowry, who missed the previous 11 games with a fractured thumb, scored 12 points and had 11 assists.

CLIPPERS 117, TRAIL BLAZERS 97

Montrezl Harrell had 26 points and nine rebounds and Paul George scored 25 as host Los Angeles won for the ninth time in 10 games while snapping Portland's three-game winning streak. Patrick Patterson added 19 points off the bench for the Clippers. He connected on 5 of 7 3-pointers and 6 of 10 from the floor. George converted 9 of 14 shots and 6 of 7 3-pointers. Kawhi Leonard and Patrick Beverley each added 11 points. CJ McCollum led the Blazers with 20 points. Hassan Whiteside scored 18 points and grabbed 13 rebounds, while Damian Lillard finished with 16 but managed just two points in the second half, a pair of free throws in the third quarter.

PISTONS 127, CAVALIERS 94

Blake Griffin scored 24 points in 24 minutes and visit-

ing Detroit won consecutive games for the first time this season by clobbering Cleveland. Andre Drummond racked up 17 points, 14 rebounds, four assists, five steals and four blocks for Detroit, which defeated San Antonio 132-98 on Sunday. It's the first time in franchise history the Pistons have recorded back-to-back victories of 30 or more points. Collin Sexton's 22 points led the Cavaliers, who lost for the 10th time in 11 games. Kevin Porter Jr. had 12 points, and Tristan Thompson supplied 10 points and 14 rebounds. Cedi Osman and Jordan Clarkson each added their own 10 points for Cleveland.

MAGIC 127, WIZARDS 120

Evan Fournier led six players in double figures with 31 points and Orlando used a balanced attack to overcome a 42-point performance by Bradley Beal to beat host Washington. D.J. Augustin (24 points), Markelle Fultz (20), Aaron Gordon (18), Terrence Ross (14) and Jonathan Isaac (11) also scored in double figures for the Magic, who set a season high in points in winning their second straight and their third in their last four. Davis Bertans had 21 points, Isaiah Thomas 20 and Rui Hachimura 15 to back Beal for the Wizards, who lost their third straight.

MAVERICKS 118, PELICANS 97

Luka Doncic had 33 points and 18 rebounds in

three quarters as visiting Dallas rolled past New Orleans. Doncic fell five assists short of adding to his league-leading seven triple-doubles in just 28 minutes as the red-hot Mavericks, fresh off a 114-100 road victory that ended the Lakers' 10-game winning streak, overcame a cold-shooting first quarter to win for the eighth time in their last nine games. Seth Curry came off the bench to score 19, Tim Hardaway Jr. and Maxi Kleber added 12 each and Dallas made 19 of 45 3-pointers. Brandon Ingram scored 24, Jrue Holiday had 18, JJ Redick added 12 and Josh Hart 11 to lead the Pelicans, who lost their sixth consecutive game.

LAKERS 105, NUGGETS 96

Anthony Davis had 25 points and 10 rebounds while battling an illness, and LeBron James had 25 points, nine assists and six rebounds for visiting Los Angeles. Dwight Howard scored 13 points and Rajon Rondo had 11 for the Lakers, who won the matchup of the top two teams in the Western Conference. Los Angeles rebounded from having its 10-game winning streak stopped with a home loss to Dallas on Sunday. Jamal Murray scored 22 points, Paul Millsap had 21 and Nikola Jokic was held to 13 points for the Nuggets. Denver has lost two straight following a six-game winning streak. — Reuters