

6 Finland picks world's youngest PM to head women-led cabinet



19 Miss South Africa wins Miss Universe crown



24 Gender-segregated entrances for eateries scrapped in Saudi



28 Russia banned from Olympics and World Cup over doping



Fitch: Kuwait political disputes to delay debt issuance, reform

Ratings agency forecasts budget deficit of over 5% of GDP as oil prices fall

No more survivors on NZ island after volcano eruption

WELLINGTON: New Zealand police have said no more survivors were expected to be rescued from an island volcano that erupted suddenly yesterday, suggesting as many as two dozen people could have died. Police said some 50 people were visiting White Island when it exploded in the early afternoon -hurling ash and rock high into the air. Some 23 people made it off the island, five of whom have since died, the rest were being treated for injuries, including severe burns. It was earlier estimated the number still on the island was in double digits.

Police said early today that despite several aerial reconnaissance flights to

try and find those trapped "no signs of life have been seen at any point". "Based on the information we have, we do not believe there are any survivors on the island. Police is working urgently to confirm the exact number of those who have died." As night fell, deputy commissioner John Tims said volcanic activity made a rescue attempts by land too dangerous. "I've got to consider the safety of our people and emergency services staff," he said.

The New Zealand military is expected to make a pass of the island at first light in the hope that people may have survived against the odds.

Continued on Page 24



BAY OF PLENTY, New Zealand: This handout photograph shows the volcano on New Zealand's White Island spewing steam and ash moments after it erupted yesterday. — AFP

HONG KONG/LONDON: The Kuwaiti government's resignation and subsequent cabinet reshuffle point to political frictions that could delay new debt issuance and weigh on broader fiscal and economic reforms, Fitch Ratings said in a report issued yesterday. Kuwait has been the slowest reformer in the Gulf Cooperation Council in recent years, partly due to these frictions and partly due to its exceptionally large sovereign assets, which could finance decades' worth of fiscal deficits.

"Parliamentary authorization to issue or refinance debt expired in 2017 and governments have been unable to secure approval for renewed borrowing. We had assumed this would happen in the fiscal year to end-March 2020 (FY19/20), but given continued political acrimony, we now think it will be delayed until FY20/21," the report said.

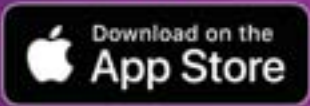
Fitch estimates Kuwait's central government gross financing need at about \$23 billion (17 percent of GDP) for FY19/20, despite the expectation of a roughly balanced budget. This reflects the government's legal obligation to transfer 10 percent of its revenue into the Reserve Fund for Future Generations (RFFG) and the fact that principal or income from the RFFG is not available for financing without special legislation.

Continued on Page 24

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Local

UK Ambassador hosts reception in support of 'Britain in Kuwait' expo



KUWAIT: (From left) Walid Al-Osaimi, Adel Muhammad Reda Behbehani, Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, Abdullah Bishara, Ambassador Michael Davenport, Eid Al-Rashidi, Ahmed Ismail Behbehani, Abdul Aziz Al-Anjari and Sulaiman Al-Rifai.

KUWAIT: The United Kingdom's Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport hosted a networking reception at his residence on Tuesday, November 26, 2019 in support of Britain in Kuwait 2019, the 10th British Trade Exhibition in Kuwait. The exhibition itself was held under the auspices

and in the presence of His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, in the Diamond Ballroom in the Sheraton Hotel from 25-27 November 2019. Ambassador Davenport welcomed over 100 guests to the reception, representing more than forty companies and



(From left) Jaber Ahmed Behbehani, Kawthar Dashti, Madonna Howick, British Ambassador Michael Davenport, Jaber Al-Hindal, Namrata Fahim, Ahmed Ismail Behbehani and Dr Youssef Ahmed Behbehani.

organizations who had taken part in or otherwise supported the exhibition.

Following welcome remarks by the Ambassador, HSBC bank CEO Roger Winfield spoke to the crowd on the topic of how digitalization is transforming the modern economy.

Exhibition organizer Emily Cunha spoke on the importance of trade to all countries, and the special relationship between Kuwait and Britain, which has been celebrated by a series of events this year, as the 120th anniversary of the signing of the Kuwait British Friendship Treaty of 1889.



(From left) Sheikha Toray, Roger Winfield, British Ambassador Michael Davenport, Emily Cunha and Ahmed Ismail Behbehani.



(From left) Roger Winfield, Diana Winfield, Emily Cunha, Yamama Abdul Hadi, James Walsh, Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan, and Ahmed Ismail Behbehani.



(From left) Nathan Taylor, Namrata Fahim, Ahmed Ismail Behbehani, Abdullah Bishara, Naila Al-Sadah and Rula Al-Sadah.

Industries and Construction Expo opens



Officials tour the exhibition.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A four-day industries and construction exhibition opened yesterday at Jumeirah Messilah Hotel. The inauguration was attended by Fahd Al-Oun, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Water and Dr Salem Al-Abalani, Head of the Cultural Department at the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences. The 9th Industries and Construction Expo kicked off with the participation of about 70 construction and furniture companies, as well as many governmental entities including the Public Authority for Housing Affairs, Ministry of Electricity and Water, Ministry of Public Works and Kuwait Credit Bank. The exhibition is open from 10 am to 1:30

pm and 5 pm to 10 pm. Promotional discounts are available on construction material, decor and fitting units. Also available are building, finishing and smart technology material, furniture, garden design, air-conditioning, engineering and consulting offices.

Dalia Nabil Wafai, Managing Director of Expo Tag for Organizing Exhibitions and Conferences, said the expo aims to provide updates and investment opportunities for everyone in the construction business, adding an exhibition of this caliber is a perfect place for direct communications between participants, experts and stakeholders in the industry and consumers from Kuwait and the region.

"Under Kuwait's 2035 vision and in line with the ongoing urban movement in Kuwait, the



KUWAIT: Officials inaugurate the industries and construction exhibition.

expo is gaining importance in light of the mega development projects that are expected in the coming years," he noted. "The expo embodies the construction industry in Kuwait and the region. It is also an opportunity to explore the latest innovations, high quality products and services offered by the most important and largest companies specialized in construction, decor and furniture. Customers can explore the latest innovations in energy-saving products," she added.

Wafai said she is confident of the success of the exhibition as it meets the needs and requirements of the market and highlights modern, innovative and quality products, and links all stakeholders and customers in one place in such a constantly evolving industry," she concluded.

Kuwait marks Int'l Human Rights Day

KUWAIT: The human rights topic in general and the rights of foreign workers in particular occupy a large part of Kuwait government strategies. Coinciding with the celebration of the International Human Rights Day, which falls on December 10 annually, Kuwaiti officials reiterated yesterday, the continuation of local efforts to protect human rights, in the belief in the principles of equality, non-discrimination and human dignity that the Kuwaiti legislator drew from the tolerant Islamic law.

In line with the international resolutions concerned with the field of human rights, perhaps the most prominent of which was the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights issued in 1948, Kuwait was keen to adhere to the relevant international treaties and covenants, believing in the importance of the international community joining forces to achieve international peace and security, protecting civilians and dedicating human rights values. Kuwait has clear human fingerprints and tangible achievements in this field by disseminating and promoting public and private freedoms, which made it occupy a world-class position in addition to its national human rights achievements, most notably the creation of the National Human Rights Bureau as a national requirement and international benefit.

On this occasion, Kuwaiti Undersecretary of the Ministry of Justice Omar Al-Sharqawi said that Kuwait believed in the principles of equality, non-discrimination and human dignity which the Kuwaiti legislator drew from the tolerant Islamic law and out of its keenness to criminalize all types of trafficking in persons. Sharqawi, who is vice-chairman of the permanent national committee on implementing the national strategy to prevent trafficking in people and smuggling of migrants has been issued. He also pointed to Kuwait's keenness to protect domestic workers and guarantee their rights through the promulgation of Law No. 68 of 2015 regarding domestic workers and established a center for manpower shelter, which is concerned with receiving

victims of trafficking in persons and providing medical and food services in addition to communicating with their country's embassies. On regional cooperation in this field, he noted that a decision was issued to the Ministers of Justice of the GCC States in their twenty-eighth meeting to adopt the model rules to combat trafficking in persons.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Human Rights Affairs Talal Al-Mutairi affirmed that Kuwait worked to adopt several measures on the ground to limit the exploitation of contracting workers. Mutairi pointed out that there is a legislative environment in Kuwait that is in line with international standards, pointing to Law No. (91/2013) concerning combating trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. He stressed that there are cases that are currently being considered in Kuwaiti courts for people who have been placed under the penalty of this law, adding that the Kuwaiti authorities have not and will not tolerate such cases, which unfortunately may harm our record in the field of human rights.

Kuwait is a unique role model in dealing with and responding to human rights decisions and recommendations issued by the UN special rapporteurs and the UN Human Rights Council, said the representative of UN Secretary-General, the organization's resident coordinator in Kuwait, Dr Tariq Al-Sheikh.

Sheikh affirmed the UN great interest in working with Kuwait in the field of human rights because of its positive spirit in dealing with any problems related to those rights. Kuwait is one of the countries that was pioneering in terms of its constitution towards working to preserve human rights and dignity and give the greatest measure of protection to preserve these rights, he added. This is evidenced by the UN naming His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the leader of the humanitarian action, as it came well and deservedly culminating in the course of his work and the efforts he made over many years to raise the status of Kuwait high.

Sheikh extended his sincere congratulations to Kuwait on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, appreciating the untiring efforts of His Highness the Amir to preserve human dignity in various regions around the world and the distinguished role of the Kuwaiti government that established human diplomacy in its permanent cooperation with the UN. — KUNA

Speaker receives Olympics-bound marksmen



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with a trio of Kuwaiti shooters who qualified for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker lawmaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem met yesterday with a trio of his compatriot shooters, all of whom have recently secured their

births at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Amid talks with Saud Al-Kanderi, Mansour Al-Rashidi and Abdulrahman Al-Faihan, Al-Ghanem said he was proud of the triumvirate's

accomplishments, which highlight the capabilities of young Kuwaiti athletes. Meanwhile, Speaker Ghanem received British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport. — KUNA



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport.

Local

Kuwait's Amir heads to Saudi Arabia today for 40th GCC summit

Sheikh Sabah meets Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, Saleh Al-Fadhlah



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Executive Director of the Illegal Residents Affairs' Apparatus Saleh Al-Fadhlah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation are set to depart today to Saudi Arabia to head the Kuwaiti delegation participating in the 40th Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) summit to be held in Riyadh.

In other news, His Highness the Amir received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness also received the Executive Director of the Illegal Residents Affairs' Apparatus Saleh Al-Fadhlah. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad and Fadhlah.

Separately, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated on Sunday Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa on his country's lifting of the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup, hosted by Qatar. The event achieved its aspired goals of strengthening the bond of brotherhood and interaction amongst the Gulf neighbors, read a congratulatory cable. His Highness the Amir also hailed the sportsmanship of the competing sides at the much-celebrated event, and the high-

level performances demonstrated by the Bahraini squad, which enabled the side to win their first-ever title. He went on to wish the King of Bahrain the best of health, and his country's growth and prosperity. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah both expressed similar sentiments in separate cables.

In the meantime, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri congratulated Bahrain's national football team clinching the title of the 24th Arabian Gulf Cup in Qatar on Sunday night. "The Bahraini team have showed an impressive performance since the beginning of the championship on November 26 until they were able to secure this well-deserved victory," the minister said. Jabri commended the performance of the Saudi Arabian team wishing them good luck in coming championships. "Since its inception in 1970, the Arabian Gulf Cup has served as a sports platform cementing the fraternal relations among the countries of the Gulf region," he said. The minister praised Qatar's "impressive organization" of the 24th edition of the championship. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Executive Director of the Illegal Residents Affairs' Apparatus Saleh Al-Fadhlah.

Riyadh hosts 2nd GCC summit in a row

KUWAIT: For the second time in a row, Saudi Arabia is to host to the 40th Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit today. This year's summit will convene amidst even more - critical and complex regional circumstances - than before, with the leaders of the Gulf bloc expected to table and attempt to thoroughly look into, as well as genuinely attempt to safeguard the region's political, economic, security and social domains. The following is a chronology of the 39th Gulf summits since the GCC was created in 1981:

The first and second Gulf summits were held in Abu Dhabi and Riyadh in May and November 1981 respectively. The third summit was held in Manama in 1982, while the fourth and fifth took place in Doha and Kuwait in 1983 and 1984 respectively. Muscat hosted the sixth GCC gathering in 1985, followed by the seventh in Abu Dhabi in 1986 and the eighth in Riyadh in 1987. In 1988, the ninth summit was held in Manama, followed by the 10th in Muscat in 1989 and the 11th in Doha in 1990. Kuwait hosted the 12th Gulf gathering in 1991, while Abu Dhabi and Riyadh hosted the 13th and 14th meetings in 1992 and 1993. Manama hosted the 15th Gulf meeting in 1994, and the following two events took place in Muscat and Doha in 1995 and 1996.

The 18th version of the annual Gulf gathering was hosted by Kuwait in 1997, followed by the 19th in Abu Dhabi in 1998, the 20th in Riyadh in 1999, the 21st in Manama in 2000, the 22nd in Muscat in 2001 and the 23rd in Doha in 2002. The 24th summit was held in Kuwait in 2003, while the 25th version took place in Manama in 2004 under the title: "Zayed Summit" to pay tribute to the late UAE president Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al-Nahyan due to his major contributions and efforts in serving Gulf, Arab, Muslim and world causes. Abu Dhabi played was to the 26th conference in 2005, which was called: "King Fahad Summit" in appreciation for the late Saudi King Fahad Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud's great role in the promotion of Gulf, Arab, Muslim and international issues. In 2006, Riyadh hosted the 27th version entitled: "Sheikh Jaber Summit" as a token of appreciation and gratitude to the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his great role in creating the GCC and serving Arab and Muslim issues, along with the ones of regional and world peace.

Doha and Muscat hosted the 28th

and 29th Gulf events in 2007 and 2008 respectively. The 30th, 31st, 32nd and 33rd summits were organized in Kuwait in 2009, Abu Dhabi in 2010, Riyadh in 2011 and Manama in 2012, consecutively. Kuwait hosted the 34th summit in 2013, while the 35th took place in Doha in 2014, followed by the 36th version in Riyadh in 2015 and the 37th in Manama in 2016. Kuwait's most recent hosting was in 2017 for the 38th version of the annual summit. Last year was Riyadh's turn hosting the 39th summit. This year's version is convening with signs of mending the political rift among member states are in the air, as peoples of the Gulf are in anticipation for such step, as well as for their other expectations to be fulfilled on all levels.

Holding the GCC's 40th summit is "clear evidence" of leaders' keenness on preserving the bloc's intactness, Secretary General Abdulatif Al-Zayani said yesterday. His remarks, according to Saudi Press Agency (SPA), came after being received by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud earlier yesterday, prior to the summit. The GCC has proved sturdiness and ability to overcome hardships and face challenges throughout time, as well as continue with collaborative achievements, Zayani noted. He also extolled the leadership of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques: King Salman, as well as his efforts to always further strengthen the bonds among Gulf brethren.

On the 40th summit agenda, he said it is packed with political, economic, defense-related and legal issues and items, as well as discussions over recent regional and international developments. The common GCC market, the customs' union, the monetary union, the electricity grid and authorities of economic, developmental and judicial affairs are among the major achievements attained throughout the Council's history, Zayani noted, pointing out that the upcoming endeavor include the completion and operation of the Gulf railroad project. He added that another goal of GCC leaders is to accomplish total equality among Gulf citizens in terms of freedom of movement, work, conducting business and property-ownership, as well as enjoying social, educational and health-care services, which would contribute to a thriving pan-GCC trade. Pan-GCC trade volume reached \$147 billion in 2018, compared to \$6 billion in 2003, Zayani indicated. — KUNA

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait City during sunset. — Photo by Ahmad Al-Fallakawi (KUNA)

Kuwaiti photographer documents photos of endangered Pelican bird

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KUWAIT: Kuwaiti photographer Omar Al-Sayed Omar managed to monitor and take rare photos of the pelican, which is classified among the endangered birds, according to the World Conservation Organization, to win the admiration of the largest global documentary channels interested in nature and living organisms. During an interview, Sayed Omar said that the bird documentary trip started from Boubyan Island, where it was seen for the first time there, and then he flew to the bird's hometown to Kerkini Lake in Greece.

The Kuwaiti photographer noted that he visited the lake several times for a month and waited a long time to manage taking photos of the rare bird. He stated that the photos were published on social media, amid great praise from the National Geographic Foundation, and he was addressed officially to broadcast his experience in this regard, which is the first of its kind in the country. He pointed out that he signed a contract with National Geographic to display and sell the bird's images in its permanent exhibitions and to print six million copies and distribute it around the world as well as displaying the photos in the institution's magazine and its official website.

The Kuwaiti photographer noted that the documentary institution focuses on the criterion of the scarcity of the



Kuwaiti photographer Omar Al-Sayed Omar

organism in addition to the technical and aesthetic standards of the work done, stressing his pride in this achievement and displaying his work in one of the most important exhibitions and international channels. He said that the pelican bird reach a length of one meter and eighty centimeters and weigh 15 kilograms while its wing reaches three and a half meters and more indicating that during the breeding season from December to February the skin sac turns the male bird's beak into red and the female beak into dark orange. Sayed Omar affirmed his continued delivery of what is documented in Kuwait to the world, noting scientific projects that he is preparing with his team in cooperation with the General Authority for the Environment and international organizations specialized in scientific research and rare birds to show the importance of Kuwait's strategic location. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Omar Al-Sayed Omar's picture of rare pelicans, which was selected by National Geographic. — KUNA

Kuwait eager to promote peace worldwide

ABU DHABI: Chairman of Kuwait's International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) and Amiri Diwan advisor Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq underlined the importance of tolerance in creating stability in societies. His remarks came in the opening session of the sixth annual assembly of the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, held in Abu Dhabi yesterday. The event is

themed "the Role of Religions in Promoting Tolerance: From Possibility to Necessity," and is attended by about 1,000 international religious and cultural figures. Religious tolerance is a big part of Islam, said Matouq, who is also special advisor for the UN Secretary General. Tolerance is built on protecting the freedom and dignity of individuals, despite their religions or beliefs, he said. Meanwhile, UAE's Minister of State for Tolerance Nahyan bin Mubarak Al-Nahyan noted that fighting extremism is the responsibility of all human beings. He affirmed the importance of creating dialogue between people of different cultures and religions to resolve issues facing the international community. The three-day meeting will see the honoring of winners of the Al-Hassan bin Ali Award for international peace, presented by the forum. — KUNA

Local

Social Affairs Ministry owes govt KD 20 million due to 'lax control'

Spending on employees' dues, unlawful social aid increased debt

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs owes the government around KD 20 million, as per the last final statement, Chairman of the parliament's budgets and final statement committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said yesterday. Abdulsamad added that the committee discussed the ministry's final statement for the fiscal year 2018-2019 and the remarks made by the State Audit Bureau and financial auditors about it. "The committee discussed the ministry's lax control over spending on employees' dues and social aid that is sometimes unlawfully given, which increased the ministry's debts to around KD 20 million - which has repeated for several years," he underlined.

Abdulsamad noted that the committee stressed the need to find a clear mechanism to prevent the recurrence of such remarks and automate various aid payments. In addition, Abdulsamad said the committee discussed the ministry's lack of spending on construction projects and insufficient knowledge of contracting measures and procedures, as reported by the State Audit Bureau. "The committee has been recommending resolving administrative problems hindering executing the ministry's projects

in the previous three reports," Abdulsamad reiterated, urging the ministry to accelerate its execution of projects as planned and avoid wasting fortunes on urgent maintenance of dilapidated buildings and their rent.

Private schools

Meanwhile, a number of parliamentarians plan to file a request to allocate two hours of a parliamentary session to discuss the situation in private schools in Kuwait, with the belief that some of them have turned education into a business at the expense of students, with the result of financially overburdening their parents. In this regard, parliamentary sources said the request is ready and will be officially filed once the new Cabinet is appointed and the new education minister is named to discuss the issue with them at the educational affairs committee. "The lawmakers intend to give the new minister a chance to probe the situation in the ministry prior to discussing the request in parliament," the sources said.

The sources highlighted the current situation has a negative impact on both Kuwaitis and expats, as some private schools provokingly use twisted ways to increase tuition fees, although the Ministry of

Two months to deposit employees' salaries



The National Assembly.

Education had set limits to fee hikes. "The services provided in these schools do not match the fees they collect," the sources remarked, pointing out that lawmakers had already drafted a number of recommendations to discuss during the session.

Employees' salaries

In other news, the Public Authority for Manpower's

official spokesperson Aseel Al-Mezzyad announced that according to administrative directive number 26/2019, employers will be granted a two-month grace period to deposit the salaries of employees recruited from abroad in local banks effective from issuing their work permits. Mezzyad added that the labor inspection department will ensure and document employers' payment of the salaries within the grace period.

Body found off Sharq beach



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firefighters recovered a dead body floating on the Gulf waters in Sharq yesterday. Firemen had arrived to the scene in response to an emergency

call, and recovered the body of the man who was identified as an Asian national in his fifties. Criminal Evidence Department men were called to transport the body for an autopsy. An investigation was opened in the case.



In other news, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate carried out a fire drill in Kabd area yesterday. The exercise was supervised by Kabd Fire Station Chief Lt Col Anwar Al-Mutairi, and 'Shift A' Team Leader Lt Col Abdullah Al-Haddad.



Ambassador Nasser Al-Subeeh

Kuwait has made important efforts to combat extremism: Official

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah yesterday affirmed that his country has embarked on a series of important efforts towards combating terrorism and violent extremism. This came in Al-Jarallah's speech, which was delivered on his behalf by Assistant Foreign Minister for Development and International Cooperation Affairs Ambassador Nasser Al-Subeeh in the opening of a workshop, entitled 'The concept of extremism and its impact on society'. He said that the concept of extremism is linked to negative changes and behaviors that violence groups seek to spread to achieve political goals and requires to confront this phenomenon spreading a culture of tolerance and moderation and respect for human rights and positive dialogues. He stressed that Kuwait has embarked on a national and international level a series of important efforts towards combating terrorism and extremism, as it issued and is still working on issuing several legislations, laws, decisions and regulations related to combating extremism and terrorism.

This project represents a firm affirmation of Kuwait's continued enhancement of international efforts to urge the international community and work to adopt a comprehensive approach to tackle this phenomenon, he added. He stated that the workshop organized by Kuwait represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with experts from the United Kingdom would contribute to Kuwait's continued enhancement of its efforts in the field. This title was chosen for the workshop in light of the internationally delicate circumstances that imposed itself as a step towards understanding and addressing this phenomenon to maintain the pillars of international peace and security, he added.

Ambassador Subeeh said that extremism is no longer associated with a country or religion, but rather threatens the security of all countries of the world, stressing that it represents a negative element in every society and has a negative impact on families and individuals in the education and work environment. He pointed out that Kuwait and the UK decided to hold a workshop to exchange experiences and expertise between the two countries on the scientific concept of extremism and the best ways and means to deal with this phenomenon. — KUNA

Council approves shisha ban in cafes

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Municipal Council approved a proposal submitted by member Ahmad Al-Enezi to separate restaurant licenses from that of cafes and ban shishas in cafes. The council decided that the mid-year holiday will be from Jan 5 until Jan 23. The council also discussed the public cleanliness issue, which remains on the agenda awaiting a report on the cleaning level and copy of contracts.

Councilmember Abdelsalam Al-Randi lauded the role and cooperation of Kuwait

Municipality by presenting cleaning contracts. Randi found it strange that there are 21 violations with a cost of KD 200, while the fine if one throws a tissue is KD 200 to KD 300, adding that this is a disturbing irony in the violations section. He said there is weak supervision by Kuwait Municipality over cleaning companies.

Meanwhile, councilmember Humoud Al-Enezi said 17 cleaning contracts were reviewed, and commended the way they were drafted. He called for applying the GPS system and monitoring cleaning contractors in governorates.

Kuwaitis advised to leave Iraq

BAGHDAD: Kuwait's Embassy in Baghdad urged on Sunday its nationals in Iraq to leave the country as soon as possible because of the current incidents. In a statement to the press, Ambassador Salem Al-Zamanan appealed to the Kuwaitis in Iraq to be cautious and keep away from demonstrations and gatherings. He also called on the nationals to follow up instructions of Iraq's authorities until they

leave the country, according to the statement. The ambassador also advised Kuwaitis who are planning to visit Iraq not to fly to the country due to the demonstrations occurring in some Iraqi cities. On October 4, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry urged its nationals not to visit Iraq at this time, and asked those in Iraq to depart the country at the earliest opportunity. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Chairman of the State Audit Bureau Faisal Fahad Al-Shaya, where he delivered a number of reports related to some ministries, bodies and government projects. — KUNA

Kuwait has leading development experience in Africa: Diplomat

KUWAIT: Kuwait has a successful leading experience in the development field in Africa Continent, a Kuwaiti diplomat said on Sunday. Assistant Foreign Minister for Asia Affairs Ambassador Ali Al-Said made the statement to reporters on the sidelines of attending the Africa Day ceremony organized by the African union. "Kuwait has enough experience in managing development activities in Africa, in addition to its consultations in several other activities," he said.

Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) has a pioneering expertise in Africa that mirrors the leadership's interest in maintaining good relations with the Black Continent, he noted. Wonderful representation of the African

embassies in Kuwait embodies their countries' keenness on developing historical ties with Kuwait, he pointed out. He lauded the humanitarian role by Abdulrahman Al-Semai who founded Direct Aid Society with the aim of carrying out several development and humanitarian activities in many areas. Meanwhile, Egypt's Ambassador to Kuwait Tareq Al-Qoni said Egypt chairing the African Union in this session was keen to take part in the ceremony, which focused on investment and touristic opportunities in the African countries. Also, Senegal Ambassador to Kuwait Ambassador Abdulahad Mbaki extolled His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's stances for peace and social and economic development. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Ambassador Ali Al-Said cuts the cake during the Africa Day ceremony. — KUNA



Rape victim's relatives to get guns and guards

Britain's 'Brexit election' campaign in final stretch



GUWAHATI, India: Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) activists take part in a torchlight procession to protest against the government's Citizenship Amendment Bill yesterday. —AFP

Protests over Indian nationality bill

Scientists and scholars dismayed over legislation that excludes Muslims

NEW DELHI: India's parliament saw raucous scenes yesterday and protests raged in the north-east of the country as MPs debated legislation that stands to give citizenship to religious minorities from neighboring countries, but not Muslims. To Muslim organizations, rights groups and others, the bill forms part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's agenda - which he denies - of marginalizing India's 200-million-strong Islamic minority.

The Citizenship Amendment Bill provides that Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians fleeing persecution in Muslim-majority Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan can be granted citizenship. Modi's government had tried to bring in the contentious legislation during its first term but the bill could not pass the

upper house where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies lack a majority.

Shashi Tharoor, a member of the opposition Congress party, told parliament amid angry exchanges that the bill "infringes upon the principle of equality before law" guaranteed to all persons, including non-citizens. The bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act of 1955 which prohibits illegal migrants from applying for Indian citizenship.

Under Modi, the Islamic-sounding names of several cities have been changed, while some school textbooks have been altered to downplay Muslims' contributions to India. In August his administration rescinded the partial autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-

majority state, and split it into two.

Yesterday, 100 scientists and scholars at institutions in India and abroad published a joint letter expressing their "dismay" at the legislation. They said that enshrined in India's constitution is the notion of treating all faiths equally. But Modi's "proposed bill would mark a radical break with this history and would be inconsistent with the basic structure of the constitution". The letter said such a careful exclusion of Muslims would "greatly strain" India's pluralism.

'Against infiltrators'

The government has defended the bill, saying it was only aimed at flushing out infiltrators, and that Muslims did not face persecution in the

three neighboring countries. "This bill is not even 0.001 per cent against minorities. It is against infiltrators," Home Minister Amit Shah said in parliament's lower house. Recently he has also proposed a "national register of citizens" that would see "each and every infiltrator identified and expelled" from India by 2024.

The citizenship bill has led to protests in India's northeastern states where residents are unhappy about an influx of Hindus from neighboring Bangladesh. In Guwahati in Assam state protestors set fire to tyres, while tribal groups staged protests in Tripura. Yesterday, prominent political groups opposing the bill called for a complete shutdown across all the states in the northeast today. —AFP

Finland picks world's youngest PM to head women-led cabinet

HELSINKI: Finland's new prime minister - the world's youngest serving premier - will have a finance minister two years her junior in a new women-led coalition cabinet, party officials said yesterday. Sanna Marin, 34 from the dominant Social Democrats, was nominated on Sunday. Centre Party chief Katri Kulmuni, 32, will get the finance post when the full new cabinet is announced today, party members said.

Finland's government resigned last week after the Centre Party said it had lost confidence in Social Democrat Prime Minister Antti Rinne over his handling of a postal strike. The five parties in power - four of them led by women - decided to stay in coalition and continue with the same programs, but said there would be a reshuffle. Marin will take over in the middle of labor unrest and a wave of strikes which will halt production at some of Finland's largest companies from yesterday. The Confederation of Finnish Industries estimates the strikes will cost the companies a combined A500 million (\$550 million) in lost revenue.

Rage against the machine fan

Marin has had a swift rise in Finnish politics since becoming head of the city council of her industrial hometown of Tampere at

the age of 27. "I myself have never thought about my age or my gender, but rather about the issues for which I took on politics and about the reasons for which we were trusted in the elections, the former transport minister told public broadcaster YLE after being picked as the prime minister candidate by her party.

Political scientist Jenni Karimäki of Turku University said the new government reflected what voters had wanted in last April's election, with many new young women and men voted into parliament. "There are more women in the parliament's composition than ever before...Voters and citizens wish to see more women in top positions, bearing even the heaviest responsibilities the society can offer," she told Reuters.

Finland was one of the first country in Europe to give women voting rights back in 1906 and the first country in the world to vote women to parliament in 1907. Marin will be the third female to head the government. "For the world it's interesting that they are young, and that they are all female. For Finland, this is not a sensation," said political commentator Risto Uimonen. Marin, who has spoken about growing up in a disadvantaged family, is a left-winger within her party and a strong defender of Finland's generous welfare state.

A long-time fan of alternative metal band Rage Against The Machine, she has said she "dreams of free daycare" for all to add to Finland's public education, which is already free of charge from primary school to university. The new government, consisting of 12 female and 7 male ministers according to media reports, will be nominated today. The Centre Party's Kulmuni, who previously held the more junior position of Minister of Economic Affairs, replaces Mika Lintila as finance minister. She took over as the head of the Centre Party from ex-prime minister



HELSINKI: Sanna Marin of Finland's Social Democrats is seen after she was elected to the post of prime minister on Sunday. —AFP

ter Juha Sipila in September.

Green Party leader Maria Ohisalo, 34, will continue as interior minister, the Left Alliance's chairwoman Li Andersson, 32, as education minister and the Swedish People's Party's Anna-Maja Henriksson, 55, as justice minister. Rinne will remain the Social Democrats leader at least until he chairs the party's conference in June. Centre Party said it removed Antti Rinne over his handling of a two-week postal strike which spread to other industries. "We had to blow the whistle and calm down the worsening situation. I explain this with the chance to move ahead on important topics," Kulmuni said on social media yesterday. —Reuters

Democrat says Trump violated oath; Reps attack impeachment probe

WASHINGTON: The head of a US congressional panel leading the impeachment inquiry against Donald Trump yesterday accused the Republican president of putting himself before his country and violating his oath of office. In a statement kicking off a hearing in the US House of Representatives to weigh the evidence against Trump, Judiciary Committee Democratic Chairman Jerrold Nadler said there was extensive proof of wrongdoing.

"The evidence shows that Donald J Trump, the president of the United States, has put himself before his country. He has violated his most basic responsibilities to the people. He has broken his oath," Nadler said. "I will honor mine." The hearing yesterday is a key step before determining charges, known as articles of impeachment, that the full Democratic-

controlled House is likely to vote on before Christmas.

The heart of the issue is whether Trump abused his power by pressuring Ukraine to investigate former Vice President Joe Biden, a political rival seeking the Democratic nomination to face Trump in the 2020 election. Trump denies having done anything wrong and has called the impeachment probe a hoax. The House Judiciary panel is expected to vote by the end of the week on whether to send formal charges to the full House, setting up an inevitable clash with the White House and its Republican allies. No current House Republican has come out in favor of impeaching Trump.

Ahead of the hearing, Republicans placed black-and-white signs in the committee room to underscore their argument that Democrats were on a partisan mission to unseat a president who did not nothing to merit impeachment. One sign quoted House Speaker Nancy Pelosi saying, "We cannot accept a second term for Donald Trump." "They're desperate to have an impeachment vote on this president," Representative Doug Collins, the ranking Republican on the panel, said during the hearing.

A vote in the House in favor of impeachment would trigger a trial in the Republican-controlled Senate where a two-thirds vote of those present would be needed to remove the president from office. A conviction is consid-

ered unlikely. White House adviser Kellyanne Conway said the White House was not participating in the Judiciary panel's proceedings because cooperating would be "colluding with an illegitimate process."

"We're not going to do their dirty work," Conway told reporters at the White House shortly before the hearing began. "Maybe in the Senate if it's a fair trial," the White House may participate, she added. It has been 20 years since Americans last witnessed impeachment proceedings, when Republicans brought charges against Democratic President Bill Clinton arising from a sexual relationship he had with a White House intern. He was acquitted in the Senate.

'Clear and present danger'

After weeks of investigation into Trump's request that Ukraine investigate Biden and his businessman son, Hunter Biden, the committee is focused on two articles charging Trump with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. Democrats have also accused Trump of abusing his power by withholding \$391 million in security aid to Ukraine - a vulnerable US ally facing Russian aggression - and holding back a coveted White House meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy as leverage to pressure Kiev into investigating the Bidens. —Reuters

Saudi training in US under scrutiny after base attack

WASHINGTON: Key US lawmakers called Sunday for a halt to a Saudi military training program after a shooting rampage at a naval base in Florida in which a Saudi officer killed three American sailors. US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said he has ordered a review of vetting procedures while defending the training program that brought Mohammed Alshamrani to Pensacola Naval Air Station. Alshamrani, a 21-year-old second lieutenant in the Saudi Royal Air Force, opened fire in a classroom on Friday, killing the three sailors and wounding eight other people before being shot dead by police.

Alshamrani, who was armed with a lawfully purchased Glock 9mm handgun, was reported to have posted a manifesto on Twitter before the shooting denouncing America as "a nation of evil". The FBI said Sunday they were investigating with the "presumption" it was an act of terrorism, as in most active shooter probes, but had yet to make a final determination.

White House National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien went further, however, saying: "To me, it appears to be a terrorist attack." "We'll have to see what the FBI investigation shows," O'Brien added, on CBS's "Face the Nation." The FBI's main goal, special agent-in-charge Rachel Rojas told a news conference, is to confirm whether Alshamrani "acted alone or was he a part of a larger network." "We currently assess there was one gunman who perpetrated this attack and no arrests have been made in this case," she said.

US lawmakers, meanwhile, called for the Saudi training program to be halted pending the investigation's outcome. "We need to suspend the Saudi program until we find out what happened here," Senator Lindsey Graham, an influential Republican, said on Fox News. In a pre-taped interview that aired on "Fox News Sunday," Esper confirmed several Saudis had been detained, including "one or two" who filmed the shooting on their cellphones. US media also reported that Alshamrani had shown mass shooting videos at a dinner party the night before the attack. Rojas said a number of Saudi students who were close to Alshamrani were cooperating with investigators, and the Saudi government had pledged to "fully cooperate" with the investigation.

Vetting

The attack has struck a nerve in the United States with its echoes of the September 11, 2001 attacks, in which Saudi citizens accounted for 15 of the 19 hijackers that flew airliners into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Saudi Arabia remains one of the closest US allies in the Middle East, and President Donald Trump has cultivated Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Sunday evening, deputy press secretary Judd Deere announced that Trump had spoken with the crown prince, who "reiterated Saudi Arabia's commitment to working with the United States to prevent a horrific attack like the Pensacola shooting from ever happening again". Saudi Arabia's King Salman had previously denounced the shooting as a "heinous crime" and said the gunman "does not represent the Saudi people". —AFP

International

Iraqis rally against government as Baghdad summons Western envoys

Prominent civil society activist killed • Rockets hit complex housing US forces

BAGHDAD: Iraqis turned out yesterday to mourn a prominent activist gunned down the previous evening, the latest violent episode in anti-government demonstrations in which more than 450 people have died. That came as Iraq's foreign ministry summoned four Western envoys over their condemnation of a deadly attack against protesters at the weekend. Iraq's capital and its Shiite-majority south have been gripped by more than two months of rallies against corruption, poor public services and a lack of jobs.

Prominent civil society activist Fahem Al-Tai was killed in a drive-by shooting in Iraq's shrine city of Karbala late Sunday while returning home from protests. Hundreds joined his funeral procession yesterday, carrying 53-year-old Tai's coffin through the city's streets. "We will not forget our martyrs," read one sign carried by tearful protesters.

The country is expected to see widespread protests today, marking two years since Iraq defeated the Islamic State group. Activists have called for massive marches from other Iraqi cities towards Baghdad, but paramilitary leaders have warned such protests would be "ruinous". "It will bring the most massive chaos yet to Baghdad," said Qais Al-Khazali, the head of the prominent Asaib Ahl al-Haq armed faction, who was recently black-listed by the US.

Asaib Ahl al-Haq is one of the most powerful groups in Iraq's Hashed al-Shaabi security force, a network of armed groups integrated into the state. Hashed chief Faleh Al-Fayyadh over the weekend ordered the factions to stay away from rallies.

Ambassadors summoned

Founded in 2014 to fight IS militants who had seized swathes of northern Iraq and neighboring Syria, the Hashed is made up of mostly Shiite factions, many of which have been backed by Iran. It initially backed the government over protests but switched sides, although protesters fear Hashed fighters' presence at rallies could derail their anti-regime movement. Demonstrators are

seeking a comeback after an attack on a major Baghdad protest site left 20 protesters and four police officers dead, sparking nationwide outrage.

The British, French and German ambassadors to Iraq condemned the violence in a meeting with caretaker premier Adel Abdel Mahdi, who resigned on Dec 1. "No armed group should be able to operate outside of the control of the state," the envoys said in a statement, urging the government to "urgently investigate". The envoys also pressed the government to implement its recent order that the Hashed "stay away from protest locations".

In response, Iraq's foreign ministry yesterday summoned all three ambassadors as well as their Canadian counterpart, who had similarly condemned the violence. The ministry said their comments were an "unacceptable intervention in Iraq's internal affairs". A diplomatic source told AFP the envoys were "not surprised" at having been summoned, particularly after the PM had defended his government in response to their criticism at the earlier meeting.

In addition to those killed, dozens of protesters went missing after the attack on the parking complex and have yet to resurface, their relatives told AFP. Demonstrators have for weeks complained of being monitored, threatened and harassed in an intimidation campaign aimed at blunting their movement.

New rocket attacks

Since Oct 1, the youth-led rallies have accused the ruling class both of being inept and corrupt and of being heavily influenced by neighboring Iran. Baghdad has close ties with both Tehran and Iran's arch-foe Washington, which led the 2003 invasion that toppled Iraq's former dictator Saddam Hussein. Some 5,200 US troops are still based across Iraq and are facing a spike in rocket attacks on their positions.

The latest in the early hours of yesterday saw four rockets slam into an Iraqi base that hosts a small contingent of US forces next to Baghdad International Airport. Six Iraqi troops were wounded, according to the military.



KARBALA: Iraqi mourners attend the funeral yesterday of a prominent civil society activist who was shot dead the previous night while returning home from anti-government protests. — AFP

Security sources said they belong to the elite Counter-Terrorism Service, created and trained by US forces. No American forces were wounded in the recent salvos.

While there have been no claims of responsibility, US defense officials have blamed several of the attacks on Iran-backed factions in Iraq. Tensions between Iran and the US have soared since last year, when Washington

pulled out of a landmark nuclear agreement with Tehran and reimposed crippling sanctions. Baghdad, worried about being caught in the middle of their bitter dispute, is also struggling with its own domestic political crisis. President Barham Saleh has until Dec 17 to name a replacement premier, and political parties are deep in talks to agree on a consensus candidate. — AFP

South Yemen peace deal stumbles as deadline expires

DUBAI: The Yemeni government and southern separatists have failed to meet a deadline to establish a power-sharing government, an ominous sign for hopes of a wider deal to end years of war. Yemen's conflict, which has killed tens of thousands of people and driven millions to the brink of famine, erupted in 2014 when the government was forced out of the capital Sanaa by Iran-aligned Houthi rebels, triggering a Saudi-led military intervention.

In August trouble re-erupted on a separate front, as southern secessionists seized control of the city of Aden, the internationally recognized government's temporary capital. The UAE - a key part of the Saudi-led coalition helping fight the Houthis in Yemen's main conflict arena - trained and remains close to separatist troops, signalling rifts within the Gulf powers' intervention. In a bid to end the "civil war within a war", Saudi Arabia brokered a power-sharing deal with the Southern Transitional Council (STC) under which the government would return to Aden.

The Riyadh Agreement signed on Nov 5 also stipulated the creation within 30 days of a new 24-member cabinet with equal representation for the southerners. Yemen's prime minister Maen Abdulmalik returned to the city last month but the new cabinet has yet to materialize, along with other key reforms including integrating secessionists into a central command structure.

'Very ambitious'

"The timeline of the Riyadh Agreement was always very ambitious. It is no surprise to see deadlines slip," Elisabeth Kendall, Yemen expert and senior research fellow at Oxford University, told AFP. "The bigger question is: are the promises simply being delayed, or are they ultimately not achievable?" The two sides say they are committed to



ADEN: A Yemeni man walks past a security point in Yemen's second city yesterday. — AFP

the Riyadh Agreement but have traded accusations over who is responsible for the failure to meet the deadline to form a new government.

STC spokesman Nizar Haitham said on Thursday that Yemen's government was "deviating" from the agreement and mobilising its troops in the south, an accusation the government denied. However in recent days an STC official told AFP that work to implement the Riyadh Agreement was ongoing and that there has been "significant progress" in implementing military and security arrangements. "Starting next week, we'll begin steps in implementing what was agreed on," this source said in a written statement without elaborating. According to gov-

ernment spokesman Rajih Badi, the secessionists are the ones failing to abide by the treaty. He said that government military movements in the south are in line with the Riyadh Agreement and in coordination with the Saudi coalition, which continues to lead the anti-Huthi camp comprised of both government and secessionist forces.

But although clashes in the south have largely subsided, the situation on the ground remains fragile, said Kendall. "This is a classic case of an agreement being easy to sign but near impossible to implement," she said. Other parts of the deal, including placing forces from both sides under the authority of the defense and interior ministries, have also not been fulfilled. — AFP



JERUSALEM: A Palestinian woman displays her vehicle's slashed tyre in the Palestinian neighborhood of Shuafat, neighboring the Israeli settlement of Ramat Shlomo, in Israel annexed east Jerusalem yesterday. — AFP

160 Palestinian cars vandalized in hate crime

JERUSALEM: More than 160 cars were vandalized in a Palestinian neighborhood of Jerusalem with anti-Arab slogans scrawled nearby, Israeli police said Monday, in a suspected hate crime. The cars in the Shuafaat neighborhood of east Jerusalem had their tyres slashed, with slogans such as "Arabs=enemies", "There is no room in the country for enemies" and "When Jews are stabbed we aren't silent" scrawled in Hebrew with red paint nearby, photos pub-

lished by Israeli media showed. Police said their forces "continue to search the area for the suspects who fled the scene".

A local official told public broadcaster Kann that footage revealed the vandalism took place overnight under the cover of the rain, and that the perpetrators were religious Jews. The incident bore the hallmark of a "price tag" attack, a euphemism for Jewish nationalist-motivated hate crimes that generally target Palestinian or Arab Israeli property in revenge for nationalistic attacks against Israelis. "Three masked settlers sneaked into the neighborhood early and damaged the tyres of cars on the main street," said Maysa Abu Khdaib, a resident whose car was targeted and whose surveillance cameras caught the scene. "My daughter went on foot to school in the rain," she added. — AFP

Iran says ready for more US prisoner swaps

TEHRAN: Iran said yesterday it was open to more prisoner swaps with the US while stressing an exchange at the weekend was not the result of formal negotiations with its arch-foe. US President Donald Trump thanked Iran for what he called a "very fair negotiation" after an American scholar was released Saturday in exchange for an Iranian scientist held in the United States. The exchange involved Xiyue Wang, a Chinese-born American held in Iran since 2016, and Massoud Soleimani, an Iranian scientist detained in the United States since 2018.

But Iran's government dismissed the idea that it was the result of any negotiations between the two countries, which have not had diplomatic ties since 1980. "This was only an exchange and... regarding exchanges we are ready to act but there are no negotiations," spokesman Ali Rabiei said on state television. "Negotiations or any kind of talks" can only take place "within the framework of the 5+1 and after America has refrained from sanctions and economic terrorism," he said.

The P5+1 is the group of countries that agreed a nuclear deal with Iran in 2015 - the five veto-wielding permanent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany. The nuclear deal has been hanging by a thread since last year, when Trump unilaterally withdrew from the accord and began reimposing sweeping sanctions on the

Islamic republic. Iran's government has long demanded that the US first drops the sanctions for it to return to negotiations under the auspices of the P5+1.

'Ball in US court'

Wang, doctoral candidate at Princeton, was conducting research in Iran when he was imprisoned in August 2016. He had been serving 10 years on espionage charges. Soleimani, a stem cell researcher at Tehran's Tarbiat Modares University, was arrested at a Chicago airport in Oct 2018 for allegedly attempting to ship growth hormones. The professor returned to Iran aboard a plane on Saturday with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif.

"After getting our hostage back this week, fully ready for comprehensive prisoner exchange. The ball is in the US' court," Zarif tweeted yesterday. Yesterday, the Iranian spokesman Rabiei said the prisoner swap came despite a US rejection of an offer Tehran made to Washington last year for an exchange of all detainees. A few months ago, he said, Iran had received a message from "a former US official" saying the Americans were ready to make an exchange.

Rabiei appeared to be referring to former US congressman Jim Slattery who, according to the New Yorker magazine, had approached the Iranians on behalf of the Wang family's lawyer. In its report, the New Yorker said Soleimani was expected to be deported after pleading guilty under a deal that Slattery had worked on with Soleimani's lawyers. "In a surprise move, however, the Justice Department instead dropped all charges against Soleimani," before the exchange went ahead, it said, citing an official from the US administration. — AFP

News in brief

Turkey deports 11 to France

PARIS: Turkey has sent 11 French relatives of suspected "terrorist fighters" back home, the Turkish interior ministry said yesterday, the latest in the country's renewed push to deport foreign insurgents. "Eleven French citizens have been deported to their home country," it said in a statement. A judicial source in France confirmed that four women and their seven children had arrived in France early yesterday. Two of the women returned were already targeted by arrest warrants and will soon face a judge, while the other two were sought by police and have been placed in custody, the French source said. Another source close to the case said the women had escaped from a camp controlled by Kurdish forces in Syria before being captured by Turkish police. — AFP

Anti-apartheid activist dies

JOHANNESBURG: South African anti-apartheid activist and outspoken African National Congress (ANC) veteran Professor Ben Turok died in the early hours of yesterday, his son said. Ben Turok, 92, died on the morning of Dec 9 according to a statement by his son Ivan Turok, without giving further details about his death. "He was always outspoken and dedicated - his whole life to fighting for freedom, equality and social justice in South Africa," Ivan said in the statement. "He was a loyal, lifetime member of the ANC, but retained an independent perspective throughout. His wisdom and counsel will be sorely missed." Turok was a key member of the delegation that drew up the Freedom Charter in 1955 and also served time in jail during apartheid for treason. Tributes poured in from all sectors of society on social media. — AFP

Over 9m facing food shortages

PARIS: The number of people requiring urgent food aid in 16 countries across Africa's Sahel region more than doubled this year to some 9.4 million amid an increase in violence and insecurity, officials and experts said yesterday. Three countries - Nigeria, Niger and Burkina Faso - are facing crisis conditions, at phase three of five on the scale used by the Food Crisis Prevention Network, which includes government and United Nations representatives as well as NGOs. Some 9.4 million people are estimated to be in immediate need of assistance in Oct-Dec 2019 in the 16 countries analyzed (excluding Liberia), including 4 million in Nigeria, 1.5 million in Niger and 1.2 million in Burkina Faso. "By June-August 2020, 14.4 million people are projected to be in a crisis situation or worse, including 1.2 million in an emergency situation (phase 4)," the network said in a statement issued during its annual meeting in Paris. — AFP

Jordan jails man over plot

AMMAN: A Jordanian court yesterday sentenced a man to eight years in prison for allegedly plotting to attack the Israeli embassy in Amman last year. The state security court ruled that Khaled Abu Raya "threatened to carry out terrorist acts". According to the charge sheet the 33-year-old Jordanian planned "to open fire on the embassy and its employees in a bid to kill a large number of Israelis". The plot was alleged to be in response to the transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to the disputed city of Jerusalem in May 2018. It was also motivated by Israel's blockade of the impoverished Gaza Strip, which has been rocked by anti-Israeli protests since March last year. The same court also sentenced another Jordanian, Munir Ibrahim, to three years in jail on Monday for allegedly planning to infiltrate Israel and attack soldiers in the Jewish state. — AFP

Britain’s ‘Brexit election’ campaign in final stretch

Some polls suggest vote could produce another hung parliament

LONDON: Britain's election campaign entered its frenetic final straight yesterday with Prime Minister Boris Johnson trying to lock in the votes needed to draw a line under years of arguments and paralysis over European Union membership. Johnson is hoping Thursday's poll hands his ruling Conservatives a majority, to allow him to push through his Brexit divorce deal with Brussels.

Parliament has been deadlocked since the result of the last election in 2017, which saw the Tories lose their majority and weaken their ability to implement the result of the 2016 referendum on EU membership. The main opposition Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn is trying to upset the odds and usher in Britain's first left-ist government in nine years. The veteran socialist has promised to negotiate his own EU divorce deal and then put it up for a vote in a new referendum that could still keep Britain partially tied to Europe - or simply cancel Brexit outright.

Opinion polls show the Conservatives maintaining a healthy lead. But Johnson needs to win at least half of the House of Commons seats because his party has no clear partners among the smaller parties. Some polls suggest the vote could produce another hung parliament that extends Britain's political paralysis and further frustrates the business community and Brussels. "We're taking nothing for granted," Johnson said during a visit to a fish market in the northeastern port of Grimsby. "We're working very, very hard across the whole country."

'Red wall'

The northeast of England bore the brunt of some of the global changes that made UK industries uncompetitive and forced the country to open up its fishing

waters to the other 27 EU states. Grimsby is part of a so-called "red wall" that traditionally backs Labour because of its support for trade unions and emphasis on social spending. The party's would-be finance minister John McDonnell promised yesterday to "end austerity" and shift wealth from London to the regions in the first 100 days of a Labour-led government.

"Don't be fooled by the doubters who say our plans are unachievable," McDonnell said. He promised to "remake the government and what people expect from it." The deep ideological divide between the two main parties has produced a fractious and highly personal campaign that appears to have done little to change the minds of voters' who opposed or supported Brexit from the start.

Johnson has faced constant questions over his trustworthiness and Corbyn has been put on the back foot over anti-Semitism within his party. Corbyn's main attack line has been to accuse Johnson of opening up Britain's cherished National Health Service (NHS) to US businesses as part of a post-Brexit trade deal with President Donald Trump. Yet his promise of lavish healthcare spending has been met with skepticism on the campaign trail and within some in the NHS itself.

"We needed our politicians to be realistic about the scale of the challenge and either fund it accordingly or be honest about how far the extra funding would go," NHS executive Chris Hopson wrote in yesterday's edition of The Times newspaper. "That's not happened."

Late surge?

Corbyn is yet to show signs of mounting the late surge that put Labour within a whisker of winning the 2017 election. Polls released over the weekend showed the Conservatives leading by about 10 percentage



GRIMSBY, United Kingdom: Britain's Prime Minister and Conservative leader Boris Johnson poses holding a fish with Conservative candidate for Great Grimsby Lia Nici during a visit to Grimsby Fish Market yesterday. —AFP

points. Pollsters believe Johnson needs to be at least six to eight points clear of Labour to secure a majority. Analysts attribute Corbyn's seeming failings this time around to his initial refusal to support a second Brexit referendum that most Labour voters want.

The century-old party has also been abandoned by

prominent members who voiced anguish at the anti-Semitism scandals that have erupted under Corbyn's watch. The Simon Wiesenthal Center that was formed in the United States to support Jewish human rights named Corbyn as the top anti-Semitic person or event for 2019. —AFP

Boris Johnson: Polarizing leader focused on Brexit

LONDON: Prime Minister Boris Johnson has promised to end the Brexit turmoil and unite Britain if re-elected this week, but critics accuse him of Trump-style populism that will only divide the country further. The former London mayor has toned down his trademark jokes and bluster ahead of Thursday's vote, as he focuses on a promise to "Get Brexit Done" by finally taking Britain out of the European Union.



Boris Johnson

Opinion polls suggest his efforts to present himself as a strong and optimistic leader are working and his Conservative party is on course to win a majority in the House of Commons. But Johnson remains a polarising figure, not least for his leading role in the 2016 Brexit referendum campaign, which was marked by exaggerated claims about the EU and anti-immigrant rhetoric. His tendency to play to the crowd both as a politician and in his previous career as a journalist has also drawn accusations of racism and misogyny. The list of offences - writing about gay "bumboys" and veiled Muslim women looking like "letterboxes" - has grown with comments unearthed in the campaign, including about "feckless" working-class men and single mothers. But he denies he meant any harm and supporters dismiss this as "just Boris", welcoming his off-the-cuff style as a sharp contrast to the soundbites of many other politicians. Crucially, many voters believe he is a better proposition than left-wing Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who polls put as the most unpopular opposition leader of the past 45 years.

Competence questions

Johnson's relaxed style and lack of attention to detail has led to accusations of incompetence - a perception fuelled by a chequered stint as foreign minister under former premier Theresa May. He was notably accused by the family of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian woman held in Tehran for sedition, of jeopardizing her case by mischaracterizing her job at the time. His aides point instead to the coordinated expulsion of Russian diplomats by many of Britain's allies, including the United States, after a nerve agent attack in England last year blamed on Moscow. As prime minister, Johnson defied his critics in renegotiating May's unpopular EU divorce deal. "Those who did not take him seriously were wrong," French President Emmanuel Macron said at the time. His credibility took a hit when, despite MPs passing a law to stop his threat of leaving the EU with no deal, Johnson refused to acknowledge Brexit would be delayed past October until it actually happened. He now hopes that, if he wins enough seats, he can get his deal through in time to leave the EU on the next deadline of Jan 31. However, experts question his pledge to get a new trade agreement with Brussels by Dec 2020, warning this is only possible with big compromises.

'One Nation' Tory

Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson was born in New York in 1964 into a high-achieving family of future politicians and media personalities. According to his sister, Rachel, as a child he once aspired to become "world king". He attended the elite Eton boys school and Oxford University to become a journalist for The Times - a job he promptly lost for making up a quote. Johnson was later sacked from the Tories' top team for lying about an extramarital affair, one of several personal scandals that have marked his career. Twice divorced, he now lives in Downing Street with his girlfriend, former Tory party staffer Carrie Symonds. But he rarely talks about his private life and some five children. He makes an exception for his great-grandfather Ali Kemal, who was briefly interior minister in the last grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire's government - a fact he often cites to reject accusations of racism. —AFP

Meet Ali, 25, Boris Johnson's biggest challenger

UXBRIDGE, United Kingdom: Ali Milani didn't speak English when he came to Britain from Iran at the age of five. Twenty years later, he's the biggest individual threat to Boris Johnson at this week's election. The 25-year-old candidate for the main opposition Labour party is trying to unseat the prime minister in his Uxbridge and South Ruislip constituency in west London.

Young political hopefuls are often given campaigning experience in places where they stand little chance of winning. But Milani is not in it to make up the numbers. Conservative party leader Johnson has a majority of just 5,034, which makes the seat a key marginal. No sitting prime minister has had such a small majority since 1924. Defeat for Johnson is unthinkable.

Milani, who pitches himself as the "local candidate", knows it and has been campaigning relentlessly to claw as many votes away from his opponent as possible. Few candidates in the high-stakes election can be as diametrically opposed as the front-runners in Uxbridge and South Ruislip. As well as being young and born in Iran, Milani was brought up by a single mother on a social housing estate in the shadow of Wembley Stadium in northwest London.

Johnson, 30 years his senior is a former London mayor and foreign minister who attended the prestigious Eton school and read Greek and Latin at the historic Oxford University. According to his sister, the charismatic Johnson, with his finely crafted persona as a bumbling stereotypical Englishman, harboured ambitions as a child of becoming "world king". In contrast, Milani is a politics graduate from Uxbridge's modern Brunel University, a practicing Muslim and a former senior figure in the National Union of Students.

Thursday's vote may be taking place against the backdrop of Brexit but local issues are still to the fore - and Johnson's lack of presence in the constituency has been noted. "It has always been a Conservative area but people are not happy with the local hospital," said Michael Freitas, 42, who works in IT. "The young people situation is not good," he told AFP among the Christmas decorations of Uxbridge town centre, some



LONDON: Ali Milani (center), the Labour Party's prospective parliamentary candidate in Uxbridge and South Ruislip, canvasses in the Eastcote area of London on Dec 7, 2019. —AFP

30 km from central London. Freitas, who said he was wavering between Milani and the smaller opposition Liberal Democrats, is unhappy at Johnson's inability to come to Uxbridge, which lies at the end of a branch of the Metropolitan underground line. "Obviously he's neglected the local community," he added.

Young people

"On paper, turning round a 5,000-majority for the sitting prime minister is not the easiest of challenges to overcome," Milani said in an article for The Guardian last month. "But the tide of opinion is turning against Johnson, who has regarded his constituents as a hindrance, and treated them with contempt," he charged. Milani says he's seen an "anti-Johnson tactical vote" and an unprecedented mobilization of students and young people, urging them to register to vote and make their voice heard. "I truly believe we are on the brink of a historic victory," he wrote.

Even a right-leaning think-tank appears to back up his theory: in April, Onward assessed that the Tories were "vulnerable" in Uxbridge and South Ruislip because of its young demographic. Catherine Knox, an actor and writer in her 30s, said Milani had "the local touch" and was more tapped into the thinking of younger voters. She has been canvassing on his behalf.

"I have been feeling quite depressed about the election. I worry about Brexit, about our public services, about lots of things," she said. "I needed to do something, I thought it would be nice to try to unseat Boris Johnson in his own constituency. He (Milani) seems to care about this area, he is from here." —AFP

torate and republicans who favor a united Ireland. At the last election in 2017, 17 of the territory's 18 seats went to the DUP (10) and Sinn Fein (seven). Alliance does not take a stance on the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. "We have really tried not to conflate the Brexit question, which is quite existential for people, with the green and orange constitutional issue here," said Bradshaw.

"The impact from Brexit will affect everybody equally regardless of where they sit on their aspirations for Northern Ireland." That may offer a home for shades of opinion lost in the divide, including unionist remainers. There is public anger at the DUP and Sinn Fein, whose inability to resolve their differences has left Northern Ireland without a power-sharing government for over 1,000 days. Across Belfast canary yellow placards of the Alliance Party urge "Demand Better".

Deep-held beliefs

Convincing voters Alliance can be truly neutral on the founding dispute of Northern Irish politics may prove difficult, however. The legacy of the bloody, three-decade dispute over British rule in Northern Ireland is never far from the surface, although Alliance leader Naomi Long disagrees. "Brexit is not an orange or green issue and Alliance is not an orange or green party," Long claimed in the party manifesto.

But Brexit - particularly fears of a return to a "hard border" with EU-member Ireland to the south - has revived fears of a return to the tensions and violence of the past. Johnson rejects the claims as scaremongering. "There will be no checks on goods from GB to NI, from NI to GB," he promised on Friday. Still, unionists fear the complicated arrangement could trigger Northern Ireland's split from mainland Britain. Sinn Fein wants a referendum on Irish unity within five years.—AFP

Jeremy Corbyn: Britain's alternative prime minister

LONDON: Jeremy Corbyn hopes to become Britain's prime minister this week after a campaign in which the Labour leader has doggedly maintained a neutral line on the burning issue of Brexit. The 70-year-old leftist has just days left to convince voters that he can heal divisions by impartially presiding over a second referendum on Britain's EU membership. The main opposition leader is offering the country a choice between a newly-negotiated, softer form of Brexit and staying in the European Union.

His party's manifesto pledges radical plans to "rewrite the rules of the economy", nationalize utilities and splurge money on public services. Corbyn commands cult-like adoration from enthusiastic, pro-European young supporters in England's larger urban centres. But to obtain power, he must also shore up pro-Brexit, older traditional Labour voters beyond the cities and convince Conservative and Liberal Democrat backers to switch their vote.

Big reveal

A lifelong campaigner on socialist causes, Corbyn appears happiest when campaigning on the stump, addressing crowds of cheering supporters who share his views. But unlike the 2017 election, where Corbyn defied opinion polls to slash a massive Conservative lead, this campaign has been less reliant on unscripted tub-thumping appearances. This time he has relied on presentations of supposedly secret dossiers that he claims prove the duplicity of the man he is seeking to defeat, Conservative Prime Minister Boris Johnson. The main thrust of Corbyn's campaign has not been on Brexit but on transforming British society. A key plank has been allegations that Johnson is secretly plotting to sell off the National Health Service in a "toxic" post-Brexit trade deal with US President Donald Trump. Both Johnson and Trump have vehemently denied the claims, with the Conservatives comparing Corbyn to a desperate conspiracy theorist.

Anti-Semitism row

Corbyn's campaign though has seen him battle allegations of anti-Semitism flourishing in the Labour movement under his stewardship. Britain's most senior rabbi even suggested anti-Semitism was a "new poison" within the party, which had been "sanctioned from the very top". Corbyn's campaign interviews have, at times, made for awkward viewing. In one BBC interview, he declined repeated chances to apologise to Britain's Jewish community for anti-Semitism.

On ITV, he was asked whether he watched Queen Elizabeth II's annual 3:00 pm Christmas Day message, the staunch republican gathered his recollections and said: "It's on in the morning usually; we have it on some of the time." He has lost the support of the left-leaning New Statesman political magazine, which could not bring itself to endorse Labour for the first time since it began in 1913. "His reluctance to apologize for the anti-Semitism in Labour and to take a stance on Brexit, the biggest issue facing the country, make him unfit to be prime minister," said the weekly.

Lifelong campaigner

From an impeccable socialist background - his parents met as activists in Britain during the Spanish Civil War - Corbyn was, he told the BBC, a "not academically successful student". He worked for trade unions before being elected to the House of Commons in 1983. He never held major office. Instead he spent decades on the backbenches championing human rights, leftist and anti-war causes, and was a serial rebel against his party's line. —AFP



Jeremy Corbyn

International

Shooting in the dark: Afghanistan war pits brother against brother

Taleban gains cause friction with residents in previously govt-held areas

KUNDUZ, Afghanistan: The 19-year-old Taleban deserter is haunted by the memory of the attack on a police checkpoint in northern Afghanistan in August. The Taleban band of around 20 fighters began its assault at 10 pm, he recalled, and by sunrise, all twelve Afghan police were dead. Kneeling in the blood-soaked sand of the bunker as he and his comrades checked the bodies for weapons and ammunition, the young militant made a terrible discovery - one of the dead men was his elder brother.

Two months later, he fled following an air strike that killed several of his band. Now hiding in Kunduz district, fearing reprisals by the Taleban for deserting, the young man and his father told their harrowing story on condition of anonymity. "I faced the darkest moment of my life seeing my brother's body covered with blood and dust," the younger brother told Reuters, fear visible on his face as he sat inside a car. "For a while the daylight turned to a dark night as if someone put a black hood on my head."

The father of the brothers said he volunteered the younger boy to fight for the Taleban after the militants learnt that the elder son was with the police.

The government accuses the Taleban of commonly using the tactic to intimidate families caught up in the 18-year-long war. "The Taleban torture and even kill innocent people to make them to join, mostly in remote rural areas where people have no other option," said Sediq Sediqqi, a spokesman for the Afghan government. The militant group denies this, though it said it does pressurize families not to join the security services of a government it regards as illegitimate and propped up by foreign forces.

Fine balance

The family, like many in the northern Kunduz province, make a difficult living subsistence farming wheat, rice and mung beans. To ease the hardship, the elder brother enlisted in police in 2006 to help support his family, his father said. A few months later, he recalled Taleban representatives visiting his mud-brick home to persuade him to make a fateful choice - either he should make his elder son quit the police, or he should volunteer one of his seven other sons to join the militants.

"It was a difficult decision for the whole family,

but we had no other choice: The Taleban were extorting us," he said, a sense of resignation in his voice, on why he allowed his youngest son to join. "They blocked the water to our crops." He knew the impact his decision might have. "Having a son in the police and giving the other to the Taleban means telling them to kill each other," he said.

The Taleban now controls more territory than at any point since it was ousted from power by US-led coalition forces in 2001. With that gain comes increasing friction with Afghans who have lived in what were previously government-held areas, experts said. "The Taleban are not aliens: They are undeniable part of Afghan society," said Atiqullah Amarkhel, a former general who served in the Afghan army between 1960 and 2009. "Many families of members of the Afghan security forces are living in rural areas and most of these areas are either completely controlled or heavily influenced by the Taleban."

Similar stories have emerged elsewhere in the country. Hikmatullah, a sergeant in the Afghan army from the eastern Nangarhar province, said the

Taleban imprisoned one of his younger brothers after he joined the security forces. They eventually released him, but after consulting with his father, he too joined the militant group. "This decision was not his choice or desire, but he was forced, in fact the whole family was forced because we were frustrated from the daily torture," Hikmatullah, who goes by only one name, said. "Whenever I get into a clash with the Taleban, I feel that my brother is standing in front of me and I am firing at him."

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taleban spokesman, denied it coerced people to join. "We sometime force those families not to serve in the front line with the Afghan police or army, because we don't want them to lose their precious lives," he said. "Joining us is their personal choice." The former Taleban fighter was deeply affected by his brother's death in the raid. In October, after an Afghan airstrike killed five of his comrades in the Taleban, he fled. He now lives away from the family's land with his father and brother's family. "Whenever I look to the three children of my late brother, I feel guilty as if I am the killer," he said. "I don't forgive myself." —AFP

Tiger skin, fetuses found in Indonesia poacher case

JAKARTA: The skin of a critically endangered Sumatran tiger and four fetuses have been confiscated after the arrest of several suspected poachers, Indonesian police said. The suspects may have been planning to sell the skin to a foreign collector, while its bones were earlier sold, possibly for use in medicinal products popular in some parts of Asia, authorities said. It was not clear how the foetuses, which were kept in a jar, were to be used.

The evidence was presented by

police at a press briefing Sunday after they announced three people had been arrested at the weekend. "We suspect that they would sell the skin to collectors, not only in Indonesia," Edward Hutapea, wildlife enforcement chief in Pekanbaru on Sumatra island, told AFP yesterday. The suspects had previously sold another tiger skin, but had yet to unload the second skin and fetuses, he said, adding that the unborn mammals were from the big cat sold earlier this year. If convicted, the trio could face up to five years in prison.

Poaching is responsible for almost 80 percent of Sumatran tiger deaths, according to TRAFFIC, a global wildlife trade monitoring network. Sumatran tigers are considered critically endangered by protection group the International Union for Conservation of Nature, with fewer than 400 believed to remain in the wild. —AFP



GOH, Indonesia: This picture taken on Dec 7, 2019 shows the three Indonesian men being paraded with a seized Sumatran tiger skin and four tiger fetus in a jar. —AFP

Firemen hailed as heroes in horror blaze

NEW DELHI: Two firemen who rescued 27 people were hailed as heroes yesterday after Delhi's deadliest fire in decades killed 43, prompting outrage that safety regulations were yet again ignored. The blaze early Sunday ripped through a four-storey building that housed small factory units in the congested lanes of the Old Delhi district while the migrant workers inside were asleep. Firefighter Rajesh Shukla, who carried out 11 people and was injured in the dangerous operation, said he was shocked by the number of people he found.

"No one in the area informed us that so many people were there in the building, some said there were three or four people trapped inside," Shukla told the Times of India daily. "I saw at least 30 people in the room (on the third floor) with most of them sleeping. A few others were dead... We were told that the laborers slept in shifts," he said. He added that if the fire brigade had had more information sooner, then "we could have saved more lives".

Yesterday, charred walls and smoke-blackened windows bore a grim testimony to the tragedy that unfolded at the cramped premises.

Locals told AFP that all illegal factories in the area pull down and lock their shutters at night, which gives workers time to flee if police raid the premises. "But this time it proved fatal for them as a lot of precious time was lost in trying to enter the building," a local resident said, as officials from the electricity department arrived at the scene.

Firefighter Ashish Malik, who managed to carry out 16 people from the blazing building, said they "had to take huge risks" carrying people down the only staircase on a rickety floor. "We rescued workers by carrying them on our shoulders. Some had to be dragged," he said. Zameel Ahmed, who lost two of his sons aged 32 and 34 in the inferno, was inconsolable. "Five of my grandchildren have lost their fathers. We have lost everything."

Hardeep Singh Puri, Indian housing and urban development minister, hit out at the Delhi state government for allowing the owners of the building to operate with "impunity". The lanes were narrow and congested with wires and cables dangling dangerously, he said in a statement, adding the building flouted safety and fire norms. "If all these (city) departments had done their job properly then many valuable lives could have been saved," he said.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal announced compensation of 1 million rupees (\$13,933) for the families of those killed. Most workers complained of government apathy. "Politicians came to the site, made big announcements and left the scene, but



NEW DELHI: Relatives of fire victims protest as they demand ambulances to carry the bodies back to their hometown yesterday. —AFP

no one tried to help the victims and their families who're facing difficulties in identifying and claiming the bodies of the workers who perished in the fire," said factory worker Rehan. More fire engines were sent to the factory yesterday morning to douse a small fire caused by burning waste.

Police said the owner of the building and its manager have been arrested and that the illegal factory units inside had been operating without fire safety clearance. One of the units manufactured wall mirrors, one was involved in the stitching of schoolbags and another stitched skull caps, the

Press Trust of India news agency reported. Such firms often provide sleeping quarters for poor workers, mostly migrants from elsewhere in India who save money by bedding down at their workplaces. Some were paid just 1,000 rupees (\$14) a month.

Locals said the building, which also made purses and jackets, had just one entrance. Twenty rooms on each floor were connected by a single internal stairway. Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted that the fire, the deadliest in Delhi since 59 people perished in a burning cinema in 1997, was "extremely horrific". —Agencies

Daughter claims Aussie ex-PM urged rape silence

SYDNEY: The daughter of former Australian prime minister Bob Hawke said he ordered her to keep quiet about her alleged rape by one of his political allies for fear it would damage his career, Australian media has reported. Rosslyn Dillon alleged she was raped three times by a late Labor member of parliament in the 1980s, The New Daily reported Saturday. In a court affidavit, Dillon said her father - one of Australia's most popular prime ministers - told her not to go to the police to avoid controversy ahead of his challenge for the party leadership in 1982.

The allegations were reportedly made as part of her Aus\$4 million (\$2.73 million) claim to Hawke's estate, which she is disputing after receiving \$750,000 in his will. Hawke was unsuccessful in his 1982 attempt to become Labor leader. He took over the following year and was quickly elected prime minister, a position he held until 1991. He died in May aged 89. According to The New Daily, there are several inconsistencies in Dillon's claims, including the timing of certain documented historical events.

Dillon's sister, Sue Pieters-Hawke, said the family had been aware of the allegations at the time and Hawke found them distressing. "She did tell people at the time. I believe there was a supportive response but it didn't involve using the legal system," she told The New Daily. Dillon reportedly said she was "still haunted by the sexual assaults" and may have found closure if she had been able to go to the police. —AFP

Rape victim's relatives to get guns and guards

LUCKNOW: Indian police yesterday deployed round-the-clock protection and promised a weapons license to the family of an alleged rape victim who died after being set on fire on the way to testify in court. The woman told police in her dying testimony that two of her alleged rapists repeatedly pushed her to withdraw the court case before attacking her last week with three other men in Uttar Pradesh state. "We have deputed personal security officers for the brother and sister of the victim, apart from deploying police force in the village," Uttar Pradesh's Unnao district police chief Vikrant Vir told AFP. The family's request for an arms license would be given priority processing, Vir added. All five men have been arrested and charged with murder, with two of them still facing rape charges.

The special provisions for the 23-year-old's

brother and sister came as public anger grows about perceived police inaction in preventing and pursuing sexual assault cases across the country. India has long battled a high number of violent crimes against women, particularly sexual assault, with more than 33,000 rapes reported in 2017. Victims and their families often complain of harassment from alleged perpetrators demanding that they withdraw their cases or agree to out-of-court settlements as court action drag on for years.

The conviction rate in rape cases is 32 percent. The brutal death of the young woman, whose name was not released for legal reasons, was the latest in a string of cases in which alleged sexual attack victims have been murdered. Last week police shot dead four men accused of raping and murdering a 27-year-old veterinary doctor in the southern city of Hyderabad. Her killing, in late November, sparked nationwide protests before the suspects were killed by police officers in what they claimed was a "shootout" during a re-enactment of the alleged attack. The state government has established a special investigations team to probe the men's deaths. —AFP

‘Old man bluffing,’ says N Korea after Trump warns Kim

SEOUL: North Korea yesterday slammed US President Trump for "bluffing" and called him "an old man bereft of patience" as Pyongyang ramps up pressure on Washington over stalled nuclear talks. Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un engaged in mutual insults and threats of devastation in 2017, sending tensions soaring before a diplomatic rapprochement the following year. Pyongyang has set Washington an end-of-year time limit to offer it new concessions in deadlocked nuclear negotiations, and has said it will adopt an unspecified "new way" if nothing acceptable is forthcoming.

Denuclearization negotiations have been at a standstill since a summit in Hanoi broke up in February. Trump has indicated that the option of military action was still on the table while downplaying Pyongyang's actions, saying the North's leader would not want to "interfere" with the upcoming US presidential elections. "I'd be surprised if North Korea acted hostily," Trump said Saturday.

But Kim Yong Chol, who served as the North's counterpart to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo until the collapse of the Hanoi meeting, slammed Trump's "odd words and expression", referring to him as a "heedless and erratic old man". "Our action is for his surprise. So, if he does not get astonished, we will be irritated," Kim, now the chairman of the Korea Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency. "This naturally indicates that Trump is an old man bereft of patience," he said, adding: "From those words and expressions we can read how irritated he is now."

The official noted that the North Korean leader had not used "any irritating expression towards the US president as yet", but warned his "understanding" of Trump could change. "He must understand that his own style bluffing and hypocrisy sound rather abnormal and unrealistic to us," Kim said. "We have nothing more to lose." The North has raised tensions in recent months with a series of assertive statements and multiple weapons tests - including a "very important test" at its key satellite launch site at the weekend - as its negotiating time limit approaches.

Kim's New Year speech, a key political set-piece in the isolated country, is also due on Jan 1. On Thursday, the North's vice foreign minister Choe Son Hui warned of again referring to Trump as a "dotard" - Pyongyang's favored nickname for the US president at the height of tensions in 2017. Another senior official said last week that what gift the US receives for Christmas will depend entirely on Washington's actions.

Trump warned Sunday that Kim had "everything" to lose through hostility towards the United States, after Pyongyang said it had carried out a major new weapons test. "Kim Jong Un is too smart and has far too much to lose, everything actually, if he acts in a hostile way," Trump tweeted in response to the unspecified test at the Sohae space launch center. The announcement of Saturday's test came just hours after Trump said he would be "surprised" by any hostile action from the North, emphasizing his "very good relationship" with Kim.

Trump and Kim engaged in months of mutual insults and threats of devastation in 2017, sending tensions soaring before a diplomatic rapprochement the following year. The pair have met three times since June 2018 but with little progress towards denuclearization "North Korea, under the leadership of Kim Jong Un, has tremendous economic potential, but it must denuclearize as promised," Trump tweeted. "NATO, China, Russia, Japan, and the entire world is unified on this issue!"

Writing that Kim had "signed a strong Denuclearization Agreement" at their June 2018 summit in Singapore, Trump warned: "He does not want to void his special relationship with the President of the United States or interfere with the US Presidential Election in November." —AFP

Analysis

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India gang-rape shootings revive 'encounter' fears

The shooting of four gang-rape and murder suspects by Indian police has highlighted the scourge of extrajudicial killings in a nation grappling with high levels of sexual crimes and a notoriously slow judicial process. Authorities claimed the four men were killed in a "shootout" during a re-enactment of the attack, carried out just under two weeks ago, in which a 27-year-old veterinarian was raped and murdered, before her body was burnt. Police were feted with rose petals, and crowds took to the streets cheering the men's deaths, saying "swift justice" had been meted out. "The law has done its duty," local police chief V C Sajjanar told reporters.

These kind of deaths - dubbed "encounters" in South Asia - where police claim suspects were killed trying to resist arrest or while escaping from custody, are part of a well-worn script trotted out by authorities. But human rights campaigners warned of a deepening culture of impunity as police take the law into their own hands. "Over the decades extrajudicial killings and custodial torture have assumed legal sanctity in India," leading Supreme Court lawyer and founder of the Human Rights Law Network, Colin Gonsalves, told AFP. "It's worrying that criminality of the police is now getting public approval." After the killings, Chief Justice Sharad Arvind Bobde of the Supreme Court said he had concerns about the use of "instant" justice. "Justice never ought to be instant. Justice must never ever take the form of revenge. I believe justice loses its character when it becomes revenge," Bobde said at an event on Saturday.

'No mercy' tactics

The "staged shootouts" were for decades used to bypass India's cumbersome judicial processes when police battled armed separatist movements in West Bengal, Punjab, Kashmir and remote northeastern states. More recently, the encounters have been deployed against those accused of violent crimes. In India's film-loving culture, "encounter specialist" police officers have been idolized by Bollywood. Scores of movies depict them as tough men and glorify their "kills", particularly relating to the deaths of hundreds of alleged gang members in Bollywood's capital Mumbai in the 1990s.

Rights activists say "encounters" are carried out as retribution by police, or used to cover up botched investigations, win awards and rewards, or to pacify a furious public. According to a government report, 100 suspects were killed in police custody in 2017. None of the 33 policemen arrested for the killings was convicted, it said. Campaigners say the number of those who actually die at the hands of the police is far higher, with many deaths categorized as suicide or from natural causes.

The Supreme Court attempted to clamp down on the killings in 2014, ordering mandatory probes and barring governments from rewarding officers before determining how and why the shootings occurred. The court is currently monitoring probes into cases from northeastern Manipur state where rights groups allege that 1,530 suspects have been killed by police since 2007.

It is also hearing a petition on the "staged killings" of at least 58 suspects in Uttar Pradesh since 2017 after the state government adopted what it called "no-mercy" tactics to battle crime. Home Minister Amit Shah has said his government would not tolerate police atrocities. He himself was cleared of charges relating to the 2005 extrajudicial killing of a gangster and his wife when he was Gujarat state's home minister.

Slow or no justice

Police have long been criticized for not preventing violent crimes or for failing to bring cases, particularly sexual assaults, to the courts. The justice system is also cumbersome and slow, with some rape and murder cases taking years or even decades to reach their conclusion. India has a backlog of some 30 million cases, of which nearly 150,000 relate to sexual assault. The conviction rate for rape stands at 32 percent, and victims also have to endure bungled police investigations and threats by perpetrators.

Analysts say the lack of justice for victims has fuelled public acceptance of extrajudicial executions. Activist Mihir Desai said rape cases have become symbolic of the rot in the criminal justice system, where constitutional rights of both victims and offenders are violated. "This somehow reflects the justice delivery system and how the state is failing its citizens," said Desai, whose rights group the People's Union for Civil Liberties has mounted several court cases against arbitrary police killings. "The young woman didn't get justice and the slain men won't get it too." — AFP

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



Retired Algerian military men shout slogans calling for elections as they watch an anti-government demonstration in the capital Algiers yesterday. — AFP

Algerian army sees vote as route back to shadows

Algeria's army, the heart of an opaque regime, exercised power from the shadows until it was thrust into the limelight with mass protests and the April departure of president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. Eight months later, commanders are hoping to use Thursday's contentious presidential vote to create a "civilian facade" and return to pulling the strings backstage, analysts say. The "Hirak" movement of massive street rallies that brought an end to veteran Bouteflika's two decades in power had an unintended effect.

"The military high command found itself, against its will, in centre stage," said Moussaab Hammoudi, a PhD candidate at the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS) in Paris. "That put it in a very uncomfortable position, because it prefers to stay hidden." Bouteflika's departure focused the spotlight on one man in particular: army chief of 15 years, General Ahmed Gaid Salah, who overnight became the North African country's de facto strongman.

"Even though officially he's just the deputy defense minister, he's emerged as the true master of the country," said Jean-Pierre Filiu, a professor at Sciences Po university in Paris who has written a book on the Hirak. "The army has always been at the heart of the Algerian system."

Army vs Hirak

Bouteflika resigned on April 2 after weeks of street

demonstrations and calls from Gaid Salah for his impeachment. But while the army was key to his downfall, Bouteflika's departure brought the military into direct confrontation with the Hirak and its demands for more sweeping reforms. While Gaid Salah has championed the holding of a presidential vote on Dec 12, the protest movement rejects any vote as invalid until root-and-branch reforms are passed and regime figures ousted.

Protesters have continued to hold mass demonstrations every week, often shouting: "Gaid Salah, forget the vote!" Indeed, their changing slogans have echoed changing perceptions of the army's role as protesters invoke fears of a military state. The early cries of "the army and the people are brothers!" have been replaced with "put the generals in the trash" and even "Gaid Salah is a traitor!"

Since Algeria's hard-won independence from France in 1962, the army has operated as "a state within a state", wielding discreet but vast political influence, said Kamal Cheklat, Maghreb specialist at the Centre for Sociological and Political Research in Paris (Cresppa). "The Hirak wants to question all that," he said. That would represent "a real break in the order of things established by the Algerian military a long time ago."

But meeting the protesters' demands is not on the army's agenda, he added, noting that the military establishment has attempted to force through a vote opposed

by "the majority of Algerians". That constitutes a bid to create "a civilian facade to its rule and pass on... the political, economic and social crisis to the future president," Cheklat said. Filiu said the army "is sincerely hoping to restore the status quo and smother the Hirak by imposing the reinstatement of a front-line civilian presidency".

No concessions

For Flavien Bourrat of France's Institute for Strategic Research at the Military School (IRSEM), the army's refusal to grant concessions to the protest movement is a bid to stop Algeria's political transition escaping its control. Many in Algeria still harbor dark memories of the "failed democratic transition" in the early 1990s, when the army's cancellation of elections expected to be won by Islamists sparked a decade-long civil war. "The military hierarchy doesn't want to get (directly) involved in politics," Bourrat said.

He recalled the army's repression of protests in the late 1980s and then its role during the civil war, which seriously damaged its image. "Algeria's economic situation is extremely difficult and worrying and few people want to end up in charge of that file," he said. "Certainly not the military." But, Hammoudi warned, the future president "will have no power over major issues. He will receive injunctions (from the army), sometimes implicit - as has always been the case." — AFP

Cherry blossoms prompt full-blown scandal for Abe

It might be the most Japanese of political scandals: A furore over Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's guest list at a party to mark the annual cherry blossom season. As scandals go, it has plenty of juicy elements - alleged mafia guests, disappearing evidence, even gaffes by Abe, who appeared to lay blame for shredded documents on a disabled worker. It's the latest headache for Japan's longest-serving premier, who has already weathered two cronyism scandals in recent years and has faced an almost daily drubbing by opposition lawmakers since the scandal emerged in early November.

The outcry involves a tradition that dates back to 1952 - a publicly funded cherry blossom party intended to honor the great and the good for their achievements. The seemingly innocuous gathering became a lightning rod for criticism after claims Abe stacked the guest list with some 850 supporters from his local constituency - with the party costing 55 million yen (\$504,000) in public money.

When the opposition smelled blood, additional allegations piled in: The chairman of a disgraced company was once a guest, a member of one of Japan's infamous yakuza mafia attended in 2019. The opposition bloc demanded the guest list for this year's event be produced, only to be told it had been shredded on the very same day the request was made. Just a coincidence, Abe insisted to outraged opposition lawmakers: the documents were shredded during "the work hours of a part-time employee with disabilities," he added, in remarks that many saw as an attempt to blame the worker.

'Abe can hold on'

The scandal has seen public support for Abe's government drop six or seven points to around 50 percent or lower, but experts said Abe is likely to weather the storm. "Voters are not convinced by the Abe administration's explanation of the scandal," Junichi Saito, a professor of politics at Tokyo's Waseda University, told AFP. "But opinion polls will not likely fall by more than 10 percentage points because there is no other candidate for a prime minister."

Abe benefits from lingering disillusionment with the country's opposition, with voters still leery after the disastrous performance of the centre-left Democratic Party-led government in 2009-2012. "I'm skeptical at this point that the opposition will win public support if it manages to dent Abe's with this scandal," Tobias Harris, senior vice

president of consulting firm Teneo, told AFP. "The worst case scenario for Abe is that (his ruling party) LDP supporters abandon him, which hasn't happened thus far, giving him a floor of around thirty percent (support)," he added. "But even then, without a smoking gun I think Abe can hold on for a long time."

'Better than lying'

Allegations have continued to emerge, including claims that Abe invited supporters to a dinner at a luxury hotel and let his political support group pick up part of the tab in violation of election law. His government denies that, and a criminal investigation is viewed as extremely unlikely. Still, Saito said, the allegations risk damaging public faith in the political system. "This administration is trying to avert criticism" by withholding documents, and that "hurts a system (of accountability) that is necessary for democracy".

Next year's cherry blossom party has been cancelled, with Abe promising to "reflect on" how the gathering has been organized. That is likely to be enough to tide him over, Junichi Takase, professor of politics at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies, told AFP. "The opposition bloc has nothing else in their arsenal except attacking Mr Abe for this kind of scandal," he said. "Mr Abe is good at handling crises. He admitted there was something wrong, apologized, and wants to move on - that's better than lying." — AFP

Beleaguered DR Congo rainforest attacked on all sides

Lush rainforest covers millions of hectares of the Democratic Republic of Congo, a central part of Earth's natural defense against global warming - but it is under severe threat from a perfect storm of mismanagement and corruption. An array of global and local NGOs are in a tense fight to save the rainforest, which lost an area twice the size of Luxembourg last year alone, according to Global Forest Watch.

But the problems run right through DR Congo society - from the poor who rely on charcoal for fuel in a country with meagre supplies of other power, to the senior officials who profit from illegal logging. "There are lawmakers and soldiers involved. They don't pay taxes - it's unfair competition," says Felicien Liofo, head of a wood craftsmen's association. Local police say soldiers simply rip apart the fences around the forest and threaten to shoot anyone who tries to stop them.

NGOs fight back

The government faces a daunting challenge to protect the rainforest. Its 2002 forestry code imposed a moratorium on new concessions and regulated the number of trees that could be chopped down under existing permits, but officials complain of a lack of resources. Felicien Malu, a provincial environment coordinator, has roughly 1,200 workers to cover a province twice the size of Portugal. But his staff, he says, are not paid and

lack even the basic tools of their trade - boats, motorcycles or pickup trucks. "We can't organize control missions because there are many rivers to cross and unpaved roads," he says.

His predecessor in the job was suspended for embezzlement, underlining how corruption feeds the problem of deforestation. NGOs have launched a multi-pronged attack against the plunder. Greenpeace Africa and a coalition of eight NGOs from DRC and neighboring Congo-Brazzaville have demanded a halt to all industrial activities in the millions of hectares of peatland shared by the two countries. The ancient wetlands store huge amounts of carbon, but companies are involved in oil exploration, logging and industrial agriculture in the area.

Global Witness investigated the illegal logging trade and earlier this year accused a general in the Congolese army of illegally reselling logging permits. However, DRC remains impoverished and electricity is a rare luxury, meaning that most Congolese still rely on charcoal as their main fuel supply. Making charcoal involves chopping down trees and slow-burning the wood in covered ovens - all of which comes at a steep price for the environment. "I get through a \$30 sackful every two months. That's a fair chunk of what I earn," says Solange Sekera while shopping at a market in the eastern city of Goma. "We have no other means of preparing meals."

'Our forests may disappear'

The trade in charcoal - known locally as makala - is worth millions of dollars and it is attracting armed groups to the Goma area, threatening Virunga national park, a sanctuary for endangered mountain gorillas. More than 2,000 km to the west, the reliance on charcoal in Kinshasa is also causing severe problems. Kinshasa residents consume five million tonnes of wood a year, according to French research group Cirad, and increasing urbanization



Joseph Bisole, 27, a former child soldier, manufactures charcoal as part of the WWF Ecomakala project to reduce illegal charcoal production, in Burungu in northeastern Democratic Republic of Congo on Sept 28, 2019. — AFP

is just raising the pressure on the forests. On the hillsides around the capital, there are scarcely any trees left. NGOs and the government are once again trying to respond. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) is trying to minimize the impact of charcoal burning by introducing "eco makala" ovens that burn the fuel more efficiently and so use less wood. And President Felix Tshisekedi is trying to boost electricity across the country to reduce demand for wood-based fuel.

He has championed hydroelectric power - and ground was broken in early October on a new dam in Goma. NGOs and locals are not convinced of the viability of the project, but Tshisekedi is adamant: "Given the current rate of population growth and our energy needs, our forests may disappear by the year 2100," he says. — AFP

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2019

12 Stocks stutter; attention turns to trade deadline



13 All eyes on Lagarde's ECB debut this week



13 Jobs of the future clustering in handful of US cities: Study



RENNES: TER (Transport Express Regional) trains are pictured at Rennes railway station yesterday. French commuters and tourists braced for another day of public transport chaos yesterday as the government prepared to respond to widespread anger over pension reform that has sparked open-ended walkouts. —AFP

French strike chaos deepens

Day 5 of public transport chaos as strike bites

PARIS: France's transport chaos deepened yesterday on the fifth day of a nationwide strike over pension reforms, ramping up tensions at the start of a crucial week in President Emmanuel Macron's battle with trade unions. With only two of the Paris metro's 16 lines running as normal and suburban trains also heavily disrupted, many commuters slipped behind the wheel to try to get to work in torrential rain, causing major gridlock.

By 9 am, the tailbacks in the Paris area ran to 600 kilometres, twice the normal level, the Sytadin monitoring website said. Large queues formed at bus stops following an announcement that one out of two buses would be running but striking workers blocked seven out of 25 bus depots, leaving more travellers stranded. With many having opted to work from home last week and only now returning to the workplace, this week will test public support for the strike.

A poll Sunday in the Journal du Dimanche newspaper showed 53 percent of the French supporting the strike or expressing sympathy for their demands, up six points in a week. Unions have called a second day of mass protests for Tuesday, a day before the

government unveils the full details of its plans for a single points-based pension scheme that does away with dozens of more advantageous plans enjoyed by train drivers, sailors, lawyers and other professions.

'A monstrosity'
Critics argue that the shake-up will require people in both the public and private sector to work longer for a smaller retirement payout. Teachers are expected to walk out again for the second time in a week Tuesday, leading to widespread school closures. Firefighters, electricity workers and "yellow vest" anti-government demonstrators have also joined railway workers in the streets in recent days. The government's pensions envoy Jean-Paul Delevoye, who drafted the reforms, and Health Minister Agnes Buzyn will meet with trade unions yesterday to try to negotiate an end to the deadlock.

But the unions have sounded an uncompromising note. "I will not negotiate over the implementation of what I describe as a monstrosity which endangers tomorrow's pensioners," said Yves Veyrier, the head of the militant Force Ouvriere union. The strike has

squeezed retailers in the run-up to Christmas, raising the prospect of another bleak year-end after the unrest caused by the yellow vests in late 2018.

The first day of the stoppage already caused an average 30 percent drop in sales, according to the Alliance of Commerce, which represents 27,000 supermarkets and clothing and shoe stores with almost 200,000 workers. A hotel association said reservations in the larger Paris region dropped by 30 to 40 percent on the first day of the strike. Regional and international trains, including the Eurostar to London and Thalys to Brussels, have also been hobbled by the unrest, and several flights were cancelled on the first days of the strike.

Fairer system for all?
Over 800,000 people took to the streets when the strike was launched on December 5, many accusing Macron of trying to weaken France's generous social safety net. The president, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe and senior cabinet ministers met late Sunday to discuss the changes, which they argue will ensure a fairer and more sustainable system for all.



PARIS: Commuters board a train at Nation suburban train station in Paris, during a strike of Paris public transports operator RATP employees yesterday. —AFP

"If we do not carry out a far-reaching, serious and progressive reform today, someone else will do a really brutal one tomorrow," Philippe told Le Journal du Dimanche. The strike has drawn comparisons with late 1995 when three weeks of strikes forced the then centre-right government to withdraw

its pension reforms. Adrien Quatennens, a lawmaker from the far-left France Unbowed party, acknowledged on LCI radio that the strike was hard on businesses and commuters, but said: "It's better to endure a few weeks of hassle than... years of hardship" in retirement. — AFP

European companies minimize risks from US-China trade war

BEIJING: European companies in China have been able to minimize the effect from the tariff war between Beijing and Washington, although some are considering relocating their businesses, the EU Chamber of Commerce said yesterday. The world's two biggest economies have been entangled in a lingering trade war for over a year, which has weighed on the global economy and resulted in hundreds of billions of dollars in punitive tariffs slapped on two-way trade.

European companies in China "have effectively negated the tariff effects in a relatively short space of time," said the president of the EU Chamber of Commerce in China, Joerg Wuttke. Many companies have "effectively side-stepped" the steep tariffs by rejigging their supply chains and leveraging their global corporate networks, the chamber said in a

statement. According to a survey of its members released yesterday, 64 percent of respondents said they have not noticed "any change" in their business as a result of the trade war.

Another 10 percent said they were "completely affected" by the trade war. However many European companies said they expected the trade war to be "long-lasting", and 10 percent have already changed suppliers. At the time of the survey, another eight percent had already relocated parts of their business out of China or were planning to do so - mainly to elsewhere in southeast Asia - while 15 percent had delayed investment or expansion decisions because of the trade war.

This figure was up from six percent since the previous survey in January. The report, which surveyed 174 companies in China, was completed in September and is released as China and the US continue to negotiate a way to reach a "phase one" trade deal. In the absence of any agreement, Washington is threatening to impose 15 percent additional customs surcharges on December 15, which will apply to Chinese goods which have so far been spared, including cellphones and sportswear. They account for some \$160 billion in annual imports. — AFP

Arms sales worldwide rises up to nearly 5 %

STOCKHOLM: Arms sales rose by nearly five percent worldwide in 2018 in a market dominated by the United States, according to a new report published yesterday by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The turnover of the 100 biggest arms manufacturers came to \$420 billion, thanks in large part to the US market, said the report. US manufacturers alone accounted for 59 percent of the market, or a turnover of \$246 billion, up 7.2 percent on the previous year.

"This is a significant increase over one year considering the already high levels of US combined arms sales," Aude Fleurant, the director of SIPRI's arms transfers and military expenditure programme, told AFP. US firms were benefitting from the Trump administration's decision to modernise its armed services to reinforce its position against China and Russia. Russia was second in the rankings for arms production, with 8.6 percent of the market, just ahead of the United Kingdom on 8.4 percent and France on 5.5 percent.

The study did not include China, for which there was insufficient data, but SIPRI's research estimated that there

were between three and seven Chinese businesses in the top 100 arms manufacturers. Two major European companies, Airbus and MBDA were also responding to "demand due to ongoing armed conflicts and severe tensions in several regions", Fleurant added. China has spent 1.9 percent of its gross domestic product on defence every year since 2013.

The top-ranked Russian firm, Almaz-Antei, jumped to ninth on the list with turnover of \$9.6 billion — 18 percent up on the previous year. "This increase was based not only on strong domestic demand, but also on continuing growth in arms sales to other countries, in particular exports of the S-400 air defence system," said the report. One of the buyers of this system is NATO member Turkey, which took the deal despite a US threat of sanctions. Turkey's arms industry had two businesses in the top 100 and turnover of \$2.8 billion, up 22 percent on the previous year.

Turkey was "driven by the goal of being self-sufficient in arms supply and therefore develop arms production capabilities in all segments (land systems, air systems, naval systems, missiles, etc.)," said Fleurant. "Turkey is also involved with an enduring armed conflict with the Kurds, which also tends to increase demand for arms," she added. The world's largest arms maker remains the US firm Lockheed Martin, as it has been since 2009, this last year with turnover of \$47.3 billion. Its sales alone account for 11 percent of the world market. — AFP

Business

Stocks stutter as attention turns to trade deadline, Central bank meetings

European shares struggle after Asia ekes out gain

LONDON: European stocks fell yesterday as worries about a Chinese economic slowdown and the US-China trade war outweighed Friday's strong US jobs data, in a quiet start to trading before several big events later in the week. The Federal Reserve meets tomorrow and new European Central Bank chief Christine Lagarde holds her first policy meeting on Thursday, which will also see a parliamentary election in Britain, with the results due on Friday.

However, at the forefront of most investors' minds is an impending Dec 15 deadline for the United States to impose a new round of tariffs on China. Top White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said on Friday that the deadline was still in place to impose a new round of tariffs on Chinese consumer goods, but he also said President Donald Trump likes where trade talks with China are going.

"If we see Donald Trump decide not to delay tariffs,

that would lead to a risk-off reaction in markets," said Nomura currency strategist Jordan Rochester. "We don't expect tariffs to go into effect as the talks are ongoing but the trade talks are the main driver this week," he said, adding he did not expect any "fire-works" from the central bank meetings.

European shares slipped. The Euro STOXX 600 was down marginally, while the German DAX dropped 0.1 percent. France's CAC 40 shed 0.2 percent and the FTSE 100 was flat. That followed small gains in Asia, where Japan's benchmark Nikkei added 0.33 percent while MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan gained 0.15 percent. Markets have been largely working on the assumption that the planned Dec. 15 tariffs, which cover several consumer products such as cellphones and toys, will be dropped or at least postponed, given that Washington and Beijing agreed in October to work on a trade deal.

Chinese shivers

China's exports shrank for the fourth consecutive month in November, sending shivers through a market already concerned about damage being done to global demand by the trade war, but growth in imports may be a sign that Beijing's stimulus steps are helping to stoke demand. The US dollar, which bounced on Friday after data showed US job growth increased in November by the most in 10 months, was down marginally against a basket of currencies and the euro, at \$1.1064. The strong labour market data in the United States helped power stock markets and further allay fears about a slowdown in the world's largest economy.

"This economy is still climbing and shattering the records for longevity," said Chris Rupkey, chief financial economist at MUFG Union Bank. "Right now, the clouds of recession still remain well offshore despite

troubled economies elsewhere in the world and a trade war." The dollar was also down 0.1 percent against the Japanese yen at 108.51 yen. Elsewhere in currency markets the British pound made more gains, rising to a new 7-month high of \$1.3180 as investors raised their bets on a Conservative Party victory - and a ruling majority in parliament - in Thursday's general election.

Government bond markets were little moved, as investors awaited the central bank meetings. Oil prices weakened after the disappointing Chinese trade data. Brent futures were down 0.56 percent, at \$64.03 per barrel after gaining about 3 percent last week on the news that OPEC and its allies would deepen output cuts. West Texas Intermediate oil futures lost 0.66 percent to \$58.90 a barrel, having risen about 7 percent last week on the prospects for lower production from 'OPEC+'. —Reuters

Warba Bank announces the 'Al Sunbula' Draw winners

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, "the Best investment Bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait, held its weekly Sunbula draw number 46 and Sunbula Kids. The draws announced the 8 lucky winners in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and bank officials. The bank proudly announced the weekly draw number 46 lucky 5 winners of the 1000 Kuwait Dinar prize: Ruba Ibrahim Yousef Sareyah, Nawaf Saleh Hamad Al-Thuwaikh, Hamad Dlaim Mohammad Almutairi, Ahmad Mubarak Mousa Al-Obaidan and Ebtesam Humoud Abdullateef Al-Duwailah.

Warba Bank has added Sunbula Kids Account for the first time to Sunbula Draws, it's an investment Saving's account with promising competitive returns along with monthly draws with innovative prizes chosen carefully for the kids. The winners of this month are: The 1st winner of a trip to Dubai Parks is Naser Humoud Saad Al-Rasheedi, the 2nd winner of a one year subscription at Flex is Badreyah Abdullateef Ahmad Al-Khamees and the 3rd winner of a one year subscription in one of the participated clubs is Leen Ahmad Kouki.

Al-Sunbula both account and fixed deposits are the perfect choices for customers who wish to save money and achieve steady returns while at the same time have the opportunity to win cash prizes throughout the year. In line with the bank's mission to develop and differentiate its offerings, Warba Bank has enhanced its Sunbula campaign for 2019 with more cash and prizes reaching more than 1 Million Kuwaiti Dinars. Warba Bank will continue its weekly draws for 5 winners of KD 1,000 each. What's new in 2019 are the "Mega Draws" which will be held every quarter to reveal five winners, the 1st winner will get KD 100,000! The four winners thereafter will each get the latest Land Cruiser VXR. Furthermore, the final Mega draw held in January 2020 will feature 2 more Land Cruiser VXRs!

As for the chances for winning, each customer is eligible to enter the draw against each KD 10 in the Sunbula Account. Nevertheless, Sunbula Fixed Deposit investors also get chances in the Sunbula draws along with high expected returns that reach up to 3.5% distributed either monthly or at maturity upon the customer's preference.

Furthermore, Warba Bank is leveraging on its Customer Onboarding solution, in line with its ambitious five-year strategy that enables non-Warba Bank customers to request the opening of Al-Sunbula account in a simple electronic manner without having to visit the branch, through 5 simple steps in 5 minutes. New customers will be able to request opening the account at anytime, anywhere, through the new and unique electronic system used to implement this service. Representatives will then contact the customer to determine the appropriate time to visit the branch to get required signatures, verify the customer's identity, deliver his/her debit card, and activate the account.

KFH participates as platinum sponsor in WIBC 2019

KUWAIT: As Platinum Sponsor, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has recently participated in the 26th Annual World Islamic Banking Conference (WIBC) which was held in Bahrain under the patronage of the Prime Minister Prince Khalifa Bin Salman Al Khalifa, and in partnership with the Central Bank of Bahrain. On the theme of "Mega Trends in Banking and Finance", The WIBC 2019 was the largest gathering in the world with an attendance of over 1000 delegates including regulators, industry leaders, bankers and experts.

The Group Chief Executive Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh participated in a panel discussion on the growth opportunities of the Islamic finance industry and the challenges and risks facing the industry with attendance of CEOs in some Islamic banks. Managing Director and CEO of KFH Bahrain, Abdulhakeem Al-Khayyat also participated in a panel discussion featuring the objectives of Sharia and Islamic finance. The panel discussion discussed the current landscape of Islamic banking and its future trends.

Al-Nahedh said that the banking industry faces challenges in light of the rapidly changing needs of customers and their expectations, competition with non-banking companies, and the great need to invest in cutting-edge information technology. He added that the growth of operational activities and achieving growth rates similar to those recorded in the past decades, in addition to fluctuations in oil prices and their results, negatively affect economic growth in general since government spending represents the main driver of growth in this region.

To address these challenges, Al-Nahedh explained that banks are developing a

highly sophisticated planning model to be better prepared for any potential future risks using new emerging technologies that rely on artificial intelligence, and data analyses to meet the growing expectations of customers. He noted that the innovation which is based on new digital financial technology (FinTech) would change the business model of banks, while banks would achieve operational excellence through adopting the best practices and meeting the requirements of the relevant regulatory authorities.

Fintech and BigTech

Al-Nahedh emphasized that "KFH", like the largest global banks, invests strongly in banking innovation and the latest technology while co-operating with "Fintech" companies to meet growth, customers and industry needs. He pointed out that digital banks were emerging as competitors to large financial institutions as they are increasingly meeting the growing consumer demand for digital services. Al-Nahedh said that there are several major obstacles inhibiting collaboration between banks and FinTech companies.

From the banks' perspective, FinTech companies don't provide sufficient IT security, while they point out to the differences between themselves and banks in terms of management, culture, and operational processes. The future of the banking sector is determined by its ability to adapt to changing customer expectations and its rapid transformation, increasing competition, its infrastructure and cost management. These can be achieved using technology and the support of regulatory authorities and by monitoring the sector, he added.

Data security

Al-Nahedh explained that customer satisfaction now is not easy to achieve, and that his behavior is linked to global trends is more sophisticated than before, especially since he has access to more information and lower cost channels. He considered that improving the customer experience is only one way of enhancing the bank's position and financial performance



compared to other banks while when it comes to launching a new product, the customer prefers reliability and credibility over other considerations.

In this respect, today's customer takes into consideration the value of the service/product as well as banking experience. Al-Nahedh also stressed that with increased reliance on modern technologies, banks have taken a greater role in fighting financial crimes and protecting user data and financial infrastructure, especially as they operate in a highly regulated industry. It is worth mentioning that 2019 WIBC edition discussed the harmonization of Islamic finance standards, the digital transformation, sustainable finance and M&A and consolidation in the GCC region.

The conference hosted special session on where the industry is heading with



respect to the objectives of Shariah. In addition, experts shared their expertise and assessment about the global economic outlook while focusing on the opportunities, challenges and the way forward for the Islamic finance presented by the Belt and Road Initiative of China, as in earlier years, WIBC also hosted a CEOs power table to discuss what keeps the CEOs awake at night.

Gulf Bank announces Al Danah winners

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 8th December 2019 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 1-5 December 2019. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week. The winners this week are: Nasir Husain A Rasoul Al Bather; Mekhled Khaled Ayyad Almutairi; Amira Abdulsahab Hassan; Mohammad Ahmad Mohammad Abdul Ghafour and Talal Ahmad Khalifah Alkudhur.

Gulf Bank's final Al Danah draw for KD1,000,000, will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al Danah millionaire will be announced at a live event. Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of win-

ning with Al Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app. Furthermore, loyal Al Danah customers are rewarded with loyalty chances.

Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year, which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Therefore, the total chances earned by Al Danah customers in 2018, have been added to their 2019 chances, and the same process will take place in 2020, and so on.

Terms and conditions apply.

Gulf Bank's Al Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD200 at any given time, a KD2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days.

To take part in the Al Danah 2020 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw. Customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 58 branches, transfer online, place queries through the official Gulf Bank WhatsApp service or call the customer contact center for assistance and guidance. Customers can visit the website to find out more about Al Danah and its winners.

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.250
Euro	338.170
Sterling Pound	402.370
Canadian dollar	231.370
Turkish lira	53.280
Swiss Franc	308.730
US Dollar Buying	296.800
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.802
Indian Rupees	4.273
Pakistani Rupees	1.975
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.672
Nepali Rupees	2.670
Singapore Dollar	224.450
Hongkong Dollar	38.862
Bangladesh Taka	3.545
Philippine Peso	5.994
Thai Baht	10.053
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	21.900

Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.904
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	229.815
Sterling Pound	400.895
Euro	337.545
Swiss Frank	303.650
Bahrain 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	1.676
Indian Rupees	4.278
Pakistani Rupees	1.691
Bangladesh Taka	3.537
Philippines Peso	5.988
Cyprus pound	18.080
Japanese Yen	3.795
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.658
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
Europe		
British Pound	0.382516	0.406416
Czech Korune	0.005149	0.014449
Danish Krone	0.040918	0.045918
Euro	0.328696	0.342396
Georgian Lari	0.102109	0.102109
Hungarian 0.000924	0.001114	
Norwegian Krone	0.029240	0.034440
Romanian Leu	0.053379	0.070229
Russian ruble	0.004765	0.004765
Slovakia	0.009092	0.019092
Swedish Krona	0.027952	0.032952
Swiss Franc	0.300400	0.311400
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.199355	0.211355
New Zealand Dollar	0.193007	0.202507
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.223844	0.232844
US Dollars	0.300150	0.305450
US Dollars Mint	0.300650	0.305450
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002990	0.003791

Chinese Yuan	0.041802	0.045302
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036772	0.039522
Indian Rupee	0.003612	0.004384
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002716	0.002896
Korean Won	0.000245	0.000260
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069366	0.075336
Nepalese Rupee	0.002623	0.002963
Pakistan Rupee	0.001286	0.002056
Philippine Peso	0.005985	0.006285
Singapore Dollar	0.218149	0.228149
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001318	0.001898
Taiwan	0.009855	0.010035
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	0.432139	0.432139
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000101	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021175	0.045175
Omani Riyal	0.785133	0.793024
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	0.045883	0.055728
UAE Dirhams	0.082203	0.083029
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

Business

Jobs of the future are clustering in a handful of US cities, study finds

New analysis paints a stark portrait of a divided economy

WASHINGTON: A new analysis of where “innovation” jobs are being created in the United States paints a stark portrait of a divided economy where the industries seen as key to future growth cluster in a narrowing set of places. Divergence in job growth, incomes and future prospects between strong-performing cities and the rest of the country is an emerging focus of political debate and economic research. It is seen as a source of social stress, particularly since President Donald Trump tapped the resentment of left-behind areas in his 2016 presidential campaign.

Research from the Brookings Institution released yesterday shows the problem cuts deeper than many thought. Even cities that have performed well in terms of overall employment growth, such as Dallas, are trailing in attracting workers in 13 industries with the most productive private sector jobs. Between 2005 and 2017, industries such as chemical manufacturing, satellite telecommunications, and scientific research flocked to about 20 cities, led by well-established standouts San Francisco, Seattle, San Jose, Boston and San Diego, the study found. Combined, these mostly coastal cities captured an additional 6% of ‘innovation’ jobs – some 250,000 positions.

Companies in those industries tend to benefit from being close to each other, with the better-educated employees they target also attracted to urban amenities. Brookings Institution economist Mark Muro said he fears the trend risks becoming “self-reinforcing and destructive” as the workforce separates into a group of highly productive and high-earning metro areas and everywhere else. Even though expensive housing, high

wages, and congestion have prompted some tech companies to open offices outside of Silicon Valley, those moves have not been at scale.

Most US metro areas are either losing innovation industry jobs outright or gaining no share, Muro wrote. Over this decade, “a clear hierarchy of economic performance based on innovation capacity had become deeply entrenched,” Muro and co-author Rob Atkinson, president of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, wrote in the report. Across the 13 industries they studied, workers in the upper echelon of cities were about 50% more productive than in others.

Revive ailing areas

For much of the post-World War Two period labor was more mobile, and the types of industries driving the economy did not cluster so intensely, a trend that started reversing around 1980. Concerns that the United States is separating effectively into two economies has sparked support for localized efforts to spread the benefits of economic growth.

The Federal Reserve has flagged it as a possible risk to overall growth, and some of the presidential candidates running for office in 2020 have rolled out proposals to address it. One aim of Trump’s decision to impose tariffs on imports from China and elsewhere is to revive ailing areas of the country. Muro and Atkinson propose a concerted push involving federal research grants, tax breaks, and loosened regulations to encourage research into areas such as autonomous vehicles. They suggest focusing on around 10 inland



SAN FRANCISCO: A now hiring sign is posted at a Jamba Juice in San Francisco, California. — AFP

cities with a large enough population and existing tech expertise to contribute.

The idea is to be discussed by members of a Congressional caucus on competitiveness this week. A federal panel choosing a handful of places for massive public investment could be controversial. But the list

of possible candidate cities has bipartisan appeal, including “rust belt” towns like St Louis and Indianapolis that lean Democratic but are located in states that lean Republican. “It is wishful thinking we will turn this around without some directed federal support,” Muro said. — Reuters

Hempel launches new passive fire protection coating



KUWAIT: World leading coatings manufacturer Hempel’s new generation fire-protection coating – Hempafire Optima 500 – is specifically designed to improve the productivity of passive fire protection (PFP) coating applications. It achieves this by reducing the number of coats required and the process time required to apply them – saving time and costs.

Hempafire Optima 500 helps to maintain the stability of steel structures in large infrastructure buildings such as airports, stadiums and commercial centres by delivering up to 180 minutes protection against cellulosic fires, being optimised for 120 minutes. It is a one-component waterborne acrylic intumescent coating (a fire protecting coating that insulates the steel substrate from fire for a period of time) with zero volatile organic compounds (VOC) and can be used for both open or closed steel sections.

Hempafire Optima 500 is fast drying and highly resistant to sagging. The appli-

cation which can be delivered in two days as part of Hempel’s PFP system, outperforms in warm conditions and provides two-hour fire protection in ISO 12944 C3 interior environments. It dries to an excellent aesthetic finish meaning there is minimum surface reworks to achieve the required cosmetic finish when applying a topcoat. The ease of application allows customers to improve their painting process by reducing the number of coats needed, minimizing drying times and maximizing the speed of the application.

Taken together, these properties save both time and money as projects can be completed faster and with lower total application costs.

Hempel’s Group Product Manager, Cellulosic PFP, Roger Soler, says: “When developing Hempafire Optima 500, we created a coating to enhance efficiency for customers by increasing their productivity and reducing costs. Thickness build-up of the coating can be achieved



in less coats that dry faster. Thus, application costs and time to deliver are reduced. We also wanted a coating that outperforms in warm climates such as those found in the Middle East and in parts of Europe. We’ve managed to achieve this without compromising the protection or the aesthetic finish.

At 40 degrees C, it comfortably holds

up 750 microns (m) dry film thickness (DFT) per coat, and can be overcoated in just three hours. For applications where speed is the key, coats of 500 m DFT can be applied every 75 minutes and recoated with a PU topcoat after 16 hours. This means that the whole system – primer, PFP, and topcoat – can be applied and dry to handle within a 48-hour period.

NBK gives customers chance to win KD 600 Alshaya gift card

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) and Alshaya Group recently launched a campaign giving customers the chance to enter a draw to win Alshaya Gift Cards when using their NBK Rewards Points at Alshaya Group’s participating retail and dining outlets. Customers will have the chance to win a worth of KD 600 card or one of Alshaya’s 24 Gift Cards worth KD 100 each. The campaign comes as part of NBK’s continued commitment to rewarding its customers through offers tailored to meet their unique needs and lifestyle.

NBK Credit and Prepaid Cardholders are eligible to enter the draw when shopping at any of Alshaya Group’s participating retail and dining outlets. Customers receive a chance to enter the draw for every KD 5 redeemed from their NBK Reward Points before December 15, 2019. Speaking of the campaign, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Senior Manager Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: “We are pleased to be partnering once again with Alshaya Group in campaigns that reward our customers and add value to their banking experience. At NBK, we are committed to rewarding our cus-

tomers throughout the year in partnership with many valuable partners.”

Al-Duwaisan added: “The NBK Rewards Program is one of the most prominent programs that we have designed for our customers, and we are committed to developing it by introducing new features and campaigns that suit our customers’ diverse needs.” Al-Duwaisan confirmed that NBK Credit Cards enable customers to take part in campaigns launched by NBK throughout the year, in addition to providing them with a unique lifestyle in which they benefit from advantages that enrich their banking experience.

The NBK Rewards Program is Kuwait’s largest loyalty program with more than 850 partner outlets across Kuwait. As an NBK Credit Cardholder, your rewards are guaranteed at hundreds of the best local and international brands that will satisfy your fashion, dining, and lifestyle needs. Customers earn 10 NBK Rewards Points for every KD 1 spend at any participating partner outlet. NBK Rewards Points can be redeemed at any participating outlets as well. Customers can check their NBK Rewards Points balance and their equivalent value in Kuwaiti Dinars through their account on NBK Mobile Banking.



Amal Al-Duwaisan

German trade surplus swells

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Germany’s closely-watched trade surplus expanded in October, as exports defied global tensions with a surprise increase, official data showed yesterday. Goods sold abroad outweighed imports by 20.6 billion euros (\$22.8 billion), federal statistics authority Destatis said in seasonally-adjusted figures.

Exports grew 1.2 percent month-on-month, to 119.5 billion euros, while imports were roughly flat at 98 billion. The trade surplus boost stands in stark contrast to the 1.7-percent month-on-month fall in industrial production in October. Meanwhile international trade tensions between Washington and Beijing, US President Donald Trump’s threats of tariffs against EU goods and Brexit have all been

weighing on cross-border business.

Looking in more detail at the figures, 70 billion euros of German exports went to the EU, roughly flat year-on-year, while third-country exports grew 4.6 percent to 49.5 billion. Meanwhile both EU and non-EU imports fell compared with a year ago. ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski noted that “German exports have held up surprisingly well in recent months,” but warned that “the ongoing drought in order books is a strong argument against optimism.”

“With disappointing consumption and industrial data but encouraging trade data, the economy will remain on a windy road between contraction, stagnation and meagre growth,” he added. In the near term, a second quarter of negative growth for 2019 appears less likely in October-December than many economists feared, after Germany narrowly escaped a technical recession – two successive quarters of shrinkage – in July-September. — AFP



DRESDEN: The illuminated Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady) can be seen at the Neumarkt square as visitors crowd at the traditional Christmas market in Dresden, eastern Germany. —AFP

Inflation, climate and jargon: ECB launches major review

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: The European Central Bank’s new president Christine Lagarde has announced that the Frankfurt-based institute will soon undertake a strategic review, its first since 2003. Here is how the ECB’s strategy has developed over the years and what has prompted the decision to reassess it.

What is the ECB strategy now?

The ECB’s overriding mandate is to ensure price stability. In 2003, its main decision-making body, the governing council, defined that goal as an inflation rate of “just below, but close to” two percent, a level that would encourage investment and employment, while warding off deflation. Nevertheless, inflation has remained stubbornly low at around one percent, a phenomenon that has left many economists around the world scratching their heads. Different theories have been put forward as to a possible explanation, from the rise of the casual “gig” economy or the suppression of workers’ earnings through globalisation, to political shocks, such as trade tensions and Brexit.

Inflation, climate in focus

There have been increasing calls for the central bank to rethink the inflation target and the issue is certain to feature highly on the ECB’s review, which is expected to take many months. At the same time, the ECB is under pressure to do more to tackle climate change and wealthier countries like Germany see the review as a chance to call into question the ECB’s ultra-expansive policy. They have long argued that the bank’s record-low – and even negative – interest rates, as well as its massive “quantitative easing” bond-buying programme, are detrimental to savers and help accentuate asset price bubbles.

The review will be “an ideal opportunity for Christine Lagarde to reflect on the unconventional crisis measures adopted over the past decade,” Pictet Wealth Management strategist Frederik Ducroz said. The aim should be “not to ‘reset’ monetary policy, but give it a new launching point for the coming eight years” of her mandate, he said. A change in the definition of the inflation target to “around” two percent, instead of “just below”, would be “desirable and plausible, if only to make forecasts simpler and more credible,” Ducroz said.

Meanwhile, environmentalists are lobbying the ECB intensively to green both its own operations and its investments in the wider economy through its bond-buying scheme. Lagarde acknowledged last week that “the ECB’s mandate is not climate change”, but said climate risks could be built into its economic forecasting and other aspects of its work, such as banking supervision, without compromising the price stability target.

Clearer communication

Until now, ECB meetings have been shrouded in more secrecy than those of other central banks, with an “account” published only weeks later that neither names participants, nor reveals the voting record of individual governing council members. “We think the bank may move to a more transparent and systematic process of voting on major policy decisions,” said Capital Economics analyst Andrew Kenningham. — AFP

Business

LuLu's Twenty14 Holdings completes GBP 300 million investment in the UK

Iconic Great Scotland Yard Hotel, London inaugurated

LONDON: Twenty14 Holdings, the hospitality investment arm of LuLu Group International has completed investments of £300 million in UK, with the inauguration of the Great Scotland Yard in London yesterday. The hotel will be open for business from December 9, 2019. The historic property was acquired in 2015 for Rs. 1,025 crores, and the makeover of the hotel involved a further Rs. 512 crores. In addition to the Great Scotland Yard, Twenty14 Holdings had acquired the celebrated Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh - The Caledonian in Scotland in 2018.

The Great Scotland Yard Hotel, which is being managed by Hyatt under their The Unbound Collection by Hyatt brand, is located in the St. James's district of Westminster. The Unbound Collection by Hyatt brand is a portfolio of independent hotel properties, ranging from historic urban gems to contemporary trend-setters. Whether it is a fascinating past, an exclusive location, famous architecture and design or an award-winning dining experience, each hotel has its own distinct narrative and creates novel, story-worthy experiences for guests, while at the same time offering World of Hyatt members all of the program's benefits.

Steeped in history, The Great Scotland Yard was once a dwelling for visiting Kings of Scotland during the Tudor period, while today the building is most famous as the former headquarters of the London Metropolitan Police force. In 1910, the building served as the British Army Recruitment Office and Royal Military Police headquarters.

Speaking about the new project, M. A. Yusuff Ali, Chairman and MD of LuLu Group International said: "London is one of the world's greatest cities and the Great Scotland Yard Hotel represents its illustrious past as well as its modern significance. The hotel spotlights the city's vibrant history, its several celebrated aspects and its status as a global melting pot. In

essence, we have curated an unmatched experience for every guest while recreating the historic premises into a symbol of ultimate hospitality. We welcome you to experience this unique and fabulous experience at the Great Scotland Yard."

An 1820s Grade II listed building with Edwardian & Victorian architecture, the high-end luxury boutique hotel with 7 floors and spanning 93,000 sq.ft. has 153 rooms and 15 suites apart from a 2-bedroom townhouse VIP-suite created from part of the original Scotland Yard Police premises. The hotel also features a library, gymnasium, meeting/conference rooms, a 120-seater conference space/ballroom and VIP function rooms.

Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Director, Twenty14 Holdings, said "The Great Scotland Yard Hotel is a dream come true for us. The culmination of a path set long ago. Transforming one of the world's most historic addresses into an icon of modern hospitality. Twenty14 Holdings' focus remained steady right through, keeping the building's reputation in mind, every effort made in its rebirth had to be extraordinary, beyond expectations. And, this is what has been accomplished. The Great Scotland Yard Hotel invites you to experience its myriad stories."

Once the famous and historical home of law and order in London's City of Westminster, Great Scotland Yard will be a modern destination, an innovative and lively space offering multiple F&B options - The Yard, The Forty Elephants, The Parlour and Sabin serving international & British modern food under the supervision of acclaimed Chef & restaurateur Robin Gill.

Peter Fulton, Group President EAME/SWA, Hyatt Hotels said "We at Hyatt feel extremely proud to find ourselves charged with preserving the illustrious heritage of this iconic building, Great Scotland Yard, and give it a new life as the first hotel within The Unbound Collection by Hyatt. I could not think



LONDON: The Great Scotland Yard being formally inaugurated by Nicky Morgan, Secretary of State, Lord Jonathan Marland, Sir Edward Lister, UAE Ambassador HE Mansoor Abulhoul, Indian High Commissioner Ruchi Ghanashyam, Hyatt Hotels Global President & CEO Mark Hoplamazian in the presence of Lulu Group Chairman M.A. Yusuff Ali and Twenty14 Holdings MD Adeeb Ahamed in London.

of a better London home for this brand, which is all about creating unique stays and story-worthy experiences. I want to thank the Lulu Group for putting their trust in us and handing us the keys to this one-of-a-kind hotel. We look forward to our continued success and building further on the fruitful relationship between Hyatt and the Lulu Group".

The hotel has partnered with the Koestler Trust, the UK prison arts charity, to showcase some of the award-winning pictures, ceramics, and sculptures by serving prisoners from the Trust's annual competition. The themed luxury hotel has

secret doors, hidden rooms, shields, emblems, and historic details etched into glass and metalwork. Walls are lined in walnut paneling, antique bronze mirror work, and bespoke joinery. Secret doors give access to the whiskey bar and signature restaurant, marble marquetry design flooring graces the cocktail bar with built-in banquet seating lined with button-cushion leather. Newly commissioned works of art and curated interior displays using antiques, collectables, and ephemera recall multiple aspects of the history of crime, detective work, and the police-as well as the hotel's location.

ManageEngine's technology trends for 2020

By Rajesh Ganesan,
Vice President ManageEngine

(1) Privacy laws will result in increased focus on employee accountability: More countries are following the European Union's lead by implementing data protection laws similar to GDPR, such as the Thailand Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA) which goes into effect in May 2020. Under such scenarios, the role of Data Protection Officers (DPOs) assumes significance as they must work closely with the CIOs and tech teams to ensure that organisations comply with the law. With increased awareness of and emphasis on data protection, there will be an even greater focus on the handling of users' personal data and its security. Employees at all levels will be held accountable as organisations strive to meet compliance. Therefore, there will be a need for up skilling and education programs to handle this aspect.

(2) AI Security will be an important investment: Even as AI adoption across enterprises is set for continued growth, organisations will realise the importance of securing the systems. At least three aspects needs attention to make AI work optimally. The first is to ensure the attackers do not mislead the AI system to make it perform the way they want in real-time. For example: introducing bias. Enterprises will see value in investing in explainable AI technologies, which involve the AI system explaining its actions and decisions thus making it possible to review and correct the AI in real time. The second is to protect the AI training data and the ML models, possibly by investing in technologies like homomorphic encryption. The third is guarding against the dangers of 'concept drift', which is when the AI models built using the training data become irrelevant and the system behaves erratically.

(3) Process automation will give way to hyper automation: In 2020, we will begin to see the rise of hyper automation, which is the meeting point of intelligence driven by AI and ML with autonomy driven by robotic and cognitive process automation. Hyper automation will help support dynamic and complex business processes including loan processing, insurance claims, warehouse dispatch, and others. This will provide the unique advantage of mimicking user actions on terminals like carrying out transactions and generating dynamic content contextually to deliver on speed, accuracy, reliability and reduced costs.

(4) Endpoint protection will be a top priority: As the number and types of endpoint devices rapidly proliferate and become 'smart powered' by software and connectivity, they become critical targets and vectors for external attacks. Mobile applications may well be the source of the next large-scale enterprise security breach, even as the influx of non-traditional workers and their remote devices continue. As the threat landscape evolves to exploit sophisticated capabilities in the endpoints, so must the protection techniques. In 2020, we'll see techniques such as data loss prevention (DLP), which prevents users from leaking critical information intentionally or otherwise, and endpoint detection & response (EDR), which continuously monitors events, detects threats, performs investigations, and initiates responses. Such techniques will gain prominence because the logic and intelligence underpinning them will increasingly reside on the devices themselves.

(5) Demand for tools has opened up analytics usage to departments that have traditionally not employed analytics for decision-making - such as IT. This means that there are now new and different sources of data that need to be standardised and checked for quality before they can be used for analysis. Getting from data to insight takes far less time when data from various sources are structured to fit a common schema or format, otherwise known as data standardisation. To accommodate this, next year is going to see a rise in the demand for ETL (extract, transform, load) tools, which help cut down the time it takes to standardise data. Analysts have to begin familiarising themselves with newer sources of data and employ ETL tools, when necessary.

(6) Businesses will prioritise controlling cloud costs: The cloud, particularly SaaS, has democratised the use of technology across all business functions. However, it has also resulted in spiraling costs and significant waste due to the decentralised model of consumption. Surveys indicate businesses could be wasting up to 35 per cent of their cloud costs because of duplicate spending and lack of usage. Fortunately, solutions are emerging to help the CFOs and CIOs take control of the situation. For example, a SaaS management platform (SMP) can bring central visibility, control, and manageability for all the SaaS applications used within the business, including cost management. Different services could have different pricing, costing and billing models; and SMPs can help provide cost and efficiency insights at the level of user, department, and organization. Another example, Cloud cost management solutions can provide unified cost management for organizations that use multiple IaaS providers. For businesses struggling with managing cloud costs, these will become top priorities.

Alghanim Industries participates in 36th NUKS-US conference

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the largest private companies in the region, participated in the 36th annual conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) USA branch, interacting with hundreds of Kuwaiti students in the USA to inform them about career opportunities in the company and its businesses. The conference took place from 28 November to 1 December in San Diego, California.

It was attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States HE Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah, and Director of the Kuwait Cultural Office in Washington, DC Dr Aseel Al-Awadhi, Director of the Kuwait Cultural Office in Los Angeles, California Dr Mohammad Al-Rasheedi, in addition to event sponsors, guests and other dignitaries. This is Alghanim Industries' 12th year to sponsor this annual event.

Alghanim Industries also participated in the career fair which took place during the conference, where representatives from different departments answered students' questions about the company, and the career and internship opportunities it provides. Towards the end of the conference, Alghanim Industries held a draw as part of the closing ceremony, and presented the winners with valuable gifts from X-cite.

Commenting on sponsoring this event, Hadeer Shelash, Corporate Communications Manager at Alghanim Industries said: "We are proud of our longstanding support for NUKS USA, with whom we are happy to collaborate for the twelfth consecutive year. Our sponsorship for this unique student activity stems from our deep-rooted belief in the essential role that youth play in



building the future. As a leading private sector company with over 30 businesses in 40 countries across MENA, Eastern Europe and Asia, we are confident that our competitive and professional work environment will have a lot to offer for young aspiring youth looking for a challenge to launch their career."

This year's student-led conference carried the slogan "A Productive Generation for a Giving Nation," featuring an array of informative panel discussions that cover topics relevant to Kuwaiti youth, ranging from sports, society, and economy. Speakers included human rights activist and journalist Arwa Al Waqayan; media presenter Ammar Taqi; athlete and Olympic champion Fahad Al Daihani; Kuwaiti entrepreneur and Talabat Co-Founder Abdulaziz Al Loughani; Undersecretary of Technical Services and Planning at the Ministry

of Commerce, Nasser Al Mutawa; Co-Founder of Coded Academy Ahmad Marafi; and former Minister of Education Ahmad Al-Mulaifi.

The sponsorship of the annual NUKS conference in the United States reflects the company's commitment to attracting the best talent that Kuwait has to offer, helping Kuwait's young men and women launch successful careers in a variety of sectors and capacities. It also comes as part of Alghanim Industries' giving forward, which is focused on empowering the underprivileged, supporting education and encouraging entrepreneurship. The company is proud of its longstanding relationship with INJAZ Al-Arab, and is among the largest supporters of INJAZ-Kuwait, a youth program that focuses on delivering educational programs on entrepreneurship, financial literacy and work readiness.

Al Babtain CEO honors top performer of 2019 Renault 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 opportunity 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 front-line staff for the Renault brand.

Previously awarded 'Best Sales Executive' award in Kuwait, Mohammed Zaher bagged the second runner-up award for his exempla-

ry 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."



Saudi-backed media group MBC hires new CEO as veteran leaves

DUBAI: Saudi-controlled MBC Group said yesterday it has appointed Marc Antoine d'Halluin as chief executive, replacing Sam Barnett who left in October after 17 years with the Middle East's biggest broadcaster. D'Halluin, who began his career at Sony Pictures, is expected to join Dubai-based MBC on Jan 5, it said. MBC owns several satellite TV channels, including the 24-hour Arabic language news channel Al

Arabiya. D'Halluin previously worked as chairman of the Luxembourg-based M7 Group, which operates satellite Pay TV packages in Holland, Belgium, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

Saudi authorities took a controlling stake in MBC Group in 2018 as they seized assets from those caught up in an anti-corruption campaign launched in 2017 by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Last year, Riyadh allowed MBC Group chairman and founder, Waleed al-Ibrahim, to leave the kingdom for the first time since he was caught up in the anti-graft sweep with scores of wealthy Saudi royals, government officials and businessmen. —Reuters

What's On

ACK students shine in Huawei ICT skill competition

Around 100 students from the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) took part in a recent Huawei ICT Skills Competition which makes around 50% of the participants nationwide. From all participants, 33 were qualified to the national ICT competition of Huawei from all over Kuwait, 16 of which were from ACK.

As a final result, out of five top scorers, ACK students and fresh graduates, Eng Mariam AlQallaf, Afsah Abdullah and Emad Kebeish won respectively the first, fourth and fifth places in the national competition that was organized in Huawei premises. The 1st place winner, Eng Mariam Al Qallaf, a recent graduate from the Electrical Engineering Department at ACK, is traveling to China to compete internationally with the national winners from universities from all around the world.

The Dean of the School of Engineering Dr Mohammed Abdul Niby, acknowledged this great achievement by ACK students and graduates and thanked them, their supervisors and all involved members for their dedication and efforts which led to this great success. He also emphasized on the role of the School of Engineering at ACK towards equipping its students with long life learning competencies and skills that are nowadays required for their continuous growth

and which will certainly positively serve the beloved Kuwait.

Manager of ACK Alumni and Career Placement Center Dr Zeina Nehme, noted that this outstanding result reflects the dedication of our students and fresh graduates to this opportunity. Dr Nehme added: "This was a great platform for our students and fresh graduates to be a part of such an important learning experience and we thank Huawei for their continuous efforts in developing our youth."

Speaking on behalf of Huawei Technologies Kuwait Co WLL, the Public Relations Director Sky Gaojun stated that: "Turn out for the ICT Skill Competition was a great success and it was an honor to provide this opportunity for local students. As the global digitalization booming and talent development is the key for government strategy, Huawei is working on ICT talent development ecosystem, which includes ICT skill competition, Huawei engineer certificate and Huawei ICT academy."

There are more 900 Huawei academies in the world and around 100 certificate exams to provide clear ICT career development paths. We hope we will support more local ICT talents to Kuwait in coming years". Mr. Sky Gaojun also added that "Collaborating with ACK



and its students was a pleasure. Both faculty and students were extremely keen and helpful to the Huawei team. ACK students showed commendable focus and

determination, which is what we hoped for in the competition. We are definitely looking forward to future collaborations with the College."

International Women's Group hosts annual seasonal dinner



The International Women's Group (IWG) celebrated Christmas and New Year with a gala dinner at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on Sunday, 8 December, 2019, in the presence of the wives of ambassadors accredited to the State of Kuwait, IWG's members and a selection of prominent women within the Kuwaiti society and international community.

The ballroom was beautifully decorated in a Christmas and New Year theme, with the walls adorned with sparkling lights, and a shimmering tree that was radiant on the occasion. Red roses representing the celebration of the holidays were present throughout the hall, which added to the joyful atmosphere.

Anita de Vogel, the IWG president opened with a welcome speech and greeted all the members and guests of this very special evening, and wishing all attendees a New Year filled with happiness and good fortune. Sheikha Hanouf Al-Sabah, Honorary President of the Group, delivered a speech welcoming all members and guests, and offered her

congratulations for the New Year. She expressed her hope that the next year will be a good year and peaceful for the State of Kuwait and Arab nations.

The evening was filled with entertainment, activities and competitions that allowed everyone to experience happiness, and fun. Many gifts were handed out to all attendees, in addition to a raffle draw organized for a grand prize. As part of the festivities, a variety of musical entertainment was organized, with the main highlights being the scout's team performance of various songs to celebrate the New Year and a singing session by Shireen Hattar and Manar Alamat, who performed songs to celebrate the occasion.

De Vogel expressed her gratitude to the management of the Crowne Plaza Hotel for its cooperation and extraordinary organization involved for the marvelous event, which included the decorations for the hall and seating areas, and the preparation of delicious cuisine specially prepared for this occasion as well as other special additions that made up a fabulous night.



BCG to display outstanding products at Horeca Kuwait

Al-Babtain Companies Group (BCG) said that the group's food products sections would display a number of their outstanding products of interest to all hospitality manufacturers in Kuwait at Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition and stressed its interest in various events and activities due to be held on the sidelines of this specialized exhibition.

A statement issued by the group renewed its golden sponsorship to Horeca Kuwait 2020 due to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Co at Mishref International Fairgrounds in the period of January 20-22, 2020. In this regard, Al-Babtain's consumer goods group CEO Hani Mer'e stressed that interest in the exhibition stems from the group's role as a basic food industries and services company since its inception sixty years earlier in Kuwait.

"We started as a small company dealing in basic consumer goods then gradually grew into Abdul Aziz Soud Al-Babtain & Sons company - one of the largest regional commercial groups thanks to plans and strategies that have proven successful over the years", Mer'e said, adding that the group also



Hani Mer'e

works in electronics, electric devices, real estate, education, entertainment and other fields.

Mer'e added that - through some of its subsidiary companies, Al-Babtain Group is now the sole distributor of well-known commercial brands from the Middle East, Europe and US in Kuwait including Elle & Vire, CORMAN, Kiri, La Vache Qui Rit, Wexford, Eurial, MAZOLA, Shoprite, LAVAZZA Coffee, Perrier, SOHAT, Holsten, Power Horse, Villa Germania, Frigomerc Meats, Glade, Windex, Muscle, Pledge, Ziploc, Kiwi, Pares and many others. Mer'e also stressed that Horeca Kuwait provides a golden opportunity to scientifically exchange expertise that would match the local market needs and future expansion plans and that it has a major economic impact of the hospitality industry.



Burgan Bank sponsors 'Greening, Environmental Awareness Day'

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently concluded its sponsorship of 'Greening and Environmental Awareness Day' that was held under the patronage of Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Governor of Ahmadi, at Nawfal Bin Al-Harith School (Boys) at Al-Riqqa. The social responsibility initiative also witnessed the participation of the Ahmadi Educational Zone, Public Authority of Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources and the Environment Public Authority.

Manager-External affairs at Burgan Bank, Hessa Al-Najadah, said: "By supporting this initiative, Burgan Bank is keen on spreading a culture of accountability for the environment among the students and raise their awareness by highlighting the importance of greening and its vital role in preserving the environment in Kuwait. It is essential to protect our natural environment and its sustainable beauty, by helping cleanse the atmos-

phere of pollution and building a generation of conscious, educated and ambitious youth who will follow the popular slogan "Let's make Kuwait a green oasis" and lead as an example to others."

Al-Najadah indicated that Burgan Bank will continue to participate and support more events that integrate the importance of environmental protection through continued practice of greening and tree-planting projects in our country. Burgan Bank and Al Ahmadi Governorate's partnership continues throughout the year which will further highlight several initiatives and activities of interest to the Kuwaiti community.

The Director of the Technical Office Department from the Ahmadi Governorate, Mr. Ibrahim Al-Fodari commented that the event falls under the umbrella of the long-term development plan "My Governorate is the Most Beautiful" that was launched by Ahmadi Governor, Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled in early 2015. It

includes five environmental projects of which greening is one of the most crucial.

"Greening and Environmental Awareness day serves as a beneficial opportunity to engage in the spirit of deeper cooperation between our students and inspire them to preserve the surrounding environment while working together as a team." The Bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change.

This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.

Health & Science

Boy oh boy! Twin male pandas charm Berlin zoo

BERLIN: The cuteness level at Berlin Zoo doubled yesterday when a pair of twin panda cubs made their public debut, with the zoo revealing the cuddly bundles of fur were both boys. The little ones were born at the zoo on August 31 but in keeping with Chinese tradition they were only named after 100 days. Speaking before a crowd of excited reporters at the Panda Garden, zoo director Andreas Knieriem announced that the cubs would go by the names of Meng Xiang, meaning "long-awaited dream" and Meng Yuan, or "dream come true".

The twins, weighing around six kilos each, then made their long-awaited first appearance before the world's media. Wheeled out in a glass-cased "panda bed", they were seen lounging close together on a heated mattress. One of the cubs appeared half-asleep and unfazed by the attention, while his more active brother repeatedly turned his back on the press pack, prompting coos and laughter.

But the general public will have to wait a little longer for their own glimpse of the zoo's newest stars. The cubs will be kept away from visitors "until they can walk properly" and are more familiar with their surroundings, Knieriem said, expected to be sometime in early 2020. The birth of the cubs has delighted Berlin's oldest zoo as it is notoriously hard to breed pandas - and twins are even rarer.

Their mother Meng Meng and male giant panda Jiao Qing arrived in Berlin in June 2017 to great fanfare. China lends pandas to zoos



BERLIN: Two giant panda cubs "Meng Yuan" (left) and "Meng Xiang" are presented to the media after they were given their names at the Zoologischer Garten zoo yesterday. — AFP

around the world—a program dubbed "panda diplomacy". Berlin zoo pays \$15 million for a 15-year contract to host the adult pandas, with most of the money going towards a conservation and breeding research program in China.

While the twin cubs were born in Berlin, they remain Chinese and must be returned to China within four years after they have been weaned.

About 1,864 pandas remain in the wild in China, up from around 1,000 in the late 1970s, according to the environmental group WWF. Just over 400 pandas live in zoos around the world, in conservation projects set up with Beijing. The species is considered "vulnerable" to extinction by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. — AFP

Experts warn of emerging threat of Nipah

LONDON: A deadly virus called Nipah carried by bats has already caused human outbreaks across South and South East Asia and has "serious epidemic potential", global health and infectious disease specialists said yesterday. The virus, identified in 1999 in Malaysia and Singapore, has sparked outbreaks with mortality rates of between 40 percent and 90 percent and spread thousands of kilometres to Bangladesh and India - yet there are no drugs or vaccines against it, they said.

"Twenty years have passed since its discovery, but the world is still not adequately equipped to tackle the global health threat posed by Nipah virus," said Richard Hatchett, chief executive of the CEPI Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, which is co-leading a Nipah conference this week in Singapore.

CEPI, a partnership between disease

experts, and public, private, philanthropic, and civil organizations, was set up in 2017 to try to speed up the development of vaccines against newly emerging and unknown infectious diseases. Among its first disease targets is Nipah, a virus carried primarily by certain types of fruit bats and pigs, which can also be transmitted directly from person to person as well as through contaminated food.

Within two years of being first discovered, Nipah had spread to Bangladesh, where it has caused several outbreaks since 2001. A 2018 Nipah outbreak in Kerala, India, killed 17 people. "Outbreaks of Nipah virus have so far been confined to South and Southeast Asia, but the virus has serious epidemic potential, because Pteropus fruit bats that carry the virus are found throughout the tropics and sub-tropics, which are home to more than two billion people," Hatchett said.

He said since Nipah can also pass from person to person, it could, in theory, also spread into densely populated areas too. The two-day Nipah conference, the first to focus on this deadly virus, is being co-hosted by CEPI and the Duke-NUS Medical School in Singapore and started yesterday. — Reuters

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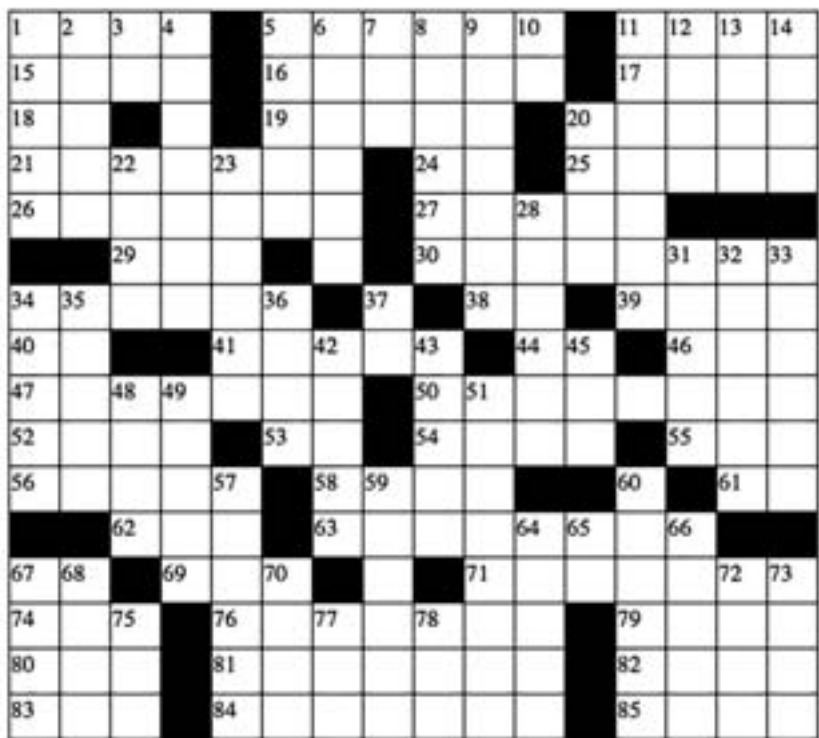
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CROSSWORD 2381



- ACROSS
1. A book of the New Testament.
5. An ancient Greek city in Boeotia destroyed by Alexander the Great in 336 BC.
11. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
15. A large indefinite number.
16. Assign a new name to.
17. A condition requiring relief.
18. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
19. Sour or bitter in taste.
21. Admit anew.
24. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
25. Consisting of or made of wood of the oak tree.
26. A large hemispherical brass or copper percussion instrument with a drumhead that can be tuned by adjusting the tension on it.
27. A member of a Muslim Turkic people of western Asia (especially in Kazakhstan).
29. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
30. A genus of herbs and shrubs belonging to the family Euphorbiaceae.
34. Pertaining to or associated with agony (especially death agonies).
38. The square of a body of any size of type.
39. On or toward the lee.
40. An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
41. (Old Testament) The Hebrew prophet who led the Israelites from Egypt across the Red sea on a journey known as the Exodus.
44. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
46. To make a mistake or be incorrect.
47. Refresh one's memory.
50. Lacking general education or knowledge.
52. (usually followed by 'to') Having the necessary means or skill or know-how or authority to do something.
53. A complete metric system of units of measurement for scientists.
54. (computer science) A rule stating that the quality of the output is a function of the quality of the input.
55. Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.
56. Show a response or a reaction to something.
58. Any group or radical of the form RCO- where R is an organic group.
61. An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
62. A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
63. A clap of the hands to indicate approval.
67. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
69. A form of entertainment that enacts a story by a sequence of images giving the illusion of continuous movement.
71. Bleeding into the interior chamber of the eye.
74. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
76. A river in the east central United States.
79. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
80. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
81. Involving only main features.
82. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
83. A boy or man.
84. Largest city in Washington.
85. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- DOWN
1. Remote and separate physically or socially.
2. Showing self-interest and shrewdness in dealing with others.
3. A crystalline metallic element not found in nature.
4. (British) A paved surface on which cars can be made to skid so that drivers can practice controlling them.
5. Public transport provided by a line of railway cars coupled together and drawn by a locomotive.
6. Marked by intense agitation or emotion.
7. The compass point midway between northeast and east.
8. United States writer of poems and plays about racial conflict (born in 1934).
9. The act of claspng another person in the arms (as in greeting or affection).
10. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
11. A town in southern Turkey.
12. Plant having a large slender white bulb and flat overlapping dark green leaves.
13. A self-replicating protein molecule that occupies a fixed place on a chromosome.
14. Chief port of Yemen.
20. Fossil fuel consisting of carbonized vegetable matter deposited in the Carboniferous period.
22. A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
23. Title used for a married Frenchwoman.
28. Large ornamental tropical American tree with bipinnate leaves and globose clusters of flowers with crimson stamens and sweet-pulp seed pods eaten by cattle.
31. Appeal or request earnestly.
32. Rupture in smooth muscle tissue through which a bodily structure protrudes.
33. A trademark for a loosely woven cotton fabric that is used to make shirts and underwear.
35. Small compact-bodied almost completely aquatic bird that builds floating nests.
36. The act of losing.
37. A Mid-Atlantic state.
42. One of the two main branches of orthodox Islam.
43. (Norse mythology) Wife of Loki.
45. A cry or noise made to express displeasure or contempt.
48. Loose or flaccid body fat.
49. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
51. (archaic) The meeting place of a medieval guild.
57. Final honors degree examinations at Cambridge University.
59. Play boisterously.
60. The dialect of Malay used as the national language of the Republic of Indonesia or of Malaysia.
64. An interval during which a recurring sequence of events occurs.
65. A long-playing phonograph record.
66. Type genus of the Percidae.
68. A small cake leavened with yeast.
70. A small inlet.
72. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
73. A French abbot.
75. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
77. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
78. Not reflecting light.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This is not a great time to make changes nor decisions regarding your career. These issues are better being dealt with at a later date. This is a time of nostalgia for you. A sense of roots and where you actually came from seems to be on your mind. You desire to know more about your family history. Who were your ancestors and what adversity did they face in their lives? This is something that is on your mind and you may find yourself starting to research this. You want to feel as if you belong on an intimate and private level with those close to you. You may feel as if your actions of today could affect the future of family members yet to come.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You have friends of all ages, all walks of life, all cultures, and different races. You may find this to be a very healthy environment. It is always beneficial to try to see things from others perspectives. This evening could find you exchanging ideas and obtaining other's outlooks on life. This is a very enlightening time for you. Always keep an open mind. Knowledge is power and you can gain much seeing things through other's eyes. Enjoy your evening with friends, Taurus. You may find this to be a great time and a wonderful learning experience for you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A great time to reflect and understand your situation and your position in life. You may find you feel good about who you are. You have come a long way. There have been obstacles and road blocks in your path. You have successfully been able to turn the stumbling blocks into stepping stones, along the way. This seems to be a time you long to surround yourself with friends and may feel as if this is where you are more comfortable. A need for change may arise. Make sure the decisions you make now are positive, and well thought out.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may feel secure in your position in life. You may find a career opportunity comes your way. Status and stability are two things you need to take into consideration when making this decision. You have to find a comfortable balance between family and work life. You may find this opportunity is a great one, but at what cost? This is a time to rethink your finances and investments. Put deep thought into your decision and always keep your family first. Family will be your support long after a job has come and gone. Remember, Cancer, money can not buy happiness.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

When your friends think about the one person they can always depend on, they think of you. When there is a problem you are the "go to" friend to all. You are very solution oriented. You are always willing to lend a helping hand. You may find someone is very sympathetic of the situation this puts you in and reaches out to assist you today. Accept the help, Leo. No one person can do it all, nor does anyone expect them to.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today finds you ready to take care of business. You crave organization and practicality. You have set your goals, made your list, and are ready to set out to conquer the world. There is a place for everything and everything has a place as far as you are concerned. You will not stop until you have things just where you want them. You find yourself focused on your health, also. This is a time you know you cannot achieve your goals unless you are at your best. Eat your Wheaties, Virgo. You have mountains to climb.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today may bring an opportunity to have a special time with a love one. This may you lead to emotion on a deeper level with this person. Feelings and emotions, you have been craving will be met and satisfied by this interaction. You have been feeling a need for an emotional connection and strong support from someone near to you. As independent as you are there as been a desire to know someone has your back and will be there to support you for the long haul. Your timing is perfect, and others are drawn to your mood as today you are spontaneous and full of life.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

It is ok to be different. Others seem to find you witty and eccentric. It seems many answers to problems you have been facing may come to you easily today. You grow to appreciate your responsibilities. You know you have been assigned duties because you are trusted. Your hard work is paying off. You may find the harder you work the more responsibility is placed on you. This may be a blessing and a curse in a way. Is your reward for hard work, more hard work? This will pay off in the end. You will be admired for your dedication and may be offered a new position.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have a lot of energy today. You may be tempted to turn it on yourself with negative conversations about you. That's counter-productive. Focus your energy on someone else you have positive feelings about, and both of you will benefit. Every encounter is an opportunity to affirm and encourage. The results may surprise you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Resist the urge to act on just a hunch. This could lead to big trouble if you do not take the time to do research and find out all of the facts. Acting with research on this one could leave you in quite a mess. You had rather be safe than sorry. You may find yourself in a situation you could be in over your head before you even realize it. If it seems to good to be true, it usually is. That is the case with something you will face today. You may feel a great desire for travel and adventure. If you stop and take time to think about this, it is really not a great time in your life right now, Capricorn. Sit back and take a deep breath and try to slow down a bit.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Today finds you a wizard of words. Through your words you may be able to bring a group together. You are persuasive and captivating. Poetry and art would be wonderful outlets for self-expression now. You may feel as you are walking in a dream. An almost trance-like feeling comes over you. This is a good evening to find an escape, a good book or staying in and watching a movie would be a great way to spend your evening. Even if a long bath is the route you choose find a way to have a relaxing evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

If it can go wrong, it will. That seems to be the way things are going today. You may feel like going back home and crawl back in bed. Today finds you very sensitive. Old habits die hard and you seem to be struggling with some bad ones today. You feel a lack of support and may find yourself clashing with someone younger. You will have to gather your strength and face each problem as they come. Find a way to relieve stress this evening. You need to relax and rejuvenate.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Real Estate 2

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

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

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BANK	FLIP	MORTGAGE	SURVEY
BROKER	FLOOR SPACE	PHOTOS	TENANT
BUYER	FOR SALE SIGN	PRINCIPAL	TITLE
CLOSING	FORECLOSURE	PROPERTY TAX	TOWNHOUSE
COMMISSION	HIGH RISE	PUBLIC AUCTION	VALUE
CONDO FEES	INSPECTION	RENT	VIRTUAL TOUR
CONTRACTOR	INTEREST RATE	ROW HOUSE	ZONING

Real Estate 1

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

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

The hidden message is: MULTIPLE LISTING SERVICE

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2019



Newly crowned Miss Universe 2019 South Africa's Zozibini Tunzi waves from stage after the 2019 Miss Universe pageant.



Newly crowned Miss Universe 2019 South Africa's Zozibini Tunzi arrives for a press conference after the 2019 Miss Universe pageant at the Tyler Perry Studios in Atlanta, Georgia on December 8, 2019. — AFP Photos

MISS SOUTH AFRICA WINS MISS UNIVERSE CROWN

Miss South Africa was crowned Miss Universe on Sunday in Atlanta after a lavish ceremony filled with glitter and heartfelt speeches about female empowerment. Zozibini Tunzi, 26, finished first ahead of the Puerto Rican and Mexican finalists in a flashy televised event, hosted by American comic turned TV personality Steve Harvey.

Television personalities Vanessa Lachey and Olivia Culpo served as backstage commentators, and a panel of seven women determined the winner. Tunzi earned cheers during her closing speech, a new segment of the competition, in which she talked about wanting to empower young women to feel confident. "I grew up in a world where a woman who looks like me, with my kind of skin and my kind of hair, was never considered to be beautiful," she said. "I think that it is time that that stops today," she said to thunderous applause. Tunzi beat more than 90 contestants from around the globe in the 68th instalment of Miss Universe, which was held in Atlanta's Tyler Perry Studios. The two favorites ahead of the competition, Miss Thailand Paweensuda Saetan-Drouin and Miss Philippines Gazini Ganados, did not make it to the final 10.

The Philippines' Catriona Gray, who presented Tunzi with the crown, took home the Miss Universe crown in 2018. Although she did not make the finals, Miss Myanmar Swe Zin Htet made waves last week when she came out as the competition's first openly gay contestant. "I have that platform that, if I say that I'm a lesbian, it will have a big impact on the LGBTQ community back in Burma," Htet told People magazine, using her country's historic name.



Miss Universe 2018 Philippines' Catriona Gray (right) crowns the new Miss Universe 2019 South Africa's Zozibini Tunzi on stage during the 2019 Miss Universe pageant.

Homosexuality is illegal in the southeast Asian country and is punishable by up to life in prison.

In 2018, the competition also featured Miss Spain Angela Ponce, who blazed a trail as Miss Universe's first transgender contestant. But the pageant has had a controversial past. Multiple contestants have alleged that US President Donald Trump would regularly enter the competitors' changing room while he

owned the organization from 1996-2015. Additionally, Miss Universe continues to host the swimsuit competition, which has drawn criticism for objectifying the contestants, although that part of the pageant was not televised. — AFP



Contestants stand around an emotional newly crowned Miss Universe 2019 South Africa's Zozibini Tunzi after the 2019 Miss Universe pageant.



Second runner up Miss Mexico Sofia Aragon (left) stands in front of the two finalists Miss South Africa Zozibini Tunzi (center) and Miss Puerto Rico Madison Anderson (right) during the 2019 Miss Universe at the Tyler Perry Studio.



R Kelly's former tour manager to testify against him

Demetrius Smith has claimed he purchased a fake ID for late singer Aaliyah when she was just 15 so she could marry the 'I Believe I Can Fly' hitmaker, and while he's spoken about the allegations both in his book and the 'Surviving R Kelly' documentary, he doesn't want to be the reason Kelly gets convicted after he recently had a charge of bribing a public official added to the sexual abuse offences he's also facing trial over. Speaking to TMZ, he said: "I wanna help. I told [authorities] when they interviewed me that I did not wanna be - I wrote it, if you read it then I have to stand on my words. "But I don't wanna use the words to prosecute Robert Kelly, because I feel like there's another part that people just don't realise and understand about this

whole thing... "I don't wanna be used as a witness to Mr. Kelly. I ain't afraid to say that, I'm saying that so you understand it." Demetrius added that while he doesn't think Kelly has "been a good person to everybody", he'd still rather see him get help than be jailed. He explained: "He's been a good person to everybody? I don't think he has, but at the same time we don't wanna see him locked up." According to court documents, the 'Ignition' singer - who is already awaiting trial on sexual abuse charges - is accused of bribing an official to obtain the "creation of a fraudulent identification document Jane Doe #1" and the date cited is one day before he wed the singer, who was just 15 at the time, on 31 August, 1994.

Harry Styles: People shouldn't say 'I love you' unless they mean it

The 25-year-old singer has opened up about the importance of honesty and timing, and insisted people shouldn't feel pressured into saying things in a relationship just because "they feel like they should". Speaking on Hits Radio, he said: "Well don't say it if you don't mean it. Erm, that's relatively obvious but I think some people jump the gun because they feel like they should. "I don't know, if you want to say it - if you feel it's true, say it, who cares?! Life is too short not to tell someone, too short not to be honest." Earlier this year, Harry gave a fan some advice on her love life in a sweet direct message on Twitter. The user Tisha shared a screenshot of her exchange with the One Direction superstar - which included his verified username in the image - after she reached out about whether or not she should tell a friend she has feelings for him

after knowing each other for several years. She tweeted: "Mr Styles gave me a very good advice at 4am at my place. Can't fall back asleep again. "Thank you from the bottom of my heart @Harry_Styles. I'll do it and let you know how it went. If you ever need someone to talk to, dm me anytime of any day. Thank you again." Although a large heart emoji covered up most of Harry's message, the fan revealed her response as she thanked him for taking the time to reply. She wrote: "Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your advice sir. If you said so, I'll definitely go for it. "Thank you so much for your message. I hope your day was good. Goodnight. I'll tell him and let you know how it went. "And, if you ever need someone to talk to in life, you can always dm me, I'll always be there for you no matter what."



Debbie Harry says she would have 'made more money' as prostitute

The Blondie legend has laughed off rumours she was a sex worker before she turned to rock music, and she explained she was "always about" her career, although she found it difficult being "a woman in a man's world". Speaking to the Mail on Sunday's EVENT magazine, she said: "Musician or hooker? I would definitely have made a lot more money if I'd been a hooker, not a singer. "There were always rumours about me like that. I was a woman in a man's world. I was different. A girl in a band. "Not everybody liked it so what do you expect? But for me it was always about the music. Still is. I'm still out there doing it." The 74-year-old star has never married or had any children, and she

explained she has made "sacrifices" for her career in music. The 'Maria' hitmaker added: "When you are a woman in a band you make sacrifices. I don't think I could ever have held down a marriage and I never wanted children. "I was adopted and that gave me a different outlook. I always thought that there were too many children out there needing parents and so I was conflicted." Meanwhile, Debbie - who made a name for herself after forming Blondie in New York in 1974 - admitted while her early fame felt like "sex", the experience was also "strangely anticlimactic" after enjoying the journey much more.



Madonna's daughter Lourdes Leon stripped off for an artistic show

The 23-year-old star took part in Spanish clothing label Desigual's Art Basel performance entitled 'Love Different', which concluded with all of the models appearing together in nude underwear and nipple pasties. In a series of Instagram posts following Friday's event, the label shared a video and pictures as they revealed Lourdes "didn't want to miss" out on the show. They wrote: "This is love different. Unveiling 'love different' a performance by @carlota_guerrero for #Desigual in which to show what Love Different means to us. "Artists like Lola LeUn, @naomishimada, @alejandrasmits did not want to miss this message of love towards diversity, multiculturalism and difference. (sic)" And in another social media post, the brand explained that the performance was focused on "love, multiculturalism and diversity". Desigual added: "'Love differ-

ent' is a performance created by the artistic direction of @carlota_guerrero to showcase the most iconic pieces of Desigual 2020. "A representation in which the catalan artist affects the most basic and universal act of love: the kiss. Please share in this message of love, multiculturalism and diversity. (sic)" In the past, Madonna admitted when her daughter Lourdes was a teenager, she was "horrified" by the sexual nature of her mum's music. Speaking in 2015, she said: "At this point, Rocco doesn't care. It just goes over his head. He's like, 'Oh, mom. Mom's being mom.' "The other little kids don't really-they're not tuned into that frequency yet. And Lo [Lourdes] is horrified by all of it. She just wants me to be her mom."

Ashley Graham has taken things out of her beauty routine

The plus size model has revealed the changes she has made to her daily beauty routine since she found out she was expecting her first child. She said: "I haven't really changed my routine since I got pregnant, I've just taken things out." And the 32-year-old model relies on eye masks and three-times daily moisturising. She added: "Most pregnant women in their third trimester don't sleep. And I'm one of them. "You know, you see all these people rolling all the time, you [wonder] why they're rolling. When you're pregnant, you get puffy! ... [The moisturising] is a commitment. But are you committed to having supple skin? Because I am!" Ashley does still wear make up but insists she's not doing it to "cover" anything up. She said: "I'm not really trying to cover anything up, I'm just trying to make my skin tone even. I mean, the pregnancy glow is there, I can see it." Ashley says pregnancy is "different" for everyone but she urged people to look to other moms and for support and she relies on them to make her feel less "alone". She told Vogue.com: "Every pregnancy is different. Find pregnant friends, find mommies that have already done it, and you will feel so incredibly supported. "You are not alone, and those moments where you feel like you are alone, just remember we are all out here doing this, and we need each other."



Rebel Wilson has 'never been drunk'

The 39-year-old actress admitted she's never been under the influence of alcohol, and explained she has created a "party girl image" on social media which is actually far removed from her real life self. Appearing on the 'Late Late Show', she told host James Corden: "Fun fact, I've never been drunk in my whole entire life... That's not a joke. "I cultivate this party girl image, like, on Instagram and stuff, but it's not true. It's just, like, me with bottles. It's an internal joke with myself." The 'Pitch Perfect' star previously admitted she found herself questioning someone's "drinking habits" when the person - who she met on an online dating app - walked straight "into a moving Uber". She said: "I'm on this celebrity dating app-but it's not really just celebrities. I've never really had a disaster. "One person got slightly... way too drunk and walked into a moving Uber. Just went flying into the Uber as it was driving off." Although Rebel was quick to reassess her options, she did decide to "give them another chance" once the person in question that realised how much they were drinking. Asked if she went on a second date, she added: "Not immediately after that. I questioned their drinking habits. Later on, when they had realised they were drinking too much, I did give them another chance."



Barbara Palvin prefers more 'minimalistic' make-up look

The Victoria's Secret model wishes people wouldn't "layer" their make-up so much and she much prefers the "natural" approach. She said: "I wish people wouldn't layer their make-up so much. Recently when you see all these make-up tutorials, it looks so thick! I like natural. You can still highlight the parts that you love about your face with very minimal make-up." And the 26-year-old model has confessed she "mimics" a lot of things from the make-up artists who work alongside her on photoshoots. She added: "I mimic every-

thing I've seen from make-up artists. I'm pretty damn good! I started modelling when I was 13, so everything I know is from artists. Something that changed my life is contouring. I learnt you should draw the number '3' [and a back-to-front '3' on the other side of the face], to shade your jawline, your cheeks, and your hairline around the forehead." And Barbara has confessed sometimes she has to tell her hair stylists and make-up artists little tricks about her routine to achieve the perfect look.





Mike Bridavsky poses with Lil Bub of the film 'Lil Bub & Friendz' at the Tribeca Film Festival 2013 portrait studio in New York City.



THE WACKY, BIG-MONEY WORLD OF PET INFLUENCERS

In this file photo taken, Grumpy Cat attends the 'Cat Summer' video launch party at Bleecker Street Records in New York City. They have millions of followers on Instagram. They generate major profits for their owners. They are... pet influencers. Grumpy Cat, Lil Bub, Boo the Pomeranian and Doug the Pug are just some of the internet's star animals, who do everything from support worthy causes to promote major brands. — AFP Photos



Grumpy the Cat poses on arrival for the World Premiere of Disney's 'Cinderella' in Hollywood, California.

They have millions of followers on Instagram. They generate major profits for their owners. They are... pet influencers. Grumpy Cat, Lil Bub, Boo the Pomeranian and Doug the Pug are just some of the internet's star animals, who do everything from support worthy causes to promote major brands. The death this week of Lil Bub, a cat whose tongue was always hanging out due to genetic anomalies, inspired a wave of emotion that highlighted the internet's power to elevate just about anything to cult status.

"She was a ray of pure joy in my life and so many others," said one Instagram user, who uses the handle @miss-maddyg. Lil Bub rose to fame after her adoption in 2011, when her owner, music producer Mike Bridavsky, began posting photos and updates about her online.

Her story garnered three million followers on Facebook, 2.4 million on Instagram and more than 800,000 on Twitter. Bub's fame eventually caught the attention of scientists. In May 2015, researchers at the University of Missouri sequenced her genome as part of a project to determine what genetic variations had caused her adorable deformities. Bridavsky also started a national fund for special needs pets, the first of its kind, with Bub serving as its face.

"Bub has made a huge difference in the world of animal welfare and in the lives of millions of people worldwide," Bridavsky wrote on Instagram, noting the fund has raised \$700,000 for "animals in need," with \$75,000 raised in 2018 alone. Over the course of her life, the Indiana-based cat lent her star power to multiple causes supported by Greenpeace and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). Since 2013, Lil Bub has also been the face of campaigns with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) promoting sterilization and pet adoption, as opposed to buying designer breeds.

Lil Bub "used her stardom to make the world a better place for animals," PETA said in a tribute tweet. "Honor her legacy by remembering her message: always adopt, never shop." But while PETA campaigns director Ashley Byrne welcomes pet influencers' charitable ventures, she is also adamant that the work must not come at the expense of the pets' welfare. Nobody should "treat animals as accessories or frivolous possessions," she told AFP. Instead, "it's important for people with animals who have an audience on the internet to encourage their followers to treat their pets like members of the family."

That, says animal talent manager Loni Edwards, is exactly what makes pet influencers so successful. Edwards's talent agency, The Dog Agency, manages pet influencers of all species, from Bruno the fat cat to CEO Edwards's own French bulldog. "As a society, we've evolved so that we now think of pets as our children," Edwards said in a November 2018 interview with Vox. "They're such an important part of our lives."



A valuable image

As of 2019, American households owned more than 42 million cats and 63 million dogs. The market for pet products in the US earned \$72 billion in 2018, according to the American Pet Products Association (APPA). Additionally, since Instagram launched in 2010, the word "cat" has been used on the platform 193 million times and the word "dog" 243 million times. "Pets raise endorphins and make people feel happy," Edwards said.

"They are adorable to look at and are easier to connect with than human influencers. Human-facing brands want to work with pet influencers because they want to show that they align on the values of their consumer, and their consumer loves pets." As a result, pet influencers can be incredibly lucrative. Lil Bub's fellow celebrity feline Grumpy Cat - known for her perpetual scowl - amassed 8.5 million fans on Facebook, 2.5 million followers on Instagram and 1.5 million on Twitter. From 2013 until her death in May, Grumpy Cat served as the face of cat food brand Friskies.

In 2018, a California court awarded her owner Tabatha Bundesen \$710,001 in damages for violation of image rights, after a coffee company used pictures of Grumpy's face without authorization. Just before her death, Lil Bub starred in campaigns advertising clothing and coffee for "Black Friday" sales. The highly-commercial pet influencer industry could seem at odds with charitable giving. But Bridavsky said Bub had left a proud legacy of raising both funds and spirits. — AFP

Internet celebrity cat Lil Bub known for her unique appearance is held by owner Mike Bridavsky at the inaugural CatConLa event in Los Angeles, California.



Palestinian children play with pet lion cubs sitting on a concrete ledge along a street in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, placed there by a local zoo owner to promote the venue. The Rafah Zoo in the southern Gaza Strip was known for its emaciated animals, with the owners saying they struggled to find enough money to feed them. In April, international animal rights charity Four Paws took all the animals to sanctuaries, receiving a pledge that the zoo would close forever. However it reopened again in August with two lions and three new cubs, penned in cages only a few square metres in size. — AFP



In this file photo taken, Caroll Spinney ‘Oscar and Big Bird’ attends SiriusXM’s Town Hall with original cast members from Sesame Street in New York City. Caroll Spinney, the big-hearted Muppeteer who play the Sesame Street character Big Bird for almost a half-century, died on December 8, 2019, Sesame Workshop announced. He was 85. — AFP photos



Caroll Spinney and The Muppets attend The 2017 Sesame Workshop Dinner at Cipriani 42nd Street in New York City.



In this file photo, Sesame Street’s Big Bird and Puppeteer Caroll Spinney lights the Empire State Building in New York City.

'SESAME STREET' PUPPETEER CAROLL SPINNEY – AKA BIG BIRD – DIES AT 85

Puppeteer Caroll Spinney, who brought Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch to life on the iconic children’s television show “Sesame Street” for half a century, died on Sunday at the age of 85. Spinney died at home in Connecticut after living for some time with the movement disorder dystonia, which causes uncontrollable muscle contractions, according to a statement from Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit organization that produces the show.

The actor retired from the show last year, having hand-picked successors to play both Big Bird and Oscar-two very different characters he helped create, delighting millions of children. Those characters-one a towering yellow bird, the other a grumpy, green monster in a trash can-existed in what many considered a magical world created by puppet

master Jim Henson and including pals Bert and Ernie, the lovable Cookie Monster and the goofy Kermit the Frog.

Spinney once told The New York Times he had modeled Oscar the Grouch on a cross between a “magnificently rude” restaurant waiter and a ranting New York cab driver. In 1973, a year after then US president Richard Nixon made his dramatic trip to China, Spinney flew to Beijing for a performance dressed as Big Bird-he said he only paid half-price for the plane ticket because the character “was only six years old.” When Henson died in 1990, Big Bird sang Kermit’s sweetly melancholy tune “It’s Not Easy Being Green” at a memorial service.

“Caroll was an artistic genius whose kind and loving view of the world helped shape and define Sesame Street from its earliest days in

1969 through five decades,” Sesame Workshop said in a statement. “His enormous talent and outsized heart were perfectly suited to playing the larger-than-life yellow bird who brought joy to generations of children and countless fans of all ages around the world, and his lovingly cantankerous grouch gave us all permission to be cranky once in a while.”

‘Infectious love and joy’

Poignantly, Spinney’s death came as the show marked its 50th birthday, and as it is lauded with one of America’s top cultural awards-the Kennedy Center Honors-at a gala Sunday in Washington. “We are really grateful that we are all here together tonight, because he was an inspiration for us all,” Leslie Carrara Rudolph, who portrays Abby Cadabby on the show, told AFP on the red

carpet at the Kennedy Center.

Spinney himself won multiple Daytime Emmys for his work, as well as a Lifetime Achievement Award. He also earned a Grammy Award, for best children’s recording. At the time of his retirement, he was quoted as saying that his Big Bird alter ego had “opened my mind and nurtured my soul.” He hand-picked his successors in the two major roles-after mentoring them for more than two decades.

A shy child, Spinney embraced puppetry and reportedly owned 70 puppets by the age of 12. He met Henson at a puppeteers festival in 1962 and bumped into him again in 1969: months later, he joined “Sesame Street.” Spinney’s life was the subject of the 2014 documentary “I Am Big Bird: The Caroll Spinney Story.” Big Bird, the instantly recognizable

giant yellow bird with the huge beak, is more than eight feet (2.5 meters) tall. Spinney, who was 5 feet 10, had to use his hands and wires to manipulate the towering puppet, guided by a TV monitor in the costume.

In 2000, he was named a Living Legend by the US Library of Congress, and he has a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Henson’s family said in a statement that Spinney managed to “perfectly convey the humor and heart in our father’s creations. Big Bird was childlike, without being childish. And Oscar the Grouch reflected universal feelings we all share, no matter our age.” “That he could do this work so brilliantly, responsibly and with such infectious love and joy is his gift to us all,” the statement said. — AFP



In this file photo, Juice WRLD performs onstage during the 2019 iHeartRadio Music Festival and Daytime Stage at the Las Vegas Festival Grounds in Las Vegas, Nevada. Chicago-born rapper Juice WRLD, one of a wave of young artists who made a name on streaming platforms before breaking out in the mainstream, died on Sunday at the age of 21. — AFP

Rising US rap artist Juice WRLD dies at 21

Chicago-born rapper Juice WRLD, one of a wave of young artists who earned attention on streaming platforms before breaking out as chart-toppers and social media celebrities, died Sunday at the age of 21, according to local authorities. A spokeswoman from the Cook County Medical Examiner’s Office in Illinois confirmed the death of the rapper, born Jarad Higgins, at 3:14 am. An autopsy has been set for today.

Police told AFP that a 21-year-old man had suffered a medical emergency at Chicago’s Midway International Airport after getting off a private jet. Celebrity news outlet TMZ reported that Higgins had suffered a seizure. Juice WRLD’s breakout single “Lucid Dreams,” rose to number two on the Billboard Hot 100 in 2018, with his follow-up album “Death Race for Love” debuting in first place on the Billboard 200 earlier this year.

“Juice made a profound impact on the world in such a short period of time,” his label Interscope Records said in a statement. “To lose someone so kind and so close to our hearts is devastating.” “Lucid Dreams” quickly re-entered the top 10 on the US iTunes site as news of his death spread. The rapper was of a generation known as the “SoundCloud rappers”—a subgenre that takes its name from the streaming platform where its artists first find fame.

The crop of rappers in recent years has become a disruptive movement in hip-hop, combining a lo-fi underground sound with raw, often emotionally laden lyrics leading some to dub them “emo rappers.” These musicians whose careers are built on internet stardom often rap about popping drugs, notably Xanax, an anti-anxiety medication. Along with prescription medication, the subculture’s aesthetic includes face tattoos and neon-dyed hair.

‘I have a lot going for me’

The SoundCloud scene has launched careers and sales figures but the lives of its figures are often volatile. XXXTentacion was murdered in 2018, while Tekashi69, seeking leniency on serious racketeering and weapons charges, this year was a star government witness at the trial of alleged former gang associates. And in 2017, the rapper Lil Peep died at age 21 of what was declared an accidental overdose of fentanyl and Xanax. Speaking to The New York Times in 2018, Juice WRLD said that he used Xanax heavily as a teenager but was aiming to curb his drug use. “I have a lot going for me, I recognize it’s a lot of big things, a lot of big looks. I want to be there, and you don’t have to overdose to not be there,” he told the Times. — AFP

‘Star Trek’ actor Rene Auberjonois dead at age 79

Actor Rene Auberjonois, known for his television roles on “Star Trek: Deep Space Nine” and the US sitcom “Benson,” died Sunday in Los Angeles after a battle with cancer. He was 79. “We are heartbroken to confirm that Rene passed away today,” a statement on the actor’s website said. In his official biography, the cause given was metastatic lung cancer.

Auberjonois earned legions of fans for his role as Odo, the shape-shifting head of security on “Star Trek: Deep Space Nine,” one of the many spinoff series spawned by the legendary science fiction show. He became a fan favorite at “Star Trek” conventions for years, donating the proceeds from autographed items to charities, such as Doctors Without Borders. “I have had my share of successes and my share of flops. But nothing has ever been like this. ‘Deep Space Nine’ is completely beyond anything that I have ever experienced,” the actor once said.

But he also was known for his portrayal in the 1980s of Clayton Endicott III, the chief of staff to a governor on the long-running sitcom “Benson.” Other career highlights include his appearance in Robert Altman’s 1970 film “MASH” as Father Mulcahy; a role on the quirky TV drama “Boston Legal”; and a host of voice roles in animated fare, including his performance as Chef Louis in Disney’s “The Little Mermaid.” Auberjonois, the son of a writer, grew up in Paris and New York, where his family lived in an artists’ colony.

After university, he broke into showbiz on the stage, and earned a Tony award for his first Broadway musical, “Coco” – about the life of French fashion designer Coco Chanel – opposite Katharine Hepburn in the title role. “Star Trek” star William Shatner – who worked with Auberjonois on “Boston Legal” – led tributes on Twitter, remembering his “wonderful friendship” with the actor, and fellow series regular George Takei called it a “terrible loss.” “When I look out to the stars, I shall think of you, friend,” Takei wrote. Auberjonois is survived by his wife Judith and two children, Tessa and Remy-Luc. — AFP



Actor Rene Auberjonois, who played the character Odo on the television series ‘Star Trek: Deep Space Nine,’ appears at the Star Trek convention at the Las Vegas Hilton in this file photo. Rene Auberjonois, the actor best known for his roles in ‘Star Trek: Deep Space Nine’ died on Sunday at his home in Los Angeles of metastatic lung cancer. — AFP



Jumeirah Group shines at World Travel Awards

Jumeirah Group yesterday announced their triumph at the World Travel Awards 2019. With competition spanning 6 continents, Jumeirah has been honoured with a number of accolades including: World’s Leading Luxury All Suite Hotel, World’s Leading Hotel Suite, World’s Leading Desert Resort, and the World’s Leading Resort Design.

Tipped as the Oscars of the tourism industry, the multiple wins for Jumeirah Group highlights the brand’s excellence in hospitality and successful dedication to their three key strategic pillars: the elevation of their dining experiences, offering service beyond expectations and providing unmatched and redefined product, architecture and design.

Burj Al Arab Jumeirah was voted as the World’s Leading Luxury All Suite Hotel 2019. An architectural spectacle, the iconic sail-shaped hotel is reflective of the Emirate’s past and future, as well as its endeavour to transition into one of the most culturally diverse and dynamic cities in the world. Burj Al Arab Jumeirah not only challenges the norms of traditional hotel design but redefines the meaning of luxury hospitality in both Dubai and globally, and is renowned for its exceptional service. This year, the hotel has elevated its culinary offering under the leadership of new Chief Culinary Officer, Michael Ellis, who has been instrumental in the introduction of two new Michelin starred chefs to the hotel.

Jumeirah Etihad Towers’ Royal Etihad Suite was voted as the World’s Leading Hotel Suite 2019. Encompassing the entirety of the 60th floor, complete with sitting rooms, dining facilities, bedrooms and butler facilities, the suite exists in harmony with the ocean, providing calming and neutral hues to create an aura of understated elegance. With 980 sqm of craftsman-

ship and a 360 degree view of the capital, the suite is an abode of tranquility and privacy with meticulous care and attention catering to every need.

Jumeirah Al Wathba Desert Resort and Spa was voted as the World’s Leading Desert Resort 2019. The recently opened Jumeirah Al Wathba is set in the mesmerizing desert landscape of Abu Dhabi and promises a remote escape complete with spaciouly designed rooms and villas that feature timeless local details, traditional artwork and Arabesque accessories. The resort ensures guests have an immersive cultural experience; all while being surrounded by breath-taking views of the desert landscape.

Grosvenor House Suites by Jumeirah Living was voted as the World’s Leading Hotel Residences 2019. Combining the refined services of a luxury hotel with the privacy, comfort and generous living space of a contemporary Mayfair residence, Grosvenor House Suites by Jumeirah Living offers a unique experience for both short and extended stays. This home away from home offers guests the added luxury of a highly specialised 24-hour concierge, as well as a 24-hour in-residence dining and daily maid service to really complete the ultimate service experience.

Jose Silva, Chief Executive Officer for Jumeirah Group commented, “We are delighted with the success of our



Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island Resort was voted as the World’s Leading Resort Design 2019. Jumeirah Group’s first luxury ‘eco-conscious’ beachfront resort, Jumeirah at Saadiyat Island overlooks 400 metres of beautiful white sand, offering breath-taking scenery and undisturbed wildlife. The hotel’s approach to design reflects its dedication to sustainability and is influenced by its natural surroundings. The use of colours, fabrics and textures create an earthy yet luxurious feel, while there is an ocean-inspired, 13-foot high glass-blown chandelier hanging in the lobby, reflecting the seven different colours of the Arabian Gulf.

properties at the World Travel Awards. Winning these five accolades is a reflection of our on-going commitment to market excellence and the world-class guest experiences that we offer.” The World Travel Awards are voted for by travel and tourism professionals worldwide. Established in 1993, the awards are recognised as a world-class hallmark of quality. Each year a series of gala ceremonies are staged to acknowledge, reward and celebrate excellence in the tourism industry.

Classifieds

Tuesday, December 10, 2019

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Mostly Sunny with light variable wind to light to moderate north easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Rather cool and Partly cloudy with light to moderate north easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	<div>SFC. CHART09/12/2019 0000 UTC</div>	
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	13 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	07 °C		
ABDALY	18 °C	07 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	19 °C	10 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	20 °C	16 °C		
AHMADI	20 °C	16 °C		
NUWAISIB	21 °C	11 °C		
WAFRA	20 °C	07 °C		
SALMY	18 °C	06 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	12/10	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	20 °C	10 °C	VRB-E	08 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	12/11	Partly cloudy	21 °C	10 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 26 km/h
Thursday	12/12	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	21 °C	10 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 40 km/h
Friday	12/13	Clouds will decrease gradually	24 °C	12 °C	SE-NW	20 - 40 km/h

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

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	19 °C
MIN. Temp.	10 °C
MAX. RH	93 %
MIN. RH	39 %
MAX. Wind	N 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Sumbul Sadia** (old name), D/o Mohammad Mokhtar Ahmad, resident of new Azimabad colony Sandalpur road Mahendru, Bahadurpur, Patna, Bihar, Passport No. S2395655 have changed my name as Sadia Sumbul (new name) for all purposes. (C 5695) 10-12-2019

I, **John Ivon D Souza** (old name) S/o Domnic Dsouza residing at

EMERGENCY
112

Airlines

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

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 10/12/2019									
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50		
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	GFA	059	Dubai	14:20		
JZR	716	Sohag	00:35	KAC	221	Bahrain	14:40		
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	KAC	672	Dubai	14:40		
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC	774	Riyadh	14:40		
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	500	Jeddah	14:45		
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	742	Dammam	14:45		
KAC	102	London	01:25	KAC	118	New York	14:50		
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KAC	286	Dhaka	14:55		
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	KAC	692	Muscat	15:00		
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	618	Doha	15:00		
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	KAC	618	Jeddah	15:10		
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	ET	529	Baku	15:10		
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	KAC	D303	Abu Dhabi	15:15		
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:25		
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	222	Riyadh	15:30		
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	562	Amman	15:40		
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45		
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50		
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:55		
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	JZR	152	Mashhad	16:00		
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25		
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35		
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JZR	116	Doha	16:40		
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	502	Beirut	16:45		
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	KAC	546	Cairo	16:45		
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	FDB	051	Dubai	16:45		
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	516	Tehran	16:50		
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:25		
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30		
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45		
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	SYR	342	Dammam	17:55		
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	KAC	158	Istanbul	17:55		
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15		
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	302	Istanbul	18:15		
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	JZR	124	Dubai	18:20		
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30		
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30		
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	FEG	441	Asyut	18:55		
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:45	RJA	640	Amman	19:10		
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:55	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:20		
KAC	106	London	06:00	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:25		
FEG	341	Sohag	06:05	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25		
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	NIA	161	Cairo	19:30		
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:05	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30		
KAC	362	Colombo	06:30	QTR	1090	Doha	19:35		
THY	6376	ISL	06:30	KAC	744	Dammam	19:45		
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	KAC	782	Jeddah	19:50		
JZR	120	Dubai	07:00	JZR	104	Bahrain	19:55		
BAW	157	London	07:05	FDB	057	Dubai	20:00		
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	OMS	225	Muscat	20:05		
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KAC	776	Riyadh	20:05		
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20		
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	QTR	1088	Doha	20:30		
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	AZQ	4565	Baku	20:30		
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	KAC	616	Bahrain	20:30		
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	ICV	6752	Luxembourg	20:35		
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	166	Rome	20:40		
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:55		
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	KAC	674	Dubai	20:55		
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	542	Cairo	21:10		
GOW	061	CNN	09:30	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20		
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20		
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20		
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	UAE	859	Dubai	21:30		
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:30		
IRA	675	Lar	09:40	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45		
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50		
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	KAC	164	MXP	21:55		
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	AZG	565	Baku	22:00		
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	168	Paris	22:00		
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	10:40	KAC	564	Amman	22:00		
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	KAC	620	Doha	22:05		
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05		
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15		
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25		
MSR	610	Cairo	12:00	RBG	213	Sohag	22:30		
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:50		
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00		
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	QTR	1092	Doha	23:10		
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	JZR	128	Dubai	23:15		
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	MSC	405	Sohag	23:15		
				FDB	071	Dubai	23:40		

Departure Flights on Tuesday 10/12/2019							
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	JZR	221	Riyadh <td>12:00</td>	12:00
SVA	503	Jeddah	00:05	KAC	515	Tehran	12:10
MSC	406	Sohag	00:15	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
QTR	1093	Doha	00:25	JZR	115	Doha	13:00
FDB	072	Dubai	00:35	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
JZR	409	Delhi	00:50	MSR	611	Cairo	13:00
AIC	990	Mumbai	01:10	GFA	210	Bahrain	13:05
IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
JZR	111	Doha	01:55	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
KAC	677	Dubai	01:55	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00	KAC	541	Cairo	13:45
PGT	859	Istanbul	02:00	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	119	Dubai	02:05	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
THY	773	Istanbul	02:20	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
KAC	417	Manila	02:30	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
IGO	1765	Delhi	02:55	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	16:00
THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
OMA	644	Muscat	04:00	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30
MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
KAC	621	Doha	04:20	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45
PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
JZR	713	Sohag	04:30	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:00
KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:35	KAC	619	Doha	17:35
LMU	511	Cairo	05:00	KAC	357	Kochi	17:35
IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45
QTR	1077	Doha	05:30	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
OHY	351	Istanbul	05:30	KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:55
JZR	101	Bahrain	05:50	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
THY	771	Istanbul	06:25	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
JZR	121	Dubai	06:35	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
RJA	643	Amman	06:55	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:20
FDB	070	Dubai	07:05	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
FEG	442	Asyut	07:05	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35
KAC	167	Paris	07:35	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00	KAC	381	Delhi	18:45
IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55
KAC	165	Rome	08:15	SYR	341	Damascus	18:55
THY	6376	Dubai/ISL	08:35	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
FDB	054	Dubai	08:35	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:00	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	501	Beirut	09:00	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
KAC	163	MPX	09:00	FEG	342	Sohag	19:55
JZR	731	Cairo	09:10	JZR	653	OSS	20:05
KAC	157	Istanbul	09:10	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
BAW	156	London	09:10	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
KAC	691	Muscat	09:20	RJA	641	Amman	20:10
JZR	601	Baku	09:30	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
KAC	545	Cairo	09:30	NIA	162	Cairo	20:30
KAC	671	Dubai	09:35	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:35
QTR	1085	Doha	09:40	JZR	501	Lahore	20:40
KAC	561	Amman	09:45	OMS	226	Muscat	20:40
KAC	101	London	09:45	FDB	058	Dubai	20:45
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
JZR	151	Mashhad	09:55	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
KAC	117	New York	10:00	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45
UAE	856	Dubai	10:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	301	Istanbul	10:05	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
KAC	613	Bahrain	10:05	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:15
KAC	773	Riyadh	10:15	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	155	Istanbul	10:20	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25
GOW	062	CNN	10:30	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
KAC	617	Doha	10:35	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35	AZQ	4565	Baku	22:30
JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40	ICV	6752	Hong Kong	22:35
IRA	674	Lar	10:40	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
QTR	1071	Doha	11:00	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00	RBG	214	Sohag	23:10
KAC	741	Dammam	11:05	KAC	783	Jeddah	23:15
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25	KAC	383	Delhi	23:20
ZAV	4132	Baghdad	11:30	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:25
AXB	790	CNN	11:40	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
				KAC	795	Madinah	23:30
				KAC	543	Cairo	23:30
				KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40

Saudi city once propped up by Qatari high-rollers prays for truce

AL-AHSA, Saudi Arabia: Jackhammers and cranes gather dust at half-built Qatari-funded hotel sites in a Saudi city hit hard by an abrupt diplomatic rupture, but signs of thawing cross-border ties are reviving economic hopes. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has downplayed the dispute with Qatar - which led to a Riyadh-led embargo on the neighboring emirate and shuttered their land border in mid-2017 - as a trivial matter with limited impact on the kingdom.

But it is anything but trivial for Al-Ahsa, a desert oasis near the border where Qatari shoppers once kept the local economy humming, crossing over to buy relatively cheaper provisions - from herbs and eggs to milk and camel meat. The deep-pocketed residents of gas-rich Qatar - one of the wealthiest countries per capita - also pumped millions of riyals into local hotels, date plantations and other real estate.

But the Qatari money dried up when the embargo shut them out, unleashing economic pain and dividing extended families on both sides, an unintended consequence of a policy meant to hurt Doha's government. The Saudi-led bloc accuses Qatar of backing radical Islamists including Muslim Brotherhood and seeking closer ties with Riyadh's arch nemesis Iran - charges Doha denies.

"The blockade had a negative impact on towns near the border and complicated investments at a time when Saudi Arabia's economy is struggling with large deficits," said Samuel Ramani, a doctoral researcher at Oxford University. Official statistics are hard to come by but the tell-tale signs of the economic impact are everywhere in Al-Ahsa, home to more than a million people. Its malls and traditional souks are empty, multiple gas stations leading up to the border have shuttered, and even salesmen of bisht, traditional gold-trimmed robes, complain of depressed sales.

Shells of three Qatari-funded luxury hotels lie abandoned after construction was halted abruptly in 2017, a long-term investment some believe was intended to accommodate any surplus guests of Qatar's 2022 football World Cup. The manager of another Al-Ahsa hotel pointed at his vacant parking lot, once full of cars with Qatari plates. The hotel's occupancy rate tanked after the embargo, and it has barely managed to cover its electricity bill, he told AFP. But the fact that the majority of Qatari investors have not liquidated their investments in Al-Ahsa despite the embargo gives some hope it will be business as usual if relations are restored.

The feud is not irreconcilable, residents say, describing it as a spat between squabbling cousins. And amid signs of a thaw, many are betting on the return of Qatari high-rollers. "The rift is between governments, not the people," said an Al-Ahsa businessman who asked not to be named. "We are not different countries, we are one big family."

Arab diplomats say both sides are closer than ever to bringing the dispute to an end. Raising hopes is recent "sports diplomacy", which saw football teams from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain travel to Qatar for the Gulf Cup despite earlier indications that they would boycott the tournament. State-funded media networks on all sides recently appear to have toned down the shrill rhetoric against each other. Qatar's foreign minister, who travelled to Saudi Arabia last month for talks, has spoken of "some progress" in negotiations.

But the real bellwether will be the level of Qatari representation at the Gulf Cooperation Council summit in Riyadh on Tuesday. The Saudi king has personally invited Qatar's amir, but it remains unclear whether he will attend. Two sources familiar with the negotiations, including an Arab diplomat, told AFP that hardliners in Abu Dhabi - Riyadh's principal ally - are opposed to a restoration of ties. This has raised the prospect of a



AL-AHSA, Saudi Arabia: A half built Qatari-funded hotel site in this eastern Saudi city is seen on Nov 29, 2019 after construction was abruptly halted in 2017. — AFP

"bifurcated peace", implying Qatar could possibly normalize ties with only some blockading nations including Saudi Arabia, with whom it shares its only land border.

Saudi Arabia appears to be adopting a de-escalatory approach after a series of what observers describe as foreign policy "missteps" that have spooked investors. A cool reception by global investors to state energy giant Aramco's stock sale has highlighted the downside of its aggressive stance, they say. Ramani said the rapprochement appears to be shaping up

"without major concessions from Doha", after the blockade boosted its self-reliance.

Once heavily dependent on food imports, it has developed new trade routes, flown in thousands of dairy cows and developed poultry farms to beat the embargo. "Qatar is like a newborn baby kicked out of a house as punishment," the Arab diplomat - who is from outside the Gulf - told AFP. "You thought it would come back crying to you, but it has stood on its feet and does not need you anymore." — AFP

Algeria youth scorn 'dinosaur' old guard ahead of elections

ALGIERS: Algeria's contentious presidential election campaign is highlighting the deep gulf between young people at the heart of a street protest movement and an ageing elite they see as clinging to power. The poll, set for Thursday, will see five candidates, all of them linked to the 82-year-old deposed president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, compete for the top office. But the protesters, whose mass mobilization forced the ex-strongman to resign from his two-decade tenure in April, have rallied weekly to demand that sweeping reforms must come ahead of any vote.

"It's not a gap between the fossils in power and the youth, it's a yawning chasm," said Lyes, a 22-year-old geology student draped in his country's flag at a student march in Algiers. While more than half of the North African country's population is under 30, Algeria's leaders are geriatric. The powerful army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah is 79 and interim president Abdelkader Bensalah is 78. The presidential candidates range in age from 56 to 75. "The dinosaurs who have held power since independence made us disgusted with politics," said Lyes.

Young people only became interested in politics with the eruption of the "Hirak" protest movement in February, he said, noting that most of his peers are not even enrolled to vote. Around him, his friends agreed. For nine months they have marched every Tuesday to demand change. Each week they wave the national colors and flags calling for a

free and democratic Algeria, while chanting against the "dinosaurs".

The young protesters summarized their aspirations as wanting to live freely, receive a good education, find a stable job with a decent salary, have their voices heard, and enjoy entertainment opportunities beyond loitering in the street. Algeria's leaders have created few jobs, stifled free speech, upheld conservative traditions and turned a blind eye to police oppression, the young protesters told AFP.

"Before we were afraid to speak out but things have changed since Hirak," said Hanya Assala Abdeddaim, a 24-year-old student. When the Hirak movement erupted onto the scene, 21-year-old Asma said she swapped nice shoes for sneakers so she could hit the streets to "put some of the old people who govern us in a museum of antiquities".

"The transition in Algeria isn't only a political transition, it's also a generational transition," said Algerian sociologist Nacer Djabi. But age is just one aspect of a deeper issue, said Yamina Rahou of the Centre for Research in Social and Cultural Anthropology in the city of Oran. "It's a political problem between a mainly young population that wants a modern state based on the rule of law, and those who appropriated the state to subjugate Algerians," she said.

Mohamed Lamine Harhad, another 22-year old student, said he did not have a problem with old people, just with old "ideas", noting that all age groups are represented in the protest movement. Among the hundreds of thousands who have demonstrated, for many young people abstention will be the only palatable choice in the election. Algeria "needs a new system based on democracy," Harhad said. This would "encourage young people without ignoring old people with experience".

This view was shared by Lamnaour Hamamouche, a sociology student from Bejaia east of Algiers, who said "the gap is not defined by age but by visions". — AFP



ALGIERS: Algerian security forces contain protesters shouting slogans during an anti-government demonstration in the capital yesterday. — AFP

Saudi eliminates gender-segregated entrances for eateries

RIYADH: Restaurants and cafes in Saudi Arabia are no longer required to have gender-segregated entrances, officials said, in a further easing of social restrictions in the ultra-conservative Islamic kingdom. Eateries have long required one entrance for single men and another for women and families, in a country where the once-powerful religious police zealously enforced sex segregation in public places for decades.

The ministry of municipalities and rural affairs said on Twitter Sunday it was eliminating several requirements for restaurants, including the need for "an entrance for bachelors and a separate entrance for families". It was unclear whether a restriction on seating inside restaurants will also be removed. Restaurants are currently segregated into a "family"

section for those accompanied by women and a "singles" area for men, though many have quietly taken down the barriers in recent years amid the kingdom's sweeping liberalization drive.

The latest reform was hailed by young Saudis but dismissed by archconservatives on social media, with one Twitter user saying it went "against sharia", or Islamic law. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has sought to project a moderate, business-friendly image of his austere kingdom as he seeks to boost investment. Prince Mohammed has clipped the powers of headline clerics as he pursues a modernization drive that has allowed mixed-gender music concerts and ended decades-long bans on cinemas and women drivers.

Until three years ago, the religious police elicited widespread fear in the kingdom, chasing men and women out of malls to pray and berating anyone seen mingling with the opposite sex. The headline enforcers of public morality, whose powers began waning even before Prince Mohammed rose to power, are now largely out of sight. But the reforms have been accompanied by a crackdown on activists, including women urging faster reform. — AFP

Fitch: Kuwait political disputes...

Continued from Page 1

Fitch Ratings estimates that RFFG foreign assets were about \$500 billion at end-FY18/19 and assume these would be made available for financing if required, although this would generate further controversy in parliament. The government's financing needs are currently being met entirely from the General Reserve Fund (less than \$60 billion in estimated assets at end-FY18/19). Rising financing requirements will further deplete easily available reserves without measures to increase revenue or cut spending, even if debt issuance resumes in FY20/21, according to the report.

Fitch is forecasting a budget deficit of over 5 percent of GDP by FY21/22 (including estimated investment income) as average oil prices fall further, increasing the annual central government financing need to \$27 billion.

Implementation of excise or value-added tax remains a remote prospect, subsidy reforms have been limited, and the government has struggled to contain current spending through executive measures while managing an uncooperative parliament.

In November, Kuwait's prime minister of more than seven years resigned and declined to be reappointed. HH the Amir subsequently replaced the caretaker interior and defense ministers and asked the foreign minister to form a government. Consultations on the composition of the new Cabinet are continuing.

"Reform will remain slow unless the composition of the new government resolves underlying power struggles and enjoys broad support among MPs and different sections of society. Neither of these is likely, in our view, partly because there are no political parties in Kuwait and the government's support base of individual MPs shifts from issue to issue," Fitch said. "Kuwait's rating of 'AA/Stable' is underpinned by its exceptionally strong balance sheet, with sovereign net foreign assets of nearly 500 percent of GDP. Nevertheless, this buffer could be eroded by sustained low oil prices or an inability to address structural drains on public finances from a generous welfare state and large public sector."



This handout image shows the volcano on New Zealand's White Island spewing steam and ash yesterday. — AFP

No more survivors on NZ island after...

Continued from Page 1

The eruption occurred just after 2pm (0100 GMT), thrusting a thick plume of white ash 3.6 km into the sky. Seconds before, live camera feeds showed a group of more than a half dozen people walking on the crater floor. Then the images went black. A "considerable number" of those caught up in the disaster are believed to be Australian, according to officials in Canberra.

As many as 30 of those involved are also believed to be cruise passengers on a day trip from the vessel Ovation of the Seas, Kevin O'Sullivan, chief executive officer of industry body the New Zealand Cruise Association told AFP. The ship's operator Royal Caribbean - who had billed the trip to White Island as "an unforgettable guided tour of New Zealand's most active volcano" - said "a number of our guests were touring the island" but did not confirm that number. The ship has a capacity of around 4,000 people and set sail from Sydney last week on a 12 day voyage.

Tourist Michael Schade, made it off the island just in time and was able to capture footage of the devastation. His videos showed groups of startled tourists clustered by the shoreline, waiting to be evacuated as the ground around them smoldered, the sky filled with white debris. An ash-caked helicopter lay damaged

nearby. Volcanic Air said they had landed a helicopter on the island shortly before the eruption carrying four visitors and one pilot. All were now accounted for.

"It had landed on the island. What happened after that we don't know, but we know that all five made it back to Whakatane on one of the tourist boats," a company spokesman told AFP. Guillaume Calmelet, the co-director of Skydive Tauranga, saw the eruption from above as he took a customer on a tandem skydive from a plane 12,000 feet above the Bay of Plenty.

"As soon as the parachute opened there was this huge cloud that was really different to whatever we've seen before," he told AFP. "I could see it coming out in free fall, so probably about 30 seconds for the whole cloud to form, if that. It was pretty quick." The country's National Emergency Management Agency described the eruption as "moderate", although the plume of ash was clearly visible from the mainland and from satellites flying overhead.

White Island - also known as Whakaari - is about 50 km offshore in the picturesque Bay of Plenty and is popular with adventurous tourists willing to don hard hats and gas masks. It is New Zealand's most active volcano cone and about 70 percent of it is underwater, according to government-backed agency GeoNet. Around 10,000 people visit the volcano every year. It has erupted frequently over the last half-century, most recently in 2016. In August of that year the New Zealand Defence Force airlifted a 2.4-tonne shipping container onto the island to serve as an emergency shelter in case of an eruption. — AFP

Guardiola admits Man City standards have slipped

Klopp says he never doubted Keita’s quality

LONDON: Pep Guardiola says Manchester City may no longer be able to match the standards of the best teams after a painful defeat against Manchester United left them 14 points behind Premier League leaders Liverpool.

Guardiola’s City have been the Premier League’s outstanding side over the past two years, clocking up 100 points in 2017/18 and retaining the title last term during their treble-winning campaign. Guardiola hopes City, who have now lost four of their 16 league games this season, will be able to learn from their setbacks.

“United have the quality to defend and the quality to attack on the counter-attack and you have to accept that,” said the City boss. “That is the level we face against Liverpool, United, Barcelona, Madrid, Juventus. They are the teams we have to face and the reality is maybe we are not able now to compete with them. We have to improve and accept it and move forward. Maybe we need to live that as a club to improve, to accept the reality now and improve.”

Guardiola, however, is not ready to give up on his side’s title defense and there is also plenty more to play for in the remainder of the campaign. City have already qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League ahead of Wednesday’s final group game against Dinamo Zagreb, are through to the League Cup quarter-finals and have a kind draw for the start of their FA Cup defense next month.

“The reality is we are 14 points behind for the mistakes we have done, for the quality of our opponents and especially, as well, the things we cannot control,” said Guardiola. “That is the reality but we have to continue. We are at the beginning of December and we have other competitions to play in and other games to

fight and improve on. Maybe this is going to help us for the future so we need to live this as a club to be better.”

KEITA’S QUALITY

Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp says he has never doubted the quality of midfielder Naby Keita despite the Guinea international’s limited impact since his arrival at Anfield last year. Keita has been confined to a bit-part role since his £52.75 million (\$69 million) move from RB Leipzig in July 2018 and before Saturday had played just 14 minutes of Premier League football this season.

But the 24-year-old, whose Anfield career has been disrupted by injuries, gave a reminder of his ability with a goal and an assist on his first top-flight start of the campaign in Saturday’s 3-0 win at Bournemouth. Klopp, who has reassured Keita about his lack of first-team opportunities, admits the relentless form of his league leaders and a series of tight matches have made it difficult to give him minutes.

“Naby had injuries, the team is in really good shape, so then do you change?” said Klopp. “We are not flying, it’s not like we won all of the games 4-0, or 5-0, so we had to bring on a player who helps us with defending set-pieces. Then Naby is sitting outside thinking, ‘why don’t I play?’ I get all that. So we stayed in contact, we talked and we spoke a lot about it.”

Klopp said he never questioned the player’s quality. “It was just unlucky and in life you need luck always,” he said. “He started (his Liverpool career) really well-everybody forgot that-then got injured. And again we had two really good seasons.”

Liverpool last lost a league game in early January but despite an eight-point lead over second-placed



MANCHESTER: Manchester City’s Spanish manager Pep Guardiola reacts on the touchline during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Manchester United at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on December 7, 2019. — AFP

Leicester, Klopp is not getting carried away. “I don’t know if it’s so special because we don’t think about it,” he said of the unbeaten run. We get confronted with our winning streak always after the game, that’s the only moment. From that moment on, nobody thinks about it.”

Klopp believes resting and rotating his players will

be key to successfully negotiating a hectic December schedule, during which they are competing in multiple competitions. “It was wonderful-maybe the best thing of the (Bournemouth) game-we didn’t have to use Sadio Mane,” said the German boss, whose team must avoid defeat against Salzburg on Tuesday to guarantee reaching the Champions League knockout stages.” — AFP

Free-scoring Salzburg pose serious threat to leaky Liverpool

LONDON: Liverpool travel to Salzburg today needing to avoid defeat to the confident Austrian champions to guard against an embarrassing Champions League group stage exit for the holders. Jurgen Klopp’s men are used to getting through to the knockout stages the hard way. In each of the past two seasons they have needed home wins to secure a place in the last 16 before going on to make the final.

However, the spectre of a free-scoring Salzburg, led by the Champions League’s top scorer in Erlin Braut Haaland spells trouble for an injury-hit Liverpool backline that has consistently leaked goals this season despite streaking clear at the top of the Premier League.

The Reds’ recorded a first clean sheet in 14 games in Saturday’s 3-0 win at Bournemouth, but lost another centre-back as Dejan Lovren limped off in the first half. Should the Croatian miss the trip to Austria, Joe Gomez will be Klopp’s only fit partner for Virgil van Dijk in central defense.

Van Dijk narrowly missed out to Lionel Messi in the battle for the Ballon d’Or last week in recognition of the transformative effect he has had on Liverpool’s fortunes over the past two years. But even the towering Dutchman has been incapable of stopping the steady flow of goals against in recent months.

Injuries have meant there has been a constant rotation of Lovren, Gomez and Joel Matip alongside Van Dijk, while the attacking impetus offered by full-backs Andy Robertson and Trent Alexander-Arnold leaves space in



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool players attend a training session at Melwood in Liverpool, north west England yesterday on the eve of their UEFA Champions League Group E football match against Salzburg. — AFP

behind to be exploited.

Goalkeeper Alisson Becker also missed the first two months of the season due to a calf injury to further unsettle the backline. The Brazilian is now back, but another injury to Fabinho has robbed the back four of the best player to protect them in the holding midfield role.

TOPSY-TURVY FIRST MEETING

“I forgot how it feels, to be honest,” said Klopp on finally ending the long wait for a clean sheet at the weekend. “It’s great, we should have them more often. It was the most-used word in the dressing room by the boys – ‘clean sheet, clean sheet, clean sheet’. Obviously everybody was desperate for that, now we have it so let’s have it more often. The next game where a clean sheet would be useful is already around the corner, against Salzburg [today].”

That is easier said than done as Liverpool know from their first meeting with Jesse Marsch’s men in October. The hosts seemed to be cruising to another Anfield win in

the Champions League as they raced into a 3-0 lead, but Salzburg hit back to level at 3-3 before Mohamed Salah’s winner ensured Liverpool edged a seven-goal thriller.

Salzburg have scored 87 goals in 24 games in all competitions this season, 28 of which have come from Norwegian wonderkid Haaland in just 21 appearances. The 19-year-old started on the bench when the sides met at Anfield due to injury, but came on to inspire the visitors’ revival in the second half and scored one of his eight Champions League goals.

“He’s not the only threat from Salzburg but he’s a proper one,” said Klopp of the danger posed by Haaland ahead of the sides’ first clash. Salzburg need to win to make the last 16 on their first appearance in the group stage in 25 years. A point would be enough for Liverpool to progress, but they need to win to secure top spot in Group E ahead of Napoli. Given Liverpool’s paucity of clean sheets and Salzburg’s thirst for goals, attack would appear to be the best form of defense for the European champions. — AFP

Three things we learned from Premier League

LONDON: Liverpool’s relentless march to a first English title since 1990 gathered pace with a comfortable win at Bournemouth, while Manchester City’s defense of the trophy was hit by a painful defeat against rivals Manchester United. Fuelled by Jamie Vardy’s blistering form, Leicester have emerged as the closest challengers to Liverpool. AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from the Premier League weekend:

SOLSKJAER’S BIG WEEK

Seven days ago Ole Gunnar Solskjaer was fielding questions over whether he is the man to return Manchester United to their former glories after a 2-2 home draw with Aston Villa left the Red Devils in ninth and with just four wins from their opening 14 Premier League games.

A week on and Solskjaer has secured the two biggest victories of his time in charge since a famous 3-1 win at Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League in March helped turn his caretaker spell in charge into a full-time position.

United have beaten Tottenham on Jose Mourinho’s return to Old Trafford and now Manchester City 2-1 to climb up to fifth and within five points of the top four. On both occasions the scoreline arguably flattered the losing side

with Solskjaer’s vision slowly coming to fruition.

Marcus Rashford has already matched his previous season’s best for goals with 13, Fred has enjoyed two of his best games since a £50 million move from Shakhtar Donetsk 18 months ago, Aaron Wan-Bissaka was outstanding in nullifying the threat of Raheem Sterling and Harry Maguire marshalled his defence resolutely under a late City bombardment.

There is still much to do for Solskjaer to convince the doubters, not least catching Chelsea in fourth to secure a return to the Champions League next season, but this was undoubtedly his best week as permanent United boss.

KLOPP RELISHES LIVERPOOL SHUTOUT

Jurgen Klopp admitted Liverpool’s first clean sheet in 14 games was the talk of the dressing room after the leaders’ 3-0 win at Bournemouth. Klopp’s side made it 33 league games unbeaten as they maintained an eight-point lead over second-placed Leicester.

Goals from Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Naby Keita and Mohamed Salah earned the victory, but it was Liverpool’s first shutout since September 28 that pleased Klopp the most. “I forgot actually how it feels, to be honest. It’s great, we should have that more often,” Klopp said.

“For the boys, that was the most used word in the dressing room when I came in, ‘clean sheet, clean sheet, clean sheet’. Obviously everybody was desperate for that and now we have it, so let’s have it more often.”



MANCHESTER: Manchester United’s Norwegian manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer gives a thumbs up on the touchline during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Manchester United at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, on December 7, 2019. — AFP

LEICESTER HAPPY TO STAY IN THE SHADOWS

With Jamie Vardy on the kind of hot streak he last managed when Leicester won their fairytale title in 2016, Brendan Rodgers’ side have become the last hope of a competitive race to be crowned kings of English football.

Liverpool have left Manchester City trailing in their wake, but Leicester remain in the hunt after Vardy’s double inspired a 4-1 rout of Aston Villa. Vardy, the Premier League’s leading scorer with 16 goals this term, has netted in eight successive games, recalling his 11-match

scoring streak from 2015-16. The Foxes have reeled off a club record eight consecutive top-flight victories, but Rodgers has no intention of talking up his team’s title chances.

“I don’t think anyone expects us to be near the top. We respect that, we get on with our work and keep developing as a team,” Rodgers said. “It’s just natural, Man City and Liverpool are both incredible teams. We know we are looking to improve and close the gap. We have finished ninth in the last two seasons but today we looked like a top team.” — AFP

Euro Roundup

AC Milan get back on track

MILAN: Daniele Ragatzu struck late as Cagliari snatched a 2-2 draw at Sassuolo to reclaim fourth spot in Serie A on Sunday, as AC Milan beat Bologna 3-2 to return to the top half of the table. Fiorentina fell to their fourth consecutive defeat, 2-1 at Torino, while Cagliari left it late thanks to Ragatzu’s 90th-minute equaliser having grabbed victory against Sampdoria on Monday five minutes into added time. The Sardinian side move fourth, four points behind third-placed Lazio, and level on 29 points with fifth-placed Roma. Inter Milan remain top after their goalless draw against Roma on Friday with champions Juventus two points behind after falling to their first defeat of the season 3-1 at Lazio on Saturday. — AFP

Marseille keep pace with PSG

PARIS: Marseille kept pace with Ligue 1 leaders Paris Saint-Germain on Sunday after coming from behind to beat Bordeaux 3-1 and rack up a sixth straight win that keeps them five points behind the champions. Jordan Amavi, Morgan Sanson and Nemanja Radonjic hit the decisive goals in front of a raucous crowd of around 52,000 as Andre Villas-Boas’ side maintained a hot streak that has seen them rise to second in the French top flight. While a real challenge to PSG’s domestic supremacy will be difficult, a return to the Champions League is looking more likely after another exciting performance led by Dimitri Payet. — AFP

Getafe close gap with Sociedad

MADRID: Real Sociedad clung on to fourth place in La Liga but saw their two-point advantage over nearest challengers Getafe wiped out after being held to a goalless draw away to Real Valladolid on Sunday. Getafe earned a 1-0 win away to Eibar earlier on Sunday thanks to a second-half strike from Angel Rodriguez, taking them fifth in the standings on 27 points, level with fourth-placed Sociedad after 16 games. Athletic Bilbao are sixth on 26 points after losing 3-2 at Real Betis, while Atletico Madrid slipped to seventh on 26, having drawn 0-0 at Villarreal on Friday. — Reuters

Ten-man Celtic down Rangers

GLASGOW: Steven Gerrard lamented a huge missed chance to land his first silverware as Rangers manager as 10-man Celtic claimed a 10th straight Scottish domestic trophy with a 1-0 win over their fierce rivals in Sunday’s League Cup final. Christopher Jullien scored the only goal on the hour mark, but Neil Lennon’s men had goalkeeper Fraser Forster to thank for a string of saves, including from Alfredo Morelos’ second-half penalty after Jeremie Frimpong was sent off for bringing down the Colombian striker. Rangers enjoyed by far the better of the play and the chances even when Celtic had their full complement but could not find a way past the inspired Forster and remain without a major trophy since 2011. — AFP

Sports

Davis scores 50 to propel Lakers over Timberwolves

Doncic passes Jordan with most games of at least 20 points, five rebounds, five assists

LOS ANGELES: Anthony Davis scored 50 points to power the Los Angeles Lakers to a 142-125 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Sunday that gave the Western Conference leaders the best record in the NBA.

Davis unleashed his aggression to notch the fourth 50-point game of his career and his first with the Lakers. He connecting on 20 of 29 shots from the field — with 16 baskets in the paint and not a single three-pointer. “One for the ages,” Lakers coach Frank Vogel said.

“The first thing that stands out to me was he had four steals, a block and great defense for all 39 minutes he was out there,” Vogel said. “To be able to perform on that end of the floor and anchor us and still go for 50 in what I feel is an old-school, smash-mouth way of getting 50. No threes, right? Twenty of 29, living at the free throw line, post-ups, offensive rebounds, crashes, all those types of things ... just an old-school performance.”

Davis, a perfect 10 of 10 from the free-throw line, also pulled down seven rebounds and handed out six assists. “I just came out aggressive, playing hard,”

said Davis, who laid in a floater with 4:39 left to play to reach 50 points for the night. “My teammates did a good job of finding me.”

LeBron James added 32 points with 13 assists despite finding himself in foul trouble with four in the first half. Alex Caruso chipped in 16 points as the Lakers improved to 21-3.

Eight Minnesota players scored in double figures. Karl-Anthony Towns and Andrew Wiggins scored 19 apiece and the Timberwolves led by five late in the second quarter. Ultimately, however, they had no answer for Davis.

HEAT FIND A HERRO

In Miami, rookie Tyler Herro scored 27 points and made a go-ahead three-pointer with 38.2 seconds left in overtime to lift the Heat to a 110-105 victory over the Chicago Bulls. Herro's heroics included a three-pointer with 7.1 seconds left in regulation, which ended with the score tied at 97-97.

He made three more from beyond the arc in the extra session — including one to tie the game and one to give the Heat the lead for good as Miami



LOS ANGELES: LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers high fives teammate, Anthony Davis #3 during the game against the Minnesota Timberwolves on December 8, 2019 at STAPLES Center in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

NBA results/standings									
LA Lakers 142, Minnesota 125; Miami 110, Chicago 105 (OT); Philadelphia 110, Toronto 104; Washington 119, LA Clippers 135; Portland 96, Oklahoma City 108; Dallas 106, Sacramento 110; Charlotte 107, Atlanta 122; Brooklyn 105, Denver 102.									
Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
	W	L	PCT	GB		W	L	PCT	GB
Milwaukee	20	3	0.870	—	LA Lakers	21	3	0.875	—
Boston	16	5	0.762	3	LA Clippers	17	7	0.708	4
Miami	17	6	0.739	3	Dallas	16	7	0.696	4.5
Philadelphia	17	7	0.708	3.5	Houston	15	7	0.682	5
Toronto	15	7	0.682	4.5	Denver	14	7	0.667	5.5
Indiana	15	8	0.652	5	Utah	13	10	0.565	7.5
Brooklyn	13	10	0.565	7	Oklahoma City	10	12	0.455	10
Orlando	11	11	0.500	8.5	Phoenix	10	12	0.455	10
Detroit	9	14	0.391	11	Minnesota	10	12	0.455	10
Charlotte	9	16	0.360	12	Sacramento	9	13	0.409	11
Chicago	8	16	0.333	12.5	San Antonio	9	14	0.391	11.5
Washington	7	15	0.318	12.5	Portland	9	15	0.375	12
Atlanta	6	17	0.261	14	Memphis	6	16	0.273	14
Cleveland	5	17	0.227	14.5	New Orleans	6	17	0.261	14.5
New York	4	19	0.174	16	Golden State	5	19	0.208	16

African players in Europe: Salah, Keita drive Liverpool towards title

PARIS: Liverpool’s confident march towards a first English title since 1990 continued with Mo Salah and Naby Keita both on target in the 3-0 win at Bournemouth.

Algerian defender Ramy Bensebaini, meanwhile, took the plaudits during Borussia Moenchengladbach’s win over Bayern Munich which kept them top of the Bundesliga.

And there were other eye-catching contributions from some of the many Africans playing in Europe’s top leagues over the weekend.

England Mohamed Salah (Liverpool)

The Egypt forward was in typically deadly form as Liverpool consolidated their eight-point lead at the top of the Premier League with a 3-0 win at Bournemouth on Saturday. With Jurgen Klopp’s side already leading by two goals, Salah — who had provided an assist for Naby Keita earlier in the match — wrapped up the points in the 54th minute when he ran onto Keita’s pass and slotted home. It was Salah’s 63rd goal in his 100th Premier League appearance and only Alan Shearer (79), Ruud van Nistelrooy (68) and Sergio Aguero (64) scored more in their first 100 games in the competition. Salah has now scored more Premier League goals against Bournemouth (seven) than any other opponent.

Naby Keita (Liverpool)

The Guinea midfielder also impressed to help title-chasing Liverpool cruise to victory over Bournemouth. After Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain put Liverpool ahead, it was Keita who made it 2-0 in the 44th minute as he slotted home after Salah set him up with a clever backheel. Keita turned provider for Salah after half-time as Liverpool extended their club record unbeaten run to 33 league games. They have won 15 of 16 Premier League matches this season.

Kelechi Iheanacho (Leicester)

The Nigeria forward maintained his recent resurgence with an influential display in Leicester’s record-breaking 4-1 win against Aston Villa on Sunday. Iheanacho scored a last-minute winner against Everton last weekend in his first league appearance of the season and he was back in goal-scoring form at Villa Park. Having already set up Jamie Vardy’s opening goal, Iheanacho made a well-timed run to meet James Maddison’s cross and finish from close range. That doubled Leicester’s lead and made it four goals in four appearances in all competitions for Iheanacho this term.

Germany

Ramy Bensebaini (Borussia Moenchengladbach)

The Algerian defender, who joined Gladbach from Rennes in August, scored both goals in a 2-1 win over Bayern Munich which ensured Borussia remained top of the table. After converting a corner with a perfectly placed header in the 60th minute to make the score 1-1, Bensebaini converted a penalty deep into second-half



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool’s Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah attends a training session at Melwood in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. — AFP

injury time to give Gladbach the three points. Bensebaini was cool and calm from the spot — perhaps because he had forgotten that during the week he was nominated as the side’s principal penalty taker and needed to be reminded by a teammate.

Achraf Hakimi (Borussia Dortmund)

Hakimi was at his very best in Dortmund’s 5-0 destruction of Fortuna Duesseldorf, providing an assist for one of Jadon Sancho’s two goals and proving a constant danger on the edge of the box. Hakimi’s pace and vision are among the best in the Bundesliga and Dortmund will sorely miss him should he return to Real Madrid at season’s end as expected.

Strelbi Mamba (Paderborn)

Mamba’s superb assist set Sven Michel’s 90th-minute winner away at Werder Bremen, with the German-born, Congo-eligible forward showing deft footwork to put the goal on a platter. It’s been an incredible few weeks for the Paderborn forward, who has struck a rich vein of form in helping his side accrue valuable points in the battle to avoid relegation.

France

Victor Osimhen (Lille)

Victor Osimhen’s reputation as a goalscorer continues to rise after the 20-year-old Nigerian scored the only goal in Lille’s 1-0 victory over Brest on Friday. It was Osimhen’s ninth of the season, all of them coming at home. After having one acrobatic effort well saved in the 12th minute by Brest keeper Gautier Larssonneur, Osimhen broke the deadlock four minutes later, latching on to Jonathan Ikone’s pass. It was a third successive win for Lille who are now up to third in Ligue 1 and in good form heading into their Champions League tie against Chelsea on Tuesday. — AFP

‘Explosive’ Martinez fuels Inter’s ambitions at home and abroad

MILAN: Lautaro Martinez has had an explosive start to the season, powering Inter Milan’s league title ambitions and European hopes under new coach Antonio Conte. The 22-year-old — known as ‘El Toro’ (The Bull) — joined the 18-time Serie A champions last season from Racing Club, scoring nine goals as Inter finished fourth in Serie A under former coach Luciano Spalletti.

The Argentina international has flourished this campaign under former Italy and Juventus manager Conte, with 13 goals in 20 appearances that have made him a fan favourite after fellow Argentine Mauro Icardi’s loan move to Paris Saint-Germain.

Inter are two points ahead of fierce rivals Juventus as they look to prevent the Turin giants from winning a ninth consecutive title. “The Nerazzurri (Inter) striker is having an incredible season, he is a great player,” said Juve coach Maurizio Sarri.

Inter host already-qualified Barcelona in the San Siro today knowing a win will seal their ticket to the last 16 of the Champions League. It was a brace from Martinez and a Romelu Lukaku goal that kept Inter in the Group F chase with a 3-1 win at Slavia Prague last time out.

Barca have shown an interest in signing the in-form Inter striker, who along with former Manchester United forward Lukaku have scored 24 of the team’s 40 goals this season. Six-time Ballon d’Or winner Lionel Messi has already played with the striker, whose style of play resembles Messi’s Barca teammate Luis Suarez, in the Copa America

Holmes chipped in 12.

CLIPPERS BOUNCE BACK

The Los Angeles Clippers bounced back from an embarrassing 28-point loss to the Milwaukee Bucks on Friday with a 135-119 victory over the Wizards in Washington. Kawhi Leonard scored 34 points and pulled down 11 rebounds for the Clippers as they improved to 1-1 in their six-game road trip.

“We just wanted to come in and execute,” Leonard said. “Last game, we played very sluggish on the offensive end. “It’s really not about missing shots or making shots, it’s about getting into our offense and executing and making the right play.” Paul George added 27 points as five Clippers players scored in double figures. Montrezl Harrell added nine of his 20 in the fourth quarter to help Los Angeles put away the determined Wizards. — AFP

with Argentina.

Martinez has scored nine goals for Argentina in 13 appearances, including a hat-trick against Mexico in September. “We were not surprised by his explosion,” said Inter vice-president Javier Zanetti. “When we chose him we were convinced that he could demonstrate the value he is now showing.”

‘Big dream’

Martinez opted for Inter ahead of Atletico Madrid, Real Madrid and Valencia, with the club’s former Argentine stars Zanetti and Diego Milito acting as intermediaries. His contract is reported to be worth 1.5 million euros (\$1.65 million) a season until the end of 2023, with a 111 million-euro release clause, but Martinez insists: “Inter is my home.”

“My big dream is to win a championship with Inter,” continued the player from Bahia Blanca, whose father was also a professional footballer. Three-time European champions Inter have not won the league since 2010, the year they won a historic treble under Jose Mourinho.

Former Argentina and Inter Milan midfielder Juan Sebastian Veron believes Martinez chose the best place to learn his trade. “The Italian league, for a football player, is the university of football,” Veron, who won a Serie A title with Inter in 2006, told Gazzetta Dello Sport. “If Lautaro is so good right now, it’s largely down to Conte. The coach is always fundamental in the growth of a talent. Conte has given him confidence, made him feel important. You don’t express yourself so confidently in a stadium like the San Siro if you don’t have support behind you.”

But Conte, who coached Juventus to three Serie A titles and Chelsea to the Premier League trophy, does not want to single out any one player. “When we talk too much about a single player or two I never like it,” said the 50-year-old. “Of course we have Lautaro and young lads who are growing. But I would like to talk about the whole team because getting hung up on just one is a lack of respect for all the others.” — AFP



MILAN: Inter Milan’s Argentinian forward Lautaro Martinez chest controls the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Inter Milan vs AS Rome on December 6, 2019 at the San Siro stadium in Milan. —AFP

Sports

Patriots jolted by Chiefs, 49ers down Saints in thriller

Kansas City, New Orleans clinch divisional titles

NFL results/standings							
Carolina 20 Atlanta 40; Baltimore 24 Buffalo 17; Cincinnati 19 Cleveland 27; Washington 15 Green Bay 20; Detroit 7 Minnesota 20; San Francisco 48 New Orleans 46; Miami 21 NY Jets 22; Indianapolis 35 Tampa Bay 38; Denver 38 Houston 24; LA Chargers 45 Jacksonville 10; Tennessee 42 Oakland 21; Kansas City 23 New England 16; Pittsburgh 23 Arizona 17; Seattle 12 LA Rams 28.							
American Football Conference							
AFC East							
	W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA	
New England	10	3	0	.769	338	168	
Buffalo	9	4	0	.692	274	212	
NY Jets	5	8	0	.385	226	301	
Miami	3	10	0	.231	221	399	
AFC North							
x-Baltimore	11	2	0	.846	430	236	
Pittsburgh	8	5	0	.615	259	242	
Cleveland	6	7	0	.462	273	291	
Cincinnati	1	12	0	.077	198	325	
AFC South							
Houston	8	5	0	.615	317	309	
Tennessee	8	5	0	.615	318	255	
Indianapolis	6	7	0	.462	296	295	
Jacksonville	4	9	0	.308	230	337	
AFC West							
y-Kansas City	9	4	0	.692	371	281	
Oakland	6	7	0	.462	258	366	
Denver	5	8	0	.385	236	261	
LA Chargers	5	8	0	.385	289	251	
National Football Conference							
NFC East							
Dallas	6	7	0	.462	334	267	
Philadelphia	5	7	0	.417	274	284	
Washington	3	10	0	.231	188	310	
NY Giants	2	10	0	.167	230	339	
NFC North							
Green Bay	10	3	0	.769	309	270	
Minnesota	9	4	0	.692	339	249	
Chicago	7	6	0	.538	243	232	
Detroit	3	9	1	.269	287	335	
NFC South							
y-New Orleans	10	3	0	.769	344	296	
Tampa Bay	6	7	0	.462	378	381	
Carolina	5	8	0	.385	300	360	
Atlanta	4	9	0	.308	300	343	
NFC West							
San Francisco	11	2	0	.846	397	229	
Seattle	10	3	0	.769	341	321	
LA Rams	8	5	0	.615	311	262	
Arizona	3	9	1	.269	272	374	
y-clinched division title							
x-clinched playoff berth							

LOS ANGELES: Tom Brady and the New England Patriots slid to a second straight defeat on Sunday, falling 23-16 to the Kansas City Chiefs in a game marred by a series of officiating blunders. The reigning Super Bowl champions launched a spirited fight-back after trailing 23-7 in the third quarter but lost crucial momentum after multiple calls went against them at Foxborough.

The most glaring officiating error occurred early in the fourth quarter, when N'Keal Harry was wrongly adjudged to have been forced out of bounds as he dived into the corner for a touchdown. Replays clearly showed Harry was in-bounds and the Patriots should have been awarded a touchdown — but with coach Bill Belichick already out of challenges, the call was allowed to stand.

With the drive eventually ending in a Patriots field goal, the hosts turned around 23-16 instead of potentially cutting the Chiefs lead to 23-20 with most of the fourth quarter remaining. The officiating crew had also blown an earlier call, mistakenly whistling play dead after failing to spot a Travis Kelce fumble, denying the Patriots a potential defensive touchdown.

The Patriots — who had been booed off the field at halftime after trailing 20-7 — had one last attempt for a game-tying score, but Brady's pass to Julian Edelman in the endzone was batted away by Bashaud Breeland.

Patriots coach Belichick refused to be drawn on the officiating performance following the loss. Asked what officials had said after disallowing Harry's touchdown, Belichick replied: "You'll have to talk to them about that. I'm not going to speak for them."

"I was proud of the way our guys competed tonight," he added. "They battled for 60 minutes. Wasn't always perfect, and there's certainly things we could have done better. But we were competitive right the way down to the final play." Asked about the boos his team had been subjected to at half-time, Belichick added: "We're just trying to win games." The Patriots fell to 10-3 with the loss but lead the AFC East. The Chiefs meanwhile clinched the AFC West divisional title with the win, improving to 9-4.

Superdome thriller

Elsewhere Sunday, the New Orleans Saints also clinched their division despite losing a thriller against



the San Francisco 49ers, going down 48-46 in the Superdome. Niners quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo finished with 349 passing yards from 26 completions as San Francisco rallied superbly with a late drive after Drew Brees had helped the Saints take a 46-45 lead with less than a minute left.

Garoppolo showed great composure as the seconds ticked down, converting a do-or-die 4th & 2 with a short pass to find tight end George Kittle. Kittle then charged forward, shrugging off the attentions of two tacklers to advance 39 yards and take the 49ers within field goal range. It was left to veteran kicker Robbie Gould to deliver the decisive field goal, the 37-year-old nailing his kick from 30 yards to silence the Superdome in dramatic fashion.

The win sees the 49ers improve to 11-2 to regain first place in the NFC West division, although Seattle

would reclaim top spot with victory over the Los Angeles Rams later Sunday. The Saints meanwhile fell to 10-3 with the defeat, potentially complicating their route through the playoffs as they chase a berth in the Super Bowl in Miami in February.

In other games on Sunday, the Baltimore Ravens sealed their playoff berth with a 24-17 defeat of the Bills in Buffalo. Ravens quarterback Lamar Jackson threw three touchdowns but ended with only 145 yards and 16 completions on a day when neither offense managed to fire on all cylinders. The Ravens now lead the AFC North on 11-2.

At Lambeau Field, Aaron Rodgers threw for 195 yards and a touchdown as the Green Bay Packers defeated the Washington Redskins 20-15. The Packers improved to 10-3 with the win to tighten their grip on the NFC North. — AFP

NHL roundup: Eichel extends streak, Sabres down Oilers in OT

EDMONTON: Defenseman Colin Miller scored his first goal of the season 1:13 into overtime as the Buffalo Sabres defeated the host Edmonton Oilers 3-2 Sunday night. Kyle Okposo and Johan Larsson also scored, and goaltender Linus Ullmark made 26 saves for the Sabres, who blew a two-goal, first-period lead. Buffalo wrapped up a three-game Western Canada trip with a 1-1-1 record. Riley Sheahan and Joakim Nygard scored for Edmonton, which fell to 1-1-1 on its four-game homestand, and Mike Smith stopped 19 of 22 shots. Sabres forward Jack Eichel weaved his way into the offensive zone in overtime and fed Marcus Johansson near the right post. Johansson sent a cross-crease pass to Miller, who put the puck into a nearly empty net. Eichel extended his point streak to 13 games (10 goals, 13 assists), the longest current run in the NHL.

Rangers 5, Golden Knights 0

Alexandar Georgiev made 38 saves for his second shutout of the season, and Jacob Trouba and Artemi Panarin each had a goal and an assist as New York began its four-game western road trip with a victory at Las Vegas. Mika Zibanejad, Chris Kreider and Jesper Fast also scored goals, and Ryan Strome added two assists for the Rangers, who avenged a 4-1 loss to the Golden Knights on Monday at Madison Square Garden. New York finishes up the trip by playing the three California teams beginning Tuesday night in Los Angeles. It was the fourth career shutout for Georgiev. It also marked the first time since Feb. 18 at Colorado (3-0) that the Golden Knights were blanked.

Jets 3, Ducks 2 (OT)

Mark Scheifele scored his second goal of the game on a power play with 4:22 remaining, and Winnipeg held on to defeat visiting Anaheim. Adam Lowry also scored, Mathieu Perreault had two assists and Connor Hellebuyck made 31 saves for the Jets. Winnipeg went on the power play with 4:45 left after Ryan Getzlaf was called for tripping Andrew Copp in neutral ice. Scheifele hit the crossbar off the faceoff four seconds into the power play before scoring on a one-timer from the slot 19 seconds later.

Panthers 5, Sharks 1

Goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky won his second game in as many nights as Florida defeated San Jose at Sunrise, Fla. Bobrovsky made 30 saves, while the Panthers got goals from Keith Yandle, Aleksander Barkov, Mike Matheson, Brett Connolly (his team-high 14th of the season) and Frank Vatrano (empty-netter). Yandle and Connolly both scored on power plays, while Jonathan Huberdeau and Aaron Ekblad each added two assists. Kevin Labanc scored for the Sharks, ending San Jose's 0-for-23 power-play drought over the previous 10 games. Martin Jones made 28 saves for the Sharks, who have lost four straight games.

Coyotes 4, Blackhawks 3 (SO)

Carl Soderberg had the game-tying goal and an assist, and Arizona rallied for a win in the shootout round against host Chicago. Christian Fischer and Conor Garland also scored during regulation for the Coyotes, who won for the third time in four games. Garland provided the decisive goal in the shootout round, which also featured a goal by Nick Schmaltz. Jonathan Toews, Alex DeBrincat and Dominik Kubalik each scored for the Blackhawks. Patrick Kane tallied the lone shootout goal for Chicago, who earned a point in the standings despite the late letdown. — Reuters



CLEVELAND: Odell Beckham #13 of the Cleveland Browns looks for yards after a first half catch while playing the Cincinnati Bengals at FirstEnergy Stadium on December 08, 2019 in Cleveland, Ohio. — AFP

Browns' Mayfield on Beckham's injury: 'Wasn't handled right'

CLEVELAND: Cleveland Browns quarterback Baker Mayfield said Sunday that wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr.'s lingering hip/groin injury "wasn't handled right" after it first surfaced in training camp. "Wasn't handled the right way in our training room," Mayfield told reporters after the Browns' 27-19 victory over the Cincinnati Bengals. "So it is what it is. His 'not 100 percent' is still good enough for us." The subject came up during the postgame press conference in reference to an ESPN report Sunday morning that Beckham is considering sports hernia surgery after the season. Mayfield was asked if he could tell that the injury has bothered Beckham.

"Yeah, I'd say that wasn't handled right," Mayfield responded. "He's not able to run as well as he should be able to, as well as he knows, and that's frustrating for him. You can sense that's some of his frustration where that comes from." Asked what was not handled right, Mayfield replied, "I think it could've been addressed earlier on."

"... I think looking back on it, obviously hindsight's 20/20, but he probably would've missed first two (games), one or two — just based on the fact it was during training camp. It is what it is, we're here right now, it's too late to do that. He's fighting through pain, he's playing through pain, so that shows you what type of guy he is."

Mayfield later addressed his comments on Twitter, saying that his "intentions were not to throw our medical staff under the bus." "No I don't know all the facts about Odell's injury," Mayfield added. "It was emotionally answered because I can sense his frustration and I care about my team and putting us in the best position to win. "Those people within our building know my intentions and where I am coming from. I truly believe that and I apologize to those that don't deserve the backlash.... today was a good team win. On to the next one." Beckham missed the whole preseason with what was described at the time as a hip injury. He has been on the injury report all season, with a hip issue designated from Weeks 1-6 and then a groin issue listed in every week since the team's Week 7 bye. Beckham has mostly practiced in full despite the issue, but he's been limited the last three weeks. He has not missed a game this season, catching 59 passes for 844 yards and two touchdowns. — Reuters

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Head of Kuwait and Asian Swimming Federations Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader Al-Sabah said preparations for the 20th FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championship, to be held in Kuwait this Thursday at HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Olympic Swimming Pools Complex at Al-Naser Sports Club are ready. He said 20 national teams will participate under the supervision of the International Federation (FINA).

Sheikh Khalid spoke during a press conference attended by FINA President Dr Julio Maglione along with several federation officials, Public Authority for Sports (PAS) Deputy Director General for Competitive Sports Dr Saqer Al-Mulla, first Vice-president of FINA, Secretary of Kuwait Olympic Committee Hussein Al-Musallam along with a number of championship sponsors. He said Kuwait's organization of this major world event contributes to the development of water polo game in Kuwait with preparing facilities and having individuals gain important experience in organizing and managing such events.

Sheikh Khalid Al-Sabah appreciated the support of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, which enabled them to host the championship. He also thanked National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem for patronizing the event, also thanked FINA officials for their confidence in Kuwait's federation.

Meanwhile, President of FINA Uruguayan Dr Julio Maglione said the facility where the championship will take place is outstanding and matches those that host Olympic games and world championships. He also pointed out the efforts of the Kuwaiti organizing committee which met all FINA requirements.

He said this championship is the most important on FINA's agenda until the 2020 Tokyo Olympic games, and pointed to the role of his first Vice-President Hussein Al-Musallam in holding the event in Kuwait as part of FINA's effort to spread the game around the world.

In the meantime, Deputy Director General of PAS Dr Saqer Al-Mulla said the authority's support to host this major world event comes out of its vision to have Kuwait



KUWAIT: Officials speak in a press conference ahead of the 20th FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championship in Kuwait.

host major world events, as human resources and world-class facilities are available ensuring the success of any major sports event.

Mulla said PAS aims to build a generation of administrative and technical manpower that is able to organize major sports gatherings, and lauded the efforts of Kuwait Swimming Federations in preparing for the event. He said PAS cooperates with all federations and clubs to support the development of Kuwait sport to be able to achieve good results and have Kuwait in a prominent place on the world map.

First Vice-President of FINA Hussein Al-Musallam said the gain from countries hosting championships is in creating a youth generation that is able to organize and manage in the sports field.

He said FINA provided a large number of referees and

technicians to run the matches as there will be eight to ten matches a day. He also commended Kuwaiti volunteers who worked hard to get things ready for this major events.

Meanwhile, FINA Executive Director Cornel Marcolescu said the federation is satisfied with technical and organizational preparations of the championship and expected competition to be strong in the presence of the best world teams.

Zain's Chief of Public Relations and Communications Waleed Al-Khashti said Zain's sponsorship comes out of its belief in the vital role of the private sector in developing youth and sports sectors out of social responsibility. He said the company will facilitate the 5G technology for the workers at the championship. Host country Kuwait plays in the same group with the United States, Italy, Iran and Montenegro.

25 Guardiola admits Man City standards have slipped



26 Davis scores 50 to propel Lakers over Timberwolves



27 Patriots jolted by Chiefs, 49ers down Saints in thriller



Russia banned from Olympics over doping

Russia cannot compete at 2022 World Cup under own flag



SOCHI: This file photo taken on February 23, 2014, shows the Olympic flag and the Russian flag flying during the Closing Ceremony of the Sochi Winter Olympics at the Fisht Olympic Stadium in Sochi. — AFP

LAUSANNE/MOSCOW: Russia was banned from the world's top sporting events for four years yesterday, including the next summer and winter Olympics and the 2022 soccer World Cup, for tampering with doping tests. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) executive committee acted after concluding that Moscow had planted fake evidence and deleted files linked to positive doping tests in laboratory data that could have helped identify drug cheats.

The decision was a huge blow to the pride of a nation that has traditionally been a powerhouse in many sports but whose reputation has been tarnished by a series of doping scandals. "For too long, Russian doping has detracted from clean sport," WADA president Craig Reedie said. "The blatant breach by the Russian authorities of RUSADA's reinstatement conditions...demanded a robust response. That is exactly what has been delivered today," he said in a statement. The impact of the unanimous decision was felt immediately, with WADA confirming that the Russian national team could not take part in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar under the Russian flag and could only participate as neutrals. But WADA said the sanctions would not prevent the Russian city of St Petersburg hosting matches during next year's Euro 2020 soccer championship or the 2021 Champions League final because they were "not multi-sport major events or world championships but rather regional/continental single-sport events."

"If they qualify (for the World Cup), a team representing Russia cannot participate, but if there is a mechanism put in place, then they can apply to participate on a neutral basis, not as representatives of Russia," Jonathan Taylor, chair of WADA's compliance review committee, told a news conference. It was not clear how that might work in practice. FIFA, soccer's

world governing body, said it was in contact with WADA to clarify the extent of the decision.

The ban also means that Russian sportsmen and sportswomen will not be able to perform at the Olympics in Tokyo next year under their own flag and national anthem. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), which has come under attack for not taking a harder line on Russian doping, said it fully backed the ruling by the Swiss-based WADA.

"The representatives of the Olympic Movement today supported this unanimous decision in the WADA Executive Committee, which is in line with the statement made by the IOC Executive Board last week and endorsed by the Olympic Summit," the IOC said.

The 2020 Tokyo Olympic organizing committee said it would welcome all athletes as long as they were clean. It would also work with relevant organizations to fully implement anti-doping measures, Tokyo 2020 spokesman Masa Takaya said in a statement.

Russia has been embroiled in doping scandals since a 2015 report commissioned by WADA found evidence of mass doping in Russian athletics. Its woes have only grown since, with many of its athletes sidelined from the past two Olympics and the country stripped of its flag altogether at last year's Pyeongchang Winter Games as punishment for state-sponsored doping cover-ups at the 2014 Sochi Games.

Yesterday's sanctions, which also include a four-year ban on Russia hosting major sporting events, were recommended by WADA's compliance review committee in response to the doctored laboratory data provided by Moscow earlier this year.

One of the conditions for the reinstatement of Russian anti-doping agency RUSADA, which was suspended in 2015 in the wake of the athletics doping scandal but reinstated last year, had been that

Moscow provide an authentic copy of the laboratory data. The sanctions effectively strip the agency of its accreditation.

The punishment leaves the door open for clean Russian athletes to compete at big international events without their flag or anthem for the next four years, something they did at the 2018 Pyeongchang Olympics.

"This protects the rights of Russian athletes by allowing re-entry for those able to demonstrate they are not implicated in any way (in doping)," Reedie told a news conference. "The decision is designed to punish the guilty parties...it stands strong against those who cheated the system."

Some Russian officials have tried to cast WADA's behavior as part of what they say is a broader Western attempt to hold back the country. Igor Lebedev, a lawmaker and deputy speaker of Russia's lower house of parliament, said on Monday the move was a serious blow to Russian sport that required a tough response from Russian authorities, the RIA news agency reported. If RUSADA appeals WADA's punishment, the case will be referred to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. Some thought the sanctions did not go far enough.

Travis Tygart, head of the United States Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) and long a vocal critic of WADA's handling of the issue, blasted it for failing to impose a blanket ban. "To allow Russia to escape a complete ban is yet another devastating blow to clean athletes," said Tygart in a statement. "WADA promised the world back in 2018 that if Russia failed yet again to live up to its agreements, it would use the toughest sanction under the rules. Yet, here we go again; WADA says one thing and does something entirely different." — Reuters

Riquelme beats Maradona as Boca elect new president

BUENOS AIRES: Former Argentina playmaker Juan Roman Riquelme has won a three-way battle with bitter rival Diego Maradona and Gabriel Batistuta after his group won the elections at Boca Juniors, striking a big blow against his old foe Maradona.

The list headed by Jorge Ameal, who was club president between 2008 and 2011, won 52.8 percent of the vote from Boca's 84,000 members, bringing Riquelme into the 33-time Argentine champions' hierarchy. The 41-year-old stood alongside Ameal as prospective second vice-president and helped see off the faction supported by Maradona and powerful outgoing president of Argentina Mauricio Macri, which was led by Christian Gribaldo and only gathered 30.6 percent of the vote. The list supported by Batistuta came in a distant third with 16.1 percent. "It was a big party. Our fans voted for the love of the club colors, I'm satisfied," said Riquelme after his side's victory.

There has been bad blood between the pair since Riquelme snubbed Maradona, then Argentina's coach, by refusing to come out of retirement for the 2010 World Cup, making it clear the refusal was personal.

Maradona, who is a hero in Argentina but won little with Boca, warned fans against voting for Riquelme's faction, saying results would worsen on the pitch. There was also a concerted effort by the previous club administration, backed by Macri, to block out Riquelme's presence in the campaigning.

A photo showing him wearing the Boca number 10 was banned from the ballot paper, and the club warned fans ahead of election day that anyone wearing a Riquelme T-shirt would not be allowed to vote at the club's Bombonera stadium.

However Riquelme's support was key to Ameal's victory as a highly successful playmaker for the capital city club. He scored three times in the 5-0 aggregate win over Gremio to win their last Copa Libertadores in 2007, Riquelme's third for the club and Boca's sixth overall.

Boca reached the Libertadores final again last year only to lose to fierce rivals River Plate in a controversial final that saw the second leg moved to Madrid following fan trouble. River also eliminated Boca in this year's semi-finals.—AFP

Saudi Arabia to host major snooker event for first time

LONDON: Saudi Arabia has agreed a deal with World Snooker to host a ranking event for the first time after signing a 10-year deal with the sport's governing body. The Saudi Arabia Snooker Masters will be held in

Riyadh from October 4-10 with total prize money of £2.5 million (\$3.29 million) as part of the 2020-21 World Snooker Tour calendar.

"This is a giant leap forward for our sport. We have enjoyed tremendous global expansion over the past decade, particularly in Asia and Europe and we are thrilled to stage a new and momentous tournament in the Middle East," World Snooker chairman Barry Hearn said on Sunday.

The tournament will include all 128 Tour players and the world's top 32 will enter at the third-round stage, with four local players competing in the first round. Saudi Arabia's General Sports Authority chairman

Prince Abdulaziz Bin Turki Al-Faisal Al Saud said: "This partnership adds further to our hosting of a diverse range of international sports in Saudi Arabia. Having held motorsport and boxing events in recent months, and with tennis and equestrian events to follow, we are thrilled to add the Saudi Arabia Snooker Masters, which will see world-class snooker played in Saudi Arabia for the first time in 2020."

Saudi Arabia has sought to stage sporting and entertainment events in a bid to attract visitors and move away from its oil-dependent economy. Britain's Anthony Joshua won world boxing heavyweight titles against Andy Ruiz in Diriyah, Saudi Arabia, on Saturday. — AFP