



6 Trump tells American Jews he is Israel's best friend



19 At 50, Sesame Street still going strong - and big honor awaits



24 Lebanon Sunni leaders back Hariri to return as premier



25 Joshua defeats Ruiz to take back heavyweight crown



Lawmaker questions education minister over school fee hikes

Court backs shelving Dow case • Ex-justice ministers probed as anti-graft tips pour in

Bahrain lift first Gulf Cup



DOHA: Bahraini players celebrate after winning the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup final football match between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia at the Khalifa International Stadium yesterday. — AFP (See Page 28)

Diabetologist says Glucophage safe to use despite warnings

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Endocrinologist, diabetologist and head of Kuwait Diabetes Society Dr Waleed Al-Dhahi refuted recent warnings against using the diabetes drug metformin, denying that it is carcinogenic. Metformin is a standard medication during early stages of type 2 diabetes. It helps control high blood sugar and is marketed under a number of brand names, including Glucophage.

Dhahi said such reports will make diabetics around the world become skeptical about using metformin, which has been known as a safe medicine since the mid-1950s. He added the real issue is related to N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), a known carcinogen in

lab animals. "This substance is found in minimal safe amounts in many products including generic drugs. Many generic drugs for blood pressure and gastric acidity have been withdrawn for this reason, leaving only original branded drugs in use in Kuwait and the world," he explained.

Dhahi pointed out that the US Food and Drug Administration and other healthcare regulators in Europe, Singapore and Poland are closely watching the percentage of this substance in generic metformin drugs and that none of them were so far found to include dangerous levels of NDMA, and thus the drug was not withdrawn because its benefits outdo its harm.

"Singapore only withdrew three generic metformin drugs after examining 46 and patients were allowed to continue using the remaining products," Dhahi said, underlining that the warning does not apply to Glucophage from the original manufacturer. "The health ministry has stressed that the generic metformin drugs withdrawn in Singapore are not registered in Kuwait," he added.

Continued on Page 24

Screams, goodbyes as dozens killed in Delhi factory fire

NEW DELHI: At least 43 people were killed yesterday in a devastating fire that ripped through a bag factory in the congested old quarter of the Indian capital New Delhi, with survivors describing the screams of scores of trapped workers who were sleeping inside. The blaze was the worst in Delhi since 59 movie-goers died in a cinema in 1997, with the city's poor planning and enforcement of building and safety regulations often responsible for such deadly incidents.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences yesterday to Indian President Ram Nath Kovind, expressing his sorrow over the factory fire tragedy. The Amir expressed hope for a speedy recovery of those injured. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.



NEW DELHI: A fire truck is seen along a street near the site of a factory where a fire broke out in the Anaj Mandi area of the capital yesterday. — AFP

Tearful relatives spoke of receiving desperate calls from factory workers begging to be freed from the inferno in the dark, poorly lit premises in the commercial hub of Sadar Bazar from around 5:00am (23:30 GMT). One father who was trapped inside the four-storey structure made a desperate phone call to ask that his children be looked after.

Continued on Page 24

Saudi gunman showed shooting videos at party

MIAMI: The Saudi military student who carried out a deadly shooting spree at a US naval base showed videos of mass shootings at a dinner party the night before the attack, US media reported

Saturday. The shooting Friday in a classroom building at Naval Air Station Pensacola in Florida killed three sailors and wounded eight other people, including two responding sheriff's deputies, before police shot dead the assailant.

The dinner party revelation came as authorities probed whether the shooter had any accomplices. "We're finding out what took place, whether it's one person or a number of people," President Donald Trump told reporters.

Continued on Page 24



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Local

Amir receives Crown Prince, top Kuwaiti officials at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received in Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also

received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, as well as His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Prime Minister

Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir received as well the President of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court Justice

Yousef Al-Mutawaa.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received at Bayan Palace Speaker Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-

Khaled, and Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa. Furthermore, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received the Deputy Prime Minister, State Minister for Cabinet Affairs, and Acting Interior Minister Anas Khaled Al-Saleh.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chief Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



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His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Qatari envoy lauds Kuwait Amir's efforts to end GCC rift

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has played a crucial role in ending the rift amongst GCC countries, said Qatari Ambassador to Kuwait Bandar Al-Attiya. Delivering a speech yesterday in a national Qatari celebration of founder of their country Sheikh Jassem bin Thani, Ambassador Attiya stressed that His Highness the Amir was one of the most important Arab and international figures especially within the humanitarian and peacemaking domains. He commended relations between Qatar and Kuwait, saying that both countries share similar views on regional and international issues. The two brotherly countries were also eager to boost relations in all possible domains to benefit their people, the region and world, he added. GCC leaders are to convene in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, tomorrow for the 40th Gulf Summit.



Bandar Al-Attiya

GCC FMs meet

Foreign Ministers of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries hold today a preparatory meeting for the GCC Summit, due in Riyadh under the presidency of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The foreign ministers are expected to hold a closed-door meeting. The GCC Secretariat did not release any statement about agenda of the one-day meeting. However, issues like the Gulf crisis, Iran's interference in GCC affairs, attacks on oil tankers in the Arabian Gulf and oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, as well as securing maritime navigation are expected to feature high on the agenda. The top diplomats are also expected to discuss economic and social issues, as well as protests in Iraq and Lebanon, the situations in Yemen, Syria, Libya and Palestine. Founded in 1981, the GCC consists of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. — KUNA

African leaders highly appreciate Kuwait's Amir: Gabon

CAIRO: Gabonese Deputy Foreign Minister Nanette Kinda said yesterday that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is held in high regards by African leaders. In a statement to the press, Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Africa Affairs Ambassador Hamad Al-Mishaan said that this praise came during a meeting with Kinda in the capital Libreville. Kinda expressed the appreciation of Gabon for the role of Kuwait and His Highness the Amir in the Gulf mediation and bridging the Gulf differences.

His Highness is greatly appreciated by African leaders due to his interest in the issues of the African continent and the role he plays towards it, appreciating Kuwait's active role and what it provided to international peace and security and its interest in African issues during its membership in the Security Council. She praised Kuwait for its continuous support for the International Peace and Security Forum, which is held in Dakar in November of every year. She also hailed the development role that Kuwait plays in the African continent through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development and the huge development projects it is undertaking there.

On the specifics of the meeting, Ambassador Mishaan said that it touched on the possibility of exchanging oil expertise,



Gabonese Deputy Foreign Minister Nanette Kinda receives a memento from Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Africa Affairs Ambassador Hamad Al-Mishaan.

given that Gabon is an oil country. "We also invited a delegation representing the Gabonese oil sector to visit Kuwait," he added. Ambassador Mishaan called on Gabon to support Kuwait's candidacy for the mem-

bership of the Board of Directors of the Universal Postal Union and the membership of the Postal Investment Council during the 27th conference of the Union to be held in Cote d'Ivoire 2020. — KUNA

Souq Mubarakiya development project to start in new fiscal year

Health insurance likely won't be extended to cover all citizens

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Under the auspices of the Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, the Municipal Council's Capital committee organized a workshop on developing various projects and services within the capital. The workshop included a presentation made by Kuwait Municipality's structural plan department on the capital's development in the fourth structural plan currently in progress.

Committee chairman Hassan Kamal said the presentation included a project to develop and expand Souq Mubarakiya, which is due to commence by the beginning of the new fiscal year. He added that traffic plans, providing enough parking spaces and public services were also discussed during the workshop. Kamal said the workshop also discussed the heritage village project in Sharq as a strategic project.

The finance ministry's assistant under-secretary Dr Ghazi Ayyash attended the workshop and explained that the contract of the previous heritage village project had been annulled and it is now being executed as a BOT project. Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Al-Khaled stressed that the workshop was very fruitful as many development projects were discussed, such as Souq Mubarakiya, traffic plans, landscap-

ing and the heritage village.

Health insurance

In other news well-informed official sources at the Ministry of Health said that the current retirees' health insurance will not be extended to include all citizens. Notably, the parliament had passed the retirees health insurance law three years ago and implemented it as a first phase to be followed by further phases to include all citizens. In this regard, the sources explained that the retirees' health insurance currently costs the state 'a fortune' and that extending it to all citizens will multiply the cost, while the reasons the law was set in the first place may gradually vanish in the foreseeable future.

"The idea was originally to make things easier for retirees and give them more treatment choices in public and private hospitals without having to wait long for medical appointments," the sources explained. They further noted that after increasing healthcare fees on expats, their numbers are remarkably decreasing in various public hospitals and they are gradually heading to private hospitals for treatment. "This means waiting lists and periods at public hospitals will accordingly decrease, especially after opening new hospitals to be run by international well-trained managements," the sources further elaborated.

Workshop mulls Capital's development



KUWAIT: People walk inside the Souq Mubarakiya in this file photo.



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah received yesterday credentials of the newly appointed Tanzania's Ambassador to Kuwait Aisha Amour. Assistant Foreign Minister for Protocol Affairs Ambassador Dhari Al-Ajran and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar attended the meeting. — KUNA



VIVA main sponsor of B2B 4 SME forum

KUWAIT: VIVA, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and a subsidiary of STC Group, announced its main sponsorship of the B2B 4 SME forum for the second year in a row, that will take place today at Al-Shaheed Park 2 (new extension) from 10 am to 10 pm. A press conference was held at VIVA's headquarters on the occasion, organized by the Association of Small and Medium enterprise of Kuwait (ASMEK), in the presence of VIVA's management where Ahmad Al-Nowaibt from the Corporate Communications team represented VIVA on the panel.

VIVA will participate in this event through a special booth for VIVA business to showcase the latest enterprise solutions for SMEs, including technical, voice and digital solutions, which help them grow and develop their projects and businesses and facilitate their

transactions.

Danah Faisal AlJasem, General Manager of Corporate Communications at VIVA commented: "Our sponsorship of this event is part of the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda at VIVA that strives to support different initiatives in the fields of health, education, sports, environment and entrepreneurship. We are always eager to support the SMEs who are the building blocks of the future through advanced corporate solutions that contribute to the development of their business."

This event is the first of its kind at a regional level, aiming to create a platform for interaction and highlighting the commercial exchange between owners of the SMEs and leading companies in the private sector, and the SMEs amongst themselves, which is a main factor that is bridging both parties and encouraging them to exchange knowledge and provide best offers to the project owners.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A compilation of photos showing a 'confrontation' between two cats at a Kuwait City beach. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Ooredoo Kuwait concludes its sponsorship of Haab Al-Saad Expo

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KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, the first to launch innovated digital services in Kuwait has recently concluded its sponsorship of the Haab Al-Saad Expo, an exhibition targeted at females which presented an array of products and services from local, regional, and international companies, as well as renowned designers. The expo provided a unique experience that targeted brides to be and wedding planners. The expo was held in Sheraton Hotel, Diamond Ballroom last week. The exhibition provided brides and wedding planners the opportunity to prepare their weddings from start to finish, by showcasing everything they need under one roof.

The main goal behind sponsoring Haab Al-Saad is to support Kuwaiti women by showcasing unique product lines and services targeting brides to be. Empowering women is a foundation pillar in our Corporate Social Responsibility strategy. Ooredoo's support of this exhibition is

another step towards achieving this goal along with the company's commitment to support and empower women.

It is worth mentioning that Ooredoo Kuwait was the communications sponsor for Hana Eleven expo support Kuwaiti women participating in the exhibition to showcase their product lines and promoting their small businesses among targeted audience in an extravagant atmosphere. Ooredoo also sponsored the ninth edition of the RoadRush Racing Competition for Women which took place at Kuwait Motor Town. Where it included a number of exciting activities such as RoadRush Market, RoadRush Kid's Wonderland, a live performance by Miami band, as well as other fun activities. The sponsorship came from the alignment with the company's core values of caring, connecting, and challenging. It further underscores the company's commitment to empowering women.



Ministry received 2,040 brand requests in Nov

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Commerce and Industry yesterday announced that it has received 2,040 brand request applications online last November. In a press statement, the ministry said that it had completed 905 transactions for registering a trademark, 807 for publishing a trademark, and three transactions for registering a trademark and issuing a certificate for it. It noted that it completed 243 trademark renewal transactions and 345 visa applications by changing the title and name of the owner of the brand, transferring its ownership, striking out a registration and changing the name of the registration agent. The ministry also pointed out that 607 transactions for publishing the renewal of brands were completed, in addition to receiving 15 appealing applications, adding that it obtained fees for all previous transactions by 249,003 Kuwaiti dinars (about \$822,000). —KUNA

Saudi envoy praises Kuwaiti support to disabled people

KUWAIT: Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Kuwait Prince Sultan Al Saud on Saturday praised the great support that Kuwait provides to people with disabilities. This came in a statement by the ambassador to reporters during the Saudi theatrical performance participating in the fifth Gulf theater festival for people with disabilities, which is held in Kuwait during the period from 3 to 9 December. Prince Sultan said that Kuwait is a pioneer in supporting this group, integrating them into society and highlighting their capabilities. The Saudi government also pays great attention to this precious group and unlimited support at all levels, as its disabled people have proven that they are creative in every field they participate in, he added. All Gulf states are participating in the festival organized by the Kuwait Public Authority of the Disabled. —KUNA

Local

Zain strategic partner of 24-hour coding challenge 'CODED Hackathon'

Company keen on supporting, developing tech innovation ecosystem

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, concluded its strategic partnership of the CODED Hackathon, a 24-hour coding challenge that aimed at boosting participants' coding skills in a unique academic and social setting.

Zain's extended strategic partnership with CODED comes in line with its corporate sustainability strategy towards the education sector, through which the company is keen on contributing to the development and advancement of the tech innovation ecosystem within all age groups to boost their coding and technology skills, as such skills are essential for the modern digital world.

Zain took part in awarding the winners of the CODED Hackathon, which mainly aimed at offering a competitive social environment for the participants throughout 24 continuous hours. The participants had to design innovative solutions to coding challenges within a limited time frame and with limited resources at hand, which boosted their teamwork, problem-



Boosting coding skills in unique setting

solving, leadership, and coding skills.

In July, Zain strategically partnered with the CODED Fresh Grad Boot Camp, which aimed at training fresh university graduates on seven essential programming languages to make them job ready as programmers and developers. Twenty graduates were selected from over 560 applicants from across various universities, and they spent 12 intensive weeks of seminars and workshops supervised by CODED's team.

Through supporting this unique program, Zain seeks to offer youth the best educational environment in Kuwait to nurture their talents, enrich their skills, and promote tech innovation within them. Zain



KUWAIT: Zain and CODED officials with the Hackathon participants.

believes in the important role tech innovation plays in building the future and progressing national economy.

Zain is keen on playing a vital role as an integrated digital service provider in light of the rapid digital changes witnessed by the modern world. The company always seeks to reach new levels of excellence with its customers through offering the best innovative services, meeting their needs and aspirations, as well as supporting programs and initiatives that

embrace tech innovation and aim at developing it.

Zain further reaffirms its commitment to supporting any entity that offers the proper educational environment for the next generation as per the highest international standards. The company will spare no efforts in offering its support to such initiatives and programs that serve the community and contribute to the further progress of the country.

Last year, Zain supported the CODED Juniors

Summer Camp, which aimed at teaching school children (ages 7-12) the basics of coding languages and technology using the latest tools and gadgets like robots, smart toys, computers, and more, as well as traditional learning methods such as art, drawing, and music. The program featured a fun educational environment that lasted for four weeks in the Space Museum at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center.



KIB offers booking appointments via smartphone app

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) launched the first-of-its-kind service in Kuwait allowing customers to book appointments via a smartphone application at all branches across Kuwait. One of the latest technologies in customer service, the service was recently debuted at an exclusive launch at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Kuwait, in cooperation with CFM Gulf Company as the sole exclusive agent in Kuwait for the Swedish company KOMATECH which specializes in customer service and scheduling systems.

On this occasion, Othman Tawfeq, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department at KIB, said: "KIB's first-of-its-kind service in Kuwait is one of the latest technologies in customer service. Through this service, our customers can schedule appointments via their smartphones, avoid congestion on the road, learn about working hours of branches and services offered, as well as receive priority when visiting the branch for quick services."

Tawfeq also pointed out that the introduction of this latest service came as part of KIB's new strategic direction under the slogan 'Bank for life'; the slogan was selected by the Bank's senior management and embodies the new strategy for developing systems and customer service. The launch of this new service will boost the level of customer service across Kuwait, not just at KIB, but also across all sectors that provide customer service.

Additionally, Tawfeq lauded the efforts made by the KIB team as well as their cooperation with CFM Gulf Computers, which resulted in the development of a 'customer service smartphone application'. Tawfeq added that this service will be followed by many more developments, as the Bank is continuously studying the latest services and products to be introduced to the local market; thereby exceeding its customers' expectations and serving diverse segments and lifestyles.

On his part, Chairman of CFM Gulf Computers, Eyad Omar Al-Serri, said: "I would like to personally thank KIB for their continued trust and cooperation over the

past years, culminating in the launch of this latest service. I would also like to thank the Swedish company (KOMATEC) and its team on their boundless support in working to make this dream a reality. Currently, we're living in a stage that has jumped leaps and bounds to reach the future of technology we are in. Today, life has become centered around smartphones, which ultimately led us to develop this service."

Al-Serri also noted that the launch of this service with KIB will boost customer service across all sectors, serving as a 'gateway to the future' that enables people to adopt technology that helps humanity. He also added that competition in the market is open to everyone, where those who succeed must meet the needs of customers, provide quick and efficient services, gain the trust of customers, meet their goals, and turn their dreams into reality.

On this occasion, Khalil Al-Arian, General Manager of CFM Gulf Computers delivered a technical presentation on the advantages of the Swedish-made QMATIC digital customer service system. Al-Arian presented a brief historical background on the introduction of these products to the Kuwait market in 1990, as well as developments in the system over the past few years to remain up-to-date with the times. These developments have allowed this service to be one of the best devices and systems for customer service on a global scale. He also lauded KIB's management which has led the Bank to become the first in Kuwait to adopt this innovative customer service, which will positively affect all sectors, allowing both public and private entities to provide services to its customers.

Arian also pointed out that this service is one of the best technologies to serve customers remotely. Today, customers can book appointments and avoid congestion before visiting the branch, helping distribute traffic over different periods, reduce waiting times and manage queues; thereby allowing customers to truly benefit from the services provided by KIB.

KIB strongly believes in the importance of technology and the need to combine traditional banking with innovative digital solutions. Accordingly, the Bank continues to develop its services and products in order to adopt the latest technological developments. By doing so, KIB provides its customers with an innovative banking experience characterized by the highest quality standards that offer safety and security, confidentiality and ease of use at any time and place.

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Myanmar Lady gambles image in genocide lawsuit

Johnson pledges transformative Brexit as nerves rattled by polls

Page 8

Page 9



HOLLYWOOD, Florida: US President Donald Trump stands on stage after his address to the Israeli American Council National Summit 2019 at the Diplomat Beach Resort on Saturday. (Inset) Trump poses with Sheldon Adelson and his wife Miriam Adelson ahead of his address. — AFP

Trump tells US Jews he’s Israel’s best friend

President says Jewish-Americans had been wrong to vote for Democrats

HOLLYWOOD, Florida: US President Donald Trump aimed to make inroads Saturday in the politically important Jewish-American vote with a Florida speech where he declared himself the best friend Israel has ever had. At a conference in Hollywood, Florida, the Republican real estate magnate said Jewish-Americans had been wrong to vote for Democrats under his predecessor Barack Obama. “So many of you voted for people in the last administration,” he said. “Someday you’ll have to explain that to me because I don’t think they liked Israel too much.”

By contrast, Trump said, “the Jewish state has never had a better friend in the White House than your president, Donald J Trump.” He was speaking at a meeting of the Israeli-American Council, a non-profit whose funders

include billionaire Jewish-American casino magnate Sheldon Adelson and his wife Miriam – both of them high-profile Trump supporters. Jews make up only a small portion of the electorate but in Florida they represent a crucial piece of the swing state electoral puzzle. Historically, American-Jews have voted heavily Democratic.

Trump, who is hoping to repeat his 2016 strategy next year by winning reelection through strategic accumulation of electoral college votes in key states, has worked especially hard to woo Jewish-Americans. Since taking office he has upended decades of American policy in the Middle East by acceding to a string of Israeli demands and all but slamming the door on Palestinians. This includes recogniz-

ing the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and also recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, a territory taken from Syria in 1967.

In November, the Trump administration again broke with decades of international consensus when it said that it would no longer consider Israeli settlements on occupied Palestinian lands in the West Bank illegal. The policies are also highly popular with rightwing evangelical Christian Republicans – a vital part of Trump’s support base.

Despite the aggressive support for Israel, coupled with intense pressure on the Palestinians, the Trump administration says it has a peace plan ready to unveil once an ongoing Israeli leadership impasse is resolved. Trump has put his son-in-law Jared Kushner, who is

Jewish-American but had no previous experience in government before joining this administration, in charge of the peace plan. “A lot of people say that can’t be done,” Trump told the crowd on Saturday. “They say that’s the toughest of all deals but if Jared Kushner can’t do it, it can’t be done.”

Taking direct aim at one of his potential Democratic opponents for the 2020 election, Trump told the audience that leftwing Senator Elizabeth Warren should not get their vote because she would impose heavy taxes. “Let’s take 100 percent of your wealth away,” he said in a reference to Warren. One problem, Trump told the gathering, is that some American-Jews, while being “great people, they don’t love Israel enough”. — AFP

Protests grip Baghdad, south despite rising toll

BAGHDAD: Thousands of Iraqi protesters streamed into streets and public squares in the capital and restive south yesterday, saying they were not deterred by deadly violence meant to “scare” them. In Baghdad, crowds of anti-government demonstrators thronged Tahrir Square, the epicenter of their movement. Late Friday, unidentified gunmen attacked a parking complex near Tahrir where demonstrators had been squatting for weeks, leaving 20 protesters and four police officers dead, medics told AFP.

Protesters feared it signalled that their movement would be derailed but by yesterday, the numbers gathered under the sun in Tahrir were staggering. “They’re trying to scare us in whatever ways they can, but we’re staying in the streets,” said Aisha, a 23-year-old protester. At least 452 people – the vast majority of them protesters – have died and 20,000 have been wounded since the rallies erupted.

In Nasiriyah, a protest hotspot where dozens were killed in a spree of violence last month, protesters regrouped in downtown along with representatives of powerful tribes. “We will keep protesting until the regime collapses,” pledged Ali Rahim, a student. In other southern cities, local authorities had declared yesterday – the first day of the work week in Iraq – a holiday for civil servants.

Road blocks and massive strikes also disrupted work in Hilla, Amara, Diwaniya, Kut and the shrine city of Najaf, AFP’s correspondents there said. The rallies have persisted



KUFA, Iraq: Iraqi students of the University of Kufa rally in support of ongoing anti-government demonstrations at the campus gate yesterday. — AFP

despite the resignation of premier Adel Abdel Mahdi earlier this month, with protesters demanding the complete ouster of the ruling class. Iraq is ranked the 12th most corrupt country

in the world by watchdog group Transparency International, with billions of dollars pilfered each year from the state budget of OPEC’s second-largest producer. — AFP

North Korea conducts ‘very important test’

SEOUL: North Korea has conducted a “very important test” at its Sohae satellite launch site, state media reported yesterday, as nuclear negotiations between Pyongyang and Washington remain deadlocked. “A very important test was carried out at the Sohae Satellite Launch Site on

December 7th, 2019,” a spokesman for the North’s National Academy of Science said. The result of the latest test will have an “important effect” on changing the “strategic status” of North Korea, the spokesman said in a statement carried by the KCNA news agency.

The statement did not provide further details on the test. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had agreed to shutter the Sohae site during a summit last year with South Korean President Moon Jae-in in Pyongyang as part of trust-building measures. Kim has also held three meetings with US President Donald Trump since June 2018 but little progress has been made in efforts towards denuclearization. The latest test comes as Pyongyang is

ramping up pressure ahead of its end-of-year deadline for the US to propose a new offer to kickstart stalled nuclear talks. On Thursday, the North’s vice foreign minister warned of returning to a war of words with the US, threatening to resume referring to Trump as a “dotard” – Pyongyang’s nickname for the US leader at the height of tensions in 2017.

The comments came a day after it warned that if the US used military force against the North it would take “prompt corresponding actions at any level”. At the recent NATO summit, Trump boasted about Washington’s “most powerful military”, adding: “Hopefully, we don’t have to use it, but if we do, we’ll use it. If we have to, we’ll do it.” — AFP

Polio returns to haunt Malaysia after 27 years

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia has reported its first polio case in 27 years, health authorities said yesterday, announcing a three-month-old baby had been diagnosed on Borneo island. The Malaysian health ministry’s director-general, Noor Hisham Abdullah, said the baby from Tuaran in eastern Sabah state had been admitted into intensive care after experiencing fever and muscle weakness. “The patient is currently undergoing treatment in an isolation ward and is in a stable condition but needs respiratory support,” Noor Hisham said, adding that the infant was diagnosed on Friday.

Polio is a highly infectious viral disease which has no cure and can only be prevented with several doses of oral and injectable vaccines. It affects the nervous system and spinal cord and can be fatal in rare cases. Over the past three decades the world has made great strides in the battle against polio. The World Health Organization said only 33 cases were reported worldwide last year. Malaysia was declared polio free in 2000. The last case in the country occurred in 1992.

The diagnosis comes after the Philippines, which shares a close sea border with Sabah, was hit in September by its first polio case in nearly two decades. Noor Hisham said test results showed that the Malaysian child was infected with a strain that shared genetic links to the virus detected in the Philippines. Public health expert T Jayabalan told AFP that he was not surprised by the polio outbreak because immunization was not mandatory in Malaysia. “This first case probably is the tip of the iceberg. There is a very high possibility of a rising trend,” he warned.

Jayabalan said there was a small group of people who refuse vaccination on account of misinformation. In recent years, Malaysia had recorded a number of deaths among children from diphtheria, a vaccine-preventable disease, because they did not receive immunization. Noor Hisham said investigations found that 23 children under the age of 15 who lived close to the infected baby had also not received the polio vaccine. “This is a frustrating situation because the spread of the disease... can only be stopped with polio immunization”. — AFP

International

Netanyahu pushes annexation plan as new elections loom

Israel strikes in Gaza after rocket attack

JERUSALEM: Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday touted his plan to annex a swathe of the occupied West Bank and Israeli settlements in a last-ditch effort to prevent another general election. "It's time to apply Israeli sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and legalise all the Judea and Samaria settlements, those that are in settlement blocs and those outside of them," he said, using the biblical term for the West Bank. "They will be part of the State of Israel."

Netanyahu announced in September, a week before general elections, that he planned to annex the Jordan Valley, which accounts for around a third of the West Bank, if re-elected. His remarks yesterday, at a conference organized by rightwing newspaper Makor Rishon, came alongside an appeal to rival Benny Gantz to form a unity government and save the time and money involved in elections. "I have offered to Benny Gantz to join a unity government and today too I'm telling him to join a unity government with me," Netanyahu said. "It's not too late."

The September polls yielded no clear winner, and Wednesday is the last day for a member of parliament to propose a coalition before the country heads to another vote - the third in a year. "I want American recognition of our sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, it's important," Netanyahu said, noting he recently discussed the issue with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, without presenting a formal plan.

Pompeo last month announced that the United States no longer shared the widely held international position that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are illegal. On Friday, however, the US House of Representatives passed a resolution supporting a Palestinian state and determining that the US should "discourage" steps such as "unilateral annexation of territory". Around 400,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank alongside around 2.6 million Palestinians. The settlements are viewed as major stumbling blocks to peace as they are built on land the

Palestinians see as part of their future state. Israel blames Palestinian violence and intransigence as the main obstacles to peace. Netanyahu has said in the past that the wider moves to annex or "legalize" settlements in the West Bank would be in coordination with US President Donald Trump and his long-awaited peace plan.

Meanwhile, Israeli aircraft carried out attacks in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip early yesterday, Palestinian security officials said, hours after militants in the enclave launched three rockets at the Jewish state. The strikes targeted two sites belonging to Al-Qassam Brigades, the Hamas military wing, in northern Gaza, with another series of sorties at a Qassam site west of Gaza City, Hamas officials said. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

The Israeli army said "fighter jets and attack helicopters struck a number of Hamas terror targets" in Gaza, as well as "a military post belonging to the Hamas naval force in the northern Gaza Strip". "The IDF (Israel Defence Force) holds the Hamas terror organization responsible for events transpiring in the Gaza Strip and emanating from it," the army said in a statement. "Hamas will bear the consequences for actions against Israeli civilians."

Late Saturday night, Palestinian militants in Gaza launched three rockets at southern Israel. All three projectiles were intercepted by the Iron Dome defence system, the army said, amending an earlier statement according to which two of the three rockets were shot down over southern Israel. Medics had treated three people in the southern Israeli town of Sderot who suffered minor injuries while seeking shelter as air raid sirens went off, the Magen David Adom emergency medical service said. There were no immediate reports of material damage.

On Nov 29, Israeli warplanes struck Hamas positions in Gaza in response to rocket fire at the Jewish state the previous day. Hamas has controlled Gaza since 2007, and Israel holds the Islamist movement responsible for all rocket fire coming from the territory,



GAZA: Palestinian boys pull shards of glass from a broken window in their home near the site of Israeli overnight attacks yesterday. — AFP

although it has targeted other militant groups there. Last month, Israeli forces assassinated a senior Islamic Jihad leader in the Gaza Strip, sparking a two-day flare-up which killed 36 Palestinians. Islamic Jihad fired

around 450 rockets at Israel, many of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome defense system. Israel has fought three wars with Hamas and allied armed groups in Gaza since 2008. — AFP

Regime trolls counter Algeria protest activists

TUNIS: Social networks set alight the months-long protest movement against Algeria's establishment, but as a contentious presidential poll looms, bots and trolls are staging an online comeback to bolster the regime. The protests which erupted in February forced the resignation of veteran president Abdelaziz Bouteflika within six weeks. Activists, who have made savvy use of social media, vowed to continue their struggle following Bouteflika's departure and have staged mass protests against a December 12 election they see as an elite attempt to cling to power. Arabic and French hashtags including #FreeDemocraticAlgeria and #TheyMustAllResign have gone viral online, echoing chants in the streets as protesters urge a boycott of the presidential poll. Algerians also took to Twitter and Facebook to ridicule interim president Abdelkader Bensalah's comments that the impact of protests had been overblown. But with the approach of the vote, anonymous trolls and automated bots are sowing discord in an apparent bid to discredit the protest movement and revive support for the regime.

'Electronic flies'

Immediately after the date of the presidential election was announced in mid-September, two hashtags opposing the protest movement's boycott call appeared and quickly spread on Twitter: #Algeria_vote and #Don't_Speak_In_My_Name. The protest movement has dubbed the trolls behind this counter-offensive "electronic flies", saying they also lodge complaints against anti-establishment pages and posts, doctor protesters' slogans and slander activists. Marc Owen Jones, an assistant professor at the Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Doha who studies propaganda and disinformation on Arab social media networks, has analyzed some 20,000 tweets under these hashtags. A very high number of accounts were "suspicious, generated by trolls or bots", he said. And "a significant number of accounts were created in September, including a large proportion... in the space of just two days," he told AFP. These hashtags are "clear evidence of a disinformation campaign", Jones concluded.

Entrapped by posts

Activists say they have also been targeted by false



ALGIERS: Algerians wave a national flag from a balcony as they watch anti-government demonstrators march in the capital on Dec 6, 2019, ahead of the presidential vote scheduled for Dec 12. — AFP

reporting against their content, a tactic they say has led to pages being suspended and the removal of purported legitimate content. Social networks allow users to flag "indecent" content, but regime opponents say multiple complaints can automatically trigger suspensions and removals. Lokman, who did not want to give his full name, is a cofounder of "Fake News Dz", a Facebook page which identifies falsehoods spread on the Algerian net. He said his daily monitoring has found "an organized campaign to report pages which directly attack the establishment".

Said Salhi, vice-president of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights, lamented that "it's impossible to know who hides behind these attacks - their accounts are anonymous". Algerian Internet users have launched a digital campaign denouncing Facebook's policy, which they accuse of undermining their freedom of expression. In November, they organized sit-ins in front of the firm's offices in many European capitals. "Algerians rely on Facebook to share their ideas in the face of an illegitimate regime," said one students' association. Yet the social media giant does not react to "hate speech by trolls"

against the protest movement, the association complained.

'Systematic arrests'

Salhi noted that unlike the pro-government players online, activists do not hide their true identity, leaving them exposed. Simple social media posts therefore sometimes land government critics in jail, he said, pointing to the "systematic arrest of bloggers", activists or journalists in recent weeks. Given the authorities' lockdown of traditional media, "Facebook is a last resort for activists, but it is also an information space for the security services," he warned.

On Thursday, the prosecutor's office in Oran, some 350 km west of Algiers, demanded 18 months jail time for renowned cartoonist Abdelhamid Amine, whose dark depictions of Algerian leaders have been an online hit. Human Rights Watch has warned that police reports in court files show "a special brigade on electronic crimes has been monitoring the social media activities" of some protest leaders. The rights group warned that "the monitoring reports form the basis for vaguely worded charges of harming state security or undermining national unity." — AFP

Preacher Bonnke, popular across Africa, dies at 79

WASHINGTON: German evangelical preacher Reinhard Bonnke, who claimed to perform miracles on stage and had a huge following in Africa, died on Saturday aged 79, his church said. Bonnke, the founder of the Christ for All Nations church, first visited Africa in the 1960s and preached across the continent for decades, often at open-air events. The obituary on his website claimed Bonnke had drawn 1.6 million people to one gathering in Lagos, Nigeria in 2000, and that he had converted 79 million people during his career.

"Hundreds of millions of people from nearly every nation in Africa have heard Evangelist Bonnke's clear, fiery presentation," the obituary said. "The crowds were drawn to much more than Bonnke's passionate oratory. From the very beginning, the multi-day events were marked by profound miracles."

Bonnke, who lived in the United States, claimed to raise the dead, and to cure the deaf, blind and disabled - often attracting criticism and anger from skeptics, other faiths and more traditional Christian churches. But Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari said that Bonnke's "legendary contributions to the body of Christ in teaching and writing will always be remembered by posterity". "Bonnke's crusades in Nigeria, across Africa and the globe strongly accentuated the message of Jesus Christ," Buhari added in a Twitter statement.

Bonnke's wife Anni said in a message on his Facebook page that "he passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family". — AFP

200 displaced Syrians leave Al-Hol camp

QAMISHLI, Syria: Around 200 Syrian displaced people, mostly women and children, were heading home from an overcrowded desert camp in the northeast of the war-torn country yesterday, a Kurdish official said. Syria's Kurds, after years of fighting the Islamic State group, are holding tens of thousands of civilians and IS relatives in camps for the displaced. In June, they started sending home Syrian families that had fled their homes during battles against the jihadists from the overpopulated camp of Al-Hol.

A Kurdish official said around 200 people were leaving the camp yesterday, to head back to their villages in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor. "Most are women and children, with just some men," said Sheikhmous Ahmad, a Kurdish official in charge of the displaced. The majority were civilians with no ties to IS, he said, while a few might have aligned with the jihadists but today regretted their decision.

The group was headed back to the villages of Hajin, Shaafa or Baghouz, which were the last to be held by IS before US-backed fighters expelled them from the entire area in March. Ahmad said around 300 people from Al-Hol had already been taken back to the same area last week. Previously, evacuations had been put on hold after Turkish troops and their Syrian proxies on October 9 launched a blistering military operation against Kurdish forces.

In June, several hundred women and children had returned to the towns of Raqqa - once the de-facto IS



BALYUN, Syria: A wedding dress is seen in the destroyed window of a bridal shop in a damaged building in north-western Idlib province yesterday, a day after a Russian airstrike on a market in the village. — AFP

capital in Syria - and Tabqa, both located in the northern province of Raqqa. That area was taken by Kurdish-led forces from IS in Oct 2017. The United Nations said the Al-Hol camp's population last month stood at around 70,000 people. These included more than 30,000 Iraqis, some 28,000 Syrians and over 10,000 foreign nationals - many of them relatives of alleged jihadist fighters being held in detention. The Kurdish authorities have repeatedly called on Western nations to repatriate their nationals, but they have been largely reluctant, except in a handful of cases. — AFP

News in brief

Trump thanks Iran

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump had rare positive words for Iran on Saturday, thanking the US foe for a "very fair" negotiation to successfully pull off a prisoner swap that saw an American released from Iranian detention amid soaring tensions. The exchange, which took place in neutral Switzerland, involved a Princeton graduate student jailed in Iran for espionage since 2016 and an Iranian national arrested over a year ago in Chicago. "Thank you to Iran on a very fair negotiation," tweeted Trump, as Xiyue Wang made his way home to his family. "It was a one-on-one hostage swap," Trump told reporters. "I think it was great to show than we can do something. It might have been a precursor as to what can be done." — AFP

Trapped gold miners found dead

JOHANNESBURG: Four gold miners trapped underground after a tremor caused a rockfall in northeast South Africa have been found dead, their union said yesterday. A fifth miner was rescued with serious injuries on Friday after the accident at the Tau Lekoa Mine in the town of Orkney, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) said. "The four mineworkers were found dead," a union statement said after the rescue team lost contact with the four men deep underground early Saturday. "The last person we talked to said: 'We are suffocating please, bring us some oxygen,'" said NUM president Joseph Montisetsa. Last year 81 people died in the country's mines, according to the department of mineral resources. — AFP

Johnson pledges transformative Brexit as nerves rattled by polls

PM promises lower immigration if he wins election

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said he was nervous about his narrowing lead in opinion polls ahead of Thursday's election but pledged to deliver a "transformative" Brexit that will allow lower immigration. The Dec 12 election will decide the fate of Brexit and the world's fifth-largest economy with a stark choice between Johnson's pro-market Conservatives and the socialist-led opposition Labour Party.

"Brexit is the most radical and profound change to the management of this country," Johnson told Sky, adding that he would lead the United Kingdom out of the European Union on Jan. 31 if he wins a majority in the 650-seat parliament. "Brexit is indispensable - you can't move forward without Brexit," said Johnson, the face of the leave campaign in the 2016 referendum before winning the top job in July after Prime Minister Theresa May failed to deliver Brexit on time.

Johnson called the snap election after more than three years of political crisis over the United Kingdom's most significant geopolitical move since World War Two. Voting takes place from 0700 and 2200 GMT on Thursday, with Johnson likely to need more than 320 seats to ensure he can remain prime minister and ratify the Brexit deal he struck with the EU in October.

Opinion polls put Johnson ahead of Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, though his lead has narrowed in recent weeks and such polls largely failed to predict the 2016 referendum result or May's loss of her majority in the 2017 snap election. Asked if he was nervous about narrowing polls, Johnson said: "Of course, we are fighting for every vote. I think that this is a critical moment for this country."

Four opinion polls published yesterday put the lead of Johnson's Conservative Party over the Labour Party at between eight and 15 points. The Conservatives are certainly in pole position, but not necessarily so far ahead

that they're guaranteed to win, polling expert John Curtice told the BBC.

Kremlin shadow?

With the United Kingdom still split over Brexit, the election has largely been dominated by rhetoric over the EU exit and an array of expensive spending promises on public services by both major parties. Beyond Brexit, the main foreign policy issue has been Corbyn's claim that Johnson would sell off the much-cherished National Health Service (NHS) to US corporations in a post-Brexit deal with U.S. President Donald Trump.

Johnson has repeatedly denied that claim and Trump last week said he wouldn't want the NHS if it was offered on a silver platter, but Corbyn has used leaked British-US trade documents to argue that Johnson is a threat to the NHS. The leak of the classified documents online is tied to a previous Russian disinformation campaign, social media site Reddit said on Friday, fuelling fears that Moscow is seeking to interfere in the British election.

The Kremlin, which says the West is gripped by anti-Russian hysteria, has denied it meddles in Western democracies. The UK government said it is looking into the matter with support from the National Cyber Security Centre, part of the GCHQ signals intelligence agency.

No major poll predicts victory for Corbyn, a socialist who wants to bring swathes of the British economy into state ownership, but Labour could yet lead a minority government given that few other parties are willing to prop up a Johnson government. Labour proposes negotiating a new deal and then holding another EU referendum. Johnson dodged a question on whether he would resign if he failed to win a majority and dismissed questions suggesting that, after nearly a decade of Conservative rule, he was offering voters little beyond Brexit.

Echoing the Leave campaign pledges of 2016, Johnson



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (center) speaks to activists and supporters as he poses for a photograph at the Conservative campaign headquarters call center yesterday. — AFP

promised lower immigration with a Australian-style points system, but that there would be scope for high skilled and other workers to come to Britain. "I'm not hostile to immigration ... I'm a believer in allowing people to come to this country and I think if they have talents and they want to do things and make their lives in the UK and they can con-

tribute to our country - fantastic." When asked by Sky what the naughtiest thing he was ready to confess, Johnson initially asked advisers for suggestions before saying: "When I was riding a bicycle every day, which I used to do, I may sometimes have not always have obeyed the law about cycling on the pavement." — Reuters

Ukraine soldiers fear Zelensky will give ground

AVDIIVKA, Ukraine: A volley of gunfire breaks the silence of a foggy day on the frontline in Ukraine, but no one really pays attention. More than the shots, it's the possibility that President Volodymyr Zelensky will be making concessions to Russia that has soldiers here worried. "Pulling us out would be like pissing on the graves of our boys," says Mykola, a 41-year-old private in the trenches near the city of Avdiivka in eastern Ukraine. "They gave up their lives so we could be here."

Zelensky and Russian President Vladimir Putin will be meeting in Paris today for their first face-to-face talks since the Ukrainian comedian-turned-president took office in May. The meeting, mediated by the French and German leaders, aims to revive efforts to resolve Kiev's five-year conflict with Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. On duty in his trench, surrounded by an apocalyptic landscape of workshops and homes torn apart by bullet and mortar fire, Mykola leaves no doubt about his opinion on the talks.

"This won't bring anything good," says Mykola, a thin and



AVDIIVKA, Ukraine: A Ukrainian serviceman is seen at a position on the frontline with Russia-backed separatists in an industrial zone near this town in eastern Ukraine on Nov 28, 2019. — AFP

bearded five-year veteran of the conflict who goes by the nom de guerre "Hacker". He says Ukraine "is in a weak position" going into the talks, and many here agree with him.

'Anxious' about talks

Many in Ukraine have warned Zelensky against giving ground in the talks, which Zelensky says will focus on agreeing a ceasefire and a prisoner exchange. After the withdrawal of some frontline forces in recent weeks, oppo-

nents fear Zelensky will be convinced to accept a general pullback along the more than 400-km frontline. Avdiivka is only six kilometres north of Donetsk - the capital of one of two breakaway republics in eastern Ukraine - and was the scene of fierce fighting in 2017.

Serving in an industrial zone on its outskirts, 24-year-old sergeant Faina says she feels "anxious" about today's talks. "Zelensky is a political novice, he could be easily influenced," she says, her long black braids and perfect manicure in stark contrast to her fatigues. "I'm afraid that we could lose territory retaken since the start of the war." Mykola says he has no trust in France and Germany to look out for Ukraine. "They will put pressure on Zelensky," because Russia is more important to their economies, he says. "Europe has always cared only about its well-being."

In Avdiivka itself - a town of about 20,000 that has been heavily damaged by the war - teacher Maryna Marchenko disagrees with the soldiers. Marchenko, 75, is well-known in Ukraine after Australian mural artist Guido van Helten painted her face on a nine-storey apartment building in Avdiivka. "Their brothers gave their lives, and what? They want to give more lives?" says the teacher of Ukrainian, whose husband was wounded during bombing and whose apartment was destroyed by mortar fire. "I want this to end like a bad dream... Everyone is so exhausted here," Marchenko says, calling for "mutual concessions" and convinced that Zelensky has "enough brains" not to make the wrong decisions. — AFP



PEARL HARBOR, Hawaii: Attendees salute the ashes of USS Arizona Survivor Lauren Bruner during his sunset interment ceremony on Saturday. — AFP

Pearl Harbor veteran interred on sunken ship

LOS ANGELES: With speeches and salutes, veterans and officials on Saturday commemorated the 78th anniversary of the 1941 sneak attack by Japan on Pearl Harbor, which brought a previously reluctant United States into World War II. A ceremony in Hawaii honoring survivors was attended by US Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and Washington's ambassador to South Korea Harry Harris. It was held within sight of the sunken USS Arizona, which was bombed in the opening moments of the attack that killed more than 2,400 Americans.

Later in the day, the remains of Lauren Bruner, who died in September aged 98 and was among the last sailors rescued from the Arizona after it exploded into flames, was interred in the wreckage. Bruner had expressed in years past his wish to be buried alongside fellow sailors who died on that fateful day. "This is the last surviving crewman of the USS Arizona being returned to his ship and his shipmates," Pearl Harbor National Memorial spokesman Jay Blount told AFP.

Bruner will be the 44th USS Arizona survivor interred on the ship. The remaining three living sailors who survived the attack will be laid to rest with their families. One of them, 98-year-old Lou Conter, attended the memorial alongside some 120 members of Bruner's family. At sunset, National Park Service and military divers took the urn containing Bruner's ashes and lowered it to his final resting place in the hull of the ship's wreckage.

'Glad to see them'

Bruner was among six men who had gathered at the back of the doomed battleship on December 7, 1941 as Japanese warplanes bombed the ship, when a sailor onboard a nearby vessel threw them a line. The 21-year-old, who was badly burned and had been shot twice in the leg, managed to grab the rope that pulled him and his comrades to safety. At the time, president Franklin D Roosevelt described the surprise attack on the US Navy base near Honolulu as "a date which will live in infamy."

A total of 1,177 sailors and Marines on board the USS Arizona were killed and more than 900 could not be recovered from the ship, according to the National Park Service. Bruner went on to fight after recovering from his injuries, taking part in battles in the Aleutian Islands and in the South Pacific. He retired from the Navy in 1947. He explained his decision to have his remains interred in the sunken ship at a 2014 news conference.

"Well, I studied it for a long time," Stars and Stripes quoted him as saying. "All my family and friends have been buried in various places, cemeteries. But it seems like after a while, nobody pays attention to them anymore after about five years. I hope that a lot of people will still be coming to the Arizona. I would be glad to see them." Saturday's ceremony took place three days after a disgruntled sailor at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard shot dead two people before killing himself. On Friday, another shooter - a Saudi military trainee - opened fire at a navy base in Florida, killing three people before he was gunned down. Officials said security was beefed up during the ceremony marking the Pearl Harbor attack anniversary. — AFP

Russia not an enemy? Macron's Moscow strategy faces first test

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron this week faces the first major test of his policy of directly engaging with Russia that has disturbed some European allies, as he hosts a summit seeking progress in ending the Ukraine conflict. Joined by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Macron will bring together Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky for their first face-to-face meeting at an afternoon summit at the Elysee Palace in Paris today.

The stakes are high: This will be the first such summit in three years and while diplomats caution against expecting a major breakthrough, a failure to agree concrete confidence-building steps would be seen as a major blow to hopes for peace and also Macron's personal prestige. Macron, who is pressing ahead with the summit despite crippling public transport strikes at home over contested pension reforms, has invested hugely in efforts to end the conflict in the east of Ukraine that has claimed 13,000 lives since 2014.

And he has also placed his bets on a risky strategy to deal directly with Putin, based on the assumption that one day Russia will understand it is in the national interest to see Europe as its long-term strategic partner. "It is an important test for Macron and for the Europeans," said Michel Duclos, a former ambassador and senior fellow at the Institut Montaigne, a French think tank. "He is already very isolated. And if he obtains nothing on Ukraine he is going to be even more isolated," he added.

But he added the Kremlin was "astute enough" to understand that the summit had to be declared a success and Putin was gladdened by Macron's overtures as he "sees in that a chance to divide the Europeans".

'Threat but also a partner'

Macron has adopted an increasingly assertive presence on the international stage in recent months, at a time when Germany is a less imposing diplomatic player as Merkel prepares to leave office. His thoughts were summed up in an explosive interview with The Economist last month, when he declared NATO was brain dead and said Europe needed to have a strategic dialogue with Russia.

Examining Russia's long-term strategic options under Putin, Macron said in the interview that Russia could not prosper in isolation, would not want to be a "vassal" of China and would eventually have to opt for "a partnership project with Europe". Macron notably described ex-KGB agent Putin as a "child of Saint Petersburg", the former Russian capital built by Peter the Great as a window onto the West.

His comments disturbed newer EU members that want a tough line against their former master Russia like the Baltic States and, in particular, Poland. And they added to a raft of growing tensions between France and Germany. But after a summit of NATO leaders in England earlier this month, Macron was unrepentant and categorical about his strategy of cultivating Russia. "Who is NATO's enemy? Russia is no longer an enemy. It remains a threat but is also a partner on some subjects. Our enemy today is international terrorism and in particular Islamist terrorism," he said.

A French diplomatic source argued Russia could not forever pin its strategy on being a "power of disturbance" with policies like its military intervention in Syria to keep President Bashar Al-Assad in power or its alliance with NATO member Turkey which has rattled the West. "If having a capacity to be a nuisance is your only lever it is not a lasting and viable strategy," said the source, adding there was also a "profound Russian concern about being locked into a rivalry with China".

Konstantin Kalachev, director of the Moscow-based Political Expert Group, warned "it would be naive to think Emmanuel Macron can exercise any kind of influence on Vladimir Putin with the aim of bringing Russia closer to the EU. — AFP

As numbers slide, Warren wrestles with Medicare

MARION, Iowa: With support for Elizabeth Warren's White House bid sliding since the release last month of a divisive plan to overhaul healthcare, the Democratic presidential contender has made an effort to refocus her campaign in early-voting Iowa on her signature anti-corruption message. Some supporters worry that shift could end up hurting the Massachusetts senator, however. Now that Warren has put her \$20.5-trillion Medicare For All plan on the table, they want the candidate to try harder to win over doubting voters.

"I don't think she should brush it under the rug," retired teacher and Warren backer Karla Thompson, 60, said at a town hall in Marion, where her wife told the candidate she was worried about the plan. "That's what will make or break her." For the moment, Warren appears to be treading carefully on the issue. While she said little about Medicare for All while campaigning in Iowa last week, her campaign there has been mobilizing outside experts to hold town halls and educational house parties to convert skeptics, making an aggressive outreach in the crucial state that will kick off the nominating contests.

In three Iowa town halls, Warren mentioned Medicare for All only after asked or fleetingly at the end of her stump speeches. Her campaign, however, planned to host at least eight healthcare-specific events in the state over the following week, along with general policy discussions and trainings for the Feb 3 caucuses. The outreach reflects how the controversy around her proposal has become a central issue for Warren - even though she never set out to have it define her White House bid.

For months, Warren has been running on a populist message of fighting Washington corruption and Wall Street greed. But her promise to expand government health insurance coverage without raising middle-class taxes is what has drawn the most attacks from rivals who say it is unrealistic and from some voters concerned it is too extreme. Warren's momentum has stalled in the month since she announced how she would finance and implement the system, a policy previously tied most closely to U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, who is also in the race.

A Nov. 6-13 CBS News/YouGov poll put Warren in fourth place in Iowa, trailing Sanders, former Vice President Joe Biden and Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend, Indiana. — Reuters

International

High stakes: Myanmar Lady gambles image in Rohingya genocide lawsuit

Suu Kyi seen as apologist for murderous military

YANGON: From democracy champion to defending Myanmar against genocide charges, the shock decision by civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi to face the UN's top court risks further damaging her image overseas and deepening the siege mentality at home. "We stand with you," proclaim billboards across Myanmar, sporting beaming portraits of the Nobel laureate as she prepares to face the International Court of Justice (ICJ) over the Rohingya crisis.

Suu Kyi's supporters are printing off T-shirts, organizing rallies and even signing up to VIP tours to The Hague to offer their backing. Political parties and even some rebel armed groups have also fallen over themselves to give their support, in a country where the Rohingya garner little sympathy and are widely regarded as illegal immigrants. Yet overseas, particularly in the West and in Muslim countries, Suu Kyi's reputation lies in tatters with multiple awards and even an honorary citizenship revoked. Critics say "The Lady", once lauded alongside Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela, has become an apologist for a murderous military intent on wiping out the country's Rohingya Muslims.

The spectacle of Suu Kyi standing up in court on behalf of the nation might play well at home but she risks suffering a fatal blow to what remains of her international reputation. "If she's only going to use the visit to demonstrate defiance and continue to defend the indefensible, then it only widens the impasse," Yangon-based analyst David Mathieson told AFP.

'Bad management'

On behalf of 57 Muslim countries, Gambia will call on the ICJ on Dec 10 to announce interim measures to prevent any further genocide by Myanmar. The tiny, mainly Muslim West African state alleges Myanmar breached the UN's Genocide Convention with its bloody crackdown against its Rohingya community two years ago. Some 740,000 Rohingya fled into sprawling camps in Bangladesh, bringing with them accounts of widespread murder, rape and arson - violence UN investigators branded as genocide.

Myanmar says the operations were justified to flush out Rohingya militants and insists abuse allegations are under investigation by its own committees. Rights groups say those panels have only whitewashed the atrocities. The UN team

also accused Suu Kyi and her government of complicity in the violence - an astounding fall from grace for the one-time rights icon who endured 15 years of house arrest under the former military junta.

She has consistently dismissed criticism of Myanmar's military, including the damning UN report, insisting the outside world simply does not understand the situation's complexities. A tacit acknowledgement at the World Economic Forum last year that "the situation could have been handled better" did little to quell criticism.

Politics or principle?

Observers are divided over why Suu Kyi is now throwing herself into the spotlight to defend the military. Some say shielding the armed forces will bring concessions over reforms to the military-drafted constitution. "There will be more negotiation and give-and-take between the government and the military," predicted political analyst Maung Maung Soe.

Others suggest it is a political ploy ahead of elections next year, a vote-winner for Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD). "The majority of political parties suspect (the NLD) will benefit at the election," Khin Yi from the opposition, military-affiliated USDP party told AFP. Even in the face of some voter disillusionment, a landslide NLD victory is widely expected - arguably rendering any gamble unnecessary.

Myanmar historian and writer Thant Myint U dismissed notions the move was simply political, saying Suu Kyi believes no genocide was carried out - the position taken by most of the country. "I think she genuinely feels a great anger at what she sees as an unfair response from the outside world. I think she genuinely wants to have literally her day in court and make this argument," he said at an event in Bangkok. "I think she genuinely believes that there can be no one better to represent the country," he added.

Only a trio of rebel armed groups - the MNDA, TNLA and AA, themselves locked in battle with the military - have dared voice support within Myanmar for the genocide charges. Yet even they could not bring themselves to use the loaded word "Rohingya", referring to the persecuted minori-



NAYPYIDAW, Myanmar: Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi leaves from Naypyidaw International Airport yesterday ahead of her appearance at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. —AFP

ty in their statement with the pejorative term "Bengali", which suggests they are from Bangladesh.

Aye Lwin from Yangon's Islamic Centre of Myanmar said he thought Suu Kyi was doing the right thing by personally assuming responsibility and going to The Hague, where the full breadth of atrocities committed will be laid bare. "It's not about winning or losing. It's about revealing the truth and correcting an injustice." —AFP

30,000 Myanmar monks attend mass alms-giving

MANDALAY, Myanmar: Thirty-thousand monks assembled in the early morning chill in Myanmar yesterday for a spectacular alms-giving event, partly organized by a controversial mega-temple under scrutiny across the border in Thailand. With many barefoot, Buddhist monks from Myanmar and Thailand and senior religious officials from a dozen countries collected alms next to an airport in the central city of Mandalay, that is also a heartland of the faith.

As the sun rose over the ancient town, a sea of saffron and maroon-robed monks assembled in an area the size of a football field. They meditated, prayed and collected alms in an event meant to tighten the relationship of "monks and Buddhists between (the) two countries" and to "strengthen the monkhood" in the region, according to a statement. "I hope we can continue to hold bigger events in the coming years," said U

Thu Nanda, a 24-year-old Burmese monk.

The event was the third and largest of its kind since 2015 and comes as one of the organizers, the Thailand-based Dhammakaya foundation, attempts to bounce back from an embezzlement scandal more than two years ago. The Dhammakaya temple's massive compound in northern Bangkok was under siege for two weeks in early 2017 as thousands of officers try to arrest the sect's spiritual leader.

Phra Dhammachayo was accused of colluding in a \$33 million embezzlement scheme and was believed to be hiding somewhere on the temple's sprawling 1,000 acre grounds, an area twice the size of Monaco. Critics said the abbot distorted traditional Buddhist morality by encouraging materialism and spiritual rewards for donations. But devotees point to the temple's accessible meditation methods to explain its popularity. Experts also speculated it was under fire because of purported ties to the then-junta's political foes. The abbot was never found but the temple is still operational.

Meanwhile, its monks have been busy. This year they also organized two large



MANDALAY: A handout photo taken yesterday shows monks lining up for alms during an alms-giving ceremony at Chanmyathazi Airport. —AFP

alms-giving events in Thailand in September and October attended by 10,000 monks to solicit donations for flood victims. But the controversy was not a topic of discussion at the event in

Mandalay, where many came to show support as co-religionists. "Donating things to many monks in one place makes me feel the delight of being Buddhist," said Khant Zaw Aung, a Burmese businessman. —AFP

Body of slain doctor arrives in Japan after Afghan shooting

NARITA, Japan: The body of Tetsu Nakamura, a beloved Japanese doctor who was shot to death in Afghanistan after decades of his earnest support for the country, was brought back to Japan yesterday. A plane carrying his body landed at Narita airport near Tokyo with his wife and eldest daughter, who visited Kabul after Wednesday's murder. Vice foreign minister Keisuke Suzuki and other attendants, including his wife, offered a silent prayer at the airport after placing bouquets on his casket wrapped by a

white sheet.

His body will be transferred to the western Japanese city of Fukuoka, his hometown, today, local media said. The 73-year-old was killed in Jalalabad, the main city in the eastern province of Nangarhar where he had worked since the 1980s. He was killed along with five Afghan guards and colleagues in an attack no-one has yet claimed, and which the Taliban condemned.

Even in a country inured to brutal violence and daily bloodshed, the killing of Nakamura, who transformed barren expanses of eastern Afghanistan and spent decades caring for the sick, came as a horrifying shock to many Afghans. Ahead of his body's departure from Kabul, Afghan officials, led by President Ashraf Ghani, attended a ceremony at an airport to mourn for the death of Nakamura, who became an honorary citizen of his adopted home. —AFP



NARITA: Government officials and relatives of late Japanese physician Tetsu Nakamura offer bouquets in front of his coffin upon arrival from Afghanistan at Narita Airport yesterday. —AFP

Son of hijack victim demands return of father

PAJU, South Korea: The son of a hijacking victim and his supporters yesterday once more demanded North Korea return his father, five decades after Pyongyang diverted a plane carrying 50 South Koreans on board. Hwang Won was on a domestic Korean Air flight from Gangneung to Seoul's Gimpo airport on Dec 11, 1969, only for the aircraft to be hijacked by a North Korean spy 10 minutes after takeoff and made to land in Pyongyang.

Two months later, 39 passengers were repatriated, but the North never returned 11 people including Hwang - whose son, who was two at the time of the hijacking, has continued to fight for his release. Returning passengers said Hwang Won had been dragged away after

resisting indoctrination efforts and questioning North Korea's ideology.

Hwang In-cheol, now in his 50s, was joined Sunday by dozens of supporters at Imjingak, just south of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) dividing the two Koreas, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the hijacking next Wednesday. "World leaders won't do anything about this until enough of us speak up," Hwang said in a petition calling for the release of his father. "North Korea is the worst country in the world, and will remain so until humanity forces it to change," he said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has engaged in a flurry of diplomacy since last year, including summits with US President Donald Trump and the South's President Moon Jae-in, but activists say the issue of human rights has largely been off the table. With temperatures dipping below zero in the bitter weather, activists waved posters reading, "We stand with Hwang In-cheol", and flew paper airplanes with messages to his father that said: "See you this Christmas!" —AFP



PAJU, South Korea: Hwang In-cheol stands before a fence covered in 'peace ribbons' during an event calling for the release of his father by North Korea at the Imjingak peace park near the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas yesterday. —AFP

The fight for justice over Myanmar's Rohingya 'genocide'

YANGON: Myanmar is facing a barrage of legal challenges in an attempt to hold it accountable over the alleged genocide against its Rohingya Muslim population. West African nation Gambia last month launched a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the UN's top court in The Hague, while rights groups have filed a separate lawsuit in Argentina. The International Criminal Court (ICC) also approved an investigation into the 2017 military crackdown that forced some 740,000 Rohingya to flee into Bangladesh.

UN investigators last year branded the bloody expulsion a genocide, and called for the prosecution of top generals - including the powerful army chief. They also accused civilian leader and one-time democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi and her government of complicity in the atrocities. Here are some of the routes down the difficult path to justice:

The Gambian gambit

The UN's top court, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), is based in The Hague and was set up after World War II to rule on disagreements between member states. It normally deals with issues of international law such as border disputes, but can also rule on alleged breaches of UN conventions. Gambia, a tiny, mainly-Muslim state, filed a complaint on behalf of the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) accusing Myanmar of breaching the 1948 UN Genocide Convention.

Leading the charge is Gambian justice minister Abubacarr Tambadou, a former genocide prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. The first hearings will be on Dec 10-12, when the court is expected to order interim measures to prevent any further genocide or destruction of evidence. In a shock move, Myanmar civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi announced she will personally travel to the court to lead the defence team. The case will likely take years. A ruling against Myanmar could mean an order to remedy the genocide and to offer reparations to the Rohingya. But it would be largely symbolic and difficult to enforce.

Generals in the dock?

The International Criminal Court (ICC), also in the Hague, investigates war crimes but is focused on individual, not state, responsibility. Myanmar has not signed up to the ICC, but last year the court launched preliminary investigations on the basis that Bangladesh - where the Rohingya are refugees - is a member. On Nov 14 judges backed a request for a full probe into allegations of crimes against humanity over the crackdown. This could ultimately lead to arrest warrants being issued for Myanmar's generals. But the process is lengthy, requiring participation from Bangladesh and - somewhat implausibly - Myanmar to hand over suspects. Another option could be for the ICC to create an ad hoc or mixed tribunal similar to ones created for Rwanda, Yugoslavia, Lebanon and Cambodia. But again this would, in theory, require cooperation from Myanmar authorities.

The Argentina option

On Nov 13, a case was filed by rights groups in Argentina against members of the Myanmar military and, notably, civilian leader Suu Kyi. The activists say Suu Kyi and her government are complicit in atrocities for failing to condemn the army's actions and helping cover them up. On board - and a reason for the faraway location - is heavyweight Argentine human rights lawyer Tomas Ojea, who was previously UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar.

Under a legal principle called "universal jurisdiction", the premise is that some crimes are so horrific they are not specific to one nation and can be brought to trial anywhere. Dozens of such cases are under way around the world, many in relation to alleged atrocities in Syria with several suspected war criminals already charged and arrested.

How is Myanmar responding?

Myanmar has long denied accusations it committed ethnic cleansing or genocide. Parties from across the political spectrum, many ethnic groups and vast swathes of the population are rallying behind Suu Kyi as she heads to The Hague to defend the nation at the ICJ. Myanmar insists its own investigative committees are adequate to look into alleged atrocities - even though critics dismiss the panels as toothless and biased. The country refuses to recognize the authority of the ICC, reiterating that the investigation is "not in accordance with international law". —AFP

Analysis

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YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief

ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
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CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
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COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.

Email: info@kuwaittimes.com

Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Change, challenges in Abiy's Ethiopia

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is accepting the Nobel Peace Prize this week just as his country heads into what could be the most consequential year of its fraught political transition. The 43-year-old reformer will be under enormous pressure to live up to the "Abiymania" hype that has faded somewhat since he took office last year. General elections scheduled for May would take place amid economic uncertainty and rising ethnic violence. The country's success or failure in holding a peaceful, credible vote will have major implications for the Horn of Africa region.

Where is Ethiopia coming from?

It has been a turbulent few years. In late 2015 a plan to expand the administrative boundaries of the capital, Addis Ababa, triggered large-scale protests in the surrounding Oromia region. The unrest snowballed into a broader anti-government movement that prompted a violent, often brutal response from state security forces. Less than a year after the protests kicked off, then-prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn declared a state of emergency. It was not enough to restore order, however, and Hailemariam abruptly resigned in Feb 2018.

Ethiopia's ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition appointed Abiy as Hailemariam's replacement, charging him with overseeing a transition from authoritarian to democratic rule. The beleaguered coalition was betting that the former spy boss - and the country's first leader from the Oromo ethnic group, Ethiopia's largest - could ensure its continued hold on power.

Why are upcoming elections so crucial?

The May 2020 elections will likely make or break Ethiopia's transition. The country has not seen a competitive vote since 2005, which brought gains for the opposition. The EPRDF has since reasserted control and currently holds all 547 parliamentary seats. But Abiy's reforms, including lifting bans on political parties and freeing political prisoners, have set the stage for a contested campaign. Abiy has recently pushed forward with transforming the EPRDF from a coalition into a single party, dubbed the Ethiopian Prosperity Party.

The controversial move, approved last month, has been rejected by the formerly dominant Tigrayan People's Liberation Front and criticized by Defense Minister Lemma Megersa, a key Abiy ally. Analysts say Abiy hopes the merger will make EPRDF members more competitive at the ballot box as well as curtail rising ethno-nationalism. But it's unclear whether Abiy can effectively manage the vote and - if he gets a five-year term - the birth of a more pluralistic political era. "How do you loosen control without losing control? That's the big question. I don't think there's a recipe for how to do that," said Tobias Hagmann, an Ethiopia expert at Roskilde University in Denmark.

Can Abiy curb ethnic violence?

Ethnic violence has been a persistent problem under Abiy, and some analysts say the situation is so bad that holding elections in May could prove impossible. Abiy's loosening of the reins has allowed longstanding tensions between ethnic groups to boil over, and Ethiopia recorded more displaced people than any other country in 2018. The latest outbreak occurred in October after prominent Oromo activist Jawar Mohammed accused the government of trying to orchestrate an attack against him.

Anti-government protests devolved into ethnic clashes across Oromia that left 86 people dead. Witnesses and victims said young Oromo nationalists targeted non-Oromos and, in some cases, fellow Oromos who opted not to participate in the violence. Amnesty International warned that the episode could be "a premonition for mass atrocities".

What will it take to revive the economy?

Abiy clearly believes that breathing new life into Ethiopia's economy is crucial for his electoral prospects. While Ethiopia is one of Africa's fastest-growing economies, high GDP rates have been largely fuelled by state spending, and officials now want to stimulate private sector growth. Abiy unveiled a "Homegrown Economic Reform" plan earlier this year, describing it as "our bridge to prosperity". The plan is intended to address problems like high inflation, foreign exchange shortages and current account deficits. A major test will come when officials open the telecoms sector to foreign competition, a move expected next year.

What does Ethiopia's stability mean for the region?

Outside Ethiopia, Abiy has played a leading role in mediating Sudan's political crisis and has tried to revive South Sudan's moribund peace process. And then there's his signature achievement to date: The outreach to Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki that led to the signing of a peace deal last year. The Eritrea deal is a main reason Abiy won the Nobel, but it has been weakened by a lack of tangible progress on critical issues like border demarcation. As elections approach, Abiy may be forced to pay less attention to foreign policy, including Eritrea. "Eritrea is not a priority for Ethiopia at this time," Hagmann said. "Ethiopia has other concerns which have to do with domestic politics that are much more pressing." — AFP

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This undated aerial handout photograph shows trucks and digger loaders spreading 10 million cubic metres of sand to reinforce the Houtribdijk near Enkhuizen, northern Netherlands, a major dike which is being shored up by more than 666,000 truckloads of sand to protect the low-lying country against rising water levels. — AFP

Dutch find unlikely ally against water

The Netherlands is deploying an unlikely ally as climate change intensifies the low-lying country's age-old fight against floods: more than 666,000 truckloads of sand to shore up a crucial dike. While building on sand has traditionally been a byword for wobbly foundations, the Dutch say they have found a new method to turn the substance into a 50-year wall against the water. The Dutch are also planning to export the idea of using sand to prevent floods elsewhere in the world, as global warming and rising waters threaten more countries.

The project comes as UN climate talks this fortnight in Madrid heard that concentrations of planet-warming CO2 in the atmosphere have reached levels not seen in three to five million years, leading to rising sea levels. The dike in question, called Houtribdijk, needed urgent reinforcement after nearly half a century serving as one of the Netherlands' most important flood defenses.

"We had a dilemma: there are no rocks in the Netherlands. This means having to import them at great cost from countries like Norway," said Stefan Aarninkhof, hydraulics professor at Delft University of Technology. "Or we had to find another solution and use material that was close at hand. That material was sand."

'Finger in a dike'

Engineers said the Houtribdijk project could be compared to the famous story of the Dutch boy who stuck his finger in a dike to prevent a flood. The fictitious character Hans Brinker, created by American writer Mary Mapes Dodge in 1865, supposedly saved a city by plugging a hole in the barrier with his digit. "But this time we use sand," one engineer laughed. The 25-km dike is designed to stop waves pushing across the IJsselmeer, a huge inland bay that has been closed off from the North Sea, into the Markermeer, another inland lake.

Work on the dike started in 1963 as part of the Netherlands' flood defense system following a catastrophic storm surge in 1953, when flood waters killed some 1,800 people. But scientists in recent years noted the 68-metre-wide dyke - which has a road on top - no longer met safety standards and had to be reinforced. The prospect of a dam breach is inconceivable in a country where at least one third of the land lies below sea level.

'Anywhere in the world'

A massive civil engineering project began in 2017

which uses sand pumped from underneath a thick layer of mud on the bottom of the Markermeer. By mid-2020 more than 10 million cubic metres of sand will have been dumped against the dyke. After that nature is expected to take care of the rest, with waves and currents dispersing the sand to eventually settle as a barrier against storm surges, the Dutch government's water management agency said.

The mud pumped up to reach the sand will be used to create a new nature reserve the size of 330 football fields. The agency said in a statement that "sandy reinforcement" of such a dike "is a worldwide first". "After the reinforcement the levee will be able to withstand a severe storm that, on average occurs every 10,000 years."

The business-minded Dutch are meanwhile planning to sell the idea abroad as the effects of climate change bite. "We've learnt some generic rules in this project about how to work in a lake system building with nature," said Fokko van der Groot, spokesman for EcoShape, the consortium behind the project. "The building with nature approach... can be applied anywhere in the world where protection against water is an issue." — AFP

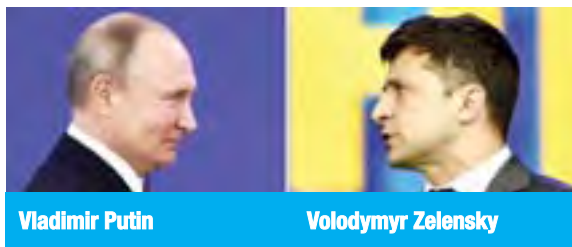
Putin vs Zelensky: Two very different presidents face off

When Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky meet today it will be an encounter between two very different presidents - one an establishment strongman with years of experience, the other a neophyte rebel learning the ropes. The Russian and Ukrainian presidents will be holding their first face-to-face talks in Paris at a summit with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

For Putin, it will be a chance to take further steps to reduce Russia's isolation over its 2014 annexation of Crimea and backing for eastern Ukrainian separatists. For Zelensky, the stakes are much higher: a potential end to a conflict that has ravaged much of his country, left more than 13,000 people dead and forced more than a million from their homes. For both men it also will be a chance to size up their opponent in what is likely to be a long contest over the future of Ukraine.

Tough guy vs comedian

After nearly 20 years in power, Putin brings to the ring a wealth of experience on the global stage. The 67-year-old former KGB agent has overseen Russia's rise to resurgent world power, with growing influence from the Middle East to Latin America. He has cracked down on nearly all political opposition, while fostering a tough-guy image with shirtless photos and defiance of Western criticism.



Vladimir Putin

Volodymyr Zelensky

A comedian and actor, Zelensky rode a wave of dis-content to become Ukraine's leader in May with no previous political experience - other than playing the president on television. Casual and easy-going, the 41-year-old walked from his home in Kiev to his inauguration and regularly appears without a tie. He has met a number of friendly leaders in recent months but the talks with Putin will be his first foray into world-scale diplomacy.

Anatoliy Oktyasyuk, a political analyst with Democracy House in Kiev, said the two men's backgrounds could hardly be more different. "Putin is a global political heavyweight, with extensive experience in negotiations with leaders of big states," Oktyasyuk said. "Zelensky is an actor and comedian."

Veteran vs newcomer

Putin goes into the talks with the full weight of the Russian state behind him, his power undisputed and nearly unchecked. Russia's economy has suffered under sanctions imposed by the West but Putin remains the head of a global diplomatic power and major energy exporter, and commander of one of the world's largest militaries. Zelensky is only months into his term, with a parliament that is loyal but inexperienced and nationalist critics ready to jump on any concession to Moscow.

His country is now the poorest in Europe, its economy

Brexit accelerant

The number of alleged crimes reported by MPs more than doubled from 151 in 2017 to 342 last year, senior police chief Neil Basu told a parliamentary committee in May. The first four months of 2019 saw a 90 percent year-on-year increase to 152 - a trend on course to lead to "certainly over 450 crimes this year", he said. Women and ethnic minorities are disproportionately targeted in particular, said Britain's top police officer Cressida Dick. The toxic atmosphere is "unprecedented", she said, citing "polarized opinions" changing the nature of protest activity following the 2016 Brexit referendum.

"The abuse that we've had has been Brexit-related - all of it," said Graham, sheltering under an umbrella in his party's yellow and black colors. He is campaigning on unfavorable territory as the Braintree constituency voted heavily in favor of Britain's departure from the European Union. Conservative Party co-chairman James Cleverly is the favorite to retain his seat, winning last time with 63 percent of the vote.

Jo Cox fear

The fear for candidates' safety is a reminder of the terrifying scenes in 2016 when pro-EU Labour MP Jo Cox was murdered by a gun- and knife-wielding neo-Nazi sympathizer. In November, a man was jailed for 12 months for sending a letter to Change UK MP Anna Soubry reading: "Cox was first, you are next". Several MPs, including two who served in Prime Minister Boris Johnson's cabinet, Amber Rudd and Nicky Morgan, are not standing again, citing threats and harassment.

As for the source of the threats, "many of them are from

battered by five years of conflict and reliant on foreign aid. Both men have also been sucked into US politics and the impeachment process - Putin as the alleged meddler-in-chief in the 2016 election and Zelensky as the supposed target of pressure from President Donald Trump. But Zelensky has had more trouble weathering the attention and in recent weeks complained of being "tired" of the scandal.

"Zelensky will be very tense" going into the talks with Putin, said Arkady Dubnov, a Moscow-based political commentator. "He is not the master of this situation, so he may be aggressive... and not give in where a more experienced politician would concede."

Favorite vs underdog

Putin may have the advantage in experience and clout, but Zelensky brings an underdog's flair for the dramatic. Since coming to power promising to end the east Ukraine conflict, he has managed several surprising moves, including a historic exchange of prisoners and the withdrawal of some frontline forces. Putin last month hailed "positive steps" in Ukraine and even described Zelensky as a "likeable" leader.

Zelensky meanwhile has kept observers guessing. He told AFP at a forum in Kiev in early September that talks with Russia were essential and he had a "feeling" Putin was looking to improve ties. A few weeks later, he held up a bullet in his speech at the UN General Assembly in New York and railed against "Russian aggression".

Mark Galeotti, an associate fellow with RUSI in London, said Zelensky was the unknown going into the talks. "We know what we get with Putin," said Galeotti, the author of "We Need to Talk About Putin", a book on how the West often misinterprets the Russian leader. "With Zelensky, we have seen multiple Zelenskys.... And we're not sure which one we're going to get." — AFP

the more right-wing, very Brexit side who see some politicians as being traitors to that", said analyst Alexandra Kellert, from the global risk consultancy Control Risks. "You might start by writing why you disagree with them on Twitter or Facebook. And then that might develop into stronger feelings," she added.

'Toxic' social media

Lib Dem candidate Rhian O'Connor does not feel particularly concerned when she goes doorknocking after dark in Greenwich, a "Remain"-backing area of southeast London. Nonetheless, she does not go out alone, and never accepts invitations to step indoors despite the wintry cold. "It's definitely more aggressive" than before, she said. Frustrated "Brexiters" see her as someone "trying to block what they see is the biggest democratic project for decades", she said. On the doorstep, people are "polite to you" but once indoors they could be on Twitter "calling you all kinds of names", she said, adding that social media had become "a lot more toxic in this environment".

Graham said his campaign manager runs his Facebook page. "She gets the full brunt of the abuse and threats," he said, adding: "Abusive messages and comments coming at such a rate that she can't delete them fast enough." Official security guidance to candidates includes taking active steps on personal safety, keeping records of abuse, limiting online personal information and reporting intimidation or abuse to internet service providers. However, the hostile atmosphere is not enough to discourage all those candidates standing for Britain's 650 seats in parliament. "Democracy doesn't work if everyone stays at home," said Hobhouse. — AFP

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2019

12 China's November exports fall; import growth hints of recovering demand**13** New travel misery in France; unions warn of fresh turmoil**14** Tariff deadline keeps focus on trade as 2019 nears end

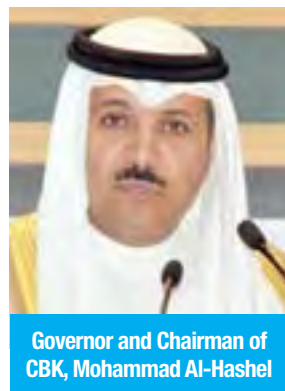
Shura Sharia Consultancy holds 8th Shura Fiqh Conference



By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Shura Sharia Consultancy organized the 8th Shura Fiqh Conference yesterday under the patronage and attendance of Governor and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Mohammad Al-Hashel. During his opening speech, Shaikh Abdul Sattar Ali Al-Qattan, General Manager of Sharia Shura Consultancy, said Shura hopes the Fiqh Shura Conference results in easy and flexible Islamic products that accommodate the diversity of customer conditions and the need of markets, and achieve scientific value in the field of modern Islamic finance.

Qattan pointed out that the conference has issued seven books that include more than 80 scientific papers in the most accurate and complex issues facing Islamic banking, and more than 20 fiqh (Islamic legal rulings) decisions were issued, some of which



Governor and Chairman of CBK, Mohammad Al-Hashel



Shaikh Abdul Sattar Ali Al-Qattan

were adopted by fiqh and legal councils. He presented a proposal to establish a platform to innovate and develop Islamic financial products, which would contribute to Islamic financial institutions with technical

participation from the Central Bank.

Hashel spoke about the necessity of the Islamic financial industry to conclude its first stage of development and start its launch to the world, which calls for it to follow three paths: Filling gaps, building on principles, and innovation and creativity. He pointed to the most important challenges and difficulties facing the Islamic financial industry, in addition to some observations that were monitored in this sector, stressing the importance of strengthening the independence and professionalism of sharia supervision.

Hashel added that Islamic finance can provide a quarter of the jobs globally within a decade and a half, considering that simulating traditional products is a wrong approach that limits the role of Islamic finance and limits its ability to innovate. With regard to the paths that Islamic finance must follow, he said the first path is to fill the gaps on the lack of scholars, weak governance and concentration of products,

reiterating that the major gap is the scarcity of scholars with both fiqh and banking and financial capabilities.

Hashel pointed out that concerning the path of innovation and creativity, the world is witnessing today the era of the fourth industrial revolution, which is an opportunity for institutions to realize the magnitude of transformations and improve dealing with them. At the same time, this is an existential threat to rigid institutions with narrow horizons.

He pointed to the role of the Central Bank and its contributions in supporting Islamic finance locally and globally, as Islamic banks make up half of the sector in number, affirming CBK's keenness to build capabilities of employees and qualify them to work in Islamic finance. CBK has communicated with universities to urge them to develop curricula to graduate those who are qualified to work in this industry and create a major in the field of sharia audit.

Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait-Egypt Net operating profit rises 32 percent

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (ABK-Egypt), one of Egypt's fastest growing banks, maintained its positive momentum in the first nine months of 2019, with net operating profit advancing 32% from the same period a year earlier to reach EGP 712 million. Net interest income climbed 35% to EGP 1.02 billion, while customer deposits grew 18% to reach EGP 28.41 billion.

Total assets also increased 18% in the period, exceeding EGP 33 billion, while the bank's gross loan portfolio grew 21% to over EGP 19 billion. Ali Ibrahim Marafi, Chairman of ABK Egypt said: "ABK-Egypt continues to go from strength to strength, as we expand our footprint in the Egyptian market, and deliver on our promise of providing a 'Simpler Banking' experience to our customers. Our capital

base remains robust, and we continue to bring innovative offerings to the market, so we are well positioned to continue this upward momentum."

Khaled El Salawy, CEO & Managing Director said: "These positive results are a reflection of the effort and commitment of ABK-Egypt team to deliver superior experiences to our customers, and the strength and agility of our leadership team to drive our business strategy. We will continue our focus on training and empowering our human capital to help drive further growth while ensuring service excellence. Moving forward, we will introduce more innovative digital offerings that meet our customers' ever-evolving needs."

ABK-Egypt was recently named "Most Innovative Bank - Egypt" by The European magazine in its

Ali Marafi
Chairman of ABK-EgyptKhaled El Salawy
CEO & MD of ABK-Egypt

Global Business Awards, which recognize excellence in the global banking and finance community. It was also recognized as "Fastest Growing Bank in Egypt" by International Finance Magazine, reflecting the Bank's strong performance since entering the Egyptian market.

Saudi Aramco shares to start trading Dec 11

RIYADH: Saudi Aramco shares will start trading domestically next Wednesday, the Riyadh stock exchange said, after the energy giant raised \$25.6 billion in the world's biggest IPO. Aramco on Thursday priced its initial public offering at 32 riyals (\$8.53) per share, the high end of the target range, surpassing the \$25 billion raised by Chinese retail giant Alibaba in its 2014 Wall Street debut.

"The Saudi Stock Exchange (Tadawul) announces that the listing and trading of the Saudi Arabian Oil Company (Saudi Aramco) will start on Wednesday," the bourse said in a statement Friday. Aramco shares will trade within a fluctuation limit of plus or minus 10 percent, the statement added. Aramco said the sale of 1.5 percent of the firm, the bedrock of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's ambitious strategy to overhaul the oil-reliant economy, was oversubscribed nearly 4.7 times.

Aramco will sell three billion shares, and the company said Friday it could exercise a "greenshoe" option, selling additional shares to bring the total raised up to \$29.4 billion. The market launch puts the oil behemoth's value at \$1.7 trillion, far ahead of other firms in the trillion-dollar club, including Apple and Microsoft. But the scaled-down IPO is still a far cry from the blockbuster originally planned by Prince Mohammed.

The much-delayed stock sale, first announced in 2016, was initially expected to raise as much as \$100 billion from the sale of up to five percent of the company. Its plans to raise additional funds by listing on a major international market are also on hold. The IPO is a crucial part of Prince Mohammed's plan to wean the economy away from oil by pumping funds into megaprojects and non-energy industries such as tourism and entertainment. But sceptics say the IPO's proceeds would barely cover the kingdom's budget deficit for a year.

The IPO was heavily focused on Saudi and other Gulf traders. International investors have remained sceptical about the secretive company's targeted valuation, even though it fell short of Prince Mohammed's desired figure of \$2 trillion. The IPO also comes with oil prices under pressure due to a sluggish global economy hit by the US-China trade war and record output by non-OPEC crude exporters. The OPEC+ group, including both cartel members and other major exporters, reached a deal Friday to cut production by 500,000 barrels per day in a bid to prop up prices. — AFP

Iran outlines budget to resist US sanctions as oil exports plunge

DUBAI: Iran's president presented a draft state budget of about \$39 billion to parliament yesterday, saying it was designed to resist US sanctions by limiting dependence on oil exports. Officials have not given figures for the oil price and export volumes used in the calculations, although the IMF has indicated Iran would need oil prices to be triple current levels to balance its budget as its crude exports have plunged.

The United States reimposed sanctions with the aim of driving down Iranian crude sales, the Islamic Republic's main source of revenues, after Washington withdrew last year from a nuclear pact between world powers and Iran. "This is a budget to resist sanctions ... with the least possible dependence on oil," Iranian President Hassan Rouhani told parliament, according to state television.

"This budget announces to the world that despite sanctions we can manage the country," he said. He gave the value of the nominally balanced draft budget at 4,845 trillion rials,

equivalent to \$38.8 billion at the free market exchange rate, for the Iranian year starting on March 20. The new budget is 10% bigger than this financial year in local currency terms although its dollar value is lower due to annual inflation that is running at about 35%.

The budget forecasts revenues for oil, gas and condensates falling 40%, leaving a gap it plans to plug by using state bonds and selling state properties. Preliminary reports by local news agencies said the budget appeared to be based on oil sales of 500,000 to 1 million barrels per day (bpd). Under US sanctions, analysts estimate Iran's oil exports have tumbled to about 400,000 million bpd or even lower, from more than 2.5 million bpd.

The International Monetary Fund has said Iran would need an oil price of \$194.6 a barrel to balance its budget in 2020/2021 and forecast a fiscal deficit of 4.5% of gross domestic product in 2019/2020 and 5.1% in 2020/2021. Benchmark Brent oil closed at \$64.38 on Friday. Analysts



TEHRAN: Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani (left) receives from President Hassan Rouhani the new budget for the financial year starting late March 2020 in Tehran yesterday. Rouhani described it as a 'budget of resistance' against crippling sanctions imposed by arch-enemy the United States. — AFP

have said Iran had probably been forced to sell its crude at a discount to normal levels, as it seeks to entice buyers wary of violating US sanctions.

Although U.S. sanctions on Iran's oil industry have slashed the OPEC member's crude exports by more than 80%, oil product sales remain strong, generating nearly \$500 million a month, shipping data and Reuters calculations showed in September. Unlike Iranian crude, which has distinct characteristics that mean its origin can be traced, the source of refined and other oil products are more difficult to identify. — Reuters

China’s November exports fall; import growth hints of recovering demand

US trade dispute heightens the risks of global recession

BEIJING: China's exports in November shrank for the fourth consecutive month, underscoring persistent pressures on manufacturers from the Sino-US war but growth in imports may be a sign that Beijing's stimulus steps are helping to stoke demand. The 17-month long trade dispute has heightened the risks of a global recession and fuelled speculation that China's policymakers could unleash more stimulus as growth in the world's second-largest economy cooled to nearly 30-year lows.

Overseas shipments fell 1.1% from a year earlier last month, customs data showed yesterday, compared with a 1.0% expansion tipped by a Reuters poll of analysts and a 0.9% drop in October. Imports unexpectedly rose 0.3% from a year earlier, marking the first year-on-year growth since April and compared with a 1.8%

decline forecast by economists.

The better-than-expected import data may point to firming domestic demand after factory activity showed surprising signs of improvement recently, although analysts have noted the recovery could be difficult to sustain amid trade risks. China's trade surplus for November stood at \$38.73 billion, compared with an expected \$46.30 billion surplus in the poll and a \$42.81 billion surplus recorded in October.

Trade tensions

Beijing and Washington are negotiating a first phase trade deal aimed at de-escalating a trade dispute but they continue to wrangle over key details. A US House bill targeting China's camps for ethnic Muslim minori-

ties in Xinjiang and other bills supporting anti-government protesters in Hong Kong have also angered Beijing, further clouding prospects for a deal.

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday trade talks with China are "moving right along," striking an upbeat tone even as Chinese officials held fast to their line that existing tariffs must come off as part of an interim deal. Earlier in the week, though, Trump rattled global markets when he said a deal might have to wait until after the 2020 election.

Top White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said on Friday that a Dec 15 deadline is still in place to impose a new round of US tariffs on some \$156 billion of China's remaining exports to the United States, but the president likes where trade talks with China are

going, he added. One Chinese official told Reuters that China will implement its own tariffs as a countermeasure if the Dec. 15 tariffs go into place, which may dash any chance of a near-term trade deal.

Trump has demanded that China commit to specific minimum purchases of US agricultural products, among other concessions on intellectual property rights, currency and access to China's financial services markets. China's trade surplus with the United States for November stood at \$24.60 billion, according to Reuters calculations based on customs data, easing from the previous month's surplus of \$26.45 billion. China confirmed on Friday that it will waive import tariffs for some soybeans and pork shipments from the United States. —Reuters

Al-Tijari announces Al Najma and ‘Salary & Cash on Top’ winners

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly draws on Al Najma Account and the draw on the "Salary and Cash on Top" campaign. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Abdulaziz Ashkanani. The results of the draw were as follows: (1) Al Najma weekly account – the prize of 5,000/- Kuwaiti Dinars and was for the share of Mohammad Hussain Dashti. (2) The "Salary & Cash on Top campaign" prize of 1,000/- Kuwaiti Dinars and was for the share of Mohammad Raheef Al-Subaiei.

The Bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000/-, monthly prize of KD 20,000/- and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize – linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes.

As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

As regarding "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees as well as the retirees and which is valid until 31 December 2019 and the mechanism of joining this campaign for availing its benefits, the Bank explained that Kuwaiti employees with a salary of KD 500 & above whether newly recruited or in service can transfer their salary to the Bank and avail the benefits of this campaign by getting instant cash gift of KD 250 or an interest free loan 5 times the salary up to KD 10,000, add to this they will automatically enter the weekly draw on KD 1,000.

As for the expatriate customers categorized under Premier Banking Account with a salary KD of 1,700 and above, they will get instant cash gift. The retirees with pension KD 1,000 & above will also get an instant cash gift of KD 150 when transferring their pension to the Bank and automatically enter the weekly draw on a prize of KD 1,000 and avail the benefits of this campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees working in private & public sector as well as the retirees.

Further, the campaign provides customers with the opportunity to get additional benefits and take advantage of the advanced & unrivalled services & products the Bank provides to its customers to meet their needs and expectations.

Customers can obtain further information on Al-Najma Account by either calling the Service Center or by visiting the Bank's website www.CBK.com and they can also visit their nearest CBK branch where the Bank staff will be ready to serve them and respond to their queries. Furthermore all details & information related to the latest offers & services launched by the Bank is also available on the Bank's social sites.

EQUATE continues to sponsor GPCA forum

KUWAIT: EQUATE Group, a global producer of petrochemicals and the world's second largest producer of Ethylene Glycol, continues to sponsor the Annual Forum of the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA) in its 14th year, supporting discussions in this year's edition on strategies that chemical companies should adopt to navigate through new market complexities and maintain profitability and commitment to stakeholders. The Forum takes place in Dubai from December 3 to 5, gathering more than 2,100 international chemical executives under the theme of 'Winning through strategic partnerships'. Speaking of EQUATE's participation, Senior Vice President, Naser Al-Dousari, said: "Today's dynamics are a challenge to our markets. Capturing the opportunities and mitigating the risks is key for companies operating in global markets."

GPCA has created forums aimed at enabling strategies focused on sustainable growth, efficiency, productivity and safety, as well as meeting the growing demand for petrochemical products." "At EQUATE, we are working towards a sustainable position that enables us to deliver to our stakeholders."

We have recently inaugurated the new MEGlobal Oyster Creek site in Texas, USA, which meets the most advanced standards of operations and quality products to support growing demand for ethylene glycol while maintaining efficiency." A founding member of GPCA, EQUATE has supported GPCA since 2006 to create a



platform for both global and regional producers to discuss and debate key challenges and opportunities, make new business connections and renew existing relationships from the Middle East and beyond.

The Company is also sponsoring a group of students from the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University to enable them to take part of GPCA's special program 'Leaders of Tomorrow'. The program provides a platform for students to engage in

science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects, and to learn and connect with leading industry experts at GPCA's networking events.

The sponsorship comes as part of EQUATE's investments in inspiring and empowering the younger generations to join the industry and support its development. EQUATE has an ongoing Memorandum of Understanding with Kuwait University to partner and collaborate in industrial and academic fields.

US Fed to hold fire as economy ends 2019 on a strong note

WASHINGTON: With the strength of the world's largest economy on display at year end, the US Federal Reserve is all but certain to leave interest rates untouched at its final policy meeting of 2019 this week. While Latin America and Europe are stagnant and China has begun to sputter worryingly, November's blockbuster US jobs report - which blew past economists' expectations - underscored the resilience of American labor markets despite headwinds from President Donald Trump's grinding trade war and signs of slower consumer spending. In that context, the Fed may feel it can take a bow for piloting a Goldilocks economy: one that is just right.

The signs of resilience validate the Fed's decision in October to pause policy after three cuts in the benchmark lending rate this year. Policymakers can now wait to see how the economy performs early in the new year. The rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee will release its decision at 1900 GMT on Wednesday, along with an updated quarterly economic forecast. Since the last meeting in October, Fed members have made clear that monetary policy is in a "good place." However a "material change" in their outlook could cause them to move again.

"At this point in the long expansion, I see the glass as much more than half full," Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said in a November speech. Consumer spending and

confidence are strong. The housing market has picked up. Unemployment is still very low as hiring continues. GDP growth slowed in the third quarter but was still better than feared. Futures markets as of Friday predicted the Fed would leave rates untouched until at least September of next year, when another cut could occur.

The odds of a recession within the next 12 months, according to the New York Federal Reserve Bank, have also begun to decline (though they are still pretty high at about one in three). The outlook could change dramatically depending on what happens to the trade conflict with China. If Washington and Beijing manage to seal a partial trade deal and at least cease hostilities, an end to uncertainty could give businesses a sharp boost.

A 'far from dull' summer

Economist Diane Swonk of Grant Thornton told AFP an apparent truce in the China trade war seemed to have lightened the mood among consumers and employers along with a helping hand from the Fed's stimulus. "There has been this detente that's gone on for more than 50 days," she said. "It doesn't cure the situation and the uncertainty but at least you're not adding insult to injury which allows the consumer to move forward." "The tipping point really is, you know whether or not we get some kind of phase one deal," she said. Trump announced a deal in October but which still has not yet been signed, although more positive signals have trickled out.

As the summer came to an end, the Fed slashed lending rates, spooked by a slackening economy and the slow burn of a trade war that took several turns for the worse as the acrimony between Washington and Beijing mounted. Those days were "far from dull," Powell said in the November speech, recalling queasy moments this year as manufacturing fell into recession, business investment tanked, exports sank and job creation figures were revised substantially downward. —AFP

Burgan Bank announces Yawmi account winners

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000. The lucky winners are: (1) Naser Abdulaziz Abdullah Alawadhi (2) Ahmed Saleh Hasan Alqallaf (3) Hanan Abdulghafar Mohammad Atash (4) Ameenah Hasan Yaseen Alamir (5) Jaber Osamah Zaid Alkazemi.

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and Quarterly Draws, wherein the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win. For more information on opening a Yawmi account, the new quarterly draw or on any of the bank's products and services, customers are urged to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch, or simply call the bank's Call Center. Customers can also log on to Burgan Bank's www.burgan.com for further information.

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.250
Euro	340.460
Sterling Pound	403.740
Canadian dollar	231.900
Turkish lira	54.820
Swiss Franc	311.250
US Dollar Buying	296.800
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.802
Indian Rupees	4.268
Pakistani Rupees	1.971
Srilankan Rupees	1.675
Nepali Rupees	2.663
Singapore Dollar	225.540
Hongkong Dollar	38.864
Bangladesh Taka	3.545
Philippine Peso	6.000
Thai Baht	10.103
Malaysian ringgit	77.813
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.187
Qatari Riyal	83.620
Omani Riyal	790.773
Bahraini Dinar	808.420
UAE Dirham	82.891
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.350

Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.916
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.222
Tunisian Dinar	110.640
Jordanian Dinar	429.580
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.162

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd	
Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.890
Canadian Dollar	230.005
Sterling Pound	400.470
Euro	337.620
Swiss Frank	303.590
Bahraini Dinar	808.155
UAE Dirhams	83.140
Qatari Riyals	84.380
Saudi Riyals	81.935
Jordanian Dinar	429.905
Egyptian Pound	18.870
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.675
Indian Rupees	4.260
Pakistani Rupees	1.959
Bangladesh Taka	3.534
Philippines Peso	5.988
Cyprus pound	18.080
Japanese Yen	3.795
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.665
Malaysian Ringgit	73.955

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.610
Thai Bhat	11.000
Turkish Lira	53.010
Singapore dollars	223.154

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.383275	0.407175
Czech Korune	0.005213	0.014513
Danish Krone	0.041142	0.046142
Euro	0.329485	0.343185
Georgian Lari	0.121420	0.121420
Hungarian 0.001147	0.001337	
Norwegian Krone	0.029305	0.034505
Romanian Leu	0.065191	0.082041
Russian ruble	0.004788	0.004788
Slovakia	0.009092	0.019092
Swedish Krona	0.028074	0.033074
Swiss Franc	0.301237	0.312237
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.200235	0.212235
New Zealand Dollar	0.193888	0.203388
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.224354	0.233354
US Dollars	0.300150	0.305450
US Dollars Mint	0.300650	
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002990	0.003791

Chinese Yuan	0.041802	0.045302
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036917	0.039667
Indian Rupee	0.003612	0.004384
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002717	0.002897
Korean Won	0.000246	0.000261
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069410	0.075410
Nepalese Rupee	0.002623	0.002963
Pakistan Rupee	0.001286	0.002056
Philippine Peso	0.005585	0.006285
Singapore Dollar	0.218396	0.228396
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001318	0.001898
Taiwan	0.010018	0.010198
Thai Baht	0.009701	0.010251
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.800882	0.808932
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	0.000103	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021175	0.045175
Omani Riyal	0.785133	0.793024
Qatar Riyal	0.082914	0.083748
Saudi Riyal	0.080047	0.081347
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.102737	0.110737
Turkish Lira	0.045976	0.055821
UAE Dirhams	0.082203	0.083029
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

Business

New travel misery in France as unions warn of fresh turmoil

Strikes could prove to be Macron’s biggest domestic challenge yet

PARIS: The most serious nationwide strike to hit France in years caused new misery for weekend travelers on Saturday, with unions dismissing proposals by the government and warning walkouts would last well into next week. The challenge thrown down to President Emmanuel Macron over his plans for radical pension reform has prompted hundreds of thousands to take to the streets and brought key transport services to a standstill. The strikes, which began on Thursday over the plans for a single points-based pension scheme, recall the winter of 1995, when three weeks of huge stoppages forced a social policy U-turn by the then-government.

Unions have vowed a second series of mass demonstrations nationwide on Tuesday after Thursday’s big ral-

lies and there is expected to be little easing of the transport freeze over the coming days. The strikes could prove to be the biggest domestic challenge yet for Macron, who came to power in 2017 on the back of promises to radically reform France and has sought a prominent place on the international stage as Europe’s number one statesman.

Macron was widely believed to have ridden out the challenge posed by the “yellow vests” whose weekly Saturday protests against inequality in France had shaken the government over the last year. But the yellow vests have also sought to use the momentum of the strike movement and held a fresh protest in Paris on Saturday and others in several cities across France. Police and

local authorities estimated the turn-out across France at 23,500 — of whom 1,600 marched in Paris. The organizers of such marches routinely dismiss these official counts as gross underestimates.

‘Intensify the movement’

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe has insisted that the government will not abandon the plan, though he added it was prepared to bring it in gradually. He did not want “confrontation”, he added. But the leader of the hardline CGT union, Philippe Martinez, said of the prime minister Saturday: “He is doing everything to ensure that the strikes last.” In a joint statement, the three main rail unions called for the strike to be stepped

up today. The SNCF rail operator has warned that disruption at the weekend will be at the same level as the last two days, with just 10-15 percent of high-speed and regional trains running.

Transilien, the operator of the Paris region rail network warned of severe shortages Monday. To avoid what could be “dangerous” levels of overcrowding, it recommended using other means of transport such as car-sharing. The Paris metro will also remain severely disrupted with only the network’s two driverless lines working normally. The international Eurostar and Thalys rail services have been hit by cancellations. Air travel however was returning closer to normal Saturday, as the civil aviation authorities dropped air traffic restrictions. — AFP

Ahli United Bank named Best Private Bank Kuwait

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) was named, for the third time, the Best Private Bank Kuwait 2019 by The Banker Magazine in collaboration with the Private Wealth Management (PWM) Magazine. As leading publications by the Financial Times Group, the two magazines present the Global Private Banking Awards in recognition of banking institutions that have achieved success in growth strategies, appropriate investment solutions, as well as the level of private banking and wealth management services provided in accordance with international standards.

The final selection of winners is made by a panel of 16 independent members selected by the two magazines which cover Private Banking industry. The panel had the opportunity to review several elements of excellence of AUB’s private banking services ranging from innovation, outstanding family wealth management and taking the lead in providing Sharia-compliant services, products and financing.

Commenting on this recognition to the Bank, Medhat Tawfik, Senior General Manager, Private Banking & Wealth Management at AUB, said:



Meshari Shehab



Medhat Tawfik

“We are proud of this award which emphasizes the Bank’s leadership in private banking and wealth management through highlighting its commitment and care got its customers, not only to provide for their needs, but also by exceeding their expectations on continuous and lasting basis through new and innovative services that enrich their lives.”

Tawfik added: “I would like to thank our Private Banking & Wealth Management Team for their commitment to AUB’s culture and approach, through which it seeks to gain the trust of its customers over the years. This achievement could not have been possible without their outstanding efforts. I also would like to thank The Banker and Private Wealth Management magazines for their appreciation and recognition of the Bank’s effort and its leading position.”

On this occasion, Meshari Shehab, Deputy General Manager, Private Banking and Wealth Management at AUB, said: “This award reflects



our success in enriching the market with a unique range of services that reflect the highest levels of originality and innovation, as well as our success in establishing long-term relationships with our customers for many years during which we provided them with top-class services by being a reliable partner that supported them achieve their financial and wealth management goals.”

Shehab added: “AUB has a proven record of excellence in the field of private banking, and based on our position as the first bank in Kuwait, we offer the market unparalleled levels of experience and skills to keep up with the requirements of our valued customers.”

NBK Weekly Market Report

US dollar ‘weaker’ over figures, trade

KUWAIT: The US dollar was noticeably weaker last week as poor manufacturing data tempered growth expectations and the US trade war took an unexpected turn. The Institute for Supply Management’s Manufacturing PMI contracted for the fourth consecutive month with manufacturing executives less than optimistic in their responses.

Economic uncertainty continues to grow while order books continue to shrink mentioned survey responders. It is clear the manufacturing sector, which accounts to 11% of US GDP, has come under pressure due to weaker global growth and a prolonged trade war between the two largest economies. The ISM index fell to 48.1 in November from October’s 48.3 and was significantly below expectations of 49.2. Statisticians at the ISM suggest that this level is consistent with annual real GDP growth of 1.5%.

Moving to trade, US President Donald Trump surprised South American officials last week by announcing tariffs on US steel and aluminum imports from Brazil and Argentina. Trump said the immediately effective tariffs were necessary because “Brazil and Argentina have been presiding over a massive devaluation of their currencies which is not good for our farmers.” Officials from both countries are seeking to immediately start negotiations with their US counter parts. Exacerbating the matter, Trump the next day, signaled no urgency for striking deal with China. “I have no deadline,” and “in some ways, I like the idea of waiting until after the election for the China deal,” he told reporters. The remarks crushed recent optimism that the “phase one” of their trade deal was to be concluded shortly. The comments by Trump combined with the weak manufacturing data dropped US stocks around 2% mid-week.

Trade deficit & labor

Despite deteriorating manufacturing and tense trade environments, the US trade deficit dropped to its lowest level in nearly 1-1/2 years in October, suggesting trade could contribute to economic growth in the fourth quarter. The Commerce Department said the trade deficit tumbled 7.6% to \$47.2 billion as both imports and exports of goods declined. It is clear that the 17-month trade war with China was reducing trade flows, which in the long run is detrimental to domestic and global growth.

Still, consumer spending is likely to remain supported by a strong labor market. Other data on Thursday showed the number of Americans filing claims for unemployment benefits unexpectedly fell last week, hitting their lowest level in seven months. Furthermore non-farm payrolls exceeded expectations creating 226,000 new jobs in November, well above the 181,000 expected. The unemployment rate slipped to 3.5% from 3.6%, while average wage paid to American workers rose 0.2%.

Brexit

The British pound was the biggest mover in the FX markets last week reaching a seven month high against the backdrop of broad-based dollar weakness and positive Brexit expectations. UK parliamentary election polls showed Boris Johnson’s ruling Conservative Party widening its lead before this week’s election. The poll showed support for the Conservatives at 44%, while their main rival Labor was unchanged on 32%. A majority win for Conservatives would effectively end the deadlock in parliament opening the door for an exit in January. Indeed, Johnson pledged that legislation to implement his EU withdrawal agreement would be put back before parliament ahead of Christmas to insure the January deadline.

UK manufacturing & services

UK manufacturing degradation continued in November, as businesses responded to October’s delay to Brexit and increased uncertainty from the forthcoming general election. New orders fell for the seventh month in a row during November, reflecting tougher conditions in both domestic and overseas markets. Companies attributed this to destocking inventories at clients following the delay to Brexit and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the political, economic and global trade situations. The decline in new export orders was among the steepest registered over the past seven years. The UK Manufacturing PMI in November was higher than forecast but still below the 50 expansionary mark at 48.9.

The Services PMI came in At 49.3 in November, down from 50.0 in October signaling a marginal reduction in service sector output. Although the

Rates – 08 December, 2019								
	Open	High	Low	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward	
BUR	1.1012	1.1115	1.1001	1.1057	1.0865	1.1260	1.1125	
GBP	1.2918	1.3168	1.2894	1.3135	1.3040	1.3330	1.3179	
JPY	109.32	109.72	108.41	108.59	108.55	110.55	107.95	
CHF	1.0001	1.0008	0.9952	0.9992	0.9710	1.0195	0.9835	

index was up from the earlier ‘flash’ reading of 48.6 in November, it still pointed to the steepest decline in business activity since March. Survey respondents noted that domestic political uncertainty once again led to cautious business and consumer spending.

ECB president testifies

New European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde had her first hearing before the European Parliament last week where she spoke about the current state of the economy. Euro area growth remains weak, with gross domestic product growing by only 0.2%, quarter on quarter, in the third quarter of 2019. This weakness has been mainly due to global factors she said. The world economy outlook remains sluggish and uncertain. This lowers demand for euro area goods and services and also affects business sentiment and investment she continued. Finally, Lagarde maintained the ECB’s accommodative policy stance has been a key driver of domestic demand during the recovery, and that stance remains in place.

Euro-zone GDP & retail sales

The euro zone economy grew at a modest pace in the third quarter with a negative impact from trade, while retail sales fell at their sharpest rate this year in October, data showed. GDP in the euro zone was up 0.2% in the July-Sept period, the same figure as the flash estimate released in October and unchanged from the second quarter. Retail sales in the euro zone in October fell by 0.6%, double the amount expected in a Reuters poll, and were up a modest 1.4% year-on-year. The monthly decline was the steepest fall of 2019.

New fiscal stimulus in Japan

Japan’s cabinet approved a \$122 billion fiscal package to support stalling growth in the world’s third-largest economy. The 26 trillion yen will go towards repairing typhoon damage, upgrading infrastructure and investing

in new technologies. It is also expected to push up gross domestic product by 1.4% through fiscal 2021. The headline figure amounts to approximately 1.9% of Japan’s gross domestic product over 15 months, significantly more than last year’s supplementary budget of 3 trillion yen, and big enough to have an impact on the economy.

China manufacturing PMI

Manufacturing in China unexpectedly rebounded higher in November for the first time in seven months. The Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) rose to 50.2 in November versus 49.3 in October, slightly above the 50-point mark that separates growth from contraction on a monthly basis. The private manufacturing survey conducted by Caixin a few days later reflected a similarly upbeat picture edging up 0.1 to 51.8. Temporary factors may partly explain the continued expansion in November as both domestic and external demand continued to increase. As such, the gains could be threatened if the US China trade war continues without resolution.

OPEC meeting

Oil prices were supported last week as OPEC and its allies geared up to approve deeper oil production cuts this week to prevent renewed oversupply and a collapse in oil prices. The group, combining over 20 producers, is considering an extra 500,000 barrels per day in cuts for the first quarter of 2020 to take the total to 1.7 million bpd, or 1.7% of global demand, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said. OPEC member Iraq commented the move was supported by key members. In related news, Saudi Aramco priced its initial public offering 32 rivals (\$8.53) per share raising \$25.6 billion. At that level, Aramco has a market valuation of \$1.7 trillion, comfortably overtaking Apple as the world’s most valuable listed firm. Aramco did not say when shares would start trading on the Saudi stock market but two sources said it was scheduled for December 11.

NBK Capital: Boursa ‘best performing Gulf markets in 2019’

KUWAIT: The GCC markets showed some strength in November after four months of weak and negative performance. The S&P GCC Composite Index edged up by 1.37% during the month supported by a strong performance in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Oman. The Index’ performance since the beginning of the year is now 1.87% but still negative at 1.33% for the fourth quarter. Leading the GCC markets upwards was Kuwait with the All Share Index up 3.69% and the Premier Market Index up 4.96%.

Kuwait’s Indices are up 16.7% and 23.8% on a year to date basis as at the end of November respectively, making Kuwait the best GCC performer this year. The Saudi Tadawul All Share index added 1.48% returning marginally to positive territory for the year at 0.41%. The Omani market, on the other hand, came in third in term of performance with a gain of 1.61% narrowing its loss for the year to 6.0%.

On the negative side, both UAE equity markets closed in the red, with Dubai’s DFM General Index down 2.48% and Abu Dhabi’s ADX General Index down 1.51%. The wider S&P Pan Arab index slightly underperformed its GCC counterpart with a gain of 1.11% weighted down by a 4.87% decline in Egypt’s EGX 30. After a strong performance in October, Emerging markets generally underperformed in November dragged by the weak performance of Asian markets. The MSCI EM was down -0.19% for the month sending its year-to-date performance down to 7.7%. The MSCI Asia-ex-Japan added a marginal 0.19% as the Shanghai Composite lost 1.95%.

Elsewhere, notable emerging markets gainers included Turkey’s Borsa Istanbul 100 Index which added 8.57% in November, increasing its year-to-date performance to 17.13%. Russia Stock Exchange added 1.43% for the month, while India’s Nifty 50 and Taiwan Stock Exchange increased by 1.50% and 1.15% respectively.

Cautious optimism regarding a successful conclusion of a phase one trade deal between China and the US provided support for global markets during November. An agreement, however, that was initially expected to be signed by end of November may not take place until the new year as some sticky remain to be resolved as China seems to be demanding a rollback of existing tariffs on Chinese goods, and not only planned ones, to be part of a phase one deal.

In the meantime, a more reassuring view of the economy in the United States boosted the US markets which led the performance of global markets during the month. The MSCI AC World Index added 2.30% in November pushing its year-to-date performance to 20%. The index’ performance was clearly driven by the US markets as the MSCI EAFE Index, which represents the performance of developed markets outside the US and Canada, underperformed adding 0.97% for the month resulting in a year-to-date return of 14.8%.

In the US, third quarter GDP was revised upward to 2.1% from a previous estimate of 1.9% and compared to a second quarter growth of 2.0%. This alleviated recession fears and helped prop up the markets. Inflation stayed subdued with the revised numbers of Core Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) for the third quarter coming in at 2.1% compared to an initial estimate of 2.2% and a Q2 figure of 1.9%. Industrial activity, on the other hand, remained weak with the ISM Manufacturing PMI coming in at 48.1 in November down from 48.3 in October and undershooting expectations of 49.2.

In the meantime, US Indices continued to lead international markets and record new highs. The S&P 500 added 3.40% during November, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) outperformed with a gain of 3.72%. The tech-heavy Nasdaq, on the other hand, recorded a gain of 4.50%. With one month left to the end of the year, all major indices are on track to close at record levels. The Nasdaq Composite tops the list with a 30.6% gain since the beginning of the year.

It is followed by the S&P 500 with a gain of 25.3% and the DJIA with 20.3%. Yields on the 10-year treasuries regained some ground advancing to 1.78% at the end of November from a closing of 1.69% in October after reaching an intra-day high of 1.97% during the month. The 2-year yield, on the other hand, advanced to 1.61% at the end of the month up from 1.52% at the end of October.

In Europe, GDP figures for the third quarter were revised up marginally to 1.2%, unchanged from the second quarter. Inflation remained stable in November with the core Consumer Price Index (CPI) unchanged at 1.1%. Manufacturing activity edged marginally higher as the Markit Manufacturing PMI increased to 46.6 in November from a revised reading of 45.9 in October. German economic indicators, although still weak, seem to be ticking marginally to the upside.

Preliminary German GDP for the third quarter showed a significant improvement growing at 1.0% year-on-year up from a revised -0.1% in the second quarter. Markit’s Manufacturing PMI also showed an increase to 44.1 in November from a revised 42.1 for the previous month, while the unemployment rate remained unchanged at 5%. Against this backdrop, European markets fared well during the month, although underperforming their US peers.

The Stoxx Europe 600 managed a gain 2.69% in November for a year-to-date gain of 20.67%. The German DAX and French CAC40 added 2.87% and 3.06% for the month. So far this year, the indices of the two major European economies added 25.36% and 24.83% respectively. After a sizable decline of 2.16% in October, the UK’s FTSE 100 managed to end the month of November in the green increasing by 1.35% and accumulating a gain of 9.2% for the year.

Manufacturing activity remains weak with the Markit Manufacturing PMI coming in at 48.9 beating consensus estimates of 48.3 but below the previous month’s reading of 49.6. Inflation, on the other hand, weakened in October as headline CPI numbers declined to 1.5% year-on-year for October from 1.7% for the previous month, while the Core measure of CPI remained stable at 1.7% over the same period.

Business

Tariff deadline keeps focus on trade as 2019 nears end

Stocks pull back from record highs

NEW YORK: The stock market looks set to end 2019 the way it began the year – highly sensitive to headlines from President Donald Trump's global trade war. Stocks pulled back from record highs to start December, undermined by comments from Trump and others in his administration suggesting any deal to resolve the trade dispute between the United States and China would not come soon. But the market rebounded at the end of the week on Friday's strong US jobs and a change in tone from Trump.

Wall Street could see more volatility ahead of Dec 15, when the next tranche of US tariffs on Chinese imports is set to take effect. At the start of the week, investors said equity prices were factoring in that those tariffs would be delayed if not canceled as Beijing and Washington work on a "phase one" trade deal. But subsequent tough talk from Trump officials has shaken those expectations somewhat.

"Until we get some finality on this, the day-to-day is

going to move on headlines that suggest progress or lack thereof," said Keith Lerner, chief market strategist at SunTrust Advisory Services in Atlanta. While the dispute between the world's two largest economies commands the spotlight, other trade issues also have drawn investor attention. They include a recent delay in ratification of the North American Trade pact, potential US tariffs on imported autos and Trump's issuing surprise levies on steel imports from Brazil and Argentina.

Optimism over a US-China truce has helped push the major Wall Street indexes to all-times highs recently, with the benchmark S&P 500 logging a gain of more than 20% so far in 2019. But as the latest swings show, lack of a resolution to a trade dispute that has lasted nearly two years continues to weigh on the market. "The problem is the uncertainty that the trade war process has on business decisions," said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at National Securities in New York. "Without some sort of short-term truce, company spending gets frozen and

that's where it affects the economy and the market."

The tariffs on \$156 billion in Chinese imports that could take effect Dec 15 are largely on consumer goods, including cellphones, laptop and desktop computers, toys and clothing. UBS economists estimate those tariffs would drag on U.S. gross domestic product by either 0.1% or 0.2% in each of the four quarters next year. UBS projects overall GDP growth to average 1.1% in 2020, with tariffs generally weighing heavily in the first half of the year.

Aside from the fallout from the tariffs themselves, "the next read from them going into effect is that trade discussions are not going well," said Walter Todd, chief investment officer with Greenwood Capital in South Carolina. Political tensions over US support for protesters in Hong Kong and over Beijing's treatment of its Uighur Muslim minority have also raised concerns about the prospects for an initial trade deal. "Without a phase one plan on getting something signed early in the new year, I think the market is susceptible for a pullback,"

said Robert Pavlik, chief investment strategist at SlateStone Wealth LLC.

The focus will remain on trade into next week, even as the Federal Reserve holds its last meeting of 2019, with the US central bank expected to keep interest rates steady after three cuts earlier in the year. "The Fed chairman pretty much outlined that the bar is very high to raise rates," SunTrust's Lerner said. However, he added, if some of the tariffs result in a sharp slowdown, "the Fed would have to act eventually" by cutting rates.

Investors will also be looking for signs of strength in the holiday shopping season, given that consumer spending is seen as a key pillar holding up overall economic growth. There is a strong incentive to push off the tariffs "as long as people are at the negotiating table," said Carol Schleif, deputy chief investment officer at Abbot Downing in Minneapolis. "President Trump definitely doesn't want a downbeat consumer going into the election cycle," she said. —Reuters

Ahli United Bank congratulates its Al Hassad winners

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced on the 4th of December 2019 the winners of its weekly draw of Al Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait that has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners. Al Hassad has have over 850 prizes, over a 12 month period. The weekly draw announced the grand prize winner of KD 10,000 Saleh Taha Abdullah.

20 other winners won prizes of KD1,000 and are as follows: Mohammad Salem Almasoud, Shafegah Said Hashim, Hanan Lafi Alazmi, Mohammad Hamad Alsanea, Latifah Mohammad Almutairi, Fahad Motlaq Falroumi, Mubark Abdulla Alhardan, Venkatraman Rajaraman, Safiya Ali Alahadad, Aeshah Khalaf Al Sulaimani, Zakareya Jassim Alturkomani, Mohammad Shuaifan Alajmi, Mirza Jaleel Ahmad, Faisal Hasan Ali, Ahmed Ali Ahmed, Hasan Ali Alrowai, Ali Abdulkarim Husain, Sami Jassim Ahmed, Abdulwahab Mansour E Alabbas, Adeela Ahmed Jasim.

On the occasion Ahli United Bank congratulate its winning customers, and commented that there are many chances to win waiting for our customers. Draws are held every Wednesday at AUB Kuwait or AUB Bahrain depending on the draw plan. On public holidays, the draw is postponed to the next business day. Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 4 quarterly mega prizes of KD 250,000 that will help the lucky winners achieve their dreams and aspirations in addition the monthly draw to win a prize of KD 100,000.

One powerful new aspect of the Al-Hassad Islamic Account is the prize draws on the holy occasion of both Eid ulFitr and Eid Al Adha, when the winning customers will receive the eid prizes of KD 100,000 each. May the Eid always bring prosperity and blessings to the Islamic nation. Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 21 weekly prizes comprised of a grand prize of KD 10,000 and 20 prizes of KD 1,000 each

In addition to the highly attractive package of the prizes, there will be the annual expected profits on, which makes the Al Hassad account a useful tool; for family and other savings, both for the short term and for the longer term – a fact which well appreciated by a large multitude of new and old customers. It is worth mentioning that there is possibility to open the account online for non-customers and there is possibility to transfer the salary to Al Hassad account. In addition Al Hassad customers can issue an ATM immediately and have the freedom to deposit and withdraw any time

To be eligible to participate in the draw, the customer should have a minimum balance of KD 100, whereby the customer has two chances to participate, with a maximum of 30,000 chances per draw, in addition to annual profits for all participants. Every KD 50 invested for at least 15 days entitles the customer to one chance in the each draw. The longer the customer keeps his balance the bigger the changes of participation in the draw.

For more information on Ahli United Bank's products and services, customers are invited to visit any of the Bank's branches or dial the customer service "Hayakom" on 1812000, or log on the Bank's website www.ahliunited.com.kw

'Exclusive services' for Gulf Bank Wealth Management clients

KUWAIT: As part of its continuous efforts to maximize customer satisfaction and highlight exclusive service offerings, Gulf Bank is offering new services to its Wealth Management clients. Gulf Bank's Private and Priority Banking clients can now benefit from additional services designed to add even more ease and comfort to their daily banking transactions.

Wealth Management services are available to Gulf Bank's Priority Banking clients, offering them access to a suite of banking and investment products and services designed to meet their daily banking needs. As a part of the Priority Banking experience, Gulf Bank assigns clients experienced and dedicated Relationship Managers, who take the time to understand their clients' financial needs and manage all their banking requirements. Relationship Managers also offer clients banking and investment solutions with the aim of protecting and growing their wealth.

Gulf Bank Priority Banking is available at select branches in Fahad Al-Salem, Mubarak Al Kabeer (Head Office), Jabriya, Audaiya, Shaab, Fahahel, Sharq, Mansouriya, Salmiya Main, Dahiyat Abdullah Al Salem, Bayan, Mishref, Hawalli, Shuwaikh Main, Ghazali, Farwanija, Adan, Ahmadi, Daiya, and Jahra. Alternatively, clients also have the option of scheduling a meeting with their Gulf Bank Relationship Manager at home or

at the office. Priority Banking services are available to customers with an account balance of KD 50,000 up to KD 500,000 in cash or investable assets, or a monthly salary transfer of KD 3,500 and more.

Wealth Management services are also available for Gulf Bank's Private Banking clients, who are assigned dedicated and highly experienced Private Bankers. Private Bankers understand their clients' individual financial needs, providing them with tailored solutions designed to preserve and grow their clients' wealth, while identifying unique investment opportunities that are in line with their clients' financial ambitions. As a part of the Private Banking experience, clients also have the option of meeting with their Private Banker at home or at the office for added convenience. Gulf Bank's dedicated Private Banking branches are available at Nuzha, Mubarak Al Kabeer (Head Office) Dahiat Abdullah Al-Salem, Adailiya, and Jabriya. Gulf Bank Private Banking is available to clients with an account balance of KD 500,000 or more in cash or investable assets.

Commenting on Gulf Bank's Wealth Management services, Mr. Ahmad Al Amir, Assistant General Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "At Gulf Bank, we are constantly striving to create new levels of comfort and convenience for our customers' daily banking transactions. This is especially true for our Wealth Management clients, who often have unique banking and investment needs that require tailor-



Huawei asks court to overturn FCC order

KUWAIT: Huawei yesterday mounted a legal challenge to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), seeking the court to overturn an unlawful order passed by the FCC on Nov 22. The order bans carriers in rural America from tapping the Universal Service Fund (USF) to purchase Huawei equipment. In a petition filed in the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, Huawei asks the court to hold the FCC's order unlawful on the grounds that it fails to offer Huawei required due process protections in labeling Huawei as a national security threat.

Huawei believes that the FCC also fails to substantiate its arbitrary findings with evidence or sound reasoning or analysis, in violation of the US Constitution, the Administrative Procedure Act, and other laws. "Banning a company like Huawei, just because we started in China - this does not solve cyber security challenges," Huawei's Chief Legal Officer Dr Song Liuping said at a press conference.

Song said both FCC chairman Ajit Pai and other FCC commissioners failed to present any evidence to prove their claim that Huawei constitutes a security threat, and ignored the facts and objections raised by Huawei and rural carriers after the FCC first made the proposal in March 2018. "Huawei also submitted 21 rounds of detailed comments, explaining how the order will harm people and businesses in remote areas. The FCC ignored them all," he said.

"Carriers across rural America, in small towns in Montana, Kentucky, and



Glen Nager, Huawei's lead counsel for the legal action



Huawei's Chief Legal Officer Dr Song Liuping



Karl Song, Vice President of Huawei's Corporate Communications Department

farms in Wyoming - they choose to work with Huawei because they respect the quality and integrity of our equipment," Song added. "The FCC should not shut down joint efforts to connect rural communities in the US." Glen Nager, Huawei's lead counsel for the legal action, said the FCC has simply adopted a standard-less rule that, by its own admission, was designed with only Huawei and another Chinese company in mind.

In addition, Nager said the decision adopted by FCC exceeds the agency's "statutory authority," as the FCC is not

authorized to make national security judgments or to restrict the use of USF funds based on such judgments. "Indeed, the Commission has no national security expertise or authority." According to Nager, FCC's designation of Huawei as national security threat lacks legal or factual support. "The designation is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of Chinese law and on unsound, unreliable, and inadmissible accusations and innuendo, not evidence. The designation is simply shameful prejudgment of the worst kind," he said.

Karl Song, Vice President of Huawei's Corporate Communications Department, said the FCC rule is threatening the improving connectivity in rural America, which depends on Huawei equipment because other vendors were not willing to do business in places "that were too remote, or where the terrain was difficult, or where there just wasn't a large population." He added that the ban and the following "rip-and-replace" proposal would cost hundreds of millions of dollars and even force some small carriers to go bankrupt.

Al Babtain CEO honors top performer of 2019 Renault Middle East skills contest

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait recently attended the first Renault Middle East regional skills contest 2019. Winners of the Renault national sales and aftersales contest held in Kuwait advanced to participate in the regional contest that was held in Park Hyatt hotel, Dubai.

The competition provided the contestants an oppor-

tunity to showcase their abilities by participating in a number of role-play activities, a written test and a team exercise for both sales and service. Based around the C@RE 2.0 and R School training programs, all the activities were designed to test each candidate's skills and competencies as frontline staff for the Renault brand.

Previously awarded 'Best Sales Executive' award in Kuwait, Mohammed Zaher bagged the second runner-up award for his exemplary performance under the category of 'Sales' and received a cash award also. In honor of his latest achievement, Al-Babtain CEO, Saleh Al-Babtain rewarded the high achiever during a felicitation ceremony in his office, in the presence of Al Babtain management and Sales and L&D teams.

Al-Babtain CEO - Saleh Al-Babtain said, "I am proud of all of the participants who represented Kuwait in the first-ever Renault Middle East contest. For more



than 7 decades, Al Babtain has been delivering exceptional results across all of domains and this would not have been possible without the commitment and hard work of our employees. I thank Mohammed Zaher for exemplifying the values for which we stand and our lasting determination to succeed and excel on such a prominent international platform."



What's On

ACK holds first HR symposium on training and development in Kuwaiti organizations



By Faten Omar

The School of Business at the Australian College of Kuwait organized the first Human Resources Symposium on Training and Development in Kuwaiti Organizations: Challenges and Opportunities on Wednesday. This symposium was sponsored by the Kuwait Foundations for Science and Advancement.

President of ACK Prof Isam Zabalawi said the conference is related to the development of human resources to serve different sectors based on the 2035 vision of Kuwait, adding the symposium shows what the qualities of employees and management should be. "We shed light on some aspects that should be achieved by workers in different departments related to scientific expertise and the use of information and communication technology in all aspects. We believe that things are moving at a high speed and the process of development of human cadres must move in the same speed.

In addition to the introduction of information and communication technology significantly in different sectors so that we can communicate with the world



President of ACK, Prof Isam Zabalawi during his speech.

continuously," he said.

Zabalawi said during his presentation that seven pillars need to be in focus - global positioning, developed infrastructure, creative human capital, effective public administration, high-quality healthcare, sustainable diversified economy, and sustainable living environment.

"A study showed that the challenges we are facing are knowledge economy, globalization and demographics, where we have to take the ageing and young society into consideration, a technological challenge where organizations must be prepared. And if we are ready for innovation, are we having strategic plans? Knowledge is doubling, so we have to make

sure that we are following this process while developing. The work environment is changing - we have a limited capacity. We have to educate our students to catch up," he explained.

The symposium allowed participants to evaluate the challenges facing Kuwaiti organizations concerning training design and effectiveness, and how organizations prepare themselves to address future training needs. In the global market, competition, training and development can shape future practices including innovation, creativity and performance, thereby providing a great platform to debate the role of employee training to quality of learning, talent and leadership development and diversity enhancement.

During the symposium, international speakers presented various challenges about learning and development in the organizational context and provided several recommendations for research and practice. Panel discussions were held consisting of HR and training managers from various companies in Kuwait. These experts shared with the audience their experiences about the challenges and opportunities encountering Kuwaiti organizations while implementing and designing training and development practices.



School students raising the flag of Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KIPCO recognizes Edrak participants under its Munjiza platform

Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) (KIPCO) in association with Burgan Bank and Gulf Insurance Group, members of KIPCO Group, held a recognition ceremony for a development opportunity titled 'Edrak' under its existing women empowerment platform, Munjiza launched April 2019.

Since its launch event in April, Munjiza has welcomed many members to its platform. Abolish 153 and Ibtkar Consult, Social Work Society, Al-Sidra Association for Psychological Care of Cancer Patients, The

Women's Research and Studies Center (WRSC), LOYAC, Ruqayah Abdulwahab Alqatami Breast Cancer Foundation, Kuwait Association for Learning Differences, INJAZ, Balsam International Co., Safira CSR, Business and Professional Women Network, Soroptimist Kuwait, Arab WIC Kuwait, Rawya Al Hajri- Director, Eightypercent, Rabaa Al Hajri- General Manager, Eightypercent, and Nour ZaZa- Assistant Director, Breast Feeding Support Program, Birth Kuwait.

Edrak an intensive customized training program benefiting Munjiza members who are diverse women in Kuwait leading change within their communities and providing them with skills and support to effectively present themselves and their work. For its first year, four Munjiza members were chosen to participate; Ms. Laila Hilal Al Mutairi INJAZ CEO, Mrs Mae Al Hajaj Vice President Soroptimist Kuwait, Mrs Maha Al Baghli Founder and Managing Director at Safira CSR, and Mrs

Laila Al Ghanim President of Ruqayah Abdulwahab Alqatami Breast Cancer Foundation.

The Edrak closing ceremony was attended by numerous KIPCO Group seniors as they are supporters of the Munjiza Platform. Faisal Al Ayyar Vice Chairman of KIPCO, Masud Hayat Vice Chairman and Group CEO- Burgan Bank, and Khaled Al Hassan Group CEO awarded the members and congratulated them on completing the Edrak training segment.

"It is great to see our KIPCO Group seniors overwhelming support of the extraordinary women from different sectors. The private sector's participation is essential in emphasizing the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 that Kuwait is striving to achieve. KIPCO, Burgan Bank, and Gulf Insurance Group are signatories of the UN Women program, Women Empowerment Principles initiative," said Abeer Al Omar Director of Corporate Social Responsibility at KIPCO.

Jumeirah Messilah Hotel joins with Jasmin Charitable Society to help Syrian refugees in Lebanon

As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa collaborated with Jasmin Charitable Society, a charity organisation under the Embassy of Germany in Kuwait, and raised over KWD 3,000 at the recently held Oktoberfest to support and help improve overall life quality of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Commenting on the donation Assistant Director of PR and Communications, Yasmine Ismail said, "At Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, we care about the next generation. We are very proud to collaborate with the Embassy of Germany to raise funds during Oktoberfest which was donated to Jasmin Hilfe Charitable Society

to support the Syrian refugee children in Lebanon. We are pleased to see the efforts of our team who assisted in the fundraising during Oktoberfest; this donation will make a difference to the Syrian refugee children in Lebanon." Jasmin Hilfe Charitable Society - Humanitarian Aid for Syrian Children is a non-profit association that is dedicated to better overall life quality of children in the Syrian refugee camps, particularly in the Bekaa Plain in Lebanon. Currently, the organisation is supporting eight camps with around 2,900 people, where the majority of them are children. In addition, the association provides clothes donations to children during the winter season for two additional camps.



LOYAC honors outstanding volunteers



On the occasion of celebrating the International Volunteers Day 2019, LOYAC recently organized a special ceremony at Al-Shaheed Park to honor a number of its outstanding volunteers and other NGOs active in voluntary work such as Kuwait Society for the Handicapped and

KRCS for the efforts they had exerted in various voluntary events in 2019.

In this regard, LOYAC's director, Al-Razi Al-Bedaiwi stressed that LOYAC was founded on the principle of volunteering ever since its foundation in 2002 adding that ever since, over 15,000 young men

and women had taken part in voluntary events donating over 200,000 hours of their time for such events.

We have taken the responsibility of empowering youth over the past 18 years making participants effective human beings. "We could not have managed to carry out our mission if it were not for those valu-

able volunteers", he underlined.

On her part, Sara Al-Saad, the PR Officer at Al-Ahlia Insurance Company; the ceremony sponsor, said Ahlia takes part in honoring volunteers because it appreciates youth efforts to encourage them to give more and achieve more future success.

Health & Science

Australian firefighters try to control bushfires ahead of hot days

MELBOURNE: Firefighters in eastern Australia used easing weather conditions yesterday to bring bushfires under control ahead of forecast of soaring temperatures for this week. There were 96 fires burning in New South Wales, home to Australia's largest city of Sydney, with only about a half contained and more than 1,600 firefighters deployed to do back burning and create containment lines.

Sydney with its population of 5.2 million has been blanketed by unhealthy haze and smoke for weeks, with conditions worsening on Friday as several fires merged into a giant blaze that may take weeks to put out. Australia has been through some devastating bushfires before during its hot summers, but fire officials have said that this earlier-than-usual wave of fires has been one of the most persistent and largest.

NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons told Australia's ABC television yesterday that temperatures will be raising to above normal by tomorrow, reaching 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit), threatening the spread of the fires and new blazes. More smoke were expected around Sydney yesterday as firefighters will do preventive work.

"Crews are going to be actively out there lighting up large tracts of land, kilometers of trails and tracks, and getting into bushland areas in an attempt to bring those fires under control and start putting it into consolidation with containment lines," Fitzsimmons said.

The fires have been blamed on soaring temperatures, dry winds and arson and with much of the



CENTRAL MANGROVE, Australia: This photo taken on December 7, 2019 shows a firefighter conducting back burning measures to secure residential areas from encroaching bushfires at the Mangrove area, some 90-110 kilometers north of Sydney. — AFP

country under a long-lasting drought, Prime Minister Scott Morrison has been under pressure to address the impact of climate change.

In mid-November, 14 mayors of fire-stricken areas signed a letter urging the government to acknowledge a correlation between climate change and the devastating bushfires, asking also for more funds. While some additional money has been provided, Morrison has repeatedly rejected any links between the fires and his conservative policies, including support for the coal industry. On

Saturday, the government issued a report suggesting that Australia is on track to meet its emission reduction target, which under the Paris Agreement calls for the country to reduce its emissions by 26-28 percent from 2005 levels by 2030.

The government acknowledged, however, that it uses so-called carryover credits, which allow for counting emissions reduction from the past towards future targets - a practice criticized by the European Union and Pacific countries threatened by climate change. — Reuters

Samoa says 90% vaccinated against measles

MELBOURNE: Samoa said on Saturday nearly 90 percent of eligible people had been vaccinated against measles as it lifted a two-day curfew imposed amid an outbreak that has killed 65 in recent weeks. There were, however, 103 new cases of measles reported since Friday, Samoa's Health Ministry said it in a statement.

The measles virus has infected almost 4,500 people in the South Pacific nation of just 200,000 since late October. Of those who died, 57 were children under the age of four. The mandatory immunization campaign aims to vaccinate 90 percent of the population, tripling Samoa's coverage in just a few weeks. The government said a rate of 89 percent had been achieved as of Friday.

Measles cases are rising worldwide, even in wealthy nations such as Germany and the United States, as parents shun

immunization for philosophical or religious reasons, or fears, debunked by doctors, that such vaccines could cause autism. Samoa and the United Nations appealed on Friday to the international community for about \$10.7 million to battle and recover from the crisis.

"The impacts of this emergency will be far reaching on Samoa and our people, particularly our young generations," Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi said in a statement. "It is imperative therefore to strengthen the culture of acceptance of vaccination in order to create 'herd immunity'. This is a painful lesson we have learnt from the current crisis."

New Zealand and a number of other countries and organizations, including the UN agency UNICEF, have delivered thousands of vaccines, medical supplies and have sent medical personnel to help with the outbreak. The World Health Organization said this week that measles infected nearly 10 million people in 2018 and killed 140,000, mostly children. The picture for 2019 is even worse, it said, with provisional data up to November showing a three-fold increase in case numbers compared with the same period in 2018. — Reuters

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OBSTETRICS & GYNECOLOGY

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- Ovarian problems e.g. cysts
- Problems of the fallopian tubes
- Cervical problems



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Tel: 1886677

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Surgery Department
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- (IFSO) member .
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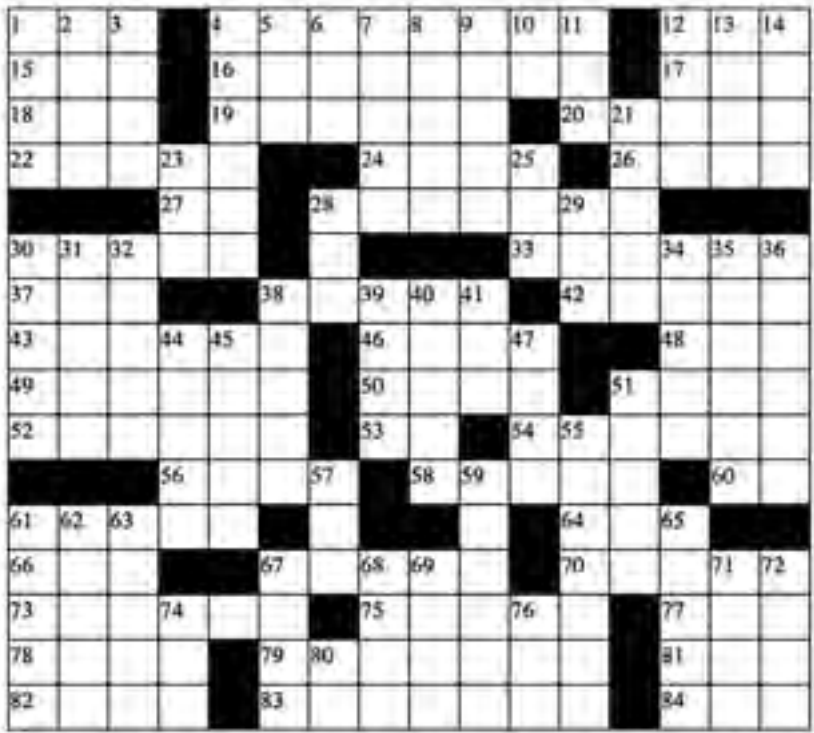
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CROSSWORD 2380



ACROSS

- 1. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- 4. Small often brightly colored scaleless marine bottom-dwellers.
- 12. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
- 15. The syllable naming the sixth (submedian) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
- 16. A place of eternal fire envisaged as punishment for the damned.
- 17. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- 18. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- 19. Anything of material value or usefulness.
- 20. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- 22. An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.
- 24. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
- 26. A kiln for drying hops.
- 27. Before noon.
- 30. Green algae common in freshwater lakes of limestone districts.
- 33. Relating to the blood vessels or blood.
- 37. An associate degree in applied science.
- 42. A city in southeastern South Korea.
- 43. Physical discomfort (as mild sickness or depression).
- 46. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield is somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
- 48. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
- 49. Filled with a great quantity.
- 50. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- 52. Catch fire.
- 53. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
- 54. Filled with fear or apprehension.
- 56. A girl or young woman who is unmarried.
- 58. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- 60. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
- 61. Not affected by a chemical substance (especially alcohol).
- 64. A coenzyme derived from the B vitamin nicotinic acid.
- 66. North American republic containing 50 states - 48 conterminous states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
- 70. Bottle that has a narrow neck.
- 73. A member of the Manchu speaking people of Mongolian race of Manchuria.
- 75. A particular environment or walk of life.
- 77. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
- 78. A town and port in northwestern Israel in the eastern Mediterranean.
- 79. A bar of sand.
- 81. A barrier constructed to contain the flow of water or to keep out the sea.
- 82. (of molten metal or glass) Formed by pouring or pressing into a mold n l.
- 83. A foreboding about what is about to happen.
- 84. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- 1. Loose or flaccid body fat.
- 2. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
- 3. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- 4. Basic principles of the cosmos.
- 5. A widely distributed system consisting of all the cells able to ingest bacteria or colloidal particles etc, except for certain white blood cells.
- 6. Thickening of tissue in the motor tracts of the lateral columns and anterior horns of the spinal cord.
- 7. Plot of land belonging to an English parish church or an ecclesiastical office.
- 8. Many times at short intervals.
- 9. The seventh month of the civil year.
- 10. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- 11. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
- 12. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- 13. By bad luck.
- 14. A heavy open wagon usually having two wheels and drawn by an animal.
- 21. A genus of delicate ferns belonging to the family Osmundaceae.
- 23. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- 25. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- 28. Hormone produced early in pregnancy by the placenta.
- 29. Take in solid food.
- 31. The capital city of Vietnam.
- 32. An association of nations dedicated to economic and political cooperation in southeastern Asia.
- 34. (Greek mythology) A princess of Colchis who aided Jason in taking the Golden Fleece from her father.
- 35. A loose narrow strip of skin near the base of a fingernail.
- 36. Port city on Atlantic coast.
- 38. Yellow-fever mosquitos.
- 39. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- 40. A pair of people who live together.
- 41. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- 44. Mix up or confuse.
- 45. Big-eyed scad.
- 47. A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- 51. A village of huts for native Africans in southern Africa.
- 55. A showy outward display.
- 57. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
- 59. Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
- 62. Port city on southern Honshu on Osaka Bay.
- 63. English botanist who accompanied Captain Cook on his first voyage to the Pacific Ocean (1743-1820).
- 65. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
- 67. Point formed by two intersecting arcs (as from the intrados of a Gothic arch).
- 68. A stick that people can lean on to help them walk.
- 69. Acute lung injury characterized by coughing and rales.
- 71. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- 72. God of love and erotic desire.
- 74. Feline mammal usually having thick soft fur and being unable to roar.
- 76. Someone (especially a woman) who annoys people by constantly finding fault.
- 80. A colorless and odorless inert gas.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are ready to get serious about taking care of you! Meal planning seems to appeal to you. Organized and healthy are a great combination. You feel great about yourself and about who you are. It is time to take the new healthy you to a new level. You have previously made small changes and now you are ready to dive head first into a new lifestyle. Join the gym, take the walk, get up and get going. Changes now will bring great reward in the future. Live out loud!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

There is a reason they make chocolate AND vanilla. What appeals to one may not always appeal to the other. People are different. They have different options and different outlooks on life. You may find yourself running across someone who could not be any more opposite of you. This person will not be someone whose company you enjoy. You can always turn a negative situation into something positive. Sit and have a talk and really listen to what this person has to say. Sometimes listening to understand rather than listening to respond can shed great light and understanding on a situation.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today spending time really getting to know those around you could be very beneficial to you. You are longing for deep personal relationships and this could be a great way to progress toward the development of just that. You find yourself being very sensitive when it comes to the needs of others. You may find yourself being very understanding today and find it very easy to communicate your ideas and feelings to those around you. Gemini. This is a time of growth for you in many ways. You are well on your way to a new and improved version of you. A sense of pride comes over you today.



Cancer (June 21-July 21)

Your way may not be the only way. You may need to put some time, thought, and consideration into the decisions you have to make today. Your first instinct isn't necessarily going to be the way to go this time. Even though you are fully aware of the why's behind your choices others may not understand your choices today. Take time to listen to the opinions of others and take all avenues into consideration. You will make the right choice in the end.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

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



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may feel as if you want all eyes on you! You are on top of the world. It seems as if everything is going your way. You are the center of attention. Your hard work and dedication have paid off and you may find others not only admire you but they actually strive to be like you. You are a trendsetter and the person others long to be like. Keep your head high and enjoy the attention.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Whether it is sexual, the desire for power, or the desire for wealth, these are all area that seem to turn you on and set you in motion today. You may find yourself in a very sensual mood at this time. The mysterious, secretive, and even that which is taboo seem to call to you and draw you in. You may desire to learn people on a deeper level. You want to know them from the inside out. You may also desire to do some soul-searching of your own and learn yourself in the same manner, Libra. A sense of openness and exploration seem to come into your world now.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your imagination soars above the norm and you're in a good place to create! Your art could be influenced by nature. You have a desire to work hard toward cleansing your karma in every area of your life. You look through the illusions of life to see the true reality that truly matters: hard, cold facts bring rewards when you follow them. Travel is indicated and this could be all about business, but fun is a big part of this trip: enjoy and prosper! Your beliefs are taken out and reexamined when you hit a rough spot you didn't expect; you make an effort to recover with grace. Having something your way brings a bright spot to your day, and this is more than likely some type of favorite food. A new outfit for an event falls into your lap and happens to be absolutely perfect! All is good.



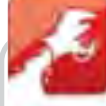
Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

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



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You decide to climb the social media mountain with full force; this may mean business or personal, either way you're into it big time. A project begins small and grows to a value you didn't imagine! Staying with a commitment you made long ago is no longer required; you're set free to go about life in whatever way you choose. A sense of melancholy may accompany some changes you're undergoing, but hold on, good times are coming. A new hobby or interest could actually make an impressive amount of money on the side: vibrations of thriving are strong and present for some time. Taking a moment or two to rest and recharge could be necessary, as a full, demanding day comes to a close. One final round of farewells tonight when friends leave for a long journey.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

It is time to get your affairs in order. Focus on your health. Develop new and healthy routines and stick to them. A new and improved you will be the results of these actions. A healthy body will create a healthier mind. Out with the old and in with the new. Treat every day of your life as if the gift it truly is. If you listen to your body, it will tell you exactly what it needs. Aches and pains are there for a reason. Respect what your body is trying to tell you and provide what it is asking for.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

What a day! It seems as everything is happening all at once. It is all good news. Things just don't get any better than this. Today is a day you will find easy solutions to old problems. A day of happiness. You may find you have a special bond with someone older or in authority. You may feel as if you are living in a fairytale. Enjoy your time to shine.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Real Estate 1

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 22 letters spell a common Real Estate phrase.

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

AGENT	AMORTIZATION	APPRAISAL	ASSESSMENT	ASSET	BUILDING	BUNGALOW	BUYING	CLOSER	COLLATERAL	CONDEMNED	CONDO
CONTRACT	CREDITOR	DEED	DEPOSIT	DEPRECIATION	DUPLEX	EXTERIOR	FLIPPING	FOR SALE	HOUSE	INSPECTOR	INSURANCE
INTERIOR	LAND	LAWYER	LENDER	LIEN	LOAN	LOFT	MARKET VALUE	OFFER	PAYMENT	PLOT	PROPERTY
REALTOR	SELL	SKYSCRAPER	SOLD	SQUARE FOOTAGE	TAXES	TIMESHARE	TOUR	TRIPLEX	VACANCY	VALUATION	ZONE

Yesterday's Solution

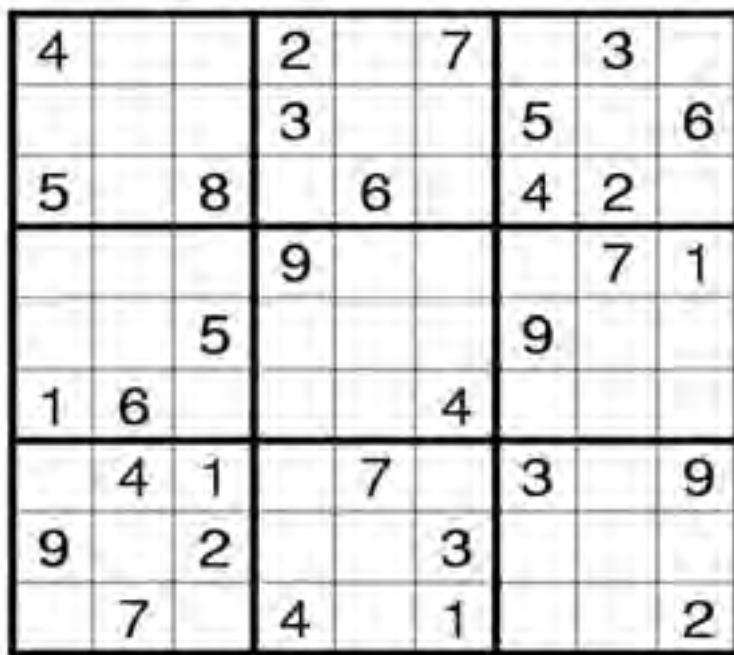
Radiohead Songs

P	R	A	T	S	U	A	F	O	T	H	E	T	O	U	R	I	S	T
K	P	S	U	E	C	I	L	O	P	A	M	R	A	K	B	T	E	
C	O	T	O	R	N	A	D	O	N	A	R	A	P	E				
U	O	R	R	O	V	E	Y	O	U	R	S	E	L	F	O	R		
L	R	G	A	X	E	L	A	B	R	N	H	E	E	G	S	T		
O	G	R	A	N	O	E	L	E	M	I	N	I	R	R	S			
R	A	P	H	U	O	I	R	L	C	L	I	P	U	M	O	E		
A	M	A	T	I	N	G	K	E	S	H	I	P	L	O	O	S		
T	Y	R	I	A	T	O	E	R	T	A	N	R	I	O	C	V		
S	I	E	O	M	A	T	I	N	E	H	I	E	R	I	T	I		
K	R	E	L	E	I	O	R	N	I	E	P	E	T	M	A	D		
G	F	A	B	O	S	E	O	N	O	R	N	O	A	N	E			
C	A	N	I	S	R	A	T	I	S	B	O	O	A	R	S	O		
B	L	U	C	K	Y	O	T	I	S	E	M	T	I	C	Y	T		
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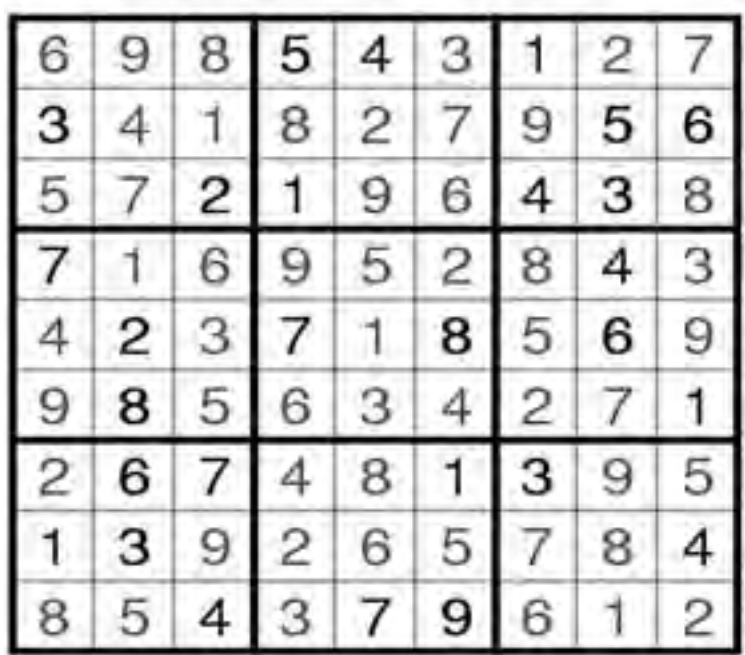
AIRBAG	ALL I NEED	BLACK STAR	BLOW OUT	BODYSNATCHERS	BONES	CREEP	ELECTIONEERING	FAUST ARP	FITTER HAPPER
HIGH AND DRY	HUNTING BEARS	IN LIMBO	JUST	KARMA POLICE	KID A	KNIVES OUT	LET DOWN	LUCKY	LURGIE
MORNING BELL	MY FIOR LUNG	NICE DREAM	NO SURPRISES	HAIDE	OPTIMISTIC	PARANOID ANDROID	PLANET TELEX	PROVE YOURSELF	
PYRAMID SONG	RECKONER	RIPCORD	SALU	THE BENDS	THE TOURIST	TREEFINGERS	VEGETABLE	VIDEOTAPE	

The hidden song is: SURTERRANEAN HOMESICK ALIEN

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2019



In this file photo, Sesame Street Live characters (left to right) Ernie, Bert, Elmo, Abby Cadabby, Zoe and Cookie Monster (front) celebrate the renaming of the corner of 31st Street and Eighth Avenue to 'Sesame Street' outside Madison Square Garden in New York. — AFP Photos

AT 50, SESAME STREET STILL GOING STRONG – AND BIG HONOR AWAITS

Generations of children around the world have grown up learning their ABCs and 123s from the lovable muppets on "Sesame Street," and as the pioneering television program turns 50, it's as popular as ever. It's also about to earn one of America's top cultural awards, to go along with a pile of nearly 200 Emmys-at a gala in Washington on Sunday, it will be the first TV show to earn the Kennedy Center Honors.

Since its debut in November 1969 on American public television, the famous address has taken on many forms, in more than 150 countries. In Afghanistan, it's "Baghch-e-Simsim." In Latin America, it's "Plaza Sesamo." And in Arabic-speaking countries, it's "Iftah Ya Simsim." But the message-one that an estimated 86 million American children alone have watched and absorbed-is the same: the importance of education, inclusiveness, acceptance and kindness.

It just happens to be delivered by a cast of colorful characters from Bert and Ernie to Big Bird, Elmo and Oscar the Grouch. They mingle with children-and a massive rotating cast of celebrity guest stars-to teach children the basics in a captivating mix of live action, songs, puppetry and laughter. "They figured out that if in 30 seconds you could sell toothpaste and soft drinks, why couldn't you sell how to count, ABCs, decent social manners and behavior?" Robert Thompson, a professor of pop culture at Syracuse University, told AFP.

Winning formula

"Sesame Street" was the brainchild of Joan Ganz Cooney and Lloyd Morrisett, who co-founded the nonprofit Children's Television Workshop (now known as Sesame Workshop) in 1968. The following year, the show launched-and just a few years later, was already an American icon. The pair will accept the Kennedy Center Honors award on behalf of the program, which also featured the artistry of the late Muppets creator Jim Henson. "Yes, it was entertaining. But it really did try to teach a series of substantial pieces of curriculum. There were lessons taught on Sesame Street," Thompson said.

"It was often like school-very entertaining school, but school nevertheless." And as the show was carried on public television network PBS, the series was able to reach children from all back-grounds-contributing to its overwhelming popularity. "Sesame Street really aimed at a demographic, a target audience that didn't necessarily have the luxury of other kinds of curriculum," Thompson noted. "There were immigrants, Spanish speakers and people of color on 'Sesame Street,'" he added-a welcome haven of diversity, even in 1970s America.

Going global

The show about what Thompson calls a "naively good and happy place" slowly gathered steam, and gradually was exported around the world, with

countries offering their unique spins. In the 1980s, as he presented a cultural exchange program with the then Soviet Union, US president Ronald Reagan went so far as to express the hope that young Soviets would watch "Sesame Street."

In South Africa, the show featured an HIV-positive character. In Afghanistan, the female character Zari promoted gender equality. In Ethiopia, Tsehai the giraffe spoke in Amharic about deforestation. In the United States, "Sesame Street" has featured everyone from first ladies to actors, to pop stars to sports icons to United Nations leaders. Michelle Obama appeared to promote her campaign against obesity. Hillary Clinton appeared to discuss health tips. NBA legend Kareem Abdul-Jabbar talked with Big Bird about subtraction.

"For 50 years, the cozy little neighborhood has taught us much more than numbers and words," Abdul-Jabbar wrote in a column for The Hollywood Reporter earlier this year. "While we can count on Count von Count to give us the good word on numbers, the other characters preach the gospel of compassion, kindness and fairness." Beyond the nostalgia factor for Generation X parents who grew up watching the show, its evergreen success comes from its ability to adapt, taking on issues as they come.

Cookie Monster has embraced healthier eating habits. Oscar the Grouch no longer lives in a garbage bag, but in a recycling bin. This year, the US show welcomed Karli, a Muppet foster child.



So how long can the show run? Sesame Workshop now produces the show in partnership with premium cable network HBO, though content is still available on PBS with a short delay. Will its streaming home on HBO Max be enough in the era of YouTube? For Thompson, "those kind of values are never going to go out of style." — AFP

Big Bird (left) and other Sesame Street puppet characters pose next to street sign at West 64th Street and Broadway in New York on the eve of the 40th anniversary of the broadcast of the children's television show.



A person dressed as 'Sesame Street' character Elmo greets people on 42nd Street in New York.



In this file photo, US Former First Lady Michelle Obama dances alongside Sesame Street character Elmo during an event announcing free licensing of Sesame Street characters to promote and market fresh fruit and vegetables.



Sesame Street character Cookie Monster shows a large cookie with the figure five to celebrate the fifth anniversary of Hollywood theme park Universal Studios Japan in Osaka, while other characters Ernie (center) and Bert smile. Generations of children around the world have grown up learning their ABCs and 123s from the lovable muppets on 'Sesame Street,' and as the pioneering television program turns 50, it's as popular as ever.



Jennifer Lopez

living the dream of 'every girl from the Bronx'

The 39-year-old star is engaged baseball icon Alex Rodriguez - who used to play for the New York Yankees - and Jennifer has admitted she feels like a lucky lady. During her appearance on 'Saturday Night Live', the 'Jenny from the Block' hit-maker - who was born in New York - explained: "I got what every girl from the Bronx dreams of: getting proposed to by a Yankee." Jennifer has been married three times previously, to Ojani Noa, Cris Judd and Marc Anthony. But earlier this year, the pop star insisted she didn't need to marry Alex at that time. Jennifer - who has 11-year-old twins Maximilian and Emme with her ex-husband Marc - explained: "Among our children and work and all the wonderful things that happen, we are really living our best years. "We are grateful for this and we do not need anything else at the moment. We have to do things at our own pace." The 'Second Act' star also confessed that having kids had changed the way she views marriage. She shared: "I think I've understood that marriage takes a lot more than just falling in love and sharing a home together. "In my case, my first responsibility is my children and making sure as a mother that I'm creating the best possible home for them.



Saint West

had a dinosaur-themed birthday party

The four-year-old - who is the son of Kim Kardashian West and Kanye West - marked his birthday with the 'Jurassic Jewelry' themed bash. The outside party was jungle-themed, and had a nest of dinosaur eggs, greenery and a fog machine to complete the look. There was also a "Jurassic Jewelry" station whilst the kids got to dress as dinosaurs, donning claws and tails. In one video, Kim can be heard saying: "Look at Saint as the dinosaur. Don't be scared. It's just your brother with a mask." Meanwhile, Kim previously took to social media to pay tribute to her son Saint. She said: "I have no words to describe how much I love your smile and those curls of yours Saint! You bring so much joy into my soul. You are so kind, loving and just so thoughtful and sweet! I am so happy today if your 4th birthday and We get to celebrate how much you've grown! Happy birthday my sweet sweet Sainty. (When I say to him my sweet sweet Sainty, he says back to me my sweet sweet sweet sweet Momma, the best momma in the world and the only momma I ever want! HOW CAN YOU NOT MELT AT HIS SWEETNESS) (sic)" Whilst Khloe added: "He's honestly one of the sweetest humans I know on this earth!!!!!! I'm melting by your caption and his face (sic)"

Kerry Katona

has turned to religion after 'rocky' year

The 39-year-old singer - whose ex-husband, George Kay, passed away earlier this year - has revealed she takes a Bible with her when she is on the road. In a lengthy Instagram post, Kerry - whose message featured a photo of her Bible and a notebook - told her followers: "Good morning you beautiful people well I'm away now on panto but bring a little bit of home with me... my gratitude book and me Bible! "I'm so grateful for so many different things even for my rocky road it's led me to where I am today. learn from your past mistakes embrace and accept them and hold your hands

up to them! "It's almost end of a year and in my family's case as many of you it's been a very tough year but again I'm grateful I'm happy and I'm extremely blessed I know they're still going to be bumps on the road no family is perfect. "Life isn't always easy but that's what makes it fun the challenges ahead the new adventure we face we've got this people let's do this s**t! (sic)" Kerry previously band-ed George a "psychopath" and claimed she was "happy" he died whilst their five-year-old daughter Dylan-Jorge was still young.



Rosie Huntington Whiteley

gives credit to her parents

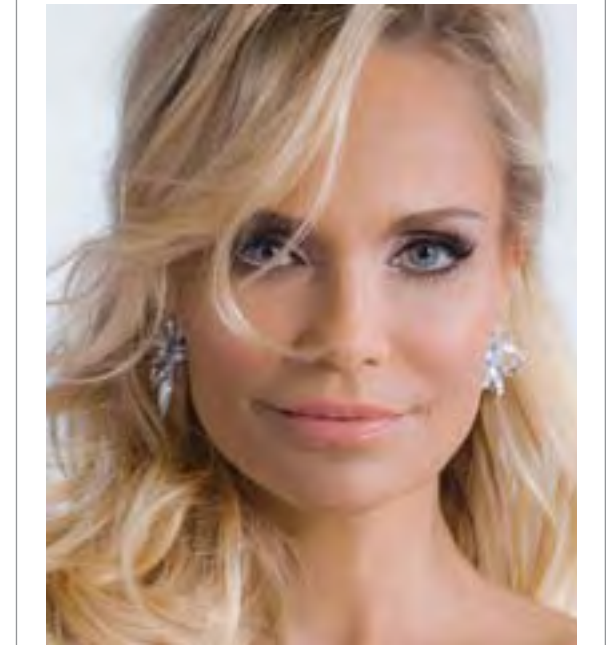


The 32-year-old model - who has two-year-old son Jack with fiancé Jason Statham - says her mom and dad help her stay grounded and always tell her to grab a hold of the "once in a lifetime opportunities" she is lucky to be handed. On the advice they gave her when she decided to leave school to embark on a full-time career in modeling, she recalled: "I remember my mum saying to me - I had a bit of breakdown - and she said to me, 'Your father and I will support whatever you do. 'This sounds like a once in a lifetime opportunity and I think you should run with it because it seems to be going pretty good.' "And so at 17 I decided to leave school, go full-time, and I'd spend a lot of time in Paris and in Europe, I went to New York for two weeks and then I called my mum and was like, 'I'm not coming home, I've bought my first apartment', and she was like, 'Great, go for it'. It's truly been the biggest gift my parents could of given me as the encouragement to fly and to let me go." The blonde beauty also admitted that it makes her anxious for the day her little boy starts making his first career and life choices. She added to the 'Pretty Big Deal with Ashley Graham' podcast: "This is the thing, now being a mum I look back on that and I think, 'Gosh'. "Everyday I'm with my son I think, 'That's one last day I have of you in my arms.' "You really start to think of these things. "That's why I've always consider it of being the greatest gift that they could ever give me was to give me the encouragement, and the support, and still to this day, I know they're there in the same house I grew up in.

Kristin Chenoweth

overwhelmed when she met birth mom

The 51-year-old actress and singer was adopted at birth and was so thrilled to find her "incredible" biological mother. Speaking to Katie Couric for a YouTube video, she said: "No one knows this, but when I walked in the door, she said, 'You're that girl?!' She had seen me on The Tonight Show ten years prior. Her uncle had said, 'Lynn, there's a girl on there that acts just like you.' "She's incredible. An incredible person. And when I met her she said, 'Can you ever forgive me?' And I said, 'Forgive you? You gave me life. And my parents Junie and Jerry gave me a life. The chance at a life.' And I'm so grateful for her." Kristin previously admitted she "lucky" to be adopted. She shared: "I can honestly say being adopted was one of the best things to ever happen to me. It was never something that was hidden from me and it is not something I have ever been ashamed of. I recognize how fortunate I am to have parents who love and support me unconditionally. The fact that they are not my biological parents does not change the fact that they are simply, my parents. Not everyone can say that, but I count myself lucky to have a birth mother who loved me enough to know she wasn't ready to be a mom. I'm lucky that I have wonderful parents who chose me. I often say adoption is a full-circle blessing and I truly believe it. Adopted children were not abandoned, we were chosen."



Harry Judd

suffers from 'dad guilt'

The McFly drummer can't help but feel "guilty and upset" when he is on the road with his band and is away from his family: wife Izzy and their three-year-old daughter Lola and two-year-old son Kit. Writing in Closer magazine, Harry commented: "I recently read there's now an emerging trend of 'dad guilt', because men are working so long hours that they feel they miss out on being at home with their children. "I do completely understand how these dads feel, because when I'm working - for example, McFly are touring next year - I can be on the road for six or seven days a week for four weeks on the trot, so I'll miss out on seeing my family, doing the nursery runs and reading stories to them. I feel both guilty and upset, because I'm missing them." Harry accepts he has been "fortunate" to have spent long periods of time with his children since they were born, whereas some fathers have to be away from their kids a lot due to the demands of their jobs. He said: "When McFly was at the peak of its fame, my wife Izzy and I hadn't had our kids yet, and since they've been born, I've been fortunate enough to have long periods of time being a stay-at-home dad." The 33-year-old musician admits that he is "constantly" questioning his parenting skills but no matter he is always trying his best.



Jennifer Aniston

'so close' to getting another dog

The White Shepherd - who she shared with ex Justin Theroux - sadly passed away in the summer and Jennifer admits she has been thinking about getting another dog. She told People magazine: "Oh God, I've come so close [to getting another]. And my friend Ellen DeGeneres, as you know, loves nothing more than to bombard me with extremely heartbreaking photographs of animals that need homes. And by the way, if I could have a llama, a pig, an alpaca, sheep, goats, I would. But I have to be very sensitive to [her dogs] Clyde and Sophie because it's all about whether they are going to be happy." Jennifer and her former husband Justin revealed the sad news back in July, sharing pictures from her funeral and a photo of them holding hands at the funeral. He wrote: "Tonight, at sunset, after a heroic struggle ... our most loyal family member and protector, Dolly A. laid down her sword and shield. She was surrounded by her entire family. 'The one that never deserts, the one that never proves ungrateful... is the dog- faithful and true, even in death.'-George Vest. Rest In Peace Dolly. #adoptdontshop. #rescuedog. (sic)" Jennifer previously had revealed that the Mexican-born White Shepherd was named after Dolly Parton, to the shock of the music legend.

Lily James, Matt Smith

still living together

The 30-year-old actress and Matt, 37, dated from 2014 until recently - but the high-profile duo are still living together, according to an insider. The source told The Sun on Sunday newspaper's Biz on Sunday column: "Lily still has a place she could return to but she hasn't yet." The celebrity duo recently decided to go their separate ways, after a long period of things not being "right" between them. A source explained: "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." 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? "Every day unveils something different. But children and family are what I'd put at the top of that list." He also said: "Essentially, the purpose of us all is to procreate." Lily also previously spoke about wanting to tie the knot with Matt, although she admitted her thoughts on marriage change frequently.





Actor Will Smith talks to the media after The World's Big Sleep Out event in Times Square on December 7, 2019 in New York. — AFP Photos



People hug while taking part in The World's Big Sleep Out event in Times Square.



People sleep outside while taking part in The World's Big Sleep Out event in Times Square.

'EMOTIONAL' SMITH CAMPAIGNS AGAINST NY HOMELESSNESS

Will Smith still feels "emotional" about homelessness years after playing a destitute man in one of his most acclaimed film roles, the Hollywood star has told charity campaigners braving a fierce New York winter night to sleep rough. Hundreds of people had gathered in Times Square on Saturday, rugged up and ready to bunk down in freezing temperatures, in a campaign to raise funds for what organizers said was record homelessness globally.

Smith told the crowd that his Oscar-nominated role in "The Pursuit of Happyness" - a 2007 biopic of a salesman forced to live on the streets of San Francisco with his young son - was a "life-changing experience" that had allowed him to understand the misery of poverty. "It makes me emotional thinking about it right now," Smith said. "To not have a place to go and to be able to lay your head down with your children at night is a horrendous tragedy." Smith also charmed crowds

with a "bedtime story" — a rap rendition of the theme tune to his 1990s hit sitcom "The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air."

People in over 50 cities around the world slept on the streets to support the World's Big Sleep Out campaign, the charity said in a Saturday statement, adding that funds from the New York event would be donated to the UN Children's Fund. "In New York City alone, more people are now homeless than at any time since the Great Depression," the statement said. "Over 62,000 people in New York, including 22,000 kids, will sleep in shelters tonight and the number of homeless people and refugees in cities around the world continues to hit record highs with each passing year." — AFP

People get ready to sleep outside while taking part in The World's Big Sleep Out event in Times Square.



'Valley of Souls' triumphs at Marrakesh film festival



Moroccan actress Mouna Fettou receives a tribute during the 18th Marrakech International Film Festival in Marrakesh.



US actor Robert Redford poses after receiving a career tribute at the 18th edition of the Marrakech International Film Festival, in Marrakesh, Morocco.



Colombian director Nicolas Rincon Gille's "Valley of Souls", the story of a father's solitary search for the bodies of his murdered sons, won top prize Saturday at the Marrakesh film festival. It follows the journey of Jose, who comes home from a night of fishing to discover that paramilitaries have killed his two sons and dumped their bodies in the river. So he sets off in a canoe to try to find their bodies and give them a proper burial.

Marrakesh's 18th annual festival was attended by top cinema stars such as Harvey Keitel, Marion Cotillard, Tilda Swinton and Robert Redford, who received a lifetime achievement award. Toby Wallace won Best Actor for his role in the Australian comedy "Babyteeth", directed by Shannon Murphy. Nichola Burley and Roxanne Scrimshaw shared the Best Actress prize for British comedy "Lynn + Lucy", directed by Fyza Boulifa. Tunisia's Ala Eddine Slim was named Best Director for "Tlamech", a drama about a soldier who deserts the army after his mother's death. — AFP

Moroccan actresses Lubna Azabal (left), Maryam Touzani (center) and Nisrin Erradi attend the 18th Marrakech International Film Festival in Marrakesh.

Man eats \$120,000 piece of art - banana on the wall

The move was bananas... or maybe the work was just too appealing. A performance artist shook up the crowd at the Art Basel show in Miami Beach on Saturday when he grabbed a banana that had been duct-taped to a gallery wall and ate it. The banana was, in fact, a work of art by Italian artist Maurizio Cattelan titled "Comedian" and sold to a French collector for \$120,000. In a video posted on his Instagram account, David Datuna, who describes himself as a Georgian-born American artist living in New York, walks up to the banana and pulls it off the wall with the duct tape attached.

"Art performance ... hungry artist," he said, as he peeled the fruit and took a bite. "Thank you, very good." A few bystanders could be heard giggling before a flustered gallery official whisked him to an adjoining space for questioning. But the kerfuffle was resolved without a food fight. "He did not destroy the art work. The banana is the idea," Lucien Terras, director of museum relations for Galerie Perrotin, told the Miami Herald.

As it turns out, the value of the work

is in the certificate of authenticity, the newspaper reported. The banana is meant to be replaced. A replacement banana was taped to the wall about 15 minutes after Datuna's stunt. "This has brought a lot of tension and attention to the booth and we're not into spectacles," Terras said. "But the response has been great. It brings a smile to a lot of people's faces." Gallery director Peggy Leboeuf said that no legal action was planned against Datuna.

"He was not arrested, but we asked him to leave the booth and to leave the fair," she said. "We have his contact and everything, so we can go further, but I don't think we will." Cattelan is perhaps best known for his 18-carat, fully functioning gold toilet called "America" that he had once offered on loan to US President Donald Trump. The toilet, valued at around \$5 to \$6 million, was in the news again in September when it was stolen from Britain's Blenheim Palace, the birthplace of wartime leader Winston Churchill, where it had been on display. — AFP



Maurizio Cattelan's "Comedian" is on view at Art Basel Miami 2019 at Miami Beach Convention Center on Dec 6, 2019. — AFP



Raynald Aeschlimann and Daniel Craig



Paul Wesley



Antoni Porowski



Sean O'Pry



OMEGA CELEBRATES NEW JAMES BOND WATCH IN NEW YORK

As the trusted timepiece of the world's favorite spy, the Swiss watchmaker OMEGA has hosted an event in New York to celebrate its newest James Bond watch. Guests were welcomed at The Top of the Standard, where the new Seamaster Diver 300M 007 Edition was revealed for the very first time. Actor Daniel Craig, as well as producers Michael G Wilson and Barbara Broccoli made a special appearance for the occasion.

James Bond has been wearing an OMEGA since Golden Eye in 1995 - the choice of Lindy Hemming, the costume designer who worked on all the Bond films between Golden Eye and Casino Royale. As guests arrived at the event in New York, they were greeted by a full display of the unique Seamaster watches worn by the British spy over the past 25 years. 04.12.2019 2/3

OMEGA is a company of the Swatch Group, the largest manufacturer and distributor of watches and

jewellery in the world. Raynald Aeschlimann, the President and CEO of OMEGA, welcomed everyone inside and introduced the new watch. He said, "James Bond shares many of the same qualities as OMEGA, from exquisite style to adventurous spirit and exacting precision. We can't wait for everyone to see the new timepiece he'll be wearing on screen."

Speaking about his involvement in the design process, Daniel Craig said, "When working with OMEGA, we decided that a lightweight watch would be key for a military man like 007. I also suggested some vintage touches and colours to give the watch a unique edge. The final piece looks incredible." Producers Michael G Wilson and Barbara Broccoli said, "Bond's military experience is a fundamental part of 007's character, so it is fitting that OMEGA's new design so cleverly reflects that aspect of his identity. Bond and OMEGA have been synonymous for almost a quarter of a century now, so as we pre-

pare to launch the 25th Bond movie, the timing is perfect to launch the new Bond watch."

The new Seamaster Diver 300M 007 Edition has been purposefully built with the needs of 007 in mind. Crafted from lightweight Grade 2 Titanium, it includes an innovative titanium mesh bracelet, as well as military-style engravings and a vintage appearance thanks to its "tropical" brown aluminum dial and bezel. This non-limited watch will be placed in OMEGA's iconic current collection and available to customers worldwide from February. Amongst the many guests in New York were a number of familiar faces including Paul Wesley, Antoni Porowski, and Sean O'Pry. As an added surprise, the spy-inspired night was concluded with a set from world-renowned DJ, Honey Dijon.



Fish farmers give peckish pelicans free lunch

Migratory pelicans have long raided Israeli fish farms, which try to deter them with loudspeakers, laser beams and by firing blank rounds from rifles. In their desperation, they have come up with another way: offering the birds a free lunch. An estimated 50,000 pelicans stop off in Israel during their annual migration from the Balkans to Africa, where they enjoy a mild winter before returning to Europe.

They rest and feed in the Middle Eastern country for weeks, causing chaos for fish farmers, whose outdoor commercial pools and reservoirs provide rich pickings. Before the pelicans reach Israel, "they have nowhere to stop and eat", said Eli Sharir, general manager of the Israel Fish Breeders Association. The impact on the fish farms is enormous. "We're talking millions of shekels a year," he said.

So six years ago Israeli fisherman came up with a solution — providing alternative feed with unmarketable fish to try to keep pelicans away from the commercial pools. One recent day on a reservoir in northern Israel, hundreds of great white pelicans swooped down to position themselves in the shallow waters, eyeing a truck backing up to the water's edge. Then the truck dropped its cargo of thousands of small, live, flapping fish into the water, where they were almost instantly scooped up by the pelicans' nimble beaks.

Luxury stop-over

Pisciculture is limited in Israel, pro-

ducing just 10 percent of the fish consumed domestically. But it is vital for the small agricultural communities of Emek Hamaayanot, the lush area below the Gilboa mountain range in northeastern Israel often dubbed the "valley of the springs." So to protect their livelihoods, the farmers in the Sharon region, north of Tel Aviv, and Hula valley, near Israel's eastern border with Lebanon, have joined forces with the Nature and Parks Authority to create the alternative feeding sites.

But not everyone believes it's a good idea. Critics say the birds may get used to making the luxurious stop-over in Israel - and may even be enticed to stay the entire winter. So fish farmers still rely on a toolkit of other ways to scare off the birds - without harming them, as pelicans are protected under international conventions.

Dor Maimon, who works for the area's farmers in protecting produce from wild animals, uses a remote-controlled, 1.5 meter long motorboat to buzz groups of pelicans in a reservoir near Beit Alfa, sending the birds spiraling into the sky. Nitzan Nadan, who manages the Gilboa Fish cooperative, said he spends around 600,000 shekels (\$172,000) a year on measures including vehicle-mounted loudspeakers and firing blank rifle rounds. At night, projectors and laser beams are used to keep the birds away. "The pelicans have to eat and eat in our pools," he said. "They cause damage you can't even begin to estimate."

Ecological causes

In the past pelican sightings close to Israeli fish pools were rare, but more have come because of ecological problems elsewhere, say experts. Marshlands and lakes in nearby Turkey, Lebanon and Syria have dried out in recent decades, and even Israeli fishing pools have diminished in number for economic reasons, said Amit Dolev, chief ecologist of the northern district of Israel's Nature and Parks Authority.

"This means that the remaining (water bodies) are nearly the only spots available," he said. What makes things worse for Israel is the fact that shooting the birds is accepted in neighboring countries, causing the pelicans to avoid pit stops there. "Israel is something of an island of nature preservation in the Middle East in many aspects, including this one," Dolev said.

To Dolev, broader global cooperation in monitoring the pelicans could help find a solution that would aid the struggling Israeli farmers. "The issue is certainly global," he said, noting the pelicans' Balkan origins and African destination. "We're basically dealing with it on our own." The fish farmers said they received no regular help from the state in footing the expenses of the alternative feedings and deterrents. "We expect help from the world, from Europe, to finance the high costs," Sharir said.— AFP



Great white pelicans eat fish provided by Israeli farmers at a water reservoir in the Emek Hefer valley north of the Israeli city of Tel Aviv. — AFP photos

Terence Blanchard, the jazz trumpeter making opera history

Atop-tier jazz trumpeter and Spike Lee's go-to film score master for three decades, Terence Blanchard is now set to make history as the first black composer to stage a production at New York's esteemed Metropolitan Opera. The storied institution's plans to produce Blanchard's second opera, "Fire Shut Up In My Bones," come 136 years after it opened its doors, having never before staged a black composer's art. It's progress "bigger than me," the 11-time Grammy winning, Oscar-nominated artist said. "It says more about what's going on in our country; what's going on in the world of art... and the statement that this makes."

The 57-year-old, sporting bold, thick eyeglass frames, said that even in "the progressive experiment called the United States," society has "a long way to go in this country in dealing with racial issues, in dealing with equality." "We still have a lot of people who want to turn back the hands of time," he said from his suite in Washington's Mayflower Hotel, hours ahead of a tribute to his career at the 2019 Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz Competition & Gala. "I have a feeling it's going to be a momentous thing, and not because it's me," he said of his opera's historic staging. "Just because it is."

'Mixed bag of emotions'

Blanchard's second opera entitled "Fire Shut Up In My Bones" is based on the searing memoir of Charles Blow, a columnist at The New York Times. The book recounts his coming-of-age as a black boy in the US Deep South, grappling with racism, sexuality and abuse. Composing music for heavy stories such as this one requires "putting your ego aside" and letting the notes "get out of your system," said Blanchard, who also scored the just-released film "Harriet" about the abolitionist Harriet Tubman.

"You can't think about how people are going to react when you're writing," said the composer, a necklace emblazoned with Tubman's image around his neck. "You have to think about what is this story - how do I relate to this story? How do I want to tell this story?" The opera premiered in St Louis and is set to appear in New York as early as the 2021-22 season. The Met's September announcement that it would stage the show came just as the house opened its season with "Porgy and Bess" - an acclaimed George Gershwin opera centered on African-Americans but written by a team of white people.

Blanchard said he felt a "mixed bag of emotions" when his own news went public: "While it's a true honor, we all know I'm not the first qualified African American composer to have an opera." "For me personally, it's a huge thing, just

because of where I come from," said the jazz star from New Orleans, describing the segregation his own father faced as an aspiring musician there. "To go from that — a person who never had an opportunity to sing opera, or was not given an opportunity — for his son to all of a sudden have a moment in time where we're producing an opera at the Met; that's huge."



Renown trumpeter and composer Terence Blanchard performs after receiving the Herbie Hancock Institute of Jazz 2019 Founder's Award at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, on December 3, 2019.

Spike Lee connection

Blanchard is a show biz regular: he boasts a vibrant career that's included working with greats like Hancock, Dr. John and Stevie Wonder. He says it's his decades-long relationship with the filmmaker Lee that "has made me grow in ways I could never had imagined." "He has a very unique cinematic style," Blanchard said of the legendary, Oscar-winning director famous for films including "Do The Right Thing," "Jungle Fever," "Malcolm X" and "BlackKkKlansman."

Blanchard's score for the latter film — about a black detective who devises a scheme to infiltrate the local white supremacist Ku Klux Klan chapter — nabbed him his first Academy Award nomination. "Film has helped me immensely in writing for opera, because I got a chance to write for orchestra," Blanchard said. Accustomed to juggling several projects at once, the artist said it's important "not to limit myself." "I want to leave this planet with no regrets," he said. "And regrets, for me, are based in fear. "To overcome your fear, you have to go out there and stick your neck out." — AFP

Classifieds

Monday, December 9, 2019



STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



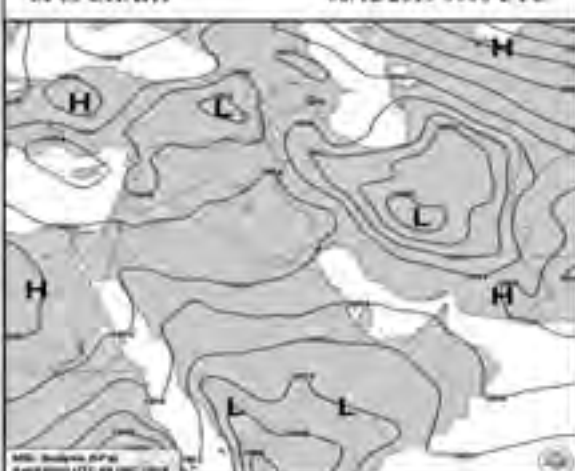
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Mostly sunny with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 38 km/h

BY NIGHT: Rather cold with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h with a chance for light fog forming especially over northern areas.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 08/12/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	23 °C	15 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	13 °C			
ABDALY	20 °C	12 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	20 °C	12 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	22 °C	16 °C			
AHMADI	23 °C	16 °C			
NUWAISIB	24 °C	14 °C			
WAFRA	22 °C	13 °C			
SALMY	19 °C	08 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	12/09	Sunny and some scattered clouds will appear	21 °C	08 °C	VRB-NE	06 - 28 km/h
Tuesday	12/10	Cloudy with a chance for scattered rain especially over southern areas and a chance for	19 °C	13 °C	VRB-NE	06 - 28 km/h
Wednesday	12/11	Partly cloudy	22 °C	09 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 32 km/h
Thursday	12/12	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain at night	22 °C	10 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:07
Sunrise	06:31
Zuhri	11:40
Asr	14:31
Sunset	16:50
Isha	18:12


RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	16 °C
MAX. RH	93 %
MIN. RH	53 %
MAX. Wind	S 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	2.34mm

CHANGE OF NAME


MATRIMONIAL

I, John Ivon D Souza (old name) S/o Dornnic Dsouza residing at Door No. 4-56(1), Sonu compound, Padubelle Post, Via Shirva, Kaup Taluk Udupi District of Karnataka. Have changed my name as John Ivon Dsouza (new name) for all purpose vide affidavit dated 05-12-2019 sworn before notary Nagaraja Hegde, Udupi. **9-12-2019**

Reputed high educated Goan Catholic family girl 38 yrs. 5'3" slim, fair, good looking, convent educated graduate B.Pharm. Having her own medical pharmacy in Goa. Seeks alliance from well established Catholic bachelor below 42 yrs. Good looking, clean habit, preferably doctor, engineer, CA or professional businessman from Kuwait/Gulf/abroad. Send details with family background and photo email: carren@yahoo.com **(C 5692) 6-12-2019**



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	
PIA	22421044	
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8	
Indian Airlines	22456700	
Oman Air	22958787	
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1	
Aeroflot	22404838/9	



Flight Schedule

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Monday 9/12/2019										Departure Flights on Monday 9/12/2019									
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	RBG	553	Alexandria	14:05	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	AXB	890	Mangalore	12:10	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
PIA	239	Sialkot	00:05	KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	JZR	215	Jeddah	00:05	JZR	890	Beirut	12:55	JZR	215	Jeddah	00:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	UAE	877	Dubai	14:10	AIC	982	Ahmedabad/Chennai	00:05	JZR	115	Doha	13:00	QTR	1075	Doha	00:05
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	KAC	752	ELQ	14:20	MSC	412	Asyut	00:15	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25	KAC	781	Jeddah	00:15
JZR	716	Sohag	00:35	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	QTR	1093	Doha	00:25	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30	JZR	123	Dubai	00:35
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	KAC	672	Dubai	14:40	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35	KAC	105	London	14:00	UAE	872	Dubai	01:10
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	774	Riyadh	14:40	PIA	240	Sialkot	01:05	KAC	105	London	14:00	UAE	872	Dubai	01:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:45	AIC	990	Mumbai	01:10	RBG	554	Alexandria	14:45	QTR	1079	Doha	01:10
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	742	Dammam	14:45	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10	KNE	382	Taif	15:00	KAC	742	Dammam	01:10
KAC	102	London	00:55	KAC	364	Colombo	14:50	JZR	111	Doha	01:55	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10	GFA	222	Bahrain	02:00
KAC	504	Beirut	01:05	KAC	118	New York	14:50	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00	UAE	878	Dubai	15:40	KAC	775	Riyadh	02:00
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KAC	286	Dhaka	14:55	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50	KAC	563	Amman	02:30
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	KAC	618	Doha	15:00	KAC	677	Dubai	02:10	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	02:30
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:10	KAC	677	Istanbul	02:10	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	02:30
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	THY	773	Istanbul	02:20	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	02:30
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:25	JZR	119	Dubai	02:25	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	02:30
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	JZR	222	Riyadh	15:30	KAC	417	Manila	02:30	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	02:30
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:30	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	02:30
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	412	Bangkok	15:40	IGO	1765	Delhi	02:55	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	02:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	562	Amman	15:40	UAE	854	Addis Ababa	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	03:05
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	KLM	446	Dubai	03:40	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	03:40
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	04:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:55	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	04:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR	152	Mashhad	16:00	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	04:00
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25	QTR	1087	Muscat	04:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	04:00
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35	QTR	1087	Abu Dhabi	04:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	04:00
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	116	Doha	16:40	QTR	1087	Cairo	04:15	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	04:15
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	FDB	051	Dubai	16:45	QTR	1087	Doha	04:20	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	04:20
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	KAC	546	Cairo	16:45	QTR	1087	Luxor	04:40	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	04:40
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	KAC	502	Beirut	16:45	QTR	1087	Chennai	05:10	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	05:10
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	KAC	516	Tehran	16:50	QTR	1087	Doha	05:30	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	05:30
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	SAW	705	Damascus	17:00	QTR	1087	Istanbul	05:30	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	05:30
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	FEQ	341	Sohag	17:20	QTR	1087	Bahrain	05:50	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	05:50
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:25	QTR	1087	Istanbul	06:25	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	06:25
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	06:35
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45	JZR	113	Doha	06:40	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	06:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	RJA	643	Amman	06:55	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	06:55
JZR	654	OSS	05:25	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15	JZR	121	Doha	07:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	07:05
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	JZR	302	Istanbul	18:15	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	07:15
JZR	502	Lahore	05:35	JZR	124	Dubai	18:20	UAE	874	Dubai	07:15	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	07:15
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:45	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30	KAC	413	Bangkok	07:30	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	07:30
UAE	873	Dubai	05:50	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30	KAC	413	Paris	07:35	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	07:35
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	JZR	306	Istanbul	18:55	RBG	214	Sohag	07:50	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	07:50
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:55	RJA	640	Amman	19:10	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	08:10
KAC	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:20	KAC	173	Munich	08:20	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	08:20
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	08:35
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	JZR	001	LGW	08:40	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	08:40
BAW	157	London	07:05	QTR	1090	Doha	19:35	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	09:00
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	KAC	744	Dammam	19:45	KAC	501	Beirut	09:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:00	KAC	563	Amman	09:00
RBG	213	Sohag	07:10	KAC	782	Jeddah	1												

Lebanon Sunni leaders back Hariri to return as premier

BEIRUT: Sunni Muslim leaders in protest-racked Lebanon have thrown their support behind ex-premier Saad Hariri to return to his post a month after he stepped down, a sidelined candidate said yesterday. Businessman Samir Khatib had been put forward as a likely contender to succeed Hariri, but he said a visit to the country's highest Sunni Muslim authority had indicated otherwise.

Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdellatif Deryan informed Khatib that "a consensus had been reached to name Saad Hariri as prime minister to form the next government", the 72-year-old businessman said. Khatib then met Hariri, who has stayed on in the role of caretaker premier and has supported him in his bid, to inform him of his withdrawal from the race, he said in televised comments.

Lebanon has been gripped by unprecedented cross-sectarian protests since Oct 17, denouncing perceived official mismanagement and corruption. Hariri stepped down less than two weeks into the nationwide movement, but a deeply divided political class has since failed to reach an agreement on a new premier. The names of several potential candidates were circulated in the media, but protesters rejected Khatib as being too close to traditional circles of power.

The president has called for mandatory parliamen-

tary consultations starting today to decide on a new premier. Yesterday evening, dozens of protesters gathered in central Beirut near a road leading to parliament closed off by security forces. Cabinet formation can drag on for months in the multi-confessional country, with Hariri taking almost nine months to reach an agreement with all political sides for the last one.

According to a complex political system that seeks to maintain a fragile balance between religious communities, Lebanon's prime minister is always a Sunni Muslim. Hariri has been prime minister on and off since 2009, stepping down and returning on two previous occasions. The 49-year-old follows in the footsteps of his father, late premier Rafiq Hariri, and is considered the traditional political leader of the country's Sunni Muslim community.

Lebanon desperately needs a new government to rebuild trust with both protesters demanding a cabinet of independent experts, and international donors able to provide financial aid. The Mediterranean country's economy is in free fall, even as the Lebanese struggle with a dollar liquidity crisis. The World Bank has projected negative growth of 0.2 percent in Lebanon for 2019, but now warns the recession could be even worse. Around a third of Lebanese live in poverty, and that figure could soon rise to half, it says. — AFP



BEIRUT: Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Saad Hariri (right) meets Lebanese businessman Samir Khatib yesterday. — AFP

Feisty Biden clings to top spot in 2020 Democratic race

WASHINGTON: He's supposedly too old, too moderate, too prone to campaign stumbles. But despite the criticism long circulating about Joe Biden, he has proven the most resilient candidate in the Democratic presidential nomination race - at least for now. The 77-year-old former US vice president is capping off a big week that has seen him take on a more aggressive tone on the campaign trail. Eleven months from the 2020 election, the elder statesman is still the national frontrunner in the race to take on President Donald Trump.

He was feeling so invigorated and pugnacious during his eight-day "No Malarkey" bus tour through early-voting Iowa that he challenged an obstinate voter to a push-up contest Thursday. "The Biden thing is the strangest thing I've ever seen in politics because the guy is up there in the air and everybody is just assuming he's going to come down," Barack's Obama's campaign guru David Axelrod told Politico recently. "But he's still driving, you know? He's still moving forward."

As Obama's deputy for eight years, Biden today has a commanding lead among African Americans, a critical constituency in the Democratic nomination battle. His blue-collar roots and appeal is also seen as a selling point to working-class white voters, many of whom may be frustrated with Trump and are looking for a viable alternative. Biden has slipped to fourth place in Iowa and New Hampshire, the two states that vote first in the nomination race.

But on the national stage he maintains a commanding lead with 28 percent support according to the RealClearPolitics polling average - far ahead of his progressive challengers Bernie Sanders on 16 percent and Elizabeth Warren on 14, and fellow moderate Pete Buttigieg on 11 percent. Biden's new ad branding Trump a global laughing stock was well-received, and footage of Biden confronting that Iowa voter went viral, giving millions a glimpse of the candidate showing fire in the belly. When the elderly voter, a retired farmer, accused Biden of helping his son Hunter Biden get a spot on the board of a Ukrainian gas company while his father was vice president, the candidate snapped. "You're a damn liar, man," Biden shot back.

Also this week Biden landed a key endorsement: Former Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry. Biden "helped President Obama make some of the toughest and loneliest decisions of a president," former secretary of state Kerry told voters at a Biden event Friday in Cedar Rapids. "That's what this is about. Seasoning. Experience."

Screams, goodbyes as dozens killed in...

Continued from Page 1

"Monu, brother, I am going to die today," the man, named Musharaff said in the recording of a call played by the ABP Hindi language news channel. "Please take care of my kids. I can't breathe. There are so many others here. Just can't breathe," he kept repeating in Hindi, eventually breaking down towards the end of the call. Authorities do not yet know if Musharaff survived the blaze.

One survivor, Sabi Abbas, told AFP he had just finished work and was about to go to sleep when he heard screams from the third floor. "I rushed to the floor and saw the wires were dangling and on fire as acrid smoke filled up the corridor," he said, adding that he ran out of the building with his wife and daughters.

The building was home to a number of manufacturing units producing items including schoolbags and packing materials which only aided the spread of the blaze, officials said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that the fire was "extremely horrific", as authorities said they would offer financial assistance to the victims' families and to survivors. Locals said the factory also made purses and jackets, and had just one entrance and 20 rooms on each floor that were connected by one internal stairway.

"Most of the casualties happened because of suffocation," witness Mohammed Khalil told AFP. "After the fire, people didn't have any way to get out and I believe many were asleep and because of the smoke, they got suffocated." Others told AFP they believed the fire started on the first floor, sparked by exposed wires, before spreading to an area used to store foam and plastic chairs.



CEDAR RAPIDS, Iowa: Democratic presidential candidate former US Vice president Joe Biden speaks at the Teamsters Vote 2020 Presidential Candidate Forum on Saturday. — AFP

Polls show Democrats want an electable candidate who can go toe to toe against the current president.

"Democrats have a burning desire to defeat Trump," Larry Sabato, director of the Center for Politics at University of Virginia, told AFP. "Most Democrats think Biden has the best chance of doing that - although it's not a slam dunk." Indeed less than two months before Iowa votes there is uncertainty about the Democratic field, including Biden. His debate performances have been hit or miss. He has struggled to raise money, trailing rivals like Buttigieg and Sanders in campaign contributions.

And billionaire Mike Bloomberg, the former mayor of New York, likely would have stayed out of the race if he believed fellow centrist Biden was a strong candidate. But Biden has exhibited staying power at least through 2019 - despite a campaign beset with problems - and Democratic strategists have looked on with a mixture of respect and bewilderment. During the first Democratic debate in June, Biden got attacked by Senator Kamala Harris for his previous positions on his civil rights record.

Biden was shaken. But he recovered, and now Harris, the only African-American woman in the field, has dropped out. Warren, who surged into a tie with the former vice president in early October, has since seen her campaign lose nearly half its support amid skepticism over her universal healthcare plan which Biden rejects as unrealistic. Former Obama cabinet member Julian Castro went after Biden hard in one of the debates - and Castro's long-shot campaign has flatlined. — AFP

Outside a nearby hospital morgue, anxious relatives and friends gathered to identify the bodies. Naushad Ahmad was looking desperately for his missing friend, who he was unable to reach on his mobile phone. "I have been to the factory and this tragedy was waiting to happen," he told AFP. "There was only one exit and entrance to the building... People didn't get a chance to escape."

Sajjamuddin Ahmad spent two hours searching for his father-in-law and brother-in-law before discovering they were dead, he told AFP. Families of the victims said they were mostly migrant workers from Bihar, one of India's most impoverished states. Some of them were paid just 1,000 rupees (\$14) a month, they said. Police and fire officials said at least 58 others were rescued. The flames had been extinguished and they did not expect to find more bodies, they added.

The cause of the blaze is not yet known but Delhi's fire services director told the Press Trust of India news agency that the site had been operating without the required fire safety clearances. The building's owner and manager were arrested later yesterday, police told PTI. Factories and small manufacturing units in big Indian cities are often located in old, cramped areas, where the cost of land is cheaper. Such units often also serve as sleeping quarters for poor, mostly migrant, workers, who save money by bedding down at their workplaces.

The blaze was the latest in a series of fire tragedies to hit India in recent years. In 2016, more than 100 people were killed after a massive explosion during a banned fireworks display in the southern state of Kerala. In 2011, at least 90 patients died after a fire in a Kolkata hospital. In 2004, 94 children burnt to death in a fire at a school in Kumbakonam in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. In Jan 2018, 17 workers were killed after a blaze in a plastic manufacturing facility in New Delhi. — Agencies

Lawmaker questions education minister...

Continued from Page 1

and Falah Al-Azab to the investigation panel of the ministers' trial court for suspected public fund violations over the appointment of ministry experts without any admission tests or interviews. The two ministers could face charges of mismanagement. The ministers were responsible for appointing over 560 justice experts,

whose appointments were nullified by the court of cassation last week.

The court said the process had involved serious violations of recruitment conditions such as being subjected to oral and written admission tests that would clearly assess the results and determine those who passed or failed. "Some of the involved experts were appointed through exemptions made by some senior officials at the experts department," said informed sources, noting that this led a number of lawyers to file cases to annul their appointment, while other legal solutions are being currently sought to reappoint those recruited according to regulations. "They may have to pass tests this month and immediately get appointed if they pass," the sources concluded.

Saudi gunman showed shooting...

Continued from Page 1

"We'll get to the bottom of it very quickly. The FBI on Saturday formally identified the attacker as Mohammed Alshamrani, 21, a second lieutenant in the Royal Saudi Air Force and a student naval flight officer.

The SITE Intelligence Group, which monitors jihadist media, said he had posted a short manifesto on Twitter prior to the attack that read: "I'm against evil, and America as a whole has turned into a nation of evil." "I hate you because every day you (are) supporting, funding and committing crimes not only against Muslims but also humanity."

The Twitter account that posted the manifesto - which also condemned US support for Israel and included a quote from Al-Qaeda's deceased leader Osama bin Laden - has been suspended. The shooter did not have any apparent ties to terror groups and no group has officially claimed the attack, the New York Times reported, citing an unnamed senior American official. However, "given that ISIS has very little to lose at this point, it wouldn't be surprising if it claimed the attack, regardless of the attacker's potential allegiances," tweeted SITE Director Rita Katz, referring to the Islamic State group.

Naval Air Station Pensacola hosts the US Navy's foreign military training programs, established in 1985 specifically for Saudi students before being expanded to other nationalities. The shooter was one of "a couple hundred" foreign students at the base, according to commanding officer Timothy Kinsella. Trump indicated the training program would now be under review. "We've been doing this with other countries, foreign countries. I guess we're going to have to look into the whole procedure, we'll start that immediately," he said.

Six Saudi nationals also assigned to the base were questioned after the attack, US media reported. Three were at the base and apparently filmed the shooting,

Diabetologist says Glucophage safe to...

Continued from Page 1

Finally, Dhahi urged all patients not to stop using Glucophage and consult their doctors and correct references such as the health ministry and Kuwait Diabetes Society for any related inquiries.

The investigation is part of the US FDA's broader push to investigate a range of drugs for the presence of NDMA, with heartburn drug Zantac being recalled this year for fear it contained NDMA. The FDA later added that levels of contamination in Zantac, also known as ranitidine, "are similar to the levels you would expect to be exposed to if you ate common foods like grilled or smoked meats".

European Union drugs watchdog EMA said it was asking companies to test metformin medicines in the EU for NDMA, reacting to findings in Singapore of NDMA impurity in some metformin products. EMA described the risk so far as very low, urging patients to continue taking their medication because the danger of not adequately controlling diabetes was far higher. The FDA said it would recommend recalls as appropriate.

The Washington Post said. The other three had flown into the US with the attacker and were based at training sites in Louisiana and Oklahoma, the Post said, citing an unnamed official. An uncle of Alshamrani, Saad bin Hantim Alshamrani, told CNN from Saudi Arabia that his nephew was "likable and mannered towards his family and the community." He said his nephew "has his religion, his prayer, his honesty and commitments".

The New York Times reported the airman first entered the United States in 2018, returned to Saudi Arabia, then re-entered the United States in February, and had reported for training at the base about three days before the attack. US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said during a public appearance on Saturday he was not ready to label it an act of terrorism.

Saudi Arabia's King Salman has denounced the shooting as a "heinous crime" and said the gunman "does not represent the Saudi people". The shooting marks a setback in the kingdom's efforts to cast off its longstanding reputation for promoting religious extremism after the Sept 11, 2001 attacks, in which 15 of the 19 hijackers were Saudis. Prince Khalid bin Salman, the king's younger son and the deputy defense minister, offered his "sincerest condolences" to the families of the victims.

Trump said King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country's de facto ruler, would "help out the families very greatly," though he did not specify how. Late on Saturday, the Navy identified the sailors killed in the attack as Joshua Watson, Mohammed Haitham and Cameron Walters.

Watson's younger brother said the 23-year-old, who reported to the base for flight training two weeks ago, "saved countless lives today with his own". "After being shot multiple times he made it outside and told the first response team where the shooter was and those details were invaluable," Adam Watson said in a Facebook post. "He died a hero and we are beyond proud but there is a hole in our hearts that can never be filled." A cousin of Arab American Haitham, Hani bin Ali Moqbel, wrote on Twitter: "God have mercy on you Mohammed, and ease your parent's pain after your loss. May you rest in heaven (We belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.)" — Agencies

The Canadian health regulator, in turn, said that it was not aware of any metformin products in Canada containing NDMA above acceptable limits, but was working closely with international regulatory partners on its assessment of the issue. It has also asked companies to test their products and is collecting samples from them to conduct its own testing, it added.

The FDA's investigation follows other countries' findings of low levels of NDMA in metformin drugs there, the agency said. Based on its information, the FDA added, NDMA in those drugs ranged within naturally occurring levels in food and water. "The FDA is investigating whether metformin in the US market contains NDMA, and whether it is above the acceptable daily intake limit of 96 nanograms," said Janet Woodcock, director of the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. The agency will "recommend recalls as appropriate if high levels of NDMA are found", she added in the statement.

Such action could put treatment out of reach for some sufferers, one expert said. "If these reports are true, it could be a big blow to many millions of people on this drug," said Ranit Mishori, a professor of family medicine at Georgetown University. "There are many other alternatives and other medication classes but many of them have side effects, are more expensive and some of the newest ones may not be covered by insurance."

Britain’s Joshua defeats Ruiz to reclaim heavyweight crown

‘Clash on the Dunes’: For the first time a world heavyweight title fight staged in Saudi

DIRIYAH: Britain’s Anthony Joshua reclaimed his world heavyweight crown from Andy Ruiz on Saturday, outclassing the Mexican-American to score a unanimous points victory. Joshua, who suffered a stunning knockout defeat to Ruiz in New York in June, produced a masterclass to regain his IBF, WBA and WBO titles in emphatic fashion.

Dominating from the outset, Joshua won by margins of 118-110 on two scorecards with the third judge making it 119-109. Billed as the “Clash on the Dunes”, the eagerly anticipated rematch marked the first time a world heavyweight title fight has been staged in Saudi Arabia.

And after entering the purpose built open-air arena at Diriyah, on the outskirts of the Saudi capital, just after midnight, it was Joshua who rose to the occasion with a stylish victory. The final scores in no way flattered Joshua, who frustrated his heavier opponent with superb movement while picking off Ruiz relentlessly with his jab.

Joshua, badly stung by his defeat to Ruiz at Madison Square Garden, was ecstatic after clinching a one-sided win. “The first time was so nice, I had to do it twice,” Joshua said as he celebrated becoming a two-time world heavyweight champion.

The 2012 Olympic champion revealed he had adapted his style after June’s loss to Ruiz, when he got drawn into a slugfest before being floored four times on his way to the first loss of his career. “I’m used to knocking guys out and last time, I realised that I hurt the man but I got caught coming in,” said Joshua, who improved to 23-1, 21 by knockout.

“No excuses, but I said to myself I’m going to correct it and come again.” “I just wanted to put on a great

boxing masterclass tonight and also show the sweet science of this lovely sport,” Joshua added. “It’s about hitting and not getting hit.”

‘TOO MUCH WEIGHT’: RUIZ

Ruiz had shocked onlookers at Friday’s weigh-in by tipping the scales at 283 pounds (128.4 kilograms), fully 15 pounds heavier than his weight in the first fight. Joshua by contrast came in at 237 pounds, his leaner, less bulky physique allowing him to dance around the ring for 12 rounds to leave Ruiz pawing at shadows.

Ruiz admitted he had prepared poorly for the rematch. “It was his night man,” Ruiz said. “I didn’t prepare as I should of. I gained too much weight. But I don’t want to make excuses, he won, he bossed me around.

“But if we do a third fight you best believe I’m going to get in the best shape of my life.” Pressed on his excess weight, Ruiz said it had “affected me a lot.” “I thought I was going to feel stronger and feel better, but on my next fight I’m going to get better prepared.”

Joshua established his dominance from the opening bell, feinting and changing direction to keep Ruiz at bay while simultaneously scoring with a series of stinging jabs. A jolting right hand towards the end of the first round opened up a cut above Ruiz’s left eye to draw roars from the large contingent of Joshua fans who had travelled to Saudi Arabia for the fight.

The remainder of the fight followed a similar pattern, with Joshua using his superior reach and movement to deny Ruiz any chance of unloading the sort of combinations that set up his win in June. Finally Ruiz managed to rock Joshua in the eighth, connecting with a stiff combination.



DIRIYAH: British boxer Anthony Joshua celebrates after winning the heavyweight boxing match between Andy Ruiz Jr. and Anthony Joshua for the IBF, WBA, WBO and IBO titles in Diriyah, near the Saudi capital. — AFP

But Joshua showed no signs of lasting damage from the exchange, and quickly settled back into the tactics which had given him a massive lead on all three card. By the time of the closing rounds, Ruiz needed a knock-

out to have any chance of victory.

But it was Joshua who finished stronger, landing a solid right on Ruiz in the 12th before dancing away to close out the win. — AFP

Gulf Air flies 1,900 fans to support Bahrain at Gulf Cup finals



MANAMA: In line with the vision and initiatives of HH Sheikh Nasser bin Hamad Al Khalifa, representative of HM the King for Charity Works, National Security Advisor, and president of the Supreme Council of Youth and Sports, Gulf Air - the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain - in collaboration

with the Ministry of Youth & Sports and with the support of a number of private companies and institutions, facilitated travel for almost 1,900 Bahraini fans to attend and support the national team in the final match of the Arabian Gulf Cup against Saudi national team.

The airline’s support comes in line with a series of initiatives to support the sports scene in the Kingdom of Bahrain and as part of Gulf Air’s corporate social responsibility strategy as the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

Messi breaks La Liga record

MADRID: Lionel Messi broke yet another record by hitting his 35th La Liga hat-trick on Saturday as Barcelona thrashed Real Mallorca 5-2 to keep pace with Real Madrid at the top of the table.

A trio of vintage Messi finishes contributed to five stunning Barca goals, the best of them arguably belonging to Luis Suarez, whose brilliant backheel capped a free-flowing move, involving seven different players.

“I knew I had a little gap, my last resort was to try a backheel,” said Suarez. “I was surprised,” added Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde. “It was an extraordinary goal.” But at the end of a week in which Messi claimed a record sixth Ballon d’Or, it was the Argentinian etching his name into the history books again after pulling clear of Cristiano Ronaldo’s 34 La Liga trebles to stand alone.

“Unbelievable,” said Valverde. “It was a celebration of the Ballon d’Or.” The efforts of Messi and Suarez overshadowed Antoine Griezmann’s opener but that was impressive too, the Frenchman applying a sumptuous chip after being assisted by his own goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

An exhibition of creativity at Camp Nou allowed for the occasional lapse in defence and Mallorca’s Ante Budimir twice reduced the deficit to 2-1 and 4-2, even if a comeback never looked likely.

Instead, Messi underlined his status as the world’s finest footballer with another sublime performance, instant evidence for why he was presented with his latest Ballon d’Or trophy on the pitch before kick-off.

Messi now has 12 goals this season, the highest in the division and one ahead of Real Madrid’s Karim Benzema, who had scored one and set up another in an equally comfortable 2-0 victory over Espanyol a few hours earlier.

It means Madrid and Barcelona are back level on points at the top of the table, with Barca ahead on goal difference. Sevilla, in third, are four points further back. Benzema’s own irresistible form in parallel with Messi adds an intriguing sub-plot to the upcoming Clasico on December 18, which looks increasingly likely to decide who will sit first over the Christmas break.

“We’re talking about Karim a lot recently, in a good way,” said Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane. “He’s getting older and that’s made a difference, his maturity.” “None of us are perfect. But he’s asked to chase and he does it. He’s asked to score and he does it. I can’t ask for more, only that he keeps doing it.” After rocky starts, La Liga’s most successful two clubs also appear to be hitting their stride ahead of what is shaping up to be a crunch meeting in 11 days’ time.

Messi in this mood will be hard to stop. For his first goal, he cut in from the right and bent the ball into the top left-hand corner and his second was almost a carbon copy, Suarez setting it back for his partner to hit the same spot.

In between, Budimir latched onto an excellent reverse pass by Salva Sevilla to briefly give Mallorca hope after Griezmann had opened the scoring, racing onto Ter Stegen’s through ball and scooping it over Manolo Reina. Suarez hit the post and then stumbled after skipping around Reina but he made up for both two minutes before half-time with arguably the goal of the night.

Ten passes, involving seven different players, ended with Suarez with his back to goal and somehow the Uruguayan dug out a superb shot with the back of his foot that span into the far corner. Frenkie de Jong had been instrumental in the build-up. — AFP

20th World Youth Water Polo U-20 Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The 20th World Youth Water Polo U-20 Championship will be held in Kuwait under the patronage of National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. The event will take place Dec 12 until Dec 20 at HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad swimming pools complex at Nasr Sports Club.

International and Kuwait Swimming Federations as well as Public Sports Authority will hold a press conference at Crowne Plaza Hotel at 10:00 am today to speak about this world event and the latest developments in this sport, while the opening ceremony will take place Thursday at 5 pm.

The world championship will see 830 athletes and officials participating, as there will be 8 to 10 matches per day.

The participating countries are: Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Hungary, Spain, Italy, Greece, Russia, Canada, USA, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, South Africa, Japan, China, Iran, Uzbekistan, and Kuwait.

Thailand sepak takraw team spring to SEA Games gold

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT ZONE: Thailand secured a team gold in sepak takraw — Southeast Asian kick volleyball — yesterday, cruising past Myanmar to take top spot in the SEA Games round-robin event.

Relatively unknown outside the region, sepak takraw involves players showing incredible acrobatic and foot-balling skills to keep a rattan ball from

touching the ground and launching it over the 1.52-metre high net into their opponents’ court.

As the Games enter their final few days in the Philippines, the win for Thailand keeps them in fourth position in the overall table with 42 golds, behind Vietnam in third (49), Indonesia in second (55), and the host nation, who have been runaway leaders since the start and currently have a golden haul of 92.

Seven of the last 11 home nations have finished top of the medals table at the SEA Games, where the flexible sporting programme is traditionally heavily weighted towards the home team. Thailand won all four of their sepak takraw team regu matches — in which teams are split into sub-groups of three — against Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and yester-

W Indies beat India to level T20 series

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Opener Lendl Simmons struck an unbeaten 67 as West Indies beat India by eight wickets in the second Twenty20 international yesterday to level the three-match series at 1-1.

Simmons put on crucial partnerships including a 73-run opening stand with Evin Lewis, who made 40, as West Indies chased down their target of 171 with nine balls to spare in Thiruvananthapuram.

Wicketkeeper-batsman Nicholas Pooran hit the winning boundary to finish unbeaten on 38 after returning to the side following his four-match ban for ball tampering. The third and final match is in Mumbai on Wednesday. — AFP



day’s opponents Myanmar.

In yesterday’s other team regu clash at the Subic gymnasium, around 80 kilometres (50 miles) northwest of Manila, Malaysia came from behind against Indonesia to secure the silver medal. Later at the 20,000 capacity stadium at the Games’ main hub in New Clark City, medals will be up for grabs in the women’s javelin, long jump, pole vault and hammer, while the men will compete for high jump and shot put golds.

Both men and women will also run in the 1500m, 400m and 100m finals. In the nearby aquatics centre, there will be finals in the women’s 50m freestyle and 4 x 100m medley relay, while the men will contest the 50m breaststroke and 100m freestyle events, and golds will be given out to 400m individual medley winners for both men and women.

Thailand take on neighbours Vietnam in the final of the women’s football in Manila on Sunday evening, and the first eSports medals at a multi-sport competition sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee will be awarded at the San Juan Arena in the capital.

About 8,750 athletes and officials are taking part in the regional Olympics spread across dozens of venues in the northern Philippines, which was hit by a deadly typhoon earlier this week. The 11-country Games, featuring a record 56 sports, were rocked by Typhoon Kammuri which forced about half of Tuesday’s events to be rescheduled.

Despite more than a dozen deaths in the storm, none of the athletes, officials or 12,000 volunteers was reported hurt and a full programme resumed on Wednesday. — AFP

Kicks off with blast

NBK celebrates 25th walkathon anniversary



19,600 participant registered for the 11 kilometers race

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK)'s 25th annual walkathon kicked off the morning of Saturday 7th December from the Green Island with an astonishing 19,600 participants who have registered for the 11 kilometers race. NBK organized this special occasion to celebrate two and a half decades of this sports festival. Thousands of cheering supporters, spectators and media individuals lined the racing route on the Arabian Gulf Street to the finish line at the Shuwaikh Beach Park, where the successful event concluded with an award ceremony and a variety of entertaining activities.

Thousands of participants were walking for strength and health awareness. The Walkathon culminated with a prize giving ceremony where NBK awarded the top 100 participants, 10 winners from each of the 5 categories for both male and female and gave away many valuable prizes alongside the two brand new Renault cars from Al Babbain Group, NBK's walkathon strategic partner.

NBK Group Chief Executive Officer, Isam Jaseem Al Sager took part in the walkathon along with NBK Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer, Shaikha Khaled Al Bahar attended the awarding ceremony along with NBK - Kuwait Chief Executive Officer, Salah Yousef Al Fulaij, NBK- Kuwait Deputy CEO, Sulaiman Barrak al Marzouq, NBK General Manager Consumer Banking Group Mohammad Al Othman, NBK General Manager Group Human Resources Emad Al Ablani and NBK General Manager Operations Group Mohammed Al Kharafi and General Manager Automotive at Abdul Mohsen Abdul Aziz Al Babbain Laurent Pernet.

Speaking in front of thousands of contestants, spectators and guests who gathered at the end of the walkathon to celebrate the awarding of the first-place winners, NBK Public Relations and Communications Assistant General Manager, Manal Al Mattar said: "this year's participation from various age categories had by far exceeded all expectations, providing yet another testament for the community with this mega event, which has become one of the much awaited NBK public activities".

Al Mattar said: "This year, NBK walkathon celebrates its 25th anniversary. As the first sports event in Kuwait and the GCC, NBK walkathon continues today



its long tradition in supporting its community"

Al Mattar commented that the great collaboration exhibited by different ministries and governmental institutions, headed by both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior, in addition to the Kuwaiti Association of Athletics Federations, Al Babbain Group and Kuwait Municipality, and many others have played a great role to ensure the event's success.

Al Mattar added "NBK strongly supports sporting events and encourages physical activities as a means

to promote a healthier and more active lifestyle for members of the community. Titled "One step can change your life", NBK's Walkathon aimed to encourage each individual to believe in their ability towards making a change."

Abdul Mohsen Al Rushaid, NBK Executive manager, Communications and Public relations, said "Over the past 25 years, our aim was not only to encourage people to participate but also to enjoy the event."

"This huge event is one of the huge events in

Kuwait with the best arrangements. NBK walkathon takes the safety of participants in its top priority," he added.

"Every year, people wait for NBK's walkathon. We are keen to meet people's expectations every year because it's our duty and commitment."

NBK's Social Media team broadcasted the Walkathon live on NBK's Official Facebook, Twitter and Instagram page, posting the updates throughout the day.





25th Anniversary

Multiple points were set up along the race route between the Green Island and the Shuwaikh Beach Park that witnessed special festivities and celebrations. One of the celebration points arranged was a camel show; others had an exciting DJ, stilt walkers, confetti and folkloric performances.

LOYAC volunteers

Loyac volunteers were present at the finish line to cheer the participants, encourage them and give them memorial medals and water bottles.

Omniya's recycling project

Volunteers from the Omniya project and NBK participated in this year's walkathon. More than 100 volunteers gathered at the starting point, and collected plastic water bottles that were left behind by participants along the 11-kilometer race line. Omniya along with NBK volunteers collected a ton of plastic bottles at the end of the race to help recycle and keep our environment clean. Farah Shaaban, who is one of the founders of the project, said that our partnership with NBK aims to create an initiative that encourages recycling in Kuwait. Our participation in NBK's walkathon is part of this partnership that works to spread awareness and a real contribution in environmental activities.

Preparations

By the early morning hours, organizers ensured the full readiness of the site to receive the participants. The event started after NBK volunteers finalized all required organizational and preventive measures to ensure the safety of the contestants.

Children's activities at Shuwaikh Beach Park

This year's event included organizing events dedicated to children aged 5 to 11 years old, set up a Shuwaikh Beach Park. The children participated in several fun-filled contests and games, organized by circuit+ and supervised by NBK's team.

Special Needs and Elderlies

NBK dedicates an annual special competition within the race for people with special needs, as part of the bank's beliefs of the utmost importance of involving all members of society and their ability to prove their active and vital role in various areas and fields, particularly sports. In addition, NBK dedicated a racing category for participants aged 60 years old and above to encourage a healthier lifestyle among all members of the society.

Two NBK Walkathon Grand Prize Winners of Renault Cars

Victoriano JR Moralde and Loulwah Al Farsi were the lucky winners of two brand new Renault cars, presented by Al Babtain Group during NBK's 25th Walkathon grand prize draw that was supervised by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. The winners were among the 19,600 participants who were entitled to the draw automatically after their online registration. Additionally, NBK presented a large number of prizes and surprises, in response to the public's great interaction with the bank's social mission, which receives overwhelming response each year from all age groups, particularly young people.

NBK announced Al Jawhara Monthly Draw Winners of KD 125,000

Al Jawhara KD 125,000 monthly draw for the month of November took place during the Walkathon 2019 event and Abdulhameed Kadhem Mohammad Ali Al Rasheed was announced as the winner of the monthly prize. The fun-filled event was supervised by representatives from Ministry of Commerce and Industry and was attended by local media. Al Jawhara monthly and quarterly draws are supervised and audited by Deloitte.

25 Britain's Joshua defeats Ruiz to reclaim heavyweight crown



25 Messi hat-trick breaks La Liga record



26 NBK celebrates 25th walkathon anniversary



Bahrain beat Saudi to lift Gulf Cup

Bahrain crowned champions for first time • Kuwait's Amir congratulates Qatari leader



DOHA: Bahrain's players celebrate after winning the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup Final football match between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia at the Khalifa International Stadium in the Qatari capital Doha yesterday. —AFP

DOHA: Bahrain were crowned champions of the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup football tournament held in Qatar yesterday after their 1-0 victory over Saudi Arabia. Bahrain waited for 49 years to achieve their first title since the tournament was first held in Manama in 1970 to register their name in the records of the champions of the Gulf Cup.

The first half was a contest between the two teams through counterattacks, as they exchanged control, seeking to score the first goal to increase the chances of winning the title. The Saudi team had the opportunity to advance after a penalty kick was awarded to them in the 12th minute, but Salman Al-Faraj missed the opportunity to score. The contest continued in the second half, with a high technical level and beautiful offensive football. The crowd were enjoying, whether in the stands or behind the screens.

Bahrain's first goal came through Mohammed Al-Rumaihi in the 69th minute through a cross from Mahdi Faisal. The match ended with this historic goal for Bahrain, achieving its second title in four months after the West Asian Championship held in the Iraqi city of Arbil in August. Kuwait tops the list with 10 titles, while Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iraq have won it three times, Oman and the UAE twice and Bahrain for the first time yesterday.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the conclusion of the successful 24th Arabian Gulf Cup. "The event achieved its aspired goals of strengthening the bonds of brotherhood and interaction among the Gulf neighbors," read the congratulatory cable.

HH the Amir praised the huge preparations made by the organizing committee ahead of the tournament and the exceptional facilities provided for this regional event, which made it a resounding success. He also hailed the sportsmanship demonstrated by the competing sides at the much-celebrated event. He wished the Qatari Amir the best of health and his country, growth and prosperity. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah both expressed similar sentiments in separate cables.

Meanwhile, King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa congratulated the national team players on winning the Gulf Cup in Qatar for the first time in the history of Bahraini football since the championship was first launched almost 50 years ago. The king extended his deepest thanks to the national team on the historic and honorable achievement, hailing their impressive performance during the championship.

He praised the team's high spirit and determination which enabled them to honor the homeland and lift the coveted trophy with merit. He hailed the achievement which reflects Bahraini football's standing in the Gulf, regional, continental and international arenas, expressing hope that the achievement would serve as a catalyst for players to look forward to more trophies in future championships.

King Hamad commended the efforts exerted by the Bahrain Football Association chaired by Sheikh Ali bin Khalifa bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa for the team's good preparation which ensured their success in winning the trophy. He praised all national efforts to support and encourage the national team to attain this landmark honorable achievement, hailing the administrative and technical staff.

He saluted Bahrainis and residents who supported the national team during the championship and encouraged the players to win the historic title, commending the press and the media for supporting the national team. He hailed the historic achievement which, he said, represents a crucial turning point in the march of football in Bahrain.

"The achievement attained by the Bahraini champions in this Gulf champion has brought joy to all the people of Bahrain and expatriates as well" said King Hamad,



DOHA: Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani (2nd-R) presents the trophy to Bahrain's goalkeeper Sayed Jaffer (L) for winning the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup Final football match between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia at the Khalifa International Stadium in the Qatari capital Doha yesterday. — AFP

expressing confidence in the ability of this generation of players to continue the march of excellence and winning more trophies.

King Hamad also congratulated the brotherly Saudi national team, hailing their outstanding performance and wishing

them further success in the march. He also reiterated keenness on supporting the youth and sports movement and developing all sports in Bahrain for the national team to continue their march in future championships. — Agencies

Red-hot Vardy fires title-chasing Leicester to club record win

LONDON: Leicester closed the gap on Premier League leaders Liverpool as Jamie Vardy extended his red-hot streak with a brace in yesterday's record-breaking 4-1 rout of Aston Villa. Brendan Rodgers' second-placed side moved within eight points of Liverpool thanks to goals from Vardy, Kelechi Iheanacho and Jonny Evans at Villa Park. Jack Grealish had reduced the deficit to 2-1 late in the first half, but Leicester cruised to an eighth consecutive top-flight victory, setting a new club record that smashed the previous best from the 1962-63 season.

Vardy has now scored in eight consecutive Premier League appearances and is the competition's top scorer

with 16 goals this term. The 32-year-old striker's blistering run has given him a chance of equalling his sequence of scoring in 11 successive matches during Leicester's 2015-16 title-winning campaign.

"I thought they were amazing, it is a historical day for the club and the performance warranted that," Rodgers said. "It really does mean something special, it puts the team in the history books of Leicester City."

Leicester's surge up the table, after 12 wins from their last 14 league games, has made them unexpected title contenders again and leaves them in position to qualify for the Champions League. Jurgen Klopp's men remain heavy title favourites and the acid test of Leicester's credentials will come with successive fixtures against Manchester City and Liverpool over Christmas.

"We will just concentrate on playing as well as we can and with a performance level as high as we can," Rodgers added. "Wherever we are in the table we always look to chase the team in front of us."

Vardy maintained his superb form to put Leicester ahead in the 21st minute. Latching onto a fine pass from

Iheanacho and, with the injured Tyrone Mings unable to sprint back, Vardy had space to round Tom Heaton before stumbling over the ball.

Quickly recovering his footing, the striker glided past Ezri Konsa to slot home from inside the six-yard box. After bagging the winner against Everton last Sunday, Nigerian forward Iheanacho struck again in the 41st minute.

Teed up by a sweeping Leicester move, James Maddison surged into the Villa area and delivered a fine cross that Iheanacho turned in from close range. Grealish gave Dean Smith's side a lifeline in first half stoppage-time when Villa's captain shot past Kasper Schmeichel after Leicester failed to clear.

But Evans restored Leicester's two-goal advantage in the 49th minute when the defender met Maddison's corner with a towering header for his first goal since February.

Vardy put the result beyond doubt in the 75th minute as he raced clear of the Villa defence to drill past Heaton.

Newcastle fought back to make it two consecutive wins with a 2-1 success against Southampton. Danny Ings gave Southampton a 52nd-minute lead at St James' Park, the

striker running onto Jack Stephens' long pass to notch his fifth goal in his last five appearances.

But Newcastle were level in the 68th minute when Jonjo Shelvey headed in substitute Andy Carroll's cross, giving the midfielder three goals in his last three games. And Federico Fernandez won it with three minutes left when he tapped in after Sean Longstaff's long-range effort was fumbled by Saints keeper Alex McCarthy.

Newcastle are up to 10th place, while Southampton sit third bottom. Sheffield United came from behind to win 2-1 at second-bottom Norwich. Norwich took the lead in the 27th minute through captain Alexander Tettey's powerful finish for his first Premier League goal since 2016.

Enda Stevens equalised for United in the 49th minute with a header from George Baldock's cross. And Baldock went from provider to scorer three minutes later when he twisted into space before blasting home.

Chris Wilder's eighth-placed team thought they had been reduced to 10 men in the 74th minute, but Chris Basham's red card for a foul on Kenny McLean was overturned by VAR. — AFP