

Friday Times

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RABIA ALTHANI 16, 1441 AH | FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019

4 Director wins prestigious Shakespeare award for Hamlet



37 Aramco shares hit 38.7 riyals on second trading day



45 Leonard rings victory bell in emotional return to Toronto



Kuwait's date palm added to UNESCO Intangible Heritage list

SEE PAGES 28, 29



Local

Long 2020 break



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Many people have started planning for the New Year break, which is only two weeks away. This year the excitement is due to the calendar that shows Wednesday, Jan 1, 2020 will be an official holiday on the occasion of the New Year. But that is not all - because Thursday, Jan 2, will be a day of rest since it falls between two holidays (Jan 1 and Friday, Jan 3). However, this requires a decision from the Cabinet. The fourth day, Saturday, Jan 4 is a day of rest for all workers in the government sector and some in the private sector.

Holiday is a word with a magic effect for those who wait for it from time to time to break the state of boredom and get rid of daily responsibilities and routines. It serves to recharge one's energy away from the stress and to enjoy and relax, which has a great impact on the psychological, mental and physical health of humans.

So, this is going to be a long break and I support



**The weather
is also beautiful
- cold with a
nice breeze in
most spots**

all those who will be traveling during this period, although this is the high season for travel agencies and usually tickets are pricier and airports crowded. But this is the season of joy and it's an exceptional time for friends and families to get together and share gifts, smiles and good times. The weather is also beautiful - cold with a nice breeze in most spots. It's snowing too, except we never tend to see this here.

Some employees cannot stop working for several days, such as energy workers and cleaners, as well as workers in shops and markets, as it is also a good season for sales and people will not stop buying and eating. In fact, it will increase sales, as the long leave whets the appetite.

I think there is a culture that we need to change, which is taking leave before official holidays. Some take the opportunity to stop working on the pretext that the system has stopped or take permission for routine leave before the holiday begins. The matter is simple, because it is possible for every supervisor to prevent approving regular leave before the start of official holidays except for necessity, because this interruption of several days will not affect the employee, but is likely to disrupt the interests of people.

For those who will not be traveling, I think the most important part of the break is evaluating the past and resetting priorities for the future. Also, the holiday is not an opportunity to only sleep and eat. Enjoy the coming New Year and try to forget the pains and losses of last year.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Mosques are an important part of Kuwait's urban landscape, with hundreds of beautiful masjids spread across the country. The Saad Akhu Nahedh Mosque is one of Kuwait's historical mosques built in 1916. It is located on the Gulf Road in Sharq near the Free Art Atelier and the Amiri Hospital. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

John's diaries on Kuwait: Part II



IN MY VIEW

By Talal Al-Ghannam

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Good morning dear brothers and sisters. In this article I would like to continue my previous article which was about John's diaries on his visit to Kuwait.

As I mentioned in my recent article [<https://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/johns-diaries-on-kuwait/>] I was speechless because I could not reply to John's queries about unfortunate practices taking place here.

While out driving around to show John the sights of our beautiful country, he noticed many incidents that sparked his interest. I told myself that I must defend my position and try to respond to his queries and misunderstandings about my country even if my replies are not convincing because I agree with him that there are irresponsible behaviors taking place in Kuwait and they must be corrected.

One day we were driving along the beach road towards the Kuwait Towers and my friend John noticed a lady driving her car with her infant in her lap. John said: Oh my God. What is this? How is she driving with her kid in her lap? Isn't this a crime?

I kept silent for a moment then replied to him by saying (with sarcasm, of course): Well, she loves her kid so much. That is why she is cuddling and embracing him, even while she's driving. She loves him too much to put him in a child

safety seat. Much better to keep him close to her.

I knew for sure that I was totally wrong but what to say? Nothing. John was unconvinced by my answer and only shook his head.

An hour later, John noticed a police car stopping a taxi which had been driving along, obeying all traffic laws. John asked: Why was the taxi driver pulled over?

I said: Well, police here can stop any taxi driver with no reason just to inquire about his health and whether he is enjoying the ride and to give him a flower.

John said wow and laughed.

Later in the day, John noticed that many motorcycle drivers were not wearing helmets and asked: Don't those drivers realize how dangerous it is to drive a motorbike with no helmets?

I replied that the weather here is hot and they want to enjoy the hot breeze and also to be known when flirting with girls on love street.

John then saw so many drivers not wearing seatbelts and wondered whether Kuwait has strict traffic rules about wearing seatbelts.

I replied by saying: Yes, we do have strict rules but many drivers believe the seatbelt wrinkles their uniforms, therefore, they refrain from wearing it.

John replied: What an argument!

Finally John noticed kids hanging halfway out of the vehicle's sunroof and from windows while their parents look on. I replied by saying: Those irresponsible parents want to teach their kids how to go with the wind (Gone with the wind).

This will wrap John's one-week-adventurous trip with John's diaries.

Till the next article insha'Allah.

Ready for the Beach ??



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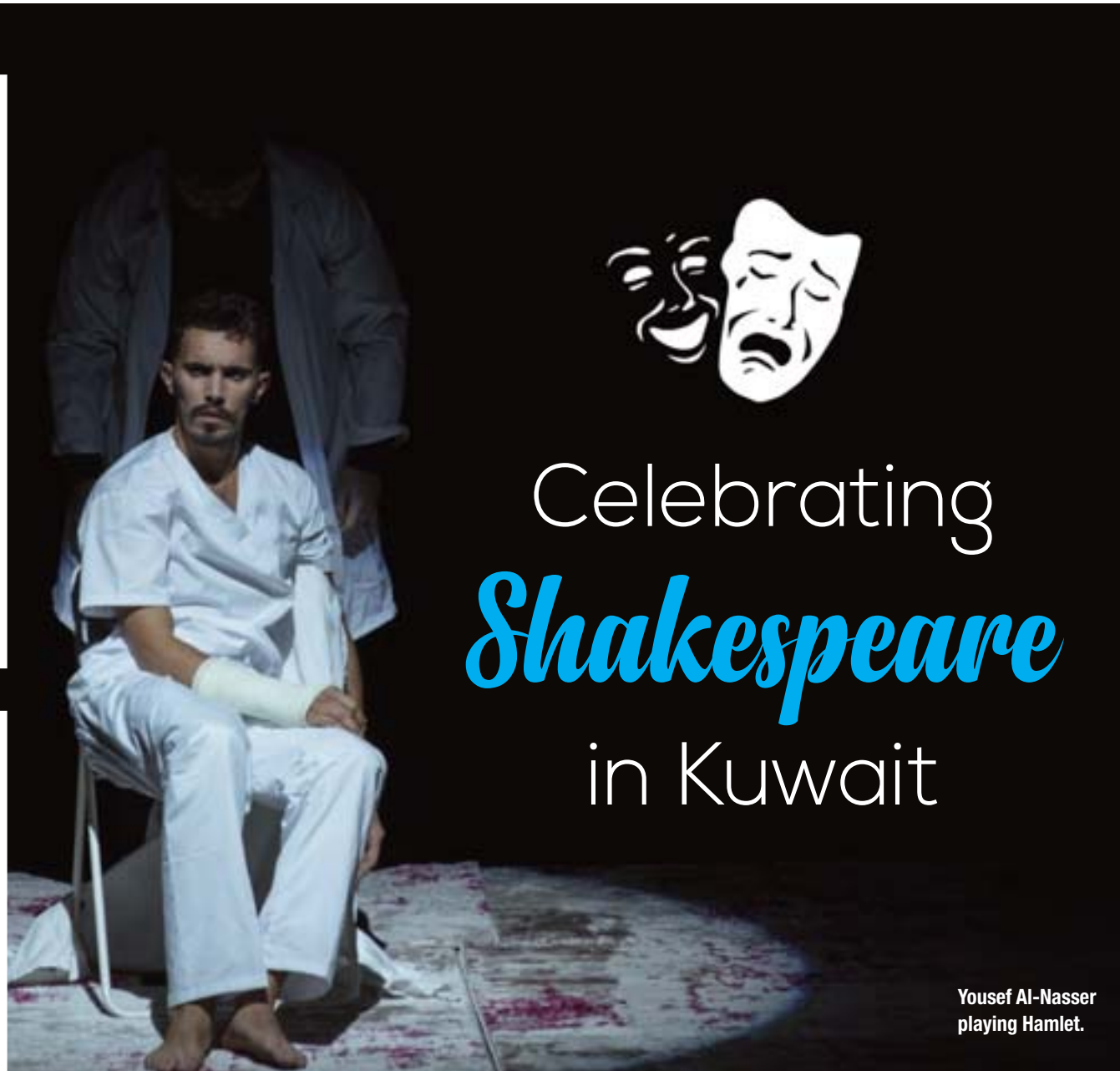
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Hamad with his first Dame Judi Dench Shakespeare Award



'Director wins prestigious Shakespeare award for Hamlet'

By Faten Omar

“To be or not to be,” - In Kuwait few are likely to know the origins of this famous quote. But one young Kuwaiti director has taken Hamlet to new heights, directing the play in its original language. Hamad Al-Jenaie is a Kuwaiti producer, actor, director and photographer. This past Wednesday, he received the first Dame Judi Dench Shakespeare Award. His theatrical journey started at a young age, when his parents took him to a performance of Macbeth in 1996-1997. From that moment, Jenaie fell in love with the theater world and Shakespeare in particular.

“I remember watching Macbeth and did not really understand it, but I was amazed by the production, story and performances,” he said.

The 31-year-old Al-Jenaie recently directed his first Shakespeare play in Kuwait, the well-received Hamlet, performed at the Yarmouk Cultural Center in late November.

The three night run attracted audiences from all ages, nationalities and interests enjoying Al-Jenaie’s vision of the troubled world of Elsinore. Jenaie directed Hamlet with local and expatriate actors, including a local Kuwaiti actor, Yousef Al-Nasser, as the lead.

From an early age, Jenaie read and researched The

Local

Bard, and when he was a teenager, received a copy of the complete works of Shakespeare. He spent his formative years in the United Kingdom, and was brought up on English literature and passionate performances in Kuwait.

In directing Hamlet, Jenaie experienced some unique challenges adapting the play to the Kuwait environment.

"We used a similar text something for the audience to interact with, using the idea of a mental asylum because I studied psychology. I was fascinated by the mindset of the characters in the play and especially the psychological disorder of Hamlet. So I



Kuwaiti director Hamad Al-Jenaie interviewed by the Kuwait Times. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

thought that might work, as anyone can understand a patient in a mental asylum and the action and characters could be in his mind," he said.

Jenaie told Kuwait Times that when the first trailer came out, the audience expected a regular play of Shakespeare but when they saw it as a play in a modern era with a developed theme they were so touched and liked the change.

"It is a 400-year-old text that survives till today. We were trying to keep the original language with a slight change in familiar

words to the audience to keep it fresh and alive."

The play enjoyed wide success, with full houses for every performance and student visits that included question and answer sessions.

Jenaie told Kuwait Times that his first public production was in Kuwait. "Meeting Alison Shan Price, MBE, Founder and CEO of One World Actors Centre, was a step forward. She is my mentor, introducing me to theater techniques and methods."

His first production that premiered in Kuwait was "The Dream Dealer: The Musical" by Marita Phillips and Harriet Petherick Bushman and directed by Price. "That was the first time Alison invited me to become a co-director on a production called Woman in Black (story by Susan Hills and adapted by Stephen Mallatrat)," he said.

"The challenges I faced were how to understand the production and the physique and technique of bringing a script to the stage. We wanted to create a multicultural theater and build something related to the story we were performing."

Jenaie aims to create a different style of theater in Kuwait and continue as director and producer to give the audience a better story while creating a multicultural environment. He advises those who want to get involved in this industry to learn, read, work as a team and be passionate about what you are doing.

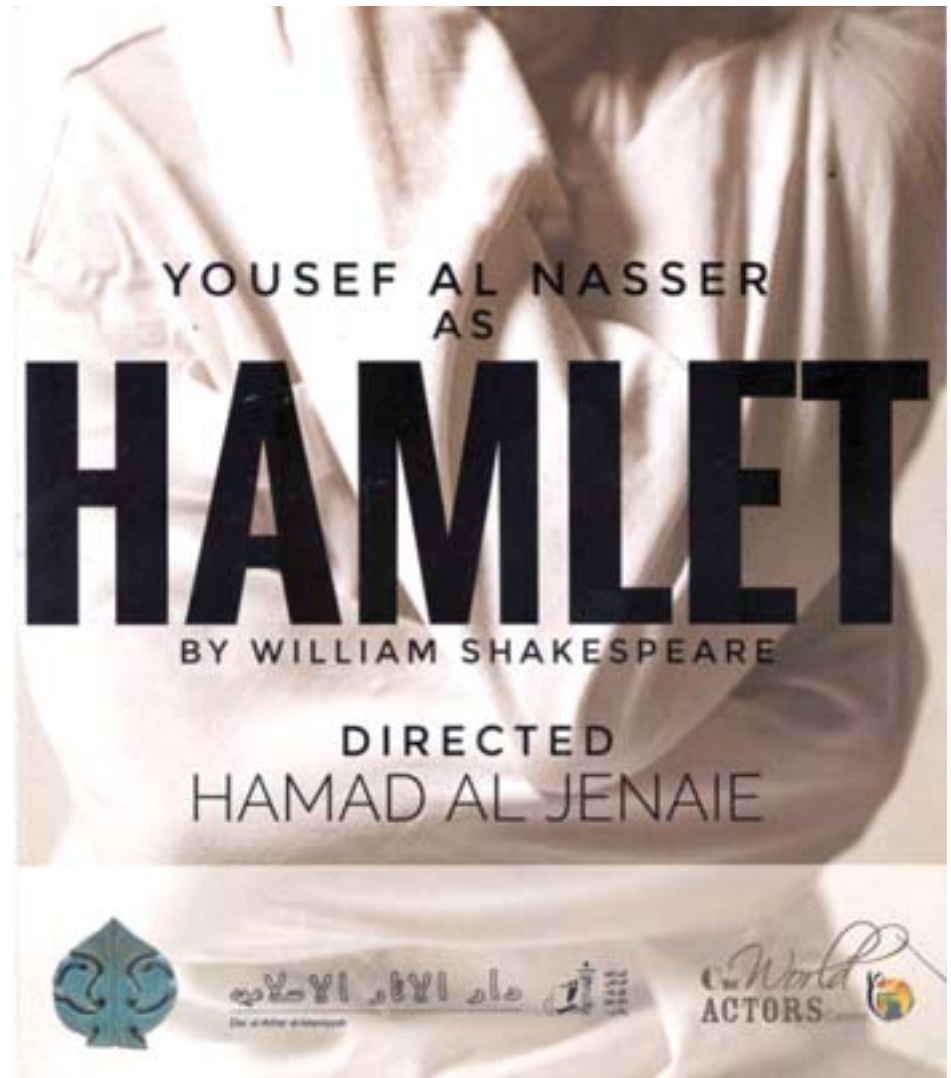
Jenaie received a distinction at gold medal level in musical theater and gold medal level acting in the LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art) examinations in Kuwait.

Hamad also received The Hamad Al Jenaie Award for Musical Theatre.

Also The Adam Darius Award in 2017 and Alison Shan Price MBE International Award in 2018.

In 2019, Hamad received the First Dame Judi Dench Shakespeare Award.

He has played major Shakespearean characters including Iago (Othello), Oberon (A Midsummer Night's Dream) and Cassius (Julius Caesar) in Kuwait.



In 2015, he won the part of King Creon when One World Actors Centre represented Kuwait at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2015 with the 4-star bilingual Antigone, an Arabian Tragedy, based on the play Antigone by Jean Anouilh and which Al Arabia TV filmed. The show was nominated for an Amnesty International Award.

After that, he returned to the Fringe in

2016 as The Father in One World Actors Centre's The Blue Box - Memories of Children of War that received 5-star ratings. It is based on stories by teenager Emma Abdullah.

Hamad is currently working on new projects in the future and wants to thank his family and friends for the amazing support and will continue to bring in new projects.



A scene from Hamlet.— Photo by Rizalde Cayanan



Jenaie with Alison Shan Price, MBE, Founder and CEO of One World Actors Centre.

Local

The man who brought Adeni music to Kuwait

'Mohammad Juma Khan mixed Indian and Yemeni heritage to create new musical style'



Mohammad Juma Khan, the first to bring Adeni music to the country.



Mohammad Juma Khan and his band. — Photos by KUNA

By Amna Al-Shemmeri

Kuwaitis had been emotionally connected with Adeni music for decades and that is evident in songs played at various folklore functions in the country. Perhaps the success of this style of music in Kuwait should be attributed to one Mohammad Juma Khan, the first to bring Adeni music to the country.

Adeni heritage expert Dr. Dhari Al-Rshaid indicated that Kuwaitis were first acquainted to Adeni music during their travels and visits to Yemen in the 1930s. Among Yemeni musical troupes entraining Kuwaiti sailors was Mohammad Juma Khan's group, which usually gathered for Sammrat (joyful gatherings), added the expert.

Khan, born to an Indian father and Yemeni mother, succeeded in seeping his dual heritage in his music, coming up with a new style of Adeni music, indicated Dr. Al-Rshaid who revealed that though Khan

resided in Hadhramaut, Kuwaitis regarded his music as being from Aden due to them frequently visiting the latter city.

Kuwaiti singers in the 1940s and 1950s—including Abdullah Al-Fdalah and Hamad Khalifa—began to emulate Adeni music in their musical outputs, further promoting the style.

In the 1960s, Mohammad Juma Khan and his group visited Kuwait and held several concerts and even signed with a production company to distribute his brand of Adeni music, said Dr. Al-Rshaid, adding that more Kuwaiti artists such as Rashid Al-Hemeli, Juma Al-Tararwa, and Hamad Senan began to

incorporate Adeni music in their albums and songs. Kuwaiti artists began to excel in Adeni music, becoming virtuosos in the oud, a lead instrument in this style.

Dr. Al-Rshaid said that Kuwaitis cover



Mohammad Juma Khan during his visit to Kuwait in 1960.

Khan's songs and also came up with their own tunes based on Adeni music in the 1980s and 1990s. After this, production of albums and singles began to decline gradually in line with the global music industry trends.

Despite the new status quo, Adeni music

still survived until this day through sheer popularity and numerous events held dedicated to this style of music, he affirmed, noting that millennials still sing and play the tunes of Adeni music thanks to Khan who initially planted the seed of this style. — KUNA

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Local

Peace, security top priority of UN General Assembly presidency

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The issue of peace and security is the top priority for the presidency of the UN General Assembly under the leadership of Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, current President of the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly. In a lecture entitled 'The Priorities of Presidency of UN General Assembly' conducted yesterday at the Saud Al-Sabah Kuwait Diplomatic Institute in Dasman, he said that the number one issue all over the world will always be about 'peace and security.' "Imagine a world without the United Nations: We may have common problems and different interests, but we are able to see and find connectedness, a very important one due to politics. But obviously as an organization of nations, the United Nations has a common interest to solve problems like climate change, migration, health pandemics, nuclear proliferation, etc. Ultimately we do need the United Nations to give nations a sense of order," he said.

The lecture was moderated by Ambassador Abdulazeez Al-Sharikh, the Director General of Saud Al-Sabah Kuwait Diplomatic Institute. Several dignitaries attended the event. "As your

current president of the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, my priority is dealing with the issue of peace and security; promoting international peace and security especially conflict prevention—and on this, I fully agree with Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that conflict prevention is key, rather than reacting to them at great cost to human life and resources," he said.

In addition, he also mentioned priorities on how to strengthen global action to tackle climate change, which is integral to the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals which include accentuating inclusion, human rights, and the empowerment of youth and women. He also aspired to eradicate poverty and hunger, and improve quality education. "When we say 'leave no one behind' within the context of the implementation of the [Sustainable Development] Goals, we must start by ensuring that the most vulnerable among us do not go hungry and have a fair chance to live meaningful, well-informed and dignified lives," he added.

Bande, who is from Nigeria, was elected President of the 74th session of the UN General Assembly on June 4, 2019, and succeeded



KUWAIT: Ambassador Tijjani Muhammad-Bande, current President of the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly, (left) attends a lecture at the Saud Al-Sabah Kuwait Diplomatic Institute yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Marria Fernanda Espinosa, whose term officially ended in September 2019. In his message after his election, he said: "We will commemorate the 75th anniversary of the creation of the United Nations next year. This presents a unique opportunity for us to reduce

the trust deficit between nations, as we all share the same aspirations and have no choice but to work together. If we will achieve the visions of our founding fathers, we must ensure that indifference and cynicism do not creep into our organization."

Diplomat hails UNESCO recognition of Kuwait's date palm heritage

PARIS: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to UNESCO Dr Adam Al-Mulla has welcomed UNESCO adding of Kuwait's date palm production and related cultural activities on its list of intangible heritage, describing it as a new achievement for Kuwait. Mulla noted that Kuwaiti cadres' participation in many educational and training workshops helped build capabilities of those who prepared the file presented to UNESCO. The Department of Antiquities and Museums of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature had participated in compiling the joint Arab file about date palm, knowledge, skills, traditions and practices, he said. Palm trees had left a cultural legacy in the Arab region that deserved recognition from international organizations, he argued.

Mulla noted that Kuwait is preparing new dossiers to be presented to UNESCO in 2020. Earlier, UNESCO announced adding Kuwait and several other Arab countries to its list of Intangible Heritage, specifically for date palm production and associated cultural activities. In a press statement, UNESCO pointed out that the Intergovernmental Committee meeting in Bogota, Colombia, selected nine cultural activities to be part of elements added to the "Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity." UNESCO said that in the 14 submitting States, which included the State of Kuwait, "the date palm has given rise over centuries to numerous associated crafts, professions and traditions."

Those maintaining the cultural aspects and viewed as "bearers and practitioners" include date palm farm owners, farmers who nurture the plant, craftspeople who produce traditional and related products, date traders, artists and performers of associated folklore like story-tellers and poems, UNESCO said. The UN body stressed that the date palm has, for centuries, "played a pivotal role in helping people face the challenges" of their environment. In addition, the date palm has "cultural relevance" and its proliferation has demonstrated communities' engagement in favor of its preservation. UNESCO said that the date palm, and associated knowledge, skills, traditions and practices merited a place on the heritage list. In addition to Kuwait, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen were added to the Date Palm listing. —KUNA

Amir congratulates KRCS chief on int'l post

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations to Chairman of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, over winning permanent membership in the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC), during the 33rd International Conference of the RCRC, held in Geneva, Switzerland. His Highness the Amir noted that this victory came to embody Dr Sayer's efforts as head of KRCS, which is always on the alert and at the forefront of initiating humanitarian relief work for the afflicted worldwide, without any discrimination. Both 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 expressed similar sentiments in separate cables.

Dr Sayer was elected on Wednesday as member of the RCRC for a four-year term. In a statement following the election, Sayer said the State of Kuwait maintains outstanding stances in support of humanitarian action on all levels worldwide. Kuwait is looking forward to boosting the activities of the RCRC Standing Commission in the next period, he affirmed. KRCS was elected as member of the RCRC in recognition of its role in promoting humanitarian action, he said, thanking all societies and governments which voted for Kuwait. He stressed the importance of

Kuwait's role in humanitarian and voluntary acts, which gained the world's confidence, noting that KRCS's membership at RCRC shows Kuwait's humanitarian diplomacy.

Dr Sayer pointed out that Kuwait has always been a leading country responding to humanitarian initiatives so as to mitigate sufferings of the victims of the conflicts and disputes. Kuwait has a wise foreign diplomacy at the international arenas, he said, adding that the country catches the world's attention in this field so many seeks its humanitarian support. He said that this election "has brought about big responsibilities to us."

Dr Sayer's election is a great achievement for the State of Kuwait, Kuwaiti Permanent Representative at the UN and International Organizations' headquarters in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim said. "This achievement is reflected of Kuwait's status of a global humanitarian center," he added. He further noted that it was also expressive of the guidelines set by international humanitarian leader His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Ambassador Ghunaim said that Dr Sayer's enrollment in the Standing Commission came after a strong Kuwaiti effort to gather votes from world nations. International partners were eager to include Kuwait in the commission due to its excellent reputation in the humanitarian field, he indicated. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah received yesterday the credentials of the new Japanese and Pakistani ambassadors to Kuwait Masato Takaoka and Syed Sajjad Haider respectively. — KUNA photos

Local

Amir condemns assault on National Assembly speaker

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday condemned the attempt to physically assault national assembly speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem when he was offering his condolences at the Sulaibkhat cemetery.

His Highness the Amir said in a cable to Ghanem that the attempted attack does not represent Islamic values and the manners and practices of the Kuwaiti people who are known for their unity at all times. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah also sent similar cables to Ghanem. In statements to reporters yesterday, Ghanem thanked the Amir for his generous gesture. Ghanem said in a statement on Twitter late Wednesday night that someone tried to assault him physically and was stopped by his brother Fahad. He said that he was offering his condolences to a number of Kuwaiti families for the death of their relatives at Sulaibkhat cemetery. He said he saw a man whom he knew very well and shook hands with him.

Ghanem said that he shook hands with an-

other man next to him and extended his hands for a third man with them. The third man refused to shake hands and then made some unacceptable remarks to Ghanem who told him it was a shame to make such remarks at the cemetery.

Ghanem then turned his back and was walking away when the man tried to hit him from behind but was stopped by Ghanem's brother Fahad who was with him, according to the statement. The speaker stressed that the man who tried to assault him only represents himself and does not represent his family. Ghanem also denied "baseless" rumors that filled social media.

Ghanem also told reporters in the assembly that the assembly could resume its regular sessions on December 24 if Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah forms the new cabinet next week.

A number of lawmakers criticized the delay in the formation of the new cabinet saying the process has taken longer than usual and has obstructed the functioning of the assembly. MP Bader Al-Mulla warned yesterday that the delay in the cabinet formation could strain the assembly relations with the government, adding that the prime minister should make a positive impression by accelerating the process.

PM thanks Kuwaitis for reporting corruption crimes

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday the Chairman of the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) Abdul-Rahman Namsh Al-Namash. During the meeting, His Highness expressed his thanks and appreciation to his fellow citizens for their response and keenness to activate Article 20 of the law establishing the authority, by reporting any crime or suspicion of corruption. He stressed the necessity of embodying the role of (NAZAHA) in activating the provisions of the articles related to protecting whistleblowers and encouraging them to exercise their responsible role in facing the scourge of corruption.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minis-

ter also received Chairman of the United Nations General Assembly at its current session Tijjani Muhammad-Bande and his accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his visit to the country. During the meeting, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled praised the role of the UN in maintaining international peace and security, stressing the keenness of Kuwait to cooperate for the success of the organization's efforts, its specialized programs and agencies. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Dr Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for the International Organizations Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, Nasser Al-Hain, and a number of senior officials. — KUNA

Motorist turns self in after fatal accident

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti citizen turned himself and his vehicle in to police yesterday, confessing that he was behind a traffic accident that took place a day earlier and claimed the lives of two female Kuwaiti teachers. Security sources said that the two teachers were heading to Solafa Bint Saad school where they work to prepare for grade five final exams when the accident happened on Fahaaheel expressway opposite Abdullah Port.

Civil IDs

Well-informed official sources strongly denied that the Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) issues identification documents to be used instead of civil IDs in travelling abroad. The sources elaborated that the documents in question only in-

clude the information of the civil ID and those of residency validity, but they do not substitute civil IDs on traveling. "They are not accredited by the borders directorate," the sources highlighted, explaining that such documents are only issued upon residents' demand to use them in facilitating certain procedures except travelling. "They are more like 'to Whom it May Concern' certificates," the sources underlined.

Closed stores

The Public Authority for Manpower's committee entrusted with inspecting the licenses of closed non-operative stores recently found 67 closed stores in Mangaf with 542 laborers registered on them. In this regard, the committee's chairman Dr Mubarak Al-Azmi said that relevant legal actions had been taken against the violating owners, adding that the committee is "intensively" inspecting stores in various areas on both morning and evening hours. On a different concern, the manpower authority stressed that it was currently working on finishing the paperwork needed to issue salary certificates through automated links with different banks and the subscribers in the 'As'hal' service. The authority also noted that automated linkage with co-ops was currently in progress.

Four passengers arrested with drugs

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Customs inspectors recently managed to foil three attempts to smuggle drugs into Kuwait through Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 4 (T4), said security sources. The first suspect, a GCC national who arrived from the US, was arrested with possession of marijuana kept in a glass container. The second suspect, an Arab man, arrived from an Asian country with a similar

container, while the third suspect, an Asian man, arrived from an Asian country other than his home country with the possession of amphetamines and marijuana hidden in paper packs. Meanwhile, custom inspectors at Terminal 5 (T5) also managed to arrest an Asian man who arrived from his home country with the possession of 250 grams of hashish. The drugs were confiscated and the four suspects were referred to relevant authorities pending further legal actions.



Condolences

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Reliability and Maintenance department

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Mother

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God grant comfort and strength to the
bereaved family members during this time

International

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019



Iraqi protesters form 'mini-state' in Tahrir Square

Delhi's air quality turns 'severe' as toxic haze lingers

Page 16

Page 11



LONDON: Nuns leave after voting at St John's parish hall polling station in London as Britain holds a general election yesterday. — AFP

UK votes in snap 'Brexit election'

Pre-Christmas election aimed at ending bitter divisions

LONDON: Britain went to the polls yesterday to decide the future of Brexit in a snap pre-Christmas election aimed at ending years of political deadlock and bitter divisions over the country's European Union membership. A decisive victory for Prime Minister Boris Johnson would most likely end Britain's 46-year involvement in the bloc next month, setting a course for a new future based on closer ties with the United States and even China. But a win for the opposition could still reverse the Brexit process and give Britain its most leftist government in decades led by veteran socialist Jeremy Corbyn, who is committed to re-nationalization and massive public sector spending.

A windmill, a few pubs and a chip shop have all been hastily turned into polling stations across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for what is widely seen as Britain's most important vote in a generation, and its third in less than five years. Johnson, who has said the result is on a "knife edge", was the first party leader to vote in person, arriving at a central London polling station with his Jack Russell dog, Dilyn.

Opinion polls, which were almost unanimously wrong about Britain's last general elec-

tion in 2017, show Johnson's ruling Conservative party in the lead, but possibly by a margin too small to form his own government. Corbyn, who has had to brush off claims of indecision about his neutral stance on Brexit stance and claims of anti-Semitism within his Labor party flashed a thumbs up sign before casting his own ballot in north London. Liberal Democrat leader Jo Swinson and Nicola Sturgeon of the Scottish National Party both voted soon afterwards in Glasgow.

Weather worries

All eyes initially were on the winter weather, with near-freezing temperatures, rain and even snow in some parts potentially affecting voter turnout. Up for grabs are all 650 seats in the British parliament, which has been deadlocked since the 2016 referendum on EU membership that saw a narrow majority vote to leave. The first indication of the overall result will come in an exit poll at 2200 GMT. The first actual result is due from around 2300 GMT and the remainder will trickle in overnight.

Johnson, who took over from Theresa May in July after she was unable to get parliament to approve her EU divorce deal, is hoping to secure

both a mandate and a majority. "Just imagine how wonderful it will be to settle down to a turkey dinner this Christmas with Brexit decided," he said in a final message to voters. But the EU itself has indicated the chances of securing a comprehensive trade deal before a December 2020 deadline is unrealistic. That would again raise the prospect of Britain facing a "no deal" scenario, plunging business and the British economy into fresh uncertainty.

Voter fatigue

A victory for Labor would make Corbyn the party's first prime minister since Gordon Brown in 2010 - and at 70, the oldest first-time premier since Viscount Palmerston in 1855. Corbyn is proposing to renegotiate softer exit terms with Brussels within three months and put them to a new referendum, alongside an option to remain in the 27-member bloc, after a three-month campaign. But he has refused to either publicly back or oppose Brexit, saying he was an "honest arbiter" who would carry out voters' wishes, no matter the outcome, in a bid to unify the endlessly bickering country. "Vote for hope. Vote for real change," he said. Johnson has hammered

home his message to "Get Brexit Done" against a backdrop of voter fatigue at the election and the tortuous Brexit process. "I wasn't happy. Brexit should not be dominating," said Gaurang Naik, 56, said after voting in London, a cold gust blowing in his face.

'More volatility'

Pollsters YouGov last month predicted that Johnson's Conservatives would have a comfortable 68-seat majority but on Tuesday indicated that projection been cut to 28. Brexit has turned traditional political allegiances on their head and shock results could be on the cards, with tactical voting expected along Leave/Remain, rather than party lines. Labor's so-called "Red Wall" in northern England — which mainly voted to leave the EU — is being watched closely for Conservative gains, as is north Wales, another traditional bastion of the left. "There's more volatility than there ever has been before," said Chris Curtis, political research manager at YouGov. "At this stage, the most likely outcome is a Conservative majority," he said. "However, a hung parliament is possible but also a much larger Conservative majority isn't something that we could rule out." — AFP

International

Algeria polling stations ransacked in unpopular presidential vote

ALGIERS: Algeria held a presidential election yesterday that has been fiercely opposed by a nine-month-old protest movement and was hit by unrest at several provincial polling stations.

The demonstrators who forced ageing president Abdelaziz Bouteflika to resign his two-decade tenure in April have pushed on with weekly rallies to demand far more sweeping reforms to the political system ahead of any vote.

Shortly after polls opened, attackers “ransacked the ballot boxes and destroyed part of the electoral lists” in the disaffected northern mountain region of Kabylie, home to much of the country’s Berber minority, a resident of the city of Bejaia told AFP.

Elsewhere in Kabylie, a large crowd surrounded a polling station in the city of Tizi Ouzou and protesters also took to the streets of Bouira, witnesses said. Kabylie has a long history of opposition to the central government but Thursday’s presidential vote was unpopular across much of the country.

In central Algiers, uniformed police and plain-clothes officers were out in force and made about 10 arrests in the morning to prevent a repeat of the previous day’s mass demonstration. Five candidates are in the running, all of them widely rejected as “children of the regime” of Bouteflika — among them former prime ministers Abdelmajid Tebboune and Ali Benflis and a former minister, Azzedine Mihoubi.

Turnout was expected to be extremely low after demonstrators shouting “no vote” again pressed their demand for a boycott, facing off with truncheon-wielding riot police in Algiers on the eve of the polls.

“How can we trust those who betrayed the

country and helped Bouteflika?” read one placard at the rally, which saw scores arrested and many wounded in clashes with security forces. Polls were scheduled to close at 1800 GMT but the result may not be announced for a day or longer, as was the case after previous elections already marked by high abstention rates.

Whoever wins will struggle to be accepted by the electorate in the north African country, where many citizens rail against a military-backed regime they see as inept, corrupt and unable to manage the flagging economy.

“None of the five candidates can hope to be considered legitimate” in the eyes of the protesters, said Anthony Skinner, Middle East and North Africa director at risk analysis company Verisk Maplecroft.

He predicted that “the vote will be boycotted on a large scale”. In an early indication of mass abstentions, polling stations at Algerian embassies abroad have stayed almost empty since they opened Saturday, with the few expatriates who did show up weathering insults by protesters.

The “Hirak” street movement kicked off when Bouteflika, 82, announced in February he would seek a fifth term in office. Since then protesters have stayed on the streets for more than 40 weeks, demanding the total dismantling of the system that has ruled Algeria since independence from France in 1962. The military high command, which long wielded power from the shadows, has been forced to take a more visible role and has pushed for the election as a way to withdraw behind the scenes again.

Demonstrators have vented their anger at army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah, who has emerged

the 120-member parliament, while Netanyahu’s Likud got 32. Unable to command a majority with their natural allies, the two men spent weeks in talks on a national unity government but failed to agree on who should lead it.

Referendum, again

Snap elections are deeply unpopular with the Israeli electorate, and Gantz and Netanyahu were quick to trade blame on Wednesday. Opinion polls found that around 40 percent of respondents blamed Netanyahu primarily for the deadlock, with only 5 percent naming Gantz as the main cause. The last two elections have been seen as referendums on the leadership of Netanyahu, Israel’s longest-serving leader but a deeply divisive figure.

The 70-year-old has been in power since 2009. Politics professor Gideon Rahat said the third round would again revolve around “for Netanyahu or against Netanyahu.” Israel’s attorney general last month charged Netanyahu with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in a series of corruption cases. He denies all wrongdoing, blaming a witchhunt. “Netanyahu might try to ask people to protect him vis-a-vis the vicious people that are after him,” Rahat said. “The other side will say he is corrupt and he shouldn’t be the next prime minister.” Netanyahu has proven to have a loyal support base and there have been few signs he will be abandoned by many of them. — Reuters



ALGIERS: Algeria’s interim president Abdelkader Bensalah casts his vote during the presidential election yesterday at a polling station in Algiers. Five candidates are running in Algeria’s presidential election to replace ousted Algerian president Abdelaziz Bouteflika. — AFP

as Algeria’s de facto strongman. A previous poll set for July was scrapped for lack of viable candidates and interim president Abdelkader Bensalah’s term technically ended five months ago.

Given the broad opposition, the five candidates have run low-key campaigns, usually under heavy police protection and often being drowned out by hecklers. Protests have been illegal in Algiers since 2001 and police have only tolerated weekly Hirak protests on Fridays and student marches on Tuesdays.

Wednesday marked the anniversary of the outbreak of major demonstrations against French colonial power in Algeria in 1960, and calls online urged protesters to converge on the Algiers square commemorating it.

Meriem, a 62-year-old Algiers resident, marched with her daughter and daughter-in-law brandishing red cards to oppose the election. “I’m marching to say no to the vote,” she said, “no to the Bouteflika system without Bouteflika.” — AFP

Election-weary Israel faces third election in a year

JERUSALEM: Israel’s political system was facing an unprecedented crisis yesterday, after the country’s politicians failed to form a government and dissolved for a new election — the third in a year. Less than three months after an inconclusive general election, with both Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and challenger Benny Gantz failing to form a governing coalition, the Israeli parliament dissolved itself in the early hours of Thursday, setting a new vote for March 2.

The September election followed a similarly deadlocked vote in April and opinion polls suggested next year’s vote could again be tight, with neither Netanyahu’s right-wing bloc nor Gantz’s centre-left alliance currently on course for a majority. Pro-Netanyahu newspaper Israel Hayom labeled the deadlock a “circus” on its front page on Thursday.

For Netanyahu, who was last month indicted on a series of corruption charges, the immediate challenge is to make sure he leads his Likud party into the election — with a leadership primary set for later this month. In September, Gantz’s Blue and White alliance won 33 seats in

Iraqi protesters form ‘mini-state’ in Tahrir Square

BAGHDAD: With border guards, clean-up crews and hospitals, Iraqi protesters have created a mini-state in Baghdad’s Tahrir Square, offering the kinds of services they say their government has failed to provide. “We’ve done more in two months than the state has done in 16 years,” said Haydar Chaker, a construction worker from Babylon province, south of the capital. Everyone has their role, from cooking bread to painting murals, with a division of labor and scheduled shifts. Chaker came to Baghdad with his friends after the annual Arbaeen pilgrimage to the Shiite holy city Karbala, his pilgrim’s tent and cooking equipment equally useful at a protest encampment.

Installed in the iconic square whose name means “liberation”, he provides three meals a day to hundreds of protesters, cooking with donated foods. In the morning he coordinates with the surrounding tents, dividing sacks of rice, sugar, flour and other ingredients then assigning meals, drinks and sandwiches for volunteers to prepare. The self-reliant en-

campment is the heart of a protest movement that seeks the radical overhaul of Iraq’s political system, and despite frequent power cuts, it never stops beating.

War, a habit

At the entrances to the square, dozens of guards like Abou al-Hassan man makeshift barricades, where men and women search incoming visitors. “We Iraqis rub shoulders with the military from a young age, so we pick up a thing or two,” said Hassan, dressed in camouflage fatigues. “We don’t need special training to detect saboteurs and keep them out... or to be able to defend our state,” he added, alertly scanning the perimeter.

But on Friday, their “state” came under attack, when gunmen Iraqi authorities have failed to identify stormed a parking building occupied by protesters. After the massacre that left 24 dead, protesters installed new checkpoints and closed an 18-storey building overlooking the square. Infiltrated by intelligence agents and at the mercy of gunmen able to cross police and military roadblocks at will, protesters insist their mini-state remains committed to non-violence. But in a country where the influence and arsenals of pro-Iran armed groups continue to increase, the protest enclave has forged an alliance with another of Iraq’s states within a state. — AFP

International

Sudan's deposed Bashir faces verdict in corruption case

KHARTOUM: A verdict in the corruption trial of Sudan's deposed president Omar al-Bashir is expected to be delivered tomorrow, months after his ouster in April in the face of unprecedented mass protests.

Bashir has been on trial in a Khartoum court since August on charges of illegally acquiring and using foreign funds. The ex-president, who ruled Sudan with an iron fist for 30 years, was toppled by the army on April 11 after months of demonstrations triggered by an acute economic crisis.

The verdict is the first faced by the veteran leader, and if found guilty, the offences could land him behind bars for more than a decade.

Bashir has appeared at several hearings in the trial, following the proceedings from inside a metal cage wearing the traditional Sudanese white jalabiya and turban.

At the start of the trial, judge Sadeq Abdelrahman said authorities had seized 6.9 million euros as well as \$351,770 and 5.7 million Sudanese pounds (\$128,000) from Bashir's home.

While the former president admitted to having received \$90 million from Saudi leaders, the trial concerns only \$25 million of these funds received shortly before his ouster from Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Bashir said the money seized from his home was the remainder of \$25 million.

The funds, he said, formed part of Sudan's strategic relations with Saudi Arabia and were "not used for private interests but as donations".

Bashir's lawyer Mohamed al-Hassan told reporters the ex-president's defence does not see the trial as a legal case, but as "a political case".

Sudan is one of the countries worst affected by corruption in the world, coming in at 172 out of 180 in watchdog group Transparency International's global ranking.

According to Adam Rashid, deputy secretary-general of the Darfur Bar Association, a group of Sudanese lawyers, the ex-president should be tried for his crimes, "small or large".

For him, this trial for corruption is "a very small case compared with the crimes committed by Bashir", he said, adding, "the victims of his crimes in Darfur, they don't care about this case".

The trial does not concern the weighty charges against Bashir levied by The Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) over the past decade.

Bashir is wanted by the ICC for his alleged role in the Darfur war that broke out in 2003 as ethnic minority rebels took up arms against Bashir's then Arab-dominated government, accusing it of marginalising the region economically and politically.

Khartoum applied what rights groups say was a scorched earth policy against ethnic groups suspected of supporting the rebels — raping, killing, looting and burning villages.

The ICC has accused Bashir of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity for his role in the conflict that left around 300,000 people dead and 2.5 million displaced, according to the United Nations.

After Bashir was toppled, ICC prosecutors asked that he stand trial for the killings in Darfur. But Khartoum has not yet authorised his extradition. The army generals who initially seized



KHARTOUM: File photo taken on April 1, 2019, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir addresses parliament in the capital Khartoum. A verdict in the corruption trial of Sudan's deposed president Omar al-Bashir is expected to be delivered tomorrow. — AFP

power after the president's fall refused to hand 75-year-old Bashir over to the ICC, based in The Hague.

Although Sudan has not ratified the Rome Statute, the founding document of the ICC, it has a legal obligation to arrest heads of state whose alleged crimes fall under the court's mandate.

The umbrella protest movement Forces of Freedom and Change, have already indicated

they have no objection to extradition. Meanwhile, on November 12, Sudanese authorities filed charges against Bashir and some of his aides for "plotting" the 1989 coup that brought him to power. In May, the attorney general said Bashir had been charged with the deaths of those killed during the anti-regime demonstrations that led to his ouster, without specifying when he would face trial. — AFP

Turkey builds Libya ties in reaction to regional rivals

ANKARA: Turkey's recent moves with Libya — threatening troop deployments and signing a contentious maritime deal — are aimed at shoring up a rare regional ally and preserving access to gas supplies, analysts say.

Ankara has been one of the staunchest supporters of the beleaguered Government of National Accord (GNA) in Tripoli, a relationship that has deepened in the face of an assault to seize the Libyan capital by military strongman Khalifa Haftar since April.

As in Syria, the Libyan conflict has become a battle for influence between regional players, with Turkey's bitterest rivals, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, backing Haftar's Libyan National Army. The issue returned to the spotlight after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan welcomed the head of the GNA, Prime Minister Fayez al-Sarraj, to Istanbul last month to sign military and maritime agreements.

"Turkey has found itself a natural ally of the GNA. They share the same opponents in different theatres," said Anas El Gomati, director of Tripoli-based think tank, Sadeq Institute, noting the "commercial and political" reasons behind Ankara's support.

"Sarraj has no real force of his own... He badly needs Turkish support to have any chance of counterbalancing Haftar," added Libya specialist Alison Pargeter, of Kings College London.

The maritime deal — which divides much of the Eastern Mediterranean between Turkey and Libya — is particularly important given the recent discovery of vast gas reserves that has triggered an exploration scramble between adjacent states and in-

ternational oil companies. Greece responded angrily to the Turkey-Libya deal, expelling the Libyan ambassador and urging the UN to condemn it. Turkey already faces European Union sanctions over ships searching for oil and gas off Cyprus, whose government in Nicosia is not recognised by Turkey. Analysts say the agreement was a response to Turkey being frozen out by others in the region.

Earlier this year, energy ministers from Cyprus, Greece, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Italy and the Palestinian territories agreed to create the "East Mediterranean Gas Forum" without Turkey. "Turkey fears that it is being boxed in from its southern flank, faced with plans for a future gas pipeline to link Cypriot gas fields with European markets," said Ege Seckin, an analyst focusing on Turkey at IHS Markit.

"The maritime boundaries drawn under the deal cover an area that reaches from southwest Turkey to northeast Libya, cutting across the planned route for this pipeline." Libya's GNA is the only international partner that supports Ankara's maritime borders.

"If Haftar won the civil war in Libya, Turkey would find itself with no other branch to hold on in the eastern Mediterranean," said Seckin. To forestall that outcome, Erdogan said this week that he was ready to send troops if they were requested by Sarraj's government in Tripoli. A UN report said last month several countries were already violating the arms embargo on Libya in place since the overthrow of its long-time dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011.

Jordan and the UAE regularly supply Haftar's forces, while Turkey supported the GNA, the report said. Turkish and Emirati drones were spotted in Libyan skies during clashes this summer.

Erdogan has said Turkey may hold patrols in the Mediterranean, which Seckin said could include waters around the Greek island of Crete. Another motivating factor, added Seckin, is that Turkey sees Haftar as "a Libyan copy" of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Erdogan strongly backed Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood government that was overthrown by Sisi in 2013, and they have been bitter rivals since. — AFP

New rocket attack targets Iraq base housing US troops

BAGHDAD: Two rockets were fired at a military base near Baghdad airport housing US troops, the 10th such attack since late October, the Iraqi army said yesterday.

There were no casualties in the overnight attack, which follows one on the same base on Monday which wounded six members of Iraq's elite US-trained counterterrorism force, two of them critically, the army said.

Washington has expressed mounting concern about the flurry of attacks on US bases and diplomatic missions, several of which it has blamed on Shiite militia groups trained by its foe and rival for influence Tehran.

Security sources have linked at least one attack last week to Kataib Hezbollah, a powerful Shiite faction close to Tehran and blacklisted by Washington. Iran holds vast sway in Iraq, especially among the more hardline elements of the Hashed al-Shaabi, a paramilitary force largely made up of Shiite militias.

A US defence official told AFP the rocket attacks made the Hashed a bigger security threat to American troops in Iraq than the Islamic State group, the jihadist movement which the US has vowed to help Baghdad wipe out.

On Friday, the United States imposed sanctions on three senior Hashed figures. Tensions between Iran and the US have soared since Washington pulled out of a landmark nuclear agreement with Tehran last year and reimposed crippling sanctions. — AFP

International

Russia to expel two German diplomats in tit-for-tat move

MOSCOW: Russia said yesterday it was expelling two German diplomats, in a tit-for-tat move after Berlin ejected two Russians over the killing of a former Chechen commander in a Berlin park. Germany immediately protested the move, warning that Berlin could take “further action” in the escalating row.

“As a retaliatory measure, the Russian side has decided to declare two employees of the German embassy in Russia ‘persona non grata,’” the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement, giving them seven days to leave.

The ministry made the announcement after summoning German Ambassador Geza Andreas von Geyr and issuing a formal diplomatic protest over the “groundless” expulsion of Russia’s Berlin-based diplomats.

Germany expelled the Russians last week after prosecutors said Moscow could be behind the murder of Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, a 40-year-old Georgian national. Khangoshvili was shot twice in the head at close range in Kleiner Tiergarten park in August, allegedly by a Russian man who was arrested shortly afterwards.

The case has been compared with the poisoning of former Russian agent Sergei Skripal in Britain last year with a Soviet-era nerve agent, which plunged relations between London and Moscow into a deep freeze. German federal prosecutors have said they have evi-

dence to suggest that the killing was carried out on behalf of the state agencies of Russia or Chechnya. Germany’s foreign ministry said Russia’s decision to expel the diplomats was “unjustified”.

“A serious and immediate cooperation of the Russian authorities is urgently required,” a ministry spokeswoman said, warning that the German government could “take further action in this matter.”

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the German envoys’ expulsion was an “unavoidable” retaliatory measure and voiced hope that the move would not negatively affect ties.

Peskov said that Russia had earlier requested that Germany extradite Khangoshvili, claiming that European countries still harboured “a lot of people involved in terror acts” and killings in the volatile Caucasus.

Russian President Vladimir Putin, speaking in Paris on Monday, described Khangoshvili as a “fighter, very cruel and bloody” who has fought with separatists against Russian’s forces in the Caucasus and also been involved in bombing attacks on the Moscow metro.

He said Moscow was ready to help Germany in the investigation. The suspect in the killing was said to be riding a bicycle and was seen by witnesses afterwards throwing the bike and a stone-laden bag with a gun into a river. German police also recovered a wig he



MESEBERG: File photo taken on August 18, 2018, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian President Vladimir Putin chat as they pose for the media at Schloss Meseberg castle in Meseberg. Russia said yesterday it was expelling two German diplomats, in a tit-for-tat move after Berlin ejected two Russians over the killing of a former Chechen commander in a Berlin. — AFP

was alleged to have used. Chancellor Angela Merkel has said Germany had acted “because we have not seen Russia supporting us in clearing up this murder”.

German police named the alleged killer as

Vadim S. and the investigative website Bellingcat said the suspect was 54-year-old Vadim Krasikov, who grew up in Kazakhstan when it was part of the Soviet Union before moving to Siberia. — AFP

71 killed in Niger military camp: Defence ministry

NIAMEY: Hundreds of jihadists attacked a Niger military camp near the border with Mali with shelling and mortars, killing 71 soldiers, the defence ministry said Wednesday. Tuesday’s attack in Inates in the western Tillaberi region was the deadliest on Niger’s military since the country’s Islamist militant violence began in 2015.

“Sadly, we regret to announce the following toll: 71 military personnel killed, 12 injured. Others missing,” the defence ministry said in a statement aired on national television. The attack was carried out by “heavily armed terrorists estimated to number many hundreds”, the statement said, adding that “a substantial number of terrorists were neutralised”.

The fighting lasted three hours, combining artillery fire with “the use of kamikaze vehicles by the enemy”. An earlier toll from a security source put the number killed in the assault at more than 60. “The terrorists bombarded the camp with shelling and mortars,” that source said. “The explosions from ammunition and fuel were the cause of the heavy toll.” The source did not say which group was responsible for the deadly assault.

Niger forces are fighting against Boko Haram militants on the southeast border with Nigeria and jihadists allied with the Islamic State in the west near Mali and Libya. Niger President Issoufou Mahamadou cut short a visit to a peace and security conference in Egypt to return to Niamey, the presidency said on Twitter.

Army reinforcements were rushed to the scene and the situation on Wednesday was “under control” the defence ministry said, stressing that a search for the assailants was under way, though they had “fled beyond our borders”.

Tuesday’s attack prompted French President Emmanuel Macron to postpone a meeting scheduled for next week in the southwestern French town of Pau, where he and five presidents

from the Sahel were due to discuss security in the region. The meeting will now take place early next year. Niger is part of a five-nation anti-jihadist task force known as the G5, set up in 2014 with Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Chad. Three Niger soldiers and 14 militants were also killed on Monday in an attack on another army post in Agando in the western Tahoua region, the defence ministry said. Heavily armed “terrorists” in a dozen 4x4 vehicles led the attack early Monday morning on the military post in Tahoua, the ministry statement said.

Niger’s council of ministers has extended for another three months a state of emergency in place since 2017 in several departments to fight against jihadist attacks, handing additional powers to security forces. Thousands of civilians and soldiers have died in violence across the vast Sahel region, which began when armed Islamists revolted in northern Mali in 2012. — AFP

Toll rises to 16 from Ukraine college fire

KIEV: Firefighters have pulled two more bodies from a college building in Ukraine’s southern port of Odessa that burned in a spectacular fire last week, authorities said yesterday, bringing the number of dead to 16.

Prosecutors have arrested the director of the college on charges of professional negligence and placed her under house arrest. The bodies of the last two people missing following the fire were found late on Wednesday, the emergency services said in a statement.

Firefighters spent eight days combing through the debris of the six-storey building, which caught fire last Wednesday. Another 30 people were injured in the blaze, with eight still in hospital as of yesterday. The College of Economics, Law, and the Hotel and Restaurant Business is in central Odessa and has some 400 graduates per year. — AFP

London attack hero says was ready to die to save lives

LONDON: A reformed prisoner who fought London Bridge assailant Usman Khan with a fire extinguisher said yesterday he was ready to die because he believed the attacker wore a live suicide belt.

Khan killed two people and wounded three while on conditional release from prison in the November 29 knife attack. He was shot dead by police while wearing what proved to be a fake explosives vest on the iconic bridge in the heart of the UK capital. Khan had been serving a 16-year prison sentence for an Al-Qaeda-inspired plot to attack central London and was freed after being deemed to no longer be a risk to the public. He was prevented from causing more harm by Londoners who jumped on him before the police arrived, tackling him to the ground and hitting him with whatever was at hand.

John Crilly, 48, who served eight years in prison for murder in a botched burglary, was attending a class for reformed convicts at the time of the attack, which came in the heat of Britain’s general election campaign.

He told the BBC that he acted on “instinct” and “was screaming at (Khan) to blow it (the belt)... calling his bluff.” “I was prepared to probably lose my life,” he said. Khan had taken part in the same convict rehabilitation programme as Crilly during some of his time in jail.

Crilly said he first tried bring down Khan with a wooden lectern he grabbed from Fishmongers’ Hall, where the class was being held, before using the fire extinguisher. “The spray distracted him,” he told the BBC. — AFP

International

Trump impeachment debate opens with fiery partisan battle

WASHINGTON: Democrats warned that US President Donald Trump was on the verge of dictatorship while Republicans fiercely defended his record at the opening of a stormy, historic debate on impeachment charges Wednesday.

The parties held tightly to diametrically opposed views of Trump as they weighed articles of impeachment at the beginning of a two-day debate. Trump is alleged to have wielded the power of the presidency for personal and political gain by pressuring Ukraine to interfere in the 2020 US election.

There is little question about the outcome in the House Judiciary Committee: by the end of the week the majority-Democrat panel is expected to approve the charges and send them to the entire House of Representatives for passage next week.

But lawmakers in the televised hearing appeared focused on speaking to voters, whose sentiment will be crucial if, as expected, Trump goes on trial in the US Senate in January. In a grave voice, Democratic committee chairman Jerry Nadler opened the hearing. "Today we begin consideration of two articles of impeachment against President Donald J. Trump," he said.

"Taken together, the two articles charge President Trump with placing his private political interests above our national security, above our free and fair elections, and above our ability to hold public officials accountable," he said. "If the president can first abuse his power and then stonewall all congressional requests for information, Congress cannot fulfill its duty to act as a check and balance

against the Executive — and the president becomes a dictator."

Charges 'generic, vague'

Doug Collins, the senior Republican on the committee, argued that Democrats have been seeking to impeach Trump ever since he came into office in January 2017, and have no clear case beyond "abuse of power."

"It's just generic vague statements," Collins said. "You go home and pick something you don't like about the president, and there's your abuse of power. This is as much about political expediency as it is anything else, and that should never be an article of impeachment."

Trump faces becoming only the third president in US history to be impeached and placed on trial in the Senate. He is accused of pressuring Ukraine for help against his Democratic challenger Joe Biden ahead of next year's national elections, and holding up military aid to the country which it needed to face Russian aggression, unless it did his bidding.

Republicans stick behind Trump

With the committee's 40 members speaking one by one, alternating by party, Republicans were united in claiming there was no evidence to support the charges. Jim Jordan said Democrats were simply refighting their 2016 election loss and hated Trump. "This is about one basic fact: the Democrats have never accepted the will of the American people," he said. "They don't like the 63 million people who voted for this president."

But Democrats clung to statements of principles, warning not to let Trump get away



WASHINGTON: US Representative Jim Jordan (C) (R-OH) delivers opening remarks during the House Judiciary Committee's markup of House Resolution 755, Articles of Impeachment Against President Donald J. Trump on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on December 11, 2019. — AFP

with inviting foreign interference in a US election. "Will we hold the president accountable, or will we serve as his accomplices?" asked Hank Johnson.

Most indications are that the Republican majority in the Senate will ultimately protect Trump from conviction and removal. But impeachment could mar his record as president and affect his reelection chances in November 2020.

At a political rally in Hershey, Pennsylvania on Tuesday, he ridiculed the charges. "Everybody

said, 'This is impeachment light,'" Trump said, adding "there are no crimes" and Democrats are just trying to win the next election. Nadler's opening statement earlier in the evening said three questions should frame the members' debate: "First, does the evidence show clearly that the President committed these acts? Second, do they rise to the level of impeachable high crimes and misdemeanors? Third, what are the consequences for our national security, for the integrity of our elections, and for our country if we fail to act?" — AFP

US Senate panel backs Russia energy bills

WASHINGTON/VIENNA: Underscoring US lawmakers' continuing unhappiness with Russia, a Senate committee on Wednesday advanced legislation seeking to hamper Russian energy pipelines and boosting NATO but delayed voting on a measure nicknamed the "sanctions bill from hell" that would punish Moscow for meddling in the 2016 US election.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved four energy bills, including the "Energy Security Cooperation with Allied Partners in Europe Act of 2019," which opposes Russia's Nord Stream 2 pipeline, encourages NATO countries not to buy Russian gas and expedites US natural gas exports.

The bill also calls on President Donald Trump to impose sanctions under existing law for sales of equipment or investment used for the construction of Russian energy export pipelines. That vote, like the others, sent the act to the full Senate, but there has been no indication yet of when the chamber's Republican leaders would allow votes given the crowded schedule as the year nears its close.

The legislation must pass the full Senate and House of Representatives before they can be sent for Trump to sign into law or veto. Lawmakers, including some of Trump's fellow

Republicans, have been pushing the president to take a harder stance against Russia over election interference, aggression toward Ukraine and involvement in Syria's civil war.

The committee also approved an act directing the State Department to prioritize assistance in developing European energy infrastructure. And it passed legislation that would require State to determine whether Russia should be designated a state sponsor of terrorism, as well as a measure requiring congressional approval if the president seeks to withdraw from NATO.

"We are aware of the political debates as well as of the ongoing legal procedure in the US Congress," a spokesman for Nord Stream 2 said. "We cannot comment on any implications for our project."

Rainer Seele, CEO of Austrian energy company OMV, which is a financial partner with Russia's Gazprom and others in Nord Stream 2, has condemned the bill. "Sanctions against Nord Stream 2 are a hit to Europe and Germany, a close ally (of the United States). It's time for Berlin and Brussels to take a clear political stance and to retaliate," Seele said in a statement on Thursday.

Nord Stream 2, which will double the existing Nord Stream's capacity from its current 55 billion cubic metres of gas a year, is owned by Gazprom, which is taking on half of the planned costs of 9.5 billion euros. The rest is divided among five European energy companies - OMV, Germany's Uniper and Wintershall, Royal Dutch Shell and France's Engie. — Reuters

Murderer becomes 22nd person executed in US this year

WASHINGTON: A Texas man who killed a prison officer was executed late Wednesday, bringing to 22 the number of people put to death in the US this year. Travis Runnels, 46, was pronounced dead at 7:26 pm (0126 GMT), the Texas Department of Criminal Justice said, after a lethal injection at Huntsville prison north of Houston.

Runnels made no final statement, the department said. Just minutes earlier, the US Supreme Court had rejected a stay of execution request. Runnels had received a 70-year jail sentence in 1997 for armed robbery.

In 2003, he slashed the throat of a prison supervisor, Stanley Wiley. Two years later he pleaded guilty to the killing and was sentenced to death. His lawyers later sought to have the penalty reversed. They said mitigating factors about his childhood were not introduced in the trial, and that an expert witness, A P Merrill, gave false testimony. — AFP

International

Authorities stop short of dubbing US kosher deli attack anti-Semitic

JERSEY CITY: US authorities held back Wednesday from characterizing a firefight that left six people including two suspects dead in a New York suburb as motivated by anti-Semitism, as the local mayor confirmed the assailants targeted a kosher grocery store.

On Tuesday two shooters — one of them female — stormed the deli in Jersey City, across the river from lower Manhattan, killing two customers and a cashier before they died in a hail of police gunfire. The now-deceased suspects — identified as David Anderson, 47, and Francine Graham, 50, who reportedly lived together — had earlier shot dead a police officer at a cemetery near the market.

The state's attorney general, Gurbir Grewal, stopped short of calling the shooting anti-Semitic.

"We are working to learn more about the shooters' motivations, and whether anyone besides the two gunmen may have been involved," he said. Hours earlier Jersey City mayor Steven Fulop said that analysis of surveillance footage showed a targeted murder.

"After extensive review of our CCTV system it has now become clear from the cameras that these two individuals targeted the kosher grocery," Fulop tweeted. "I'm Jewish and proud to live in a community like #JerseyCity that has always welcomed everyone... Hate and anti-semitism have never had a place here in JC and will never have a place in our city."

Hundreds of police, including tactical officers armed with rifles and wearing olive-green fatigues and helmets, were deployed during the hours-long drama. State Governor

Phil Murphy said that there was "no ongoing security concern," but did say he had spoken with the Consul General of Israel in New York. "An attack on our Jewish community — or for that matter, on any community... is an attack against all nine million of us who are proud to call ourselves New Jerseyans," he told reporters.

'Still under shock'

Investigators discovered a live pipe bomb in the shooters' van, officials said Wednesday, along with "other items" they declined to discuss. According to The New York Times, citing a law enforcement official, investigators had also found a "manifesto-style note" that did not suggest a clear motive.

Two members of the area's Hasidic community were killed inside the market: the store owner's wife and a customer, according to Grewal. A store worker also died in the shootout. One other person in the store was wounded by a gunshot.

When the assailants entered the deli more than 50 children aged five to 12 were in an adjoining synagogue, said Yossi Steinmetz, who ran inside the place of worship when shots rang out. "I don't feel safe at the moment; I'm still under shock," he told AFP Wednesday.

Many families have moved to the area, mostly from Brooklyn where rents are higher, said Rabbi Moshe Schapiro of the Chabad Lubavitch in Hoboken, a municipality just north of Jersey City. "The people I talked to, they were not afraid," Schapiro said. "We don't take anything for granted — but they feel the law enforcement takes care."



JERSEY CITY, NJ: Members of the Jewish community gather around the JC Kosher Supermarket on December 11, 2019 in Jersey City, New Jersey. — AFP

'High alert' in NYC

Citing a "crisis of anti-Semitism gripping" the nation and the city, New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said the attack should be taken as "a warning sign."

"We have to understand, as I've heard from so many members of the Jewish community, that people are now living in constant fear," the mayor told journalists. "Members of the Jewish community have told me they no longer feel comfortable wearing anything that is a symbol of their faith for fear of an attack."

He directed officers to assume a "state of high alert," increasing police presence in Jewish areas. He also announced a new unit

focused on identifying racially and ethnically motivated extremism.

New York is home to the largest Jewish community outside of Israel. Attacks against Jewish targets have been on the rise across the United States, especially in the densely populated New York metropolitan area.

A report in April from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) stated that the number of anti-Semitic attacks in 2018 was close to the record of 2017, with 1,879 incidents. Last year a white supremacist walked into a Pittsburgh synagogue, and killed 11 people, the deadliest attack ever committed against the Jewish community in the United States. — AFP

Trump stirs controversy with new Judaism definition

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump celebrated the Jewish festival of Hanukkah on Wednesday with a controversial change to the definition of Judaism — a move that will allow clamping down on boycotts of Israel. "I will always stand with our treasured friend and ally the state of Israel," Trump told a gathering in the White House's ceremonial East Room.

Trump, who calls himself the most pro-Israeli US president in history, used the annual event to reinforce his determined effort to win over traditionally pro-Democratic American Jewish voters ahead of next year's presidential election. Trump signed an executive order, which bypasses Congress, that essentially redefines Judaism as both a nationality as well as a religion.

The seemingly academic change will have the important legal effect of allowing the government to clamp down on a boycott movement spreading on university campuses against Israel over its treatment of Palestinians. Trump said the order was to "combat anti-Semitism" and "applies to institutions that traffic in anti-Semitic hate."

Specifically the order is aimed at quashing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, which has growing support on campuses, by forcing universities to block the movement or face a cut in government funds. "Our message to universities," Trump said, is "if you want to accept the tremendous amount of federal dollars you get every year, you must reject anti-Semitism."

Activists say the BDS movement is a grassroots effort to punish Israel for its occupation of Palestinian lands. The Israeli government says it is based on anti-Semitism. Trump's executive order tweaks existing civil rights legislation so that the government can intervene in BDS cases, because Judaism will now be classified not only as a national entity.

"President Trump's order makes it clear that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 applies to anti-Semitic discrimination based on race, color, or national origin," the White House said in a statement. "This action further demonstrates the unwavering commitment of President Trump and his Administration to combating all forms of anti-Semitism." — AFP

Sandy Hook families to get day in court against gunmaker

NEWTOWN, Connecticut: Families of victims in the Sandy Hook school massacre that killed 20 children and six adults will get their day in court about nine years from the shooting. A trial date in September 2021 has been set for the lawsuit brought by them against Remington Arms Co over its marketing of the assault-style rifle used in the shooting.

"After nearly five years of legal maneuvering by Remington, we will finally discover what went on behind closed doors that led to the company's reckless marketing of the Bushmaster AR-15," Josh Koskoff, a lawyer for the victims, said in a statement.

The lawsuit was filed in 2014 by the family members of nine people slain and one survivor of the 2012 massacre. Superior Court Judge Barbara Bellis in Waterbury, Connecticut set the court date after about two hours of talks with lawyers for both sides. "The families' faith in the legal system has never wavered and they look forward to presenting their case to a Connecticut jury", Koskoff added.

Remington did not immediately respond to

a Reuters request for comment outside regular working hours. The plaintiffs have argued that the Bushmaster AR-15 gun — a semi-automatic civilian version of the US military's M-16 — had been illegally marketed by the company to civilians as a combat weapon for waging war and killing human beings.

The company has argued that it should be insulated from the lawsuit by a 2005 federal law known as the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which was aimed at blocking a wave of lawsuits damaging to the firearms industry. Connecticut's highest court, in a 4-3 ruling, said in March that families of the schoolchildren gunned down in the massacre can sue Remington.

The company appealed that ruling to the United States Supreme Court, which last month declined to shield the gun maker from the lawsuit. The Dec 14, 2012 rampage was carried out by 20-year-old Adam Lanza, who shot his way into the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut and fired on first-graders and adult staff before fatally shooting himself as police closed in. — Reuters

International

Protesters set fire to train stations in India over citizenship law

GUWAHATI: Protesters attacked train stations in India's northeast, authorities said yesterday, angry over a new federal law that would make it easier for non-Muslim minorities from some neighboring countries to seek Indian citizenship.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government has said the Citizenship Amendment Bill, approved by parliament on Wednesday, was meant to protect minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Protesters in the northeastern state of Assam, which shares a border with Bangladesh, say the measure will open the region to a flood of foreigners. Others said the bigger problem with the new law was that it undermined India's secular constitution by not offering protection to Muslims.

Police fired tear gas in Assam's main city of Guwahati to break up small groups of people who were demonstrating in the streets, defying a curfew imposed on Wednesday. "This is a spontaneous public outburst," said Nehal Jain, a masters student in communications in Guwahati. "First they tell us there are too many illegal immigrants and we need to get rid of them. Then they bring in this law that would allow citizenship to immigrants," she said.

A movement against illegal migrants has simmered in tea-growing Assam state for decades. The citizenship amendment law

grants Indian nationality to Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Parsis and Sikhs who fled Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan before 2015.

Protesters vandalised four railway stations in Assam and tried to set fire to them, a railway spokesman said. Train services were suspended, stranding scores of passengers. IndiGo said it had cancelled flights because of the unrest in Assam.

The turmoil in Assam comes days ahead of a summit Modi plans to host for Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe there as part of his campaign to move high-profile diplomatic events outside of Delhi to showcase India's diversity.

Modi urged calm and said the people of Assam had nothing to fear. "I want to assure them - no one can take away your rights, unique identity and beautiful culture. It will continue to flourish and grow," he tweeted. More troops have been deployed to Assam to restore peace and mobile internet was suspended in 10 districts, the government said.

The new law is also raising concerns that Modi's government is pushing a Hindu-first identity for India and fanning fears for the future of Muslims, the biggest minority group. The Indian Express said the law, which requires presidential assent, unfairly targets India's 170 million Muslims.

"It is a political signal of a terrible narrowing, a chilling exclusion, directed at In-



GUWAHATI: People walk past the wreckage of a vehicle which was set on fire by demonstrators during a protest against the government's Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) in Guwahati yesterday. —AFP

dia's own largest minority. India is to be redefined as the natural home of Hindus, it says to India's Muslims. And that they must, therefore, be content with a less natural citizenship."

The government has said the new law will be followed by a citizenship register

that means Muslims must prove they were original residents of India and not refugees from these three countries, potentially rendering some of them stateless. Members of other faiths listed in the law, by contrast, have a clear path to citizenship. —Reuters

Delhi's air quality turns 'severe' as toxic haze lingers

NEW DELHI: India's capital New Delhi was shrouded in a toxic haze for the second straight day yesterday, and visibility dropped due to cooler temperatures and lower wind speeds that let deadly pollutants hang in the air. The air quality index crossed 400 on a scale of 500, indicative of "severe" conditions that pose a risk for healthy people and can seriously impact those with existing diseases.

The index measures the concentration of deadly pollutant PM2.5 - tiny particles that can enter the bloodstream. Chronic exposure to such pollutants can contribute to the risk of developing diseases such as lung cancer, according to the World Health Organization.

Federal pollution control officials were tracking the air quality status, Prashant Gargava, member secretary at the Central Pollution Control Board, said. The board falls under the federal environment ministry.

Under an emergency action plan, author-

ities shut down brick kilns and halted all construction activity during the day. During the last two months, the capital's 20 million residents have breathed "moderate" to "satisfactory" air only for four days, according to a record of official data compiled by Reuters. The air quality index was "very poor" on most days this month.

Air quality levels have crossed 400 for a second time this month despite farm fires from Delhi's neighboring states - blamed by authorities as the primary cause for poor air quality in recent weeks - coming to an end with the onset of winter. "Now fire counts are almost stopped except in a few routine incidences and hence no contribution to Delhi's air quality is expected now onwards for the season," government-run monitor SAFAR said.

The relentless focus on stamping out farm fires every year tends to deflect scrutiny from authorities that are falling behind on cleaning up industry or improving public transport, critics say. Vehicular exhausts, along with emissions from industry, contribute more than 50 percent of Delhi's air pollution on most days through the year, according to official estimates. SAFAR forecast said that Delhi's air quality was likely to deteriorate next week due to foggy conditions. —Reuters

Bangladesh plastics factory blaze kills 13

DHAKA: At least 13 people were killed and nearly 20 people were critically injured when a fire swept through an illegal plastics factory outside the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, police said yesterday. Factory fires are common in Bangladesh, especially in the dry winter season, due to lax enforcement of safety codes.

Hopes in ashes for grieving Indian family after deadly factory fire

NEW DELHI: When Mohammed Faisal Khan perished in a fire that killed 43 workers sleeping in a small factory in New Delhi on Sunday his parents back in the impoverished eastern state of Bihar lost their eldest son and the family's sole breadwinner. A victim of the Indian capital's deadliest fire in two decades, Khan was one of eight migrant workers from Narayanpur village whose charred bodies were found in the doomed leather processing factory.

The blaze started on Wednesday afternoon and quickly ripped through the ground floor of the Prime Patent Plastic factory in Keraniganj, just southwest of Dhaka, police said. "So far 13 people were killed. Twelve of them died while being treated at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital and another died at the scene," police inspector Bacchu Mia said.

Police said some 150 people were working in the tin-shed ground floor factory when fire broke out with a loud bang in one of the rooms. "The workers who were in that room were the ones who were burnt. We immediately shifted them to hospital in critical conditions," local police chief Shah Zaman said. —AFP

"My husband is too unwell to work and my son was our only hope. We're completely shattered," Rubina Khatoon, his mother, told Reuters by telephone from the family home. A neighbor, who died alongside him, had helped Khan get the job. Like thousands of migrant workers swarming Delhi, the victims earned as little as \$2 to \$3 a day.

Khan, 23, was using the pittance he made to support his sister and brother's education and buy medicine for his father, a diabetic, his mother said. "My son would have only two meals a day to save money and send 3,500-4,000 rupees (\$49-56) to us every month. He would hardly keep 500-1,000 rupees for his day-to-day expenses," she recounted. —Reuters

International

Friday, December 13, 2019

Myanmar cannot be trusted to put its own soldiers on trial: Gambia

THE HAGUE: Myanmar cannot be trusted to hold its soldiers accountable for alleged atrocities against its Rohingya Muslim minority, and measures to stop the violence need to be taken immediately, a lawyer presenting a genocide case against it said yesterday.

Speaking on the third and final day of hearings at the International Court of Justice in the case brought by Gambia under the 1948 Genocide Convention, the west African country's lead lawyer repeated its demand for "provisional measures" to restrain the Myanmar military until the case is heard in full.

Paul Reichler, said Myanmar had not even tried during the hearings to deny most of the accusations of extreme violence made against its military, known officially as the Tatmadaw, nor of the mass deportation of Rohingya following a 2017 crackdown. Statements from Myanmar that it was taking action to prosecute soldiers accused of wrongdoing were incredible, he said.

"How can anyone possibly expect the Tatmadaw to hold itself accountable for genocidal acts against the Rohingya, when six of its top generals including the commander-in-chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, have all been accused of genocide by the UN fact-finding mission and recommended for criminal prosecution," he told the panel of 17 judges.

He was referring to the findings of UN investigators who in an August 2018 report said the Myanmar military had carried out killings and mass rape with "genocidal intent" in the

2017 operation. Gambia's legal team had outlined graphic testimony from their report at the first day of hearings on Tuesday. More than 730,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar to Bangladesh after the military launched its crackdown. The UN investigators have said 10,000 people may have been killed.

Leading the defense

Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi had led her country's defense on Wednesday, telling the court the military-led "clearance operation" in western Rakhine State was a counterterrorism response to coordinated Rohingya militant attacks against dozens of police stations in August 2017.

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate said that Myanmar "actively investigates, prosecutes and punishes soldiers and officers that are accused of wrongdoing" and argued the tribunal, also known as the World Court, should not have jurisdiction. She said that even if there had been violations of humanitarian law during what she described as an internal conflict, they did not rise to the level of genocide and were not covered by the 1948 convention.

Myo Nyunt, spokesman for her National League for Democracy party, told Reuters by telephone that Suu Kyi had presented Myanmar's case "very detailed and precisely about the complicated Rakhine issue".

Outside the ornate Peace Palace in The Hague that houses the court, protesters from both sides lined up on Thursday, shouting

People's Republic of Korea. "We trust that the DPRK will turn away from further hostility and threats, and instead make a bold decision to engage with us," she said.

Hinting at further sanctions, Craft said: "If events prove otherwise, we, this Security Council, must all be prepared to act accordingly." She called North Korea's persistent shorter-range tests "deeply counterproductive" and, in an unusually direct condemnation by the United States, said they violated UN Security Council resolutions. Craft appeared to rule out meeting North Korea's demands for an offer in the year's final weeks, saying: "Let me be clear: The United States and the Security Council have a goal — not a deadline."

But she said the United States, which used its presidency of the Security Council to convene the meeting, wanted to work toward a deal. "We remain ready to take actions in parallel, and to simultaneously take concrete steps towards this agreement," Craft said. "We are prepared to be flexible in how we approach this matter."

Trump has hailed his relationship with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un after his breakthrough summit last year in Singapore and two subsequent meetings. Trump, who has boasted that he prevented war, has said he would be "surprised" if North Korea acted in a hostile manner.

But North Korea — which did not participate in Wednesday's session — has shown frustration since February's eagerly awaited summit in Hanoi ended in stalemate. The two countries met in Stockholm in October to start working-level talks, though North Korea denounced the meeting, accusing the United States of not offering anything. —Agencies



THE HAGUE: Myanmar's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi leaves the Peace palace in The Hague yesterday on the last day of a three-day hearing on the Rohingya genocide case before the UN International Court of Justice. —AFP

"Mother Suu, be healthy," and "Aung San Suu Kyi, shame on you" as the Myanmar delegation left the premises.

Suu Kyi and her team will have several hours to formulate a rebuttal and final statement. The court has not set a date for a decision on provisional measures, but one could come in January. Its decisions are binding and not subject to appeal, though it has no means of enforcement and countries have occasionally ignored them or failed to fully adhere.

After the decision on provisional measures, the process may continue to a full case that could last years. Suu Kyi supporters from Myanmar's Buddhist majority were expected to rally at a park in Yangon, where the hearings were being projected on a large screen.

Rohingya Muslims in camps in Cox's Bazar were praying that the suit succeeds. "Aung San Suu Kyi is a big liar...We hate her," said Hasmat Ali, 41, who fled to Bangladesh after the August 2017 crackdown. —Reuters

N Korea 'ready' to respond to any US measure

SEOUL: North Korea's foreign ministry criticized the United States for convening the UN Security Council and warned that it is ready to respond to any corresponding measure that Washington chooses, state media said yesterday.

"The United States said about corresponding measure at the meeting, as we have said we have nothing to lose and we are ready to respond to any corresponding measure that the US choose," said its state news agency KCNA citing a North Korean Foreign Ministry spokesperson.

The United States on Wednesday warned North Korea of consequences if it makes good on threats of a spectacular weapons test in the New Year, while offering flexibility if it stays in talks. Frustrated by the lack of sanctions relief after three summits with President Donald Trump, North Korea has vowed an ominous 'Christmas gift' if the US does not come up with concessions by the end of the year.

At the UN Security Council, the US ambassador, Kelly Craft, voiced concern that North Korea was indicating it would test intercontinental ballistic missiles "which are designed to attack the continental United States with nuclear weapons.

"Missile and nuclear testing will not bring the DPRK greater security," Craft said, referring to the North by its official name, the Democratic

Singapore defends misinformation law after criticism

SINGAPORE: Singapore has defended a controversial new law against misinformation that it has wielded against Facebook, after an opposition party launched a withering attack on the legislation. The law gives ministers in the tightly-regulated city powers to order internet platforms to put warnings next to posts they deem false, but activists fear it could be used to stifle dissent.

Authorities used the measure twice last month, ordering Facebook to put a correction by a post for the first time, and telling an opposition party member to correct a message. The opposition Progress Singapore Party (PSP), which will contest elections expected within months, said the law fell short of the values of transparency, independence and accountability.

It empowers ministers "to declare a piece of news to be falsehood without requiring any justification, criteria or

standards," said the party, in a statement on their website alongside a picture of people with their mouths taped shut.

The PSP is among a host of small opposition parties but they are not seen as a threat to the People's Action Party, which has ruled Singapore for decades. But in a joint statement late Wednesday, the communications ministry and law ministry insisted the legislation, which came into force last month, would not curb free speech. "Requiring a factual statement to be posted in order to correct a false statement does not curtail anyone's free speech," they said.

Google also cited the new regulation, which prohibits adverts seeking to influence public opinion, when it announced a ban on political ads in Singapore this month, according to another opposition group, the Singapore Democratic Party.

The party said the move would affect its ability to reach out to voters in a country where the mainstream media usually backs the government. Singapore's government, which regularly faces criticism for curbing civil liberties, insists the legislation is necessary to stop the spread of damaging falsehoods online. —AFP

International

New Zealand military set for risky mission to retrieve bodies from volcano

WHAKATANE, New Zealand: New Zealand's military will embark on a risky dawn mission to retrieve eight bodies from the still-active White Island volcano, officials said yesterday, as pressure from distraught victims' families mounted.

Teams will move in "shortly after first light" today, deputy police commissioner Mike Clement said, despite volcanologists warning that the chances of another significant eruption in the next 24 hours had risen to 50-60 percent.

"They will go on to the island and they will make every effort to recover all of the bodies" and transport them to military frigate HMNZS Wellington anchored off the coast, he said. With the help of drone flights and helicopter pilots who were near the volcano immediately after the eruption, authorities have located six of the eight bodies on the island.

Recovering the six will be a priority, Clement said. A geologist will be on hand sifting data in real-time to determine whether another eruption is imminent and whether the mission needs to be aborted.

"The risk is not gone," Clement said. "Of course I'm going to worry tonight. People are putting themselves on the front-line to do the right thing... our thoughts and our prayers and our love will be with them."

The number of people believed to have died in Monday's disaster now stands at 16. That includes the eight people thought to be still on White Island — among them New Zealand tour guide Hayden Marshall-Inman. His brother Mark Inman has epitomized families' frustrations with stalled recovery efforts, putting the delay down to "red tape, bureaucracy" and failed leadership, while offering to go to the island himself.

A visibly anguished Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern earlier expressed empathy with the families but insisted "everyone is desperate to get those victims back."

"We are all in exactly the same place and wanting to make sure that as soon as possible, as soon as we can, that recovery operation begins." After days of caution and focusing on the risk to rescuers, police have indicated they now see the recovery as a race against time, and the longer the operation is delayed, the less chance there is of returning identifiable remains to grieving families.

'Devastating loss'

On White Island poisonous gases are still billowing from the volcanic vent and the island is blanketed in a thick layer of acidic ash. GeoNet volcanologist Nico Fournier said the dangers facing recovery teams if an eruption occurred included magma, superheated steam, ash and cannonball-like rocks thrown from the caldera at supersonic speed.

While officials weighed how to recover bodies of the dead, some 29 people — mostly tourists who had been on a day trip to see the natural wonder — are still being treated in hospitals across New Zealand and Australia, many in a critical condition suffering severe burns.

The survivors' injuries were so severe



WHAKATANE, New Zealand: This handout photo taken on December 9, 2019 and provided courtesy of Lillani Hopkins through her Facebook account yesterday shows a plume of ash rising into the air as the volcano on White Island erupts off the coast of Whakatane on New Zealand's North Island. — AFP

New Zealand doctors initially estimated they would need to import 1.2 million square centimeters (185,000 square inches) of skin for grafts — although that was likely to be revised down as victims were moved overseas to ease the strain on hospitals. Police said two people died in hospital overnight, taking the confirmed number of fatalities to eight.

Sydney high school Knox Grammar named the latest fatalities as brothers Matthew and Berend Hollander, saying their deaths were a "devastating loss for our community." It said the boys' parents, Barbara and Martin Hollander, were still unaccounted for. A total of 47 day-trippers and guides were on the island when the blast occurred, hailing from Australia, the United States, Britain, China, Germany, Malaysia and New Zealand.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said one Australian was confirmed dead and a further 10 were missing and presumed to have perished. Canberra has sent three military aircraft with specialist medical crews to repatriate some of the survivors, with at least 12 Australians expected to be flown to burns units in the country.

Malaysia previously said one of its citizens had died in the tragedy, but a foreign ministry official said yesterday the victim had in fact survived and was in a critical condition. "The victim will be flown to Australia for further treatment," the official said. British and US officials said their citizens were among those hurt. A coronial process has begun to identify the eight confirmed dead but police said it could "take some time." — AFP

Cruise passengers shaken by New Zealand tragedy

WELLINGTON: Tourists from the cruise ship that was near the volcanic island in New Zealand when it erupted arrived in Wellington yesterday, many traumatized by the deaths of co-passengers and others recalling their brush with tragedy.

Royal Caribbean's 16-deck cruise liner, Ovation of the Seas, was docked at Tauranga port on the Bay of Plenty, about 100 km (60 miles) from the volcanic White Island when it erupted suddenly on Monday. Many tourists from the cruise had booked tours to see the volcano and were on the uninhabited island when it started spewing steam and gas, with ash plumes shooting 12,000 feet (3,658 m) into the air.

At least eight people were killed and over two dozen have serious burns. Another eight people are missing and presumed dead, buried under the ash on the island. It was not clear how many of them were from Ovation of the Seas. Australian John Bartley, one of the passengers, said he was told by staff on the cruise that two crew members and one passenger died in the eruption, while about 23 were injured.

Calls and emails to Royal Caribbean

were not immediately returned. It said previously that passengers from its cruise were on the island at the time and it grieved "this tragic loss", but gave no further details. "The mood was pretty sad," said Bartley, 52, a native of Sydney who was on the cruise with his family.

"We feel so bad for these people. You don't expect to go on a holiday and not return. We are very adventurous too and we would have definitely gone on that volcano tour. But we had a friend with kids so we decided not to," he said.

He and other passengers were in Wellington on Thursday where the cruise ship docked after being stranded in Tauranga for two days. They were brought to the downtown area where many visited restaurants, shopped or just sat around in the park enjoying a sunny morning.

Many declined comment, saying the experience was too traumatic. "A family just 10 rooms past us are still in the hospital," said Jim Karamanov from Adelaide, Australia, who was on the tour with his wife Suzanne. "We saw some police officers come around to pick up their things from the room. It was quite devastating," he said.

He said after the news of the tragedy, many passengers just spent their time huddled in rooms or on the deck checking the news on their phones. "It's put a dampener on everything. You feel ill," said his wife, Suzanne. — Reuters

Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019

www.kuwaittimes.net

**Oxen and horses put
back to work in Cuba**

Page 20

**World's hottest
peppers grow
under Serbian snow**

Page 26

**Date palm, Arab region symbol
of prosperity, listed by UNESCO**

See Pages 28, 29





A farmer works in a field using oxen to plow the land in Los Palacios, Pinar del Rio province. Due to a lack of fuel, Cuba resorts to animal traction to boost its agriculture and the transport of goods and people in rural areas. — AFP Photos



Farmers work in a field using oxen to plow the land in Los Palacios.



Oxen and horses put back to work in Cuba

A lack of fuel, in large part due to the US blockade, is forcing Cubans to return to horse and ox power for farming, transport and everyday travel. In Los Palacios, 100 kilometers (60 miles) of the west of the capital Havana, Heriberto Piloto bellows at his oxen “Montezuelo” and “Pasajero” as they plough a tobacco field at the “La Juanita” farm.

Once the fields were ploughed by tractors, plus some animal help, but now beasts of burden are the only option, meaning the job of ploughman has made a comeback too in Cuba’s fields. “Under normal conditions, we always used animals and... given the country’s fuel restrictions, we’ve had to increase this activity,” said

Alfredo Reynoso, the director of the state company Cubaquivir, which provides services to the 12 agricultural cooperatives in Los Palacios. “We need to prepare around 1,200 hectares of land with animal power during the cold season,” Reynoso added.

No buses

A thousand kilometers to the east, long, straight roads flanked by sugarcane fields lead to Havana. There, “Dragau” and “Abre Campo” pull an ox cart driven by Felix Betancourt, a 65-year-old bringing food to field workers. “I bring food to cooperative workers: breakfast, lunch. It works well, it saves a lot of things (including) fuel, given

that there is none any more,” said Betancourt. “The animals’ fuel is grass. In the evening I given them food, leave them to sleep well, then I get up the next morning and put them to work at 5:30 am.”

In the eastern city of Bayamo, horse-drawn carriages have long been a tourist attraction - today they’ve become an integral part of the public transport system. “Carriages have always been used in Bayamo, but now they’re being used a bit more,” said Silvia Diaz, a neighborhood leader. “There are neighborhoods where there are no buses, but there are carriages.” Rides cost between two and five pesos (a maximum of 20 cents). In recent weeks, garbage disposal has been carried out by carts pulled by animals. “It’s helping to keep the neighborhood clean and avoids fuel expenses,” she said.

Not enough beasts

US sanctions against Cuba and its main source of oil, socialist ally Venezuela, forced the island nation to operate with just 30 percent of its fuel needs in September. October was better but still Cuba had only 60 percent of its requirements. “You can’t say that the lack of fuel hasn’t been felt,” said Jorge Luis La Guardia, the 50-year-old president of one of Los Palacios’ agricultural cooperatives. It’s not the first time that Cuba has had to revert to the use of pack and draught animals.

The government encouraged their use during the economic crisis of the 1990s that followed the break-up of the old Soviet Union, which had been Cuba’s main foreign backer. The problem is that Cuba doesn’t have enough beasts to take up the strain of silenced engines. Los Palacios has 780 pairs of oxen, “insufficient” to meet the city’s needs, according to Reynoso. “We’re transporting 100 percent of the farmers’ food to the population by pack animals, with oxen and carts, horse gigs and horse-drawn carriages,” said La Guardia.

Cuba has almost 200,000 pack animals, according to official data. Back in the fields, weighing in at more than 600 kilograms each, “Montezuelo” and “Pasajero” follow 54-year-old Piloto’s orders. “The technique is to get up early, and at around 10-something or 11 am, if it’s a hot morning, you let the ox loose, give it food, and then at 4-something in the afternoon, you put them back to work,” said Piloto, his skin weather-beaten. “Anyone would want a tractor, but it’s impossible.” — AFP



A man in an oxen carriage is seen in Granma province.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph as detained refugees in California's nativity



The Nativity scene at the Claremont United Methodist Church in Claremont, California depicting a scene of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in separate cages as refugees. The display is aimed at drawing attention to the conditions faced by migrants seeking asylum in the US. — AFP Photos

Baby Jesus is lying in a manger inside a cage, wrapped in an emergency foil blanket and separated from Mary and Joseph, who are each trapped in cells of their own. This is the startling nativity scene created by a Protestant church in California to draw attention to the plight of migrants.

"We put them in different cages, as a symbol representing our community, and all immigrants, who are being held in detention centers and need our help," Genaro Cordoba, co-creator of the installation and spokesman for Claremont United Methodist Church said. "Jesus, Joseph, Mary represent all our immigrants, all the refugees, not just in the United States but all over the world," he said, switching from Spanish to English. "We have seen how they suffer, and people don't want them, and (in) our country the same thing," Cordoba added.

Karen Clark Ristine, senior minister at the church about 30 miles (48 kilometers) east of Los Angeles, explained in a Facebook message accompanying the images that the Holy Family were "the most well-known refugee family in the world." "Shortly after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary were forced to flee with their young son from Nazareth to Egypt to escape King Herod, a tyrant," she wrote. "They feared persecution and death. What if this family sought refuge in our country today?"

The grim Nativity scene appears to address that question. Each cell is lined with barbed wire, and both Mary and Joseph are pictured facing the infant, their arms outstretched in hope and desperation. "Imagine Joseph and Mary separated at the border and Jesus no older than two taken from his mother and placed behind the fences of a Border Patrol detention center as more than 5,500 children have been the past three years," wrote Ristine.

A Trump administration "zero tolerance" policy launched in 2018 saw thousands of children separated from their parents at the border, a tactic apparently meant to frighten the families, before the government backed down. Migrants including children were held in caged enclosures. "Jesus grew up to teach us kindness and mercy and a radical welcome of all people," said Ristine. — AFP





Kim Kardashian West is raising her children to be compassionate

The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star wants her children - North, six, Saint, four, Chicago, 23 months and Psalm, seven months - to "know they are blessed" to come from a privileged background, and is ultimately trying to teach them to be "good people". She said: "I do the best I can and I really do believe my children are well adjusted and know they are blessed, but understand to be really compassionate. They're really good people, and that is my number one goal in life." Recently, Kim's husband and rapper Kanye West - with whom she has all four of her brood - made headlines when he banned his eldest daughter North from wearing makeup until she's a teenager, and Kim has admitted she agrees with his stance on the subject. But the 38-year-old reality star also said she often turns to her famous family - most of whom have children of their own - for advice. She added: "I don't think a kid should really be wearing makeup, either. I think sometimes if you don't understand a rule, it's good to learn and ask your friends - and in my case, my siblings - what they would do, bounce ideas around and develop a way we're gonna parent and rules we have. And we always have to stay aligned."

Cassie shares the first picture of her newborn

The 33-year-old singer welcomed her first child with her husband Alex Fine into the world last Friday, with the tot weighing in at 8 lbs. 4oz, and measuring just a little over 21 inches long. And now, the first-time mom has posted an adorable snap of their little bundle of joy on Instagram, and gushed that she's "just different". She wrote alongside the black and white photo of Frankie holding her hand with just part of her head on display: "She's just different. Frankie Stone Fine. My BFF." Khloe Kardashian - who has 20-month-old daughter True with ex-partner Tristan Thompson - was one of the first to send well-wishes to Cassie. The reality star commented on the post: "Congratulations beautiful!!!! You're a mommy!!!! (sic)" Cassie revealed the couple were set to become parents back in June on Instagram. Alongside a slideshow of images of herself and her boyfriend sitting in a car, she wrote: "Can't wait to meet our baby girl [heart emoji] Love You Always & Forever." Alex also shared a touching letter he wrote to his unborn daughter and pledged to always be her "number one fan". Alongside a photo of him kissing Cassie on the cheek, he wrote: "I will be the first man in your life and will show you the greatest love and affection now and forever."



Channing Tatum teaches his six-year-old daughter boxing



The 'Magic Mike' actor took to Instagram to share a video of his little girl - whom he has with ex-wife Jenna Dewan - throwing some punches his way wearing gloves and a protection helmet, and he revealed he's decided to give his little girl lessons because he wants Everly to feel "secure". He also quipped that he fears for the person who tries to "poke the beast inside [his] little angel". Alongside the IGTV clip, he wrote: "She love punching dad! "This is only 1/16 how long this went for hahaha she an animal. We love wrestling and boxing. And we keep it fun. "I heard once that martial arts was only created to take the mystery out of fight. So people started to practiced it. "So if ever there came a time they had to defend themselves they wouldn't be as afraid. "In my experience fear most times leads to bad decisions. "Being calm and secure with your mind and body...Make great opportunity for good decisions. "Violence is 100% never the answer. But having a daughter i always want her to feel safe in her being. "And god help the person that ever poke the beast inside this little angel. (sic)"



Nick Jonas, Priyanka Chopra are working on unscripted series

To mark the couple's first year as a married couple, the 'Baywatch' actress has announced the upcoming currently "untitled project", which is based on the Sangeet - a traditional Indian dance which celebrates the union of two people the night before their tie the knot. The 37-year-old star - who married the Jonas Brothers star in a three-day wedding extravaganza in Jodhpur, India, last December - took to Instagram to tease the series, which is looking for couples who are "engaged to be married in the spring or summer next year" to take part. In a lengthy post, she explained: "At our wedding, both of our families came together to perform a sangeet. A performance (dance-off competition style) that celebrated our love story, one of the most unforgettable moments from a very special time in our lives. "@nickjonas and I are excited to announce a new, currently untitled project (we're still working on it!!) that celebrates the love and magic that comes from friends and family that join together through music and dance the night before a wedding. "It's our #SangeetProject Happy one year anniversary baby. It's our first together"



Margot Robbie still sleeps with childhood stuffed animal

The 'Bombshell' star has admitted she goes to bed every night with a stuffed rabbit toy named Bunny - which she has had since she was born - although she also claimed her husband Tom Ackerley isn't a fan of the teddy. Speaking on W magazine's new podcast 'Five Things with Lynn Hirschberg' - in which guests discuss a person, a place, a thing, a positive event, and a negative event that shaped their identities - Margot selected Bunny as her object, and said: "[My husband] always throws Bunny out of the bed because he obviously thinks it's a tad ridiculous that I still sleep with Bunny. Maybe he's a little jealous that Bunny always gets priority place in the bed. He thinks I'm asleep and he'll throw Bunny out of the bed and I get so cross with him." And although Margot named her aunt as the person who has shaped her, she wasted no time in gushing over her 'Bombshell' co-stars Nicole Kidman and Charlize Theron. Speaking of Nicole, the 29-year-old actress said: "I remember thinking, 'Holy s**t, that's why she's Nicole Kidman.' The second they called action, she just became this crazy presence. I couldn't take my eyes off her. Everything she said, even if it wasn't a terribly profound line it just suddenly felt powerful. And I was like whoa. It was so cool to witness first-hand. I remember thinking like, 'Okay, I get it. I get why she is who she is because that is magical.'

Jordyn Woods 'exhausted' and wants to move on

The 22-year-old model has been accused of shading Khloe Kardashian in a recent Instagram Story photo - which showed her biting into an apple with the caption "an apple a day keeps the haters away" - but she has insisted subliminal messages aren't her style. In a social media video, she said: "I just got home from doing press and I realize, y'all arms must be really, really tired from reaching. Like, I can't even eat an apple in peace. "And let me tell you something, I don't do subliminals, I do general statements and if I have something to say about someone or to someone, Imma say it to them or not at all. "If y'all are tired of this, I'm exhausted. Let's move on. It's all love. It's all good." It comes after Jordyn took a lie detector test to prove she didn't sleep with Khloe's then-partner Tristan Thompson, and appeared on family friend Jada Pinkett Smith's 'Red Table Talk' show to explain her actions when she kissed him in February. According to the polygraphist, she was telling the truth when she said "no", but the 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star clearly wasn't impressed. She posted on her own Instagram Story: "Liars are always ready to take oaths."



Millie Mackintosh suffering 'severe anxiety'

The former 'Made in Chelsea' star is expecting a baby girl with husband Hugo Taylor and she's admitted she's been frequently gripped by "unexplainable fear" connected to pregnancy, birth and parenthood so has asked fans to recommend some books to help ease her worries. She wrote on Instagram: "Trying to keep on top of my mental health is proving a little trickier than usual. I'm still practicing mindfulness and daily meditation (as I normally would) but have had moments of severe anxiety on multiple occasions. "I have found over the last few months that I have unexplainable fear which constantly switches from 'something is wrong with the baby' to 'how I will cope when the baby arrives' and don't get me started on the 'BIRTH!' I'm sure all new mums go through this and I am no different but would be great to hear from any of you who have been through similar things or have any suggestions on how to lessen these worries. Recommendations for good books & podcast always welcome." And the 30-year-old star has been suffering with a number of physical symptoms and is on an "emotional roller coaster" of mood swings.

Jennifer Lopez fought back tears over her first-ever nomination



The 50-year-old singer-and-actor got emotional as she opened up about receiving a nod for Outstanding Performance by a Female Actor in a Supporting Role for her part in 'Hustlers' as stripper Ramona Vega, and she is "so humbled" to be up for the accolade. Speaking in a video shared on her Instagram, she said: "I don't think I've ever been nominated for a SAG Award before. "I am so excited and so humbled to be recognized by my fellow actors out there. "Acting was my first love along with dancing and I just can't believe all this is happening." Jennifer also offered words of support to "struggling actors", advising them to continue to pursue their dreams. She added: "To all the struggling actors out there don't

give up. It could happen. It's happening. "Thank you so much. I feel like I already won. Thank you to SAG Awards. I'll see you guys there." Jennifer appeared to be working out while speaking in the video and was visibly fighting back the tears. She wrote in the caption: "Holding back tears... means so much to me to be recognized by my fellow actors!!! Thank you so much to @sagawards for this nomination, it truly means the world to me!! NEVER GIVE UP!! #HustlersMovie #Ramona #SAGAwards (sic)" While the 'Second Act' star's nod already feels like a win, she faces tough competition on the night.

Weinstein agrees to \$25 million settlement with accusers

Disgraced Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein has reached a \$25 million settlement with dozens of women who accused him of sexual misconduct, one of the women's lawyers told AFP on Wednesday. The once-powerful producer of "Pulp Fiction" and "Sin City", whose case sparked the #MeToo movement against sex crimes, faces a criminal trial next month that could see him jailed for life. The payout from a separate civil case will be shared among more than 30 actresses and former employees who have sued the 67-year-old for offenses ranging from sexual harassment to rape. Weinstein will not have to admit wrongdoing or pay from his own pocket, celebrity news portal TMZ said, with the bill instead being met by insurers for his bankrupt former movie studio, The Weinstein Company. The deal will have to be

signed by all parties and get court approval to resolve almost every misconduct lawsuit brought against him since 2017 and insulate company directors from future liability. Weinstein's accusers include some of the world's most famous actresses - including Angelina Jolie, Gwyneth Paltrow and Salma Hayek - although none is part of the proceedings. "Boardwalk Empire" actress Paz de la Huerta, who accused the producer of raping her in 2010, is expected to be part of the settlement, her lawyer Aaron Filler told AFP. The criminal claims against him involve just two accusers, meaning the civil settlement represents the only chance of justice for the many women who have accused Weinstein of abuse. But several accusers and their lawyers have denounced the deal. "We plan to vigorously object to any provision that tries to bind victims who want to

proceed with holding Harvey Weinstein accountable for his actions," said lawyer Douglas Wigdor, who is representing two women in claims against the producer. Anti-sexual harassment campaign group Time's Up, created in the wake of accusations against Weinstein, said it hoped that the settlement brought Weinstein's victims "some small measure of long overdue justice" but added the size of the payout was inadequate. "If this is the best the survivors could get, the system is broken," the group tweeted.

Bail doubled

Weinstein faces a criminal trial in January on charges of rape and forcibly performing oral sex on a woman. Looking frail as he shuffled into a pre-trial hearing in Manhattan with a walking frame, he had his \$1 million cash bail raised to \$2

million in assets after prosecutors accused him of mishandling his ankle monitor. Weinstein's legal team told the court he was scheduled to undergo surgery on Thursday to relieve back pain from an injury in an August car accident.

"He is in pain. He's going to have surgery and he will be back in court on January 6," said attorney Donna Rotunno. One of his accusers, 50-year-old Katherine Kendall, told The New York Times she was disappointed by the deal but had agreed to sign on because she didn't want other women to miss out on the payout. "I don't love it, but I don't know how to go after him. I don't know what I can really do," said Kendall, who alleged that she was chased around by a naked Weinstein in his New York apartment. — AFP

Turn off, tune in: Theater, concert fans forced to go phone-free

When Adam Weiss arrived at a New York theater to see a Broadway show, he was dismayed to learn he would have to lock up his cell phone. The team behind "Freestyle Love Supreme," an improvisation comedy show co-created by Lin-Manuel Miranda of "Hamilton" musical fame, requires audience members to keep their mobiles in a locked pouch during the performance. "It's a bit like being without a part of myself," the 39-year-old Weiss said. But once the show began, worries over what he might miss online faded. "I actually didn't think about it, once it was gone," he told AFP.

Weiss's experience is part of a growing trend at concerts, theatrical performances and even art exhibitions — attendees need to not only stow their cell phones, but make them unusable. Pop icon Madonna and comedian Dave Chappelle are among the performers who have latched onto the commonly used Yondr system. Here's how it works: upon arrival at a theater or auditorium, personnel will place an audience member's silenced phone into a pouch that is then locked with magnetic closures. The only way to open the bag is to visit an unlocking device in specified phone use areas. The goal is to reduce the unwelcome distractions for both performers and spectators of cell phone use, get audiences to be more engaged, and protect sets and content from leaking online. For actor Andrew Bancroft, a "Freestyle Love Supreme" performer, the lack of cell phone flashes has led to a more attentive audience and ultimately a better show overall. "There's this feeling nowadays - is there something better that I'm missing?" he said of society's smartphone addiction. "You're neither here nor there — you don't fully get to be in one place."

Considering the ephemeral nature of improv performances - which can involve audience participation and a tendency to get vulnerable or profane - the elimination of phone recordings allows actors to get real and audiences to tune in, he said. "We want to have complete freedom because that's what makes it dangerous and exciting," the 41-year-old actor said. "It protects us in a way that allows us to really go there and surprise people," Bancroft said. "But I think that's secondary to, why don't you sit with who you came with, and really have your eyes, ears and hearts open to this present moment."

'Too many sensory inputs'

When he began pitching his idea in San Francisco, Yondr founder



Mobile phones are locked into 'Yondr' pouches before people enter an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in New York City. Yondr creates phone-free spaces for artists, educators, organizations and individuals. — AFP Photos



Yondr' pouches are seen at an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in New York City.

Graham Dugoni initially met with resistance for his plan. But he remained adamant that such a start-up, which he founded in 2014, was necessary to "help people move into the digital age in a way that doesn't erode all meaning in people's lives."

"People need to have some reasonable expectation of privacy, even in the public sphere," he told AFP. "It's very important that the artist has a safe space to perform in, that fans can enjoy getting swept up in something." On a more philosophical level, Dugoni said "there's a base feeling that the easier everything gets in life, the meaning is getting hollowed out." Today, the 33-year-old CEO himself has renounced life with a smartphone and communicates via an old-school flip phone, saying he simply "had too many sensory inputs."

'Real addiction'

The New York Philharmonic is testing the Yondr system, and a listening installation at the Brooklyn Museum also requires phones to be locked. Besides performances, Dugoni said Yondr has caught on at schools to help students focus and even at weddings, where couples ban

mobiles to encourage guests "to just be there and not be whipping out their phone every two seconds."

"What we hear mostly is that it makes a difference in the energy of the room," he said. Meredith Weiss, who attended the "Freestyle Love Supreme" show with her husband Adam, told AFP that being forced to stash her phone was a welcome respite. The 39-year-old's only concern was that the babysitter might call. "I didn't have time to give my sitter a heads up that we weren't going to have our phones," she said. Bancroft said he's sold on the concept, whether he is a performer or a spectator.

"Every now and then, people will say they missed having their phones - for us, that is kind of funny, but also signals that we have a real addiction in our society," he said. Bancroft laughed at the feeling many people seem to have "to prove I was here; to snap a picture of Miranda and show that I'm worth a little more than I am." "I'm guilty of it too," Bancroft said. "I'm like, 'Cool, I'll post this later,' and I typically don't even do that." "So why did I waste even 15 seconds of this beautiful moment to get a video I'll never look at?" — AFP



This photo illustration shows packed caviar at Kaluga Queen. —AFP Photos



An employee of Chinese caviar company Kaluga Queen cuts open a sturgeon for its roe at the firm's processing facility in Quzhou city, China's Zhejiang province.



A worker feeds sturgeon at a fishery run by Chinese caviar company Kaluga Queen in Qiandao lake.

Caviar 'queen': Chinese roe reigns around the world

The caviar on the menu of Michelin-starred restaurants may come from an unexpected place: China. The country has endured embarrassing food scandals in recent years, but its sturgeon eggs have gained the respect of caviar connoisseurs around the world. It has also become pricier for US buyers as Chinese caviar is among the slew of products hit with 25 percent tariffs in the US-China trade war.

The bulk of China's production comes from a picturesque lake ringed by mountains in eastern Zhejiang province where industry leader Kaluga Queen breeds the giant fish. The brand was created in 2005 by experts who worked for the ministry of agriculture and it now produces more than a third of the world's caviar, making China the global leader. The company's sturgeon farm is a 20-minute boat ride away from the shore in Qiandaohu, or Thousands Islands Lake.

Qiao Yuwen, a breeder, stood at the edge of the pools where the animals live until they are between the ages of seven and 15. The biggest sturgeons can grow to be four meters (13 feet) long and weigh 300 kilos (660 pounds).

"They're like our babies. We see them from when they're very young, so it's hard when they are sent to be slaughtered," Qiao said. "But there's also, of course, the satisfaction of having contributed to making an exceptional product," he said before throwing pellets containing shrimp, peas and vitamins to the fish.

'Price of a Ferrari'

For a long time, Iran and Russia fished sturgeon in the wild in the Caspian Sea. But the fish population was nearly decimated by overfishing and poaching after the Soviet Union, which had regulated fishing, fell in 1991. Sturgeon fishing in the Caspian Sea was banned in 2008 while sturgeon farms have sprung up everywhere, with Italy, France and China among the world leaders in the industry. Kaluga Queen has 300 employees looking after some 200,000 sturgeons. Once they reach sexual maturity, females are fished out and taken to a laboratory where they are stunned before their bellies are sliced open to extract the black eggs. The roe is then washed, sorted,

salted and placed in boxes. Kaluga Queen produced 86 tons of caviar last year, most of it destined for exports, with half going to the European Union, 20 percent to the United States and 10 percent to Russia. Depending on the species, the price per kilo varies between 10,000 and 180,000 yuan (\$1,420 to \$25,600). Sturgeons producing the most expensive caviar can carry as much as two million yuan worth of eggs. "It's the price of a Ferrari," said Xia Yongtao, the company's vice president.

'Very good caviar'

Kaluga Queen has walked a "long road" to win the trust of customers since the company produced its first jar in 2006, Xia said. Chinese caviar had to overcome skepticism from foreign clients who were used to headlines about food scandals, from contaminated milk powder to soy sauce containing arsenic and rice tainted with cadmium. "A few years ago, customers were reluctant when we talked about Chinese caviar," said Raphael Bouchez, president of Kaviari, a Paris-based supplier to renowned restaurants. Bouchez convinced customers by explaining how Chinese producers raise fish and use methods that respect the environment.

"Chinese caviar, it must be said, is a very good caviar," Bouchez said. "That said, many of the chefs still do not want it. They prefer to have caviar from France, Uruguay, or elsewhere," he said. Today, Kaluga Queen has an annual turnover of 220 million yuan and counts among its customers German airline Lufthansa and L'Atelier de Joel Robuchon, a two Michelin stars restaurant in Shanghai. Distributors supply other restaurants around the world, and one buyer said he had delivered one shipment to Kim Jong Un, according to Xia.

French chef Guy Savoy, whose Paris restaurant has three Michelin stars and is rated the best in the world, uses Chinese caviar with skate wings and scallops. "The label 'made in China' does not matter," Savoy told AFP. "The important thing is the quality of the breeding. Those supplied to us are of remarkable quality." Lily Liu, Kaluga Queen's marketing manager, hopes someone else can try her company's caviar. "We hope that Donald Trump will taste our caviar

and say: 'I like it! Let's reduce tariffs and help Chinese caviar conquer America!'" — AFP



Employees of Chinese caviar company Kaluga Queen work at the firm's processing facility in Quzhou city.



Photo shows a sturgeon at a fishery run by Chinese caviar company Kaluga Queen in Qiandao lake, China's Zhejiang province.

World's hottest peppers grow under Serbian snow



The young farmer Aleksandar Tanic shows the hottest pepper in Serbia that he produces in the southern Serbian town of Niska Banja. — AFP Photos

December snow flurries in Serbia haven't stopped Aleksandar Tanic from cultivating his scorching-hot crop: the crinkly chili peppers that are considered the spiciest on the planet. At the base of a mountain in southern Serbia, Tanic plucks a handful of red, yellow and orange peppers from rows of leafy vines inside a greenhouse whose roof is blanketed with a layer of snow.

Among them is the chubby and gnarled Carolina Reaper, considered to be the hottest pepper out there, according to Guinness World Records. First developed in South Carolina, it boasts an average of 1.6 million heat units on the "Scoville scale" that measures capsaicin, the ingredient that gives peppers their firepower. Despite Serbia's wintry temperatures, Tanic says he has no problem growing the peppers in soil beneath Mount Koritnyak in the town of Niska Banja.

"We have a good climate here," says the 36-year-old former electrician. "I don't know why but the peppers are better and bigger and maybe even hotter here". Tanic first started researching peppers a few years back "out of a love for cooking and spicy food," he says. He began tasting varieties from the US, the

Caribbean, South America and Asia that were far hotter than the red peppers used to make Serbia's beloved ajvar spread. "I used to think that I was heating spicy food before, but after I tried these sorts of chillies I realized that I had never tasted true hotness," he says with a smile.

With the help of his father Svetislav and a friend, Tanic is now growing about fifteen varieties including the Trinidad Moruga Scorpion, which has 1.2 million heat units, the Seven Pot Habanero and the Mustard Habanero. They grind up the peppers for ultra-spicy sauces with flavours ranging from pear to chocolate. In the small cabin where he dries peppers on a rack, the intensity of the capsaicin particles in the air make it difficult to breathe.

With bees and wind criss-crossing different strains to make new pepper varieties, it is difficult to measure the hotness of all of his produce. "New sorts are created and it takes time for them to be established, so we can't exactly know how hot they are," he said. When temperatures are back up next summer, he plans to put the hot products on display with an eye-watering chili-eating competition that won't be for the faint of heart-or tongue. — AFP



The young farmer Aleksandar Tanic poses inside of his greenhouse where he produces Serbia's hottest peppers in the southern Serbian town of Niska Banja.



A photograph shows the hottest peppers in Serbia produced by a young farmer Aleksandar Tanic in the southern Serbian town of Niska Banja.



General view at the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards nominations announcement at the Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood, California. — AFP Photos



(Left to right) Danaï Gurira and America Ferrera speak at the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards Nominations Announcement at Pacific Design Center.

'Bombshell' leads US Screen Actors Guild award nominations

Bombshell," which depicts the sexual harassment scandal that ousted Fox News co-founder Roger Ailes, led the Screen Actors Guild Awards nominations Wednesday, boosting its Oscar hopes. Lionsgate's star-studded #MeToo drama secured

acting nods for its lead Charlize Theron, who plays TV news anchor Megyn Kelly, as well as supporting actresses Nicole Kidman and Margot Robbie, and an overall cast nomination.

It narrowly beat divorce tearjerker "Marriage Story," Martin Scorsese's gangster epic "The Irishman" and Quentin Tarantino's "Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood," which each secured three acting nominations. But "Marriage Story," which on Monday topped the Golden Globes nominations and added further individual nods for Scarlett Johansson and Adam Driver, surprisingly missed out on best cast - the SAG's top award.

Instead the remaining best cast nominations went to Nazi satire "Jojo Rabbit" - which also stars Johansson — and South Korean class warfare drama "Parasite." Robert De Niro was again overlooked for his lead role in Scorsese's three-and-a-half hour "The Irishman" after missing out on a Golden Globes nomination. On the television side "The Marvelous Mrs Maisel," Amazon's story of a 1950s housewife-turned-standup comic, followed a strong showing at the Emmys by topping the SAG nominations with four.

Although less high-profile than the Golden Globes, the SAG awards are seen as more of an indicator of Oscars glory, since actors represent the largest branch of the roughly 10,000 voters for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The strong return for "Bombshell" throws the movie firmly back into Oscars contention, especially for best picture, after it managed just two nominations at the Golden Globes. Elsewhere, acting frontrunners Joaquin Phoenix ("Joker") and Renee Zellweger ("Judy") burnished their credentials by picking up further nominations.

'Thrones' bows out

Netflix repeated its Globes success by again comfortably topping both the film and television nominations. But there was no recognition for Anthony Hopkins nor Jonathan Pryce, who both earned Globes nods for their roles in the streaming giant's Vatican drama "The Two Popes." And Eddie Murphy, making his acting comeback in Netflix's blaxploitation biopic "Dolemite Is My Name," also missed out. Instead, SAG votes favored Taron Egerton's turn as Elton John in musical biopic "Rocketman," and Christian Bale's daredevil racer in "Ford v Ferrari." Lupita Nyong'o also picked up an individual nomination for acclaimed horror flick "Us," a film shunned entirely by the Globes.



(Left to right) Elizabeth McLaughlin and JoBeth Williams speak at the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards Nominations Announcement.



SAG-AFTRA President Gabrielle Carteris poses at the 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards nominations announcement at the Pacific Design Center.

For television, Apple TV+ flagship "The Morning Show" - about a news television program hit by a #MeToo scandal - secured the platform's first three nominations including for Jennifer Aniston, although her co-star Reese Witherspoon missed out. The new cast of "The Crown," led by Olivia Colman for season three, also picked up three nods, as did Emmys breakout hit "Fleabag," the dark British comedy from Phoebe Waller-Bridge. But the much-maligned final season of "Game of Thrones" had to settle for just two acting nominations - best cast in a drama series, and an individual nod for Peter Dinklage as sharp-tongued Tyrion Lannister.

Other drama cast contenders included star-studded "Big Little Lies" and perennial big-hitters "The Handmaid's Tale" and "Stranger Things." Dark hitman comedy "Barry," Michael Douglas vehicle "The Kominsky Method" and offbeat Canadian hit "Schitt's Creek" rounded off the comedy ensemble nods. The nominations were announced at a Los Angeles ceremony hosted by America Ferrera ("Ugly Betty") and Danaï Gurira ("The Walking Dead"). The 26th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards will take place on January 19 in Los Angeles. — AFP



Iraqis harvest dates in a Palm grove in the Kadhimiyah district of northern Baghdad. The date palm, which was recognized by UNESCO has for centuries played an important role in the establishment and growth of civilisations in the hot and dry regions of the Arab world. — AFP photos

Date palm, Arab region's symbol of prosperity, listed by UNESCO



Egyptian workers making beds of sand to protect their palm trees in the Nile Delta region of Rosetta, 250 km northwest of Egypt's capital Cairo.

The date palm, which was recognized by UNESCO on Wednesday, has for centuries played an important role in the establishment and growth of civilizations in the hot and dry regions of the Arab world. Now date palm-related knowledge, traditions and practices have been inscribed on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The tree, whose roots penetrate deep into the soil, allowing it to grow in arid climates, has not only been a source of food but also of economic gain. "Date palms gather in oases of different densities within desert areas indicating the presence of water levels suitable for irrigation," according to a nomination put forward by 14 countries-Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

"As a result, this aided mankind in settling down despite harsh conditions," said the document. Until this day, platters of dates adorn tables in homes and businesses across the Arab world, where the symbol of the date palm tree has historically presented prosperity. The offering of the sweet fruit, coupled with a cup of coffee, is a sign of good old-fashioned Arab hospitality. According to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization, the date palm is probably the most ancient cultivated tree.

It was grown as early as 4,000 BC and used for the construction of the moon god temple near Ur in southern Iraq - the ancient region of Mesopotamia. "The population of the submitting states has been associated with the date palm tree for centuries as it aided them in the construction of civilization," they said in



Palestinian workers pick up dates from a palm tree in the village of Jiftlik, north of the West Bank city of Jericho, during the harvest season.



An Emirati man harvests dates from a palm tree during the annual Liwa Date Festival in the western region of Liwa, south of Abu Dhabi.



A Palestinian man checks the harvest dates from a palm trees in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip.

the nomination. "Historical research and various antiquities excavations have resulted in the plant's significant cultural and economic status in numerous regions such as Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt and the Arab Gulf."

The ancient crop also faces some modern challenges. Gulf countries have fought hard to eradicate the red palm weevil, which originally came from Asia and was first detected in the region in the 1980s. The beetle, which is barely a few centimeters (around an inch) long, produces larvae that feed off palm trunks, killing the trees. "In Gulf countries and the Middle East, \$8 million is lost each year through removal of

severely infested trees alone," according to the FAO.

All parts of the date palm were and are still used in some parts of the region for shelter or to produce a range of products, including handicrafts, mats, rope and furniture. To celebrate and promote their date palm heritage and palm products, some of the submitting countries hold annual date festivals, most notably the annual Liwa Date Festival in the UAE and the Dates Festival in Al-Qassim in Saudi Arabia. Both Gulf countries are among the top date exporters, according to the Geneva-based International Trade Centre. — AFP



Photo shows Palm trees at the ruins of the ancient site of Babylon, some 100 kms south of the Iraqi capital Baghdad.

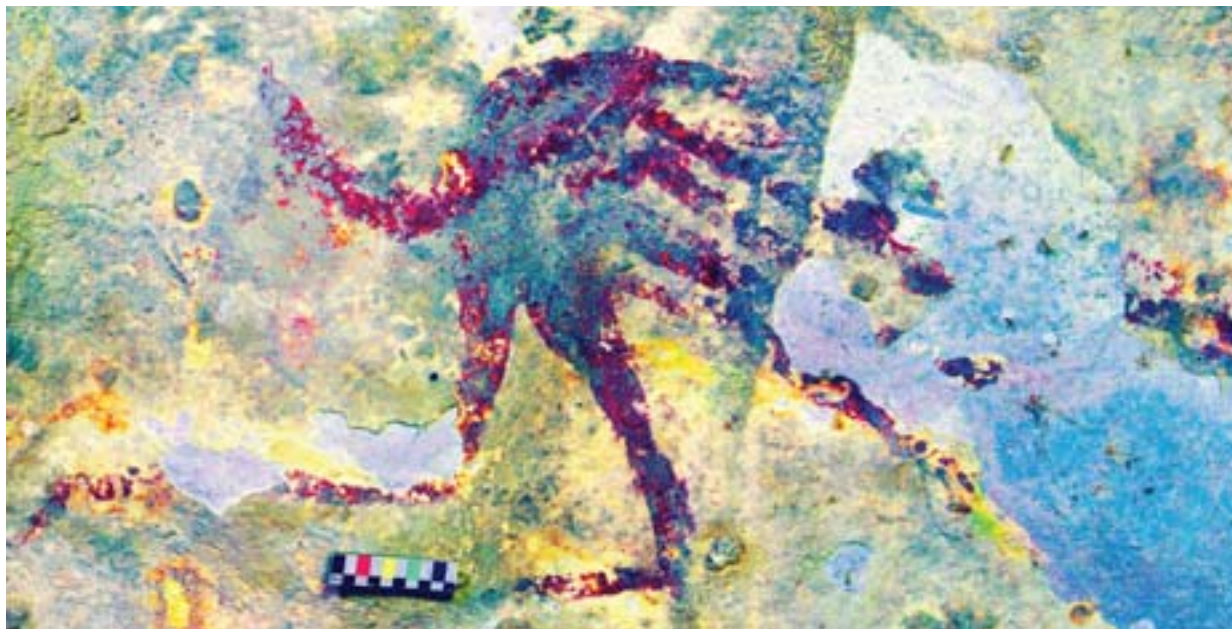


Photo shows cave art inside Bulu Sipong 4, Sulawesi, Indonesia. — AFP Photos

World's oldest figurative artwork uncovered in an Indonesian cave

An Indonesian cave painting that depicts a prehistoric hunting scene could be the world's oldest figurative artwork dating back nearly 44,000 years, a discovery that points to an advanced artistic culture, according to new research. Spotted two years ago on the island of Sulawesi, the 4.5 meter wide painting features wild animals being chased by half-human hunters wielding what appear to be spears and ropes, said the study published in the journal *Nature* on Wednesday.

Using dating technology, the team at Australia's Griffith University said it had confirmed that the limestone cave painting dated back at least 43,900 years during the Upper Palaeolithic period. "This hunting scene is - to our knowledge - currently the oldest pictorial record of

storytelling and the earliest figurative artwork in the world," researchers said.

The discovery comes after a painting of an animal in a cave on the Indonesian island of Borneo was earlier determined to have been at least 40,000 years old, while in 2014, researchers dated figurative art on Sulawesi to 35,000 years ago. "I've never seen anything like this before," Griffith University archaeologist Adam Brumm told *Nature*. "I mean, we've seen hundreds of rock art sites in this region, but we've never seen anything like a hunting scene," he added.

'Mythological or supernatural'

For many years, cave art was thought to have emerged from Europe, but Indonesian paintings have challenged that thinking. There are at least

242 caves or shelters with ancient imagery on Sulawesi alone, and new sites are being discovered annually, the team said. In the latest dated scene, the animals appear to be wild pigs and small buffalo, while the hunters are depicted in reddish-brown colours with human bodies and the heads of animals including birds and reptiles.

The human-animal figures, known in mythology as therianthropes, suggested that early humans in the region were able to imagine things that did not exist in the world, the researchers said. "We don't know what it means, but it seems to be about hunting and it seems to maybe have mythological or supernatural connotations," Brumm was quoted as saying. A half-lion, half-human ivory figure found in Germany that was estimated to be some 40,000 years old was

thought to be the oldest example of therianthrope, the article said.

Evolutionary history

The Sulawesi painting, which is in poor condition, suggests that a highly advanced artistic culture existed some 44,000 years ago, punctuated by folklore, religious myths and spiritual belief, the team said. "(The scene) may be regarded not only as the earliest dated figurative art in the world but also as the oldest evidence for the communication of a narrative in Palaeolithic art," researchers said. "This is noteworthy, given that the ability to invent fictional stories may have been the last and most crucial stage in the evolutionary history of human language and the development of modern-like patterns of cognition." — AFP



This handout photography shows cave art inside Bulu Sipong 4, Sulawesi, Indonesia.

YouTube bans 'implied' threats

YouTube broadened its anti-harassment policies on Wednesday to include a ban on "implied" threats along with insults based on race, gender identity or sexual orientation. "We will no longer allow content that maliciously insults someone based on protected attributes such as their race, gender expression, or sexual orientation," global head of trust and safety Matt Halprin said in an online post.

"This applies to everyone, from private individuals, to YouTube creators, to public officials." YouTube already bans explicit threats, but now "veiled or implied" threats will be barred as well, according to Halprin. "This includes content simulating violence toward an individual or language suggesting physical violence may occur," Halprin said. "No individual should be subject to harassment that suggests violence."

The changes stem in part from YouTube's pledge earlier this year to crack down on harassment by video creators. The platform was berated for leaving up videos from Steven Crowder, a right-wing commentator who regularly insulted gay Vox producer Carlos Maza based on his sexual orientation and Cuban heritage. Maza's video montage of insults from Crowder over a period of years - including "lisp sprite" and "angry little queer" - went viral, prompting a YouTube investigation that concluded they didn't violate its hate speech policies.

Problematic patterns

In the case of Crowder's channel, a review found that individually, the flagged videos did not violate YouTube guidelines, spokesman Chris Dale explained in an online post in June. "However, in the subsequent days, we saw the widespread harm to the YouTube community resulting from the ongoing pattern of egregious behavior, took a deeper look, and made the decision to suspend monetization," Dale said. He promised the platform would scrutinize its harassment policies and update them. YouTube at the time announced a ban on videos promoting or glorifying racism and discrimination as well as those denying well-documented violent events, like the Holocaust or the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting.

YouTube and other sharing platforms have been under pressure to filter out hateful and violent content while fending off concerns about censorship. Early this year, YouTube said it would stop recommending specious videos such as those claiming the earth is flat or promoting bogus theories. But it stopped short of banning that content. Channels that repeatedly brush up against YouTube hate or harassment policies will be suspended from the partner program that lets creators make money from ads or other features, according to Halprin.

"We may also remove content from channels if they repeatedly harass someone," Halprin said. "If this behavior continues, we'll take more severe action including issuing strikes or terminating a channel altogether." Moves by social media to filter hateful or abusive content have prompted criticism among right-wing activists in the United States, and President Donald Trump has claimed that online platforms are seeking to suppress conservative voices. — AFP

Netflix Christmas satire in Brazil sparks outcry

A Christmas satire on Netflix depicting Jesus in 'a relationship' has sparked a backlash in Brazil, where hundreds of thousands signed a petition calling for the film to be axed. "The First Temptation of Christ" by Brazilian comedy group Porta dos Fundos began streaming on December 3, drawing criticism from conservative politicians, Evangelicals and Catholics.

The teaser for the 46-minute movie says Jesus, who is turning 30, brings a "surprise guest" to meet his family. More than 760,000 people had signed a Change.org petition by Tuesday afternoon calling for the film to be pulled for "seriously offending Christians." "We support freedom of expression, but is it worth attacking the belief of 86 percent of the population," tweeted Eduardo Bolsonaro, the eldest son of Brazil's president and a member of Congress.

Brazil remains the world's biggest Catholic country, although its flock has shrunk while Evangelical churches grow. Around 64 percent of the population identified as Catholics, according to the 2010 census. Henrique Soares da Costa, a bishop in the northeastern state of Pernambuco, said on Facebook he had cancelled his Netflix subscription over the film, describing it as "blasphemous, vulgar and disrespectful." Netflix Brazil would not comment on the outcry when contacted by AFP. For their part, Porta dos Fundos took to Twitter to "celebrate the success of God's other creation: our Christmas special." — AFP

Comic

Word Search

Roller Coasters

Find and circle all of the roller coasters that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 20 letters spell a Ernest Hemingway quotation.

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

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AFTERBURN | GHOSTRIDER | MIND BENDER | SHEIKRA |
| ALPENGEIST | GOLIATH | MONTU | TATSU |
| BALDER | GRIFFON | NEMESIS | THUNDERBOLT |
| BIZARRO | HADES | NITRO | TITAN |
| COLOSSOS | INTIMIDATOR | PHOENIX | TREMORS |
| COMET | JUPITER | PROWLER | TROY |
| CYCLONE | KATUN | RAGING BULL | TWISTER |
| DESPERADO | LEVIATHAN | RAPTOR | VIPER |
| DIAMONDBACK | MANTA | RENEGADE | XCELERATOR |
| EL TORO | MAVERICK | ROAR | |

Yesterday's Solution

Restaurant

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

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------|------------|
| APERITIF | CUPS | MANAGER | SPOON |
| APPETIZER | CUSTOMER | MEAL | TABLECLOTH |
| BILL | DESSERT | MENU | TABLES |
| BUSBOY | DISHWASHERS | NAPKINS | TEA |
| CASHIER | DRINKS | ORDER | TIP |
| CHAIRS | ENTREE | PLATES | WAITER |
| CHEF | FORK | SALAD | WAITRESS |
| COFFEE | GLASSES | SAUCERS | WATER |
| COOKS | KNIFE | SERVERS | WINE |

The hidden word is: RESERVATION

Crossword 2384



ACROSS

- A vertical spar for supporting sails.
- A town in northern Egypt.
- The compass point that is one point west of due south.
- On or toward the lee.
- Type genus of the Cuculidae.
- Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
- A detailed description of design criteria for a piece of work.
- Relating to the Andes and their inhabitants.
- Covered with paving material.
- A nonmetallic largely pentavalent heavy volatile corrosive dark brown liquid element belonging to the halogens.
- One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
- A circumscribed inflammatory and often suppurating lesion on the skin or an internal mucous surface resulting in necrosis of tissue.
- Lack of respect accompanied by a feeling of intense dislike.
- (in golf) The standard number of strokes set for each hole on a golf course, or for the entire course.
- Make amends for.
- (sometimes followed by 'of') Having or showing realization or perception.
- In or relating to or obtained from urine.
- A city in western Nevada at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.
- A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- Wheeled vehicle that can be pushed by a person.
- A heavy ductile magnetic metallic element.
- Have an ambitious plan or a lofty goal.
- Island country in the Atlantic east of Florida and Cuba.
- A heavy odorless colorless gas formed during respiration and by the decomposition of organic substances.
- An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
- German mystic and theosophist who founded modern theosophy.
- Relating to or indicating a remainder.
- Any plant of the genus *Astilbe* having compound leaves and showy panicles of tiny colorful flowers.
- A mask with a filter protects the face and lungs against poisonous gases.
- A hospital unit staffed and equipped to provide intensive care.
- Submerged freshwater perennials.
- An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
- A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
- Any of various showy orchids of the genus *Calanthe* having white or yellow or rose-colored flowers and broad leaves folded lengthwise.
- A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
- The compass point that is midway between north and northeast.
- Excessively quick.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- An independent group of closely related Chadic languages spoken in the area between the Biu-Mandara and East Chadic languages.
- A large mountain system in south-central Europe.
- Pass gradually or leak through or as if through small openings.
- A technician who is highly proficient and enthusiastic about some technical field (especially computing).
- A burn cause by hot liquid or steam.
- The sister of your father or mother.
- A theory of strong interactions between elementary particles (including the interaction that binds protons and neutrons in the nucleus).
- The French-speaking capital of the province of Quebec.
- (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
- A score in baseball made by a runner touching all four bases safely.
- A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
- A usually malignant tumor arising from connective tissue (bone or muscle etc.).
- Cheese containing a blue mold.
- Impairment resulting from long use.
- (of stone especially) Not given a finished form by or as if by hewing.
- A city in northern India.
- A tiny or scarcely detectable amount.
- A silvery malleable metallic element that resists corrosion.
- Type genus of the Laridae.
- (of something seen or heard) Clearly defined.
- Someone whose job is to dye cloth.
- A Russian river.
- Manufactured in standard sizes to be shipped and assembled elsewhere.
- Indian nun and missionary (born in Albania) dedicated to helping the poor in India (1910-1997).
- (Scotland) A slope or hillside.
- Provoke someone to do something through promises or persuasion.
- Affectedly trendy.
- A prehistoric megalith typically having two upright stones and a capstone.
- A persistent but subordinate motif.
- A genus of Ploceidae.
- The fifth day of the week.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- Stem of the rattan palm used for making canes and umbrella handles.
- Small space in a tissue or part such as the area between veins on a leaf or an insect's wing.
- A mouth or mouthlike opening.
- An Oscan-speaking member of an ancient people of Campania.
- A short composition for a solo instrument.
- A member of a Turkic people of Uzbekistan and neighboring areas.
- (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- God of love and erotic desire.
- An informal term for a father.
- An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
- A colorless explosive liquid that is volatile and poisonous and foul-smelling.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings

MOVIES ACTION

00:15 Overlord
 02:20 Friday The 13th Part IV: The Final Chapter
 04:05 The Quake
 06:05 Men In Black 3
 08:00 Spy Hard
 09:30 We Still Steal The Old Way
 11:15 Occupation
 13:20 Men In Black 3
 15:20 WarGames
 17:25 Power Rangers
 19:40 Twelve Monkeys
 22:00 Predators

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:50 Wolves And Warriors
 01:45 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
 02:40 I Survived An Animal Attack
 03:35 The Aquarium
 04:25 Wolves And Warriors
 05:15 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
 06:02 Wildest Middle East
 06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
 07:36 Dogs 101: New Tricks
 08:25 Animal Cops Houston
 10:10 The Zoo
 11:05 Treehouse Masters
 12:00 Pit Bulls & Parolees
 12:55 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
 13:50 Crocodile Hunter
 14:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
 15:40 Pit Bulls & Parolees
 16:35 Urban Predator: Lion On The Loose
 17:30 Whale Wars
 18:25 Animal Cops Miami
 19:20 Keeping Up With The Kruger
 20:15 The Vet Life
 21:10 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
 22:05 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
 23:00 Urban Predator: Lion On The Loose
 23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees

BBC FIRST

00:10 EastEnders
 00:40 Mrs Wilson
 01:40 Holby City
 02:35 Bad Move
 03:00 Back
 03:25 The Coroner
 04:10 Father Brown
 05:00 Doctors
 05:30 Doctors
 06:00 Doctors
 06:30 EastEnders
 07:00 Holby City
 07:55 Death In Paradise
 08:50 Father Brown
 09:35 Casualty
 10:20 Five By Five
 10:25 Bad Move
 10:50 Bad Move
 11:15 Holby City
 12:10 Death In Paradise
 13:05 Father Brown
 13:50 Casualty
 14:35 Five By Five
 14:40 Bad Move
 15:05 Bad Move
 15:30 Doctors
 18:30 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
 20:10 The Cry
 21:10 Line Of Duty
 22:15 The Good Karma Hospital
 23:05 Press

crime investigation network

00:00 The First 48
 01:00 Homicide Hunter
 02:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
 02:55 Psychic Kids
 03:50 It Takes A Killer
 04:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
 05:30 The First 48
 06:15 Homicide Hunter
 07:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
 08:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
 08:20 The First 48
 09:50 Homicide Hunter
 11:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill

12:25 The First 48
 13:20 Crimes That Shook Australia
 14:15 Live PD: Police Patrol
 14:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
 15:10 It Takes A Killer
 15:40 It Takes A Killer
 16:05 Homicide Hunter
 17:00 The First 48
 18:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
 19:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
 20:00 It Takes A Killer
 20:30 It Takes A Killer
 21:00 The First 48
 22:00 Homicide Hunter
 23:00 Kids Behind Bars: Life Or Parole

COMEDY CENTRAL TV14

00:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
 00:27 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
 00:50 Impractical Jokers
 01:15 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
 01:40 Teachers
 02:05 Friends
 02:55 South Park (Repeats)
 03:20 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
 03:45 Teachers
 04:08 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
 04:35 South Park (Repeats)
 05:00 Friends
 07:10 House Of Food
 08:00 House Of Food
 08:55 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
 10:15 Friends
 12:20 Ridiculousness
 14:30 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
 17:10 Friends
 19:30 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
 21:30 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA
 22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
 22:30 Rachel Feinstein: Only Whores Wear Purple
 23:30 Most Ridiculous

Discovery Family

00:30 Dodo Heroes
 01:20 Animal Airport
 01:45 Animal Airport
 02:10 My Cat From Hell
 03:00 Dirty Jobs
 03:50 Somebody's Gotta Do It
 04:40 Tanked
 05:30 Animal Airport
 05:53 Animal Airport
 06:15 My Cat From Hell
 07:00 Dirty Jobs
 07:45 Somebody's Gotta Do It
 08:30 UFOs: The Lost Evidence
 09:15 Strip The Cosmos
 10:00 Strip The Cosmos
 10:45 Clistastic
 11:10 Tanked
 12:00 UFOs: The Lost Evidence
 12:50 Storm Chasers
 13:40 Invent It Rich
 14:30 Man v Expert
 15:20 Dirty Jobs
 16:10 Tanked
 17:00 Bad Dog
 17:50 My Cat From Hell
 18:40 Dirty Jobs
 19:30 The Carbonaro Effect
 20:20 Tricks On The Streets
 21:10 Breaking Magic
 21:35 Breaking Magic
 22:00 The Next Great Magician
 22:50 Keeping Up With The Kruger
 23:40 Tanked

LD

00:00 Dead Of Night
 01:00 Twisted Sisters
 02:00 The Lies That Bind
 03:00 The Coroner: I Speak For The Dead

05:30 Border Control: Spain
 07:35 Border Control: Spain
 08:00 Evil Online
 08:55 Evil Online
 09:50 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
 10:45 True Crime With Aphrodite Jones
 11:40 Betrayed
 12:35 Murder Chose Me
 13:30 Murder Chose Me
 14:25 Swamp Murders
 15:20 Deadly Affairs
 17:10 Betrayed
 18:05 Evil Stepmothers
 20:00 Disappeared
 22:00 Bride Killa
 23:00 Til Death Do Us Part

Discovery

00:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
 01:00 Alex & Co.
 01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
 02:40 Alex & Co.
 03:05 Binny And The Ghost
 03:55 Evermoor Chronicles
 04:45 Alex & Co.
 05:35 Violetta
 06:25 Binny And The Ghost
 06:45 Rolling With The Ronks
 07:00 Raven's Home
 07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
 07:55 That's So Raven
 08:20 That's So Raven
 08:45 K.C. Undercover
 09:10 Bizaardvark
 09:35 Jessie
 10:00 Jessie
 10:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
 11:15 Bizaardvark
 12:05 Liv And Maddie
 12:55 K.C. Undercover
 13:45 Bunk'd
 14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
 14:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
 15:00 Disney Cookabout
 15:25 Shake It Up
 15:50 A.N.T. Farm
 16:40 Penny On M.A.R.S
 17:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
 17:10 Amphibia
 17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
 18:00 Raven's Home
 19:00 That's So Raven
 20:00 Stuck In The Middle
 20:30 K.C. Undercover
 21:30 Shake It Up
 22:30 Disney Mickey Mouse
 22:35 Liv And Maddie
 23:25 Jessie

Disney Junior

00:00 PJ Masks
 00:30 The Lion Guard
 01:00 Sofia The First
 01:25 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes
 01:30 Gigantosaurus
 02:00 PJ Masks
 02:50 Paprika
 03:00 Zou
 03:30 Henry Hugglemonster
 04:20 Paprika
 04:40 Zou
 05:25 Paprika
 05:35 Paprika
 05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
 06:45 PJ Masks
 07:30 Gigantosaurus
 07:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
 08:00 The Lion Guard
 08:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
 09:00 PJ Masks
 09:30 Bluey
 09:40 Bluey
 09:50 Vampirina
 10:10 Vampirina
 10:30 Elena Of Avalor
 11:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy
 11:30 PJ Masks
 12:00 Vampirina
 12:30 Vampirina

13:00 Doc McStuffins
 13:30 Gigantosaurus
 14:00 Puppy Dog Pals
 14:30 Puppy Dog Pals
 15:00 PJ Masks
 15:30 T.O.T.S.
 16:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
 16:30 Vampirina
 17:00 Elena Of Avalor
 17:30 Sofia The First
 18:00 T.O.T.S.
 18:30 Bluey
 18:40 Bluey
 18:55 Doc McStuffins Shorts
 19:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy
 19:15 Fancy Nancy Clancy
 19:30 Vampirina
 20:00 PJ Masks
 20:30 The Lion Guard
 21:00 Sofia The First
 21:30 Elena Of Avalor
 22:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy
 22:30 Bluey
 22:40 Bluey
 22:55 Doc McStuffins Shorts
 23:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy
 23:15 Fancy Nancy Clancy
 23:30 Vampirina

Discovery

00:15 Running Wild With Bear
 Grylls
 01:05 Ripley's Believe It Or Not!
 01:50 Mythbusters
 02:35 Salvage Hunters: The Restorers
 03:20 Misfit Garage
 04:05 Misfit Garage
 04:50 How Do They Do It?
 05:15 How Do They Do It?
 05:35 Garage Gold
 06:00 Shed And Buried
 06:20 Garage Gold
 06:45 Running Wild With Bear
 Grylls
 07:35 Alaskan Bush People
 08:20 Gold Rush
 09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
 09:55 Salvage Hunters
 10:45 How Do They Do It?
 11:10 How Do They Do It?
 11:30 Misfit Garage
 12:20 Misfit Garage
 13:05 Shed And Buried
 13:30 Garage Gold
 13:55 Salvage Hunters
 14:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
 15:30 Running Wild With Bear
 Grylls
 16:15 Bad Chad Customs
 17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
 17:50 Gold Rush
 18:40 How Do They Do It?
 19:05 How Do They Do It?
 19:25 Misfit Garage
 20:15 Misfit Garage
 21:00 Salvage Hunters: Classic Cars
 21:50 Bad Chad Customs
 22:40 Wheeler Dealers
 23:30 Deadliest Catch: The Bait

3D

00:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
 01:00 Boyster
 01:20 Boyster
 01:45 Counterfeit Cat
 02:30 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
 03:20 Boyster
 03:40 Boyster
 04:05 Counterfeit Cat
 04:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
 05:15 Supa Strikas
 06:00 Lab Rats
 06:50 Phineas And Ferb
 07:40 Gravity Falls
 08:30 Phineas And Ferb
 09:20 Big City Greens
 10:05 Phineas And Ferb
 10:50 Lab Rats
 11:10 Lab Rats

11:35 Phineas And Ferb
 11:55 Phineas And Ferb
 12:20 Gravity Falls
 12:45 Gravity Falls
 13:10 Furiki Wheels S1 Shorts
 13:15 Phineas And Ferb
 13:40 Phineas And Ferb
 14:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
 14:30 Phineas And Ferb
 14:55 Phineas And Ferb
 15:20 Big City Greens
 15:45 Big City Greens
 16:10 Supa Strikas
 16:35 Supa Strikas
 17:00 Disney 11
 17:25 Lab Rats
 17:50 Phineas And Ferb
 18:15 Phineas And Ferb
 18:40 Supa Strikas
 19:05 Lab Rats
 19:30 Lab Rats
 19:55 Furiki Wheels S1 Shorts
 20:00 Disney 11
 20:25 Gravity Falls
 20:50 Phineas And Ferb
 21:15 Phineas And Ferb
 21:40 DuckTales
 22:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
 22:30 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
 22:55 Furiki Wheels S1 Shorts
 23:00 Furiki Wheels
 23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
 23:50 Dude That's My Ghost

E! HD

00:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
 01:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
 02:00 Nightly Pop
 03:00 Famously Single
 04:00 WAGs
 08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
 08:55 True Hollywood Story
 11:40 E! News: Daily Pop
 12:35 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
 15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
 16:15 Botched
 19:00 E! News: Daily Pop
 20:00 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian
 23:00 Nightly Pop
 23:30 Nightly Pop

HD

00:30 Weapons At War
 01:15 The Lost Evidence
 02:00 UFO Hunters
 02:45 How The Earth Was Made
 03:30 Fifth Gear
 04:15 Ancient Discoveries
 05:00 Ancient Aliens
 05:45 Cryptid: The Swamp Beast
 06:30 UFO Files
 07:15 Weapons At War
 08:00 How The Earth Was Made
 08:45 Fifth Gear
 09:30 Ancient Discoveries
 10:15 Ancient Aliens
 11:00 Decoding The Past
 11:45 UFO Files
 12:30 Weapons At War
 13:15 UFO Hunters
 14:00 How The Earth Was Made
 14:45 Fifth Gear
 15:30 Ancient Discoveries
 16:15 Ancient Aliens
 17:00 Decoding The Past
 17:45 UFO Files
 18:30 Weapons At War
 19:15 UFO Hunters
 20:00 How The Earth Was Made
 20:45 Fifth Gear
 21:30 Ancient Discoveries
 22:15 Ancient Aliens
 23:00 MysteryQuest
 23:45 UFO Files

HISTORY HD

00:20 The Curse Of Oak Island
 01:05 Storage Wars
 01:25 Storage Wars
 01:50 American Pickers Best Of
 02:35 Pawn Stars

02:55 Pawn Stars
 03:20 Hunting Hitler
 04:10 Project Impossible
 05:05 Forged In Fire
 06:00 Detroit Steel
 06:45 The Curse Of Oak Island
 07:30 Storage Wars
 07:50 Storage Wars
 08:15 American Pickers Best Of
 09:00 Pawn Stars
 09:20 Pawn Stars
 09:45 Hunting Hitler
 10:30 Project Impossible
 11:15 Forged In Fire
 12:00 American Pickers
 14:15 Truck Night In America
 18:45 Hunting Hitler
 21:00 Unidentified: Inside America's UFO Investigation
 21:50 Ancient Aliens
 22:40 Ancient Aliens
 23:30 American Pickers

NAT GEO people HD

00:10 Fish Tank Kings
 01:00 48 Hrs Destination
 01:50 What's For Sale With A View
 02:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
 03:30 Andy And Ben Eat Australia
 03:55 Late Nite Eats
 04:20 Destination Extreme
 05:10 Access 360 World Heritage
 06:00 David Rocco's Dolce India
 06:50 Miguel's Feasts
 07:40 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
 08:30 Late Nite Eats
 08:55 United Plates Of America
 09:20 Log Cabin Fever
 10:10 Pizza In Parma
 10:35 Delicacy Hunter: On The Silk Road
 11:00 Access 360 World Heritage
 11:50 David Rocco's Dolce India
 12:40 Miguel's Feasts
 13:30 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
 14:20 Late Nite Eats
 14:45 United Plates Of America
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 20:55 United Plates Of America
 21:25 Log Cabin Fever
 22:20 Pizza In Parma
 22:45 Delicacy Hunter: On The Silk Road
 23:15 Access 360 World Heritage

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

00:00 Nazi Megastructures: Battle Ready
 00:55 Primal Survivor
 01:45 Locked Up Abroad
 02:35 The Big Picture With Kal Penn
 03:00 The Big Picture With Kal Penn
 03:25 Inside T4: Terminal Of Tomorrow
 04:15 Nazi Megastructures: Battle Ready
 05:05 Primal Survivor
 06:00 Locked Up Abroad
 06:55 The Big Picture With Kal Penn
 07:20 The Big Picture With Kal Penn
 07:50 Nazi Megastructures: Battle Ready
 08:45 Primal Survivor
 09:40 WW2 Hell Under The Sea
 10:35 Car SOS
 11:30 Brain Games
 12:25 Access 360 World Heritage
 13:20 WW2 Hell Under The Sea
 14:15 Airport Security: Brazil
 15:10 America Inside Out With Katie Couric
 16:05 Lost Cities With Albert Lin
 17:00 Car SOS
 18:00 Access 360 World Heritage
 19:00 Brain Games

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It seems as if your sexual needs are one of the issues you seem to place great focus on today. You desire power and control. These desires may lead to greater interest in healing and investing. The great mysteries of life and death seem to intrigue you. You may feel much support and harmony in your life now. Surrounded by friends and loved ones is the place for you. You may find yourself having a great time this evening surrounded by the children and younger people in your life. It seems these younger people look at you with much admiration and strive to be more like you. Continue to set a good example for these children, Aries. Great reward could come from investing in the lives of others.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is a wonderful time for a quiet evening spent alone with your special someone. Keep to yourself today. This is not a great day for getting your point across to others. You may find your mind lost in your own memories. A great escape for you. This could be a very emotional day as you think back on lost love and lost loved ones. A walk down memory lane may bring your own mortality into focus. Life is short, Taurus. Live it to the fullest. Live, Laugh, and love hard. We are not promised tomorrow, so make today count.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Don't be surprised if you find someone challenging your values or your good taste. To each his own. This is why they make chocolate and vanilla. Do not take offense to this. You are unique and the only person you are responsible for pleasing is yourself. You may find you are being too strict on yourself. Loosen up and let your hair down. Life is short and you should remember to take time to relax and enjoy yourself every now and then. It seems the nature of time is something you have really had on your mind. You are starting to see just how short life is.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your stubbornness could be an asset today. You know what you want and you are willing to work to get it. Compromise is not your strength, but you find it is a need when it comes to a romantic issue. Find a middle ground that you can learn to live with. This may restore the peace and happiness you have been longing for.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

We are not promised tomorrow. This is weighing heavy on your mind. Time is ticking. You are fully aware that time seems to be passing by at a high rate of speed. This is a day you decide to live each day to the fullest. To live, love, and laugh. From this point on you will live your life to the fullest and spread joy in every direction you can.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You have a reputation for not offering information unless you know it to be true. If you argue, which is rare, you are sure of your premise. You present your case as facts, leaving little room for disagreement. Most people trust you because they know what you say is true. Some may see this as arrogance. But, in most cases you are able to make your point without offending. You have a knack for telling people what they don't want to hear, but in most cases making them like it.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

The sky is the limit. You have set your goals high and by this point you may be look down on them as you soar above and beyond all expectations you had for yourself. You are on fire. You filled with optimistic feelings and on top of the world. This is a great day for your relationship wise as well as in the workplace. You exude confidence today that so many will find as attractive. Your desires are leading you to crave something new. You are willing to try anything today with your "bring it on" attitude. High energy and happiness fill your world today.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may need to loosen up a bit. You seem to be taking life extremely serious now. You are too strict with yourself. All work and no play isn't a good thing. Sure you are getting a lot accomplished but at what cost? You will burn out. You will not be the person others want to spend time with. You have to realize there is more to life than money and sometimes your health is not worth the price. Take some time for you. Sit back and learn to relax, Scorpio. This will help you more than being overworked.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

No one likes to be stood up. This may be the action you take that puts strain on your relationship with friends. Though you would love nothing more than to be out with friends socializing and have some fun, your more responsible side knows where your priorities lie and are unable to go through with plans you have made. Your mind is sharp, and you find yourself very productive which is the reward you need to make up for having to miss out and play adult today. You may find your experience leaves you with a great sense of sympathy for those close to you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Something seems to be leading you toward a healthier lifestyle. You are ready to take life seriously. You know you are what you eat, or so they say. You are ready to feel better about your health. Today finds you getting serious about making some major lifestyle changes. You may want to join the gym, or start counting calories. You know you are ready to get up and get moving. Life will not pass you by. Your high energy and positive attitude will be determining factors in your quest for health. This is a great time for you, Capricorn. You will succeed.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

It seems as if you have a greater understanding of time and the fact life is short. Facing the day with this attitude, gives you inspiration to accomplish your goals. You are more passionate about all you do. You are making a decision to live as if each day is your last and enjoy all this world has to offer. This is a drastic change for you as you have been too strict on yourself in the past. You have no tolerance for anyone or anything that doesn't contribute to your long-term goals. You are full of ambition and will not allow anyone to stand in your way.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are loving and sensitive when it comes to others. Even though you tend to give from your heart with no expectations, you may be longing to feel some sense of appreciation for what you do for others. Taking a chance now could bring great rewards in the future.

Country Codes

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

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
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Friday, December 13, 2019

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

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

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

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

ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES:

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

SPECIALIZED IN:

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

SHARL, Ahmad Alshar, Building 16, Floor 11.
Tel: (+965) 22060777
@DrFahadS, @DrFahadS, @DrFahadS
Email: drfahad@beautybeyond.com.kw
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

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

Specialized in:

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

Know your Doctor
Otorhinolaryngology (E.N.T)
Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Specialist

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

Specialized in:

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

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

daralshifa
Email: aahaddad@daralshifa.com

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

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

daralshifa
Tele:1802 555

IC
American Board Certified in General Surgery
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation
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- Hernia repair
- Surgery for reflux disease
- Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- Breast surgeries
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries


Dr. Hani Haider
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- Problems of the uterus (fibroids, adhesions, congenital problems)
- Congenital problems of the vagina
- Ovarian problems e.g. cysts
- Problems of the fallopian tubes
- Cervical problems



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Dr. Maged Sefar
Specialist of Obstetrics & Gynecology



Dr. Bassem Alshamrani
Specialist of Obstetrics & Gynecology



Dr. Jawsana Sultan
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor



Dr. Wafiq Saqqa
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor



Dr. Fadia Al
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor



Dr. Mervat Husein
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor



Dr. Yehya Alshamrani
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor



Dr. Amal Alshamrani
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor



Dr. Rasha Alshamrani
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor



Dr. Amr Alshamrani
Obstetrics & Gynecology Doctor



Dr. Fatmeh Alshamrani
Specialist of Obstetrics & Gynecology

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Specialized in Hand, Shoulder, Hip and Knee

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WELCOME

Dr. Tammam Abou Ali
Consultant ENT, Head Neck, Facial Plastic Surgery

Advocate of the most advanced techniques in ENT and related fields.

15 years experience in ENT and related fields.

As Head of ENT Department in Hamad Hospital (2016-2018)

10 years work experience in UK and Ireland.


- ▲ Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
- ▲ Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
- ▲ Snoring and OSAP Surgery
- ▲ Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
- ▲ Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
- ▲ Salivary gland and parotid surgery
- ▲ Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
- ▲ Micro laryngeal surgery



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DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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



Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B



DR. WALEED S BUHAIMEED
Consultant of General Surgery
Laparoscopic and Bariatric Surgery

- Academic Certificates – Training
- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

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



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

Classifieds

CHANGE OF NAME

I, SUTHAN SUNIL SUNIL BHAVAN, S/o SUTHAN. Holder of Indian passport number N0423196 issued at Kuwait on 31/12/2015 and permanent address is SUNIL BHAVAN, West Of Pandavar Kavu Temple, Muthukulam North P.O, Alappuzha, Kerala, and PIN 690560. I am residing in Kuwait at present, Hereby declare that Henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: SUNIL, Surname: SUNIL BHAVAN SUTHAN. (C 5477) 13-12-2019

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 Door No. 4-56(1), Sonu compound, Padubelle Post, Via Shirva, Kaup Taluk Udipi District of Karnataka. Have changed my name as John Ivon Dsouza (new name) for all purpose vide affidavit dated 05-12-2019 sworn before notary Nagaraja Hegde, Udupi. 9-12-2019

SHARING ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation for Filipino ONLY Farwaniya block 4, near Big Jamiya, available on December 25, Contact 55571873. 11-12-2019

EMERGENCY

112

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

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Clouds will increase gradually with light variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Cloudy to partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind, with speed of 18 - 50 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	15 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	08 °C
ABDALY	21 °C	09 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	23 °C	12 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	21 °C	17 °C
AHMADI	20 °C	16 °C
NUWAISIB	25 °C	11 °C
WAFRA	23 °C	09 °C
SALMY	21 °C	11 °C

SFC. CHART	12/12/2019 0000 UTC

4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	12/13	Clouds will decrease gradually causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be	24 °C	11 °C	SE-NW	22 - 50 km/h
Saturday	12/14	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain	22 °C	10 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 28 km/h
Sunday	12/15	Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain later on	21 °C	09 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Monday	12/16	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rising dust with a chance for thunder rain at times	22 °C	13 °C	NW-SW	25 - 55 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:08
Sunrise	06:33
Zuhr	11:42
Ast	14:32
Sunset	16:51
Isha	18:13

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	12 °C
MAX. RH	81 %
MIN. RH	22 %
MAX. Wind	N 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Business

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019

38 Asian shares climb on dovish Fed, but Brexit hurdle looms



40 World first commercial electric aircraft takes flight in Canada



41 Smooth-talking Lagarde faces first ECB grilling



ABQAIQ: Photo shows a general view of Saudi Aramco's Abqaiq oil processing plant. Saudi Aramco's shares soared on their debut on the domestic stock exchange - becoming the world's biggest listed company worth \$1.88 trillion after a record-breaking IPO. —AFP

Aramco tops \$2 trillion target

Aramco shares hit 38.7 riyals on second trading day

DUBAI: Saudi Aramco topped the \$2 trillion target sought by Saudi leader Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman yesterday as the state-owned oil firm's shares soared for a second day, defying some scepticism about their long-term value. The Saudi Crown Prince has made the Aramco initial public offering (IPO) the centrepiece of his plan to diversify the Kingdom's economy away from its dependence on oil by using the \$25.6 billion raised to develop other sectors.

But that sum is well below the Crown Prince's earlier plan in 2016 to raise as much as \$100 billion through a blockbuster international and domestic listing. Riyadh scaled back its IPO plans after overseas investors balked at the proposed valuation and only 1.5% of Aramco's shares trade on the Riyadh stock exchange, a tiny free float for such a large company.

While the Saudi government hailed a 10% jump in the stock on their Wednesday market debut as a vindication of its long-sought valuation, support is largely from loyal Saudi and Gulf investors, with some analysts saying it is worth less. Bernstein analysts initiated Saudi Arabian Oil Co (Aramco) shares with an "underperform" rating, estimating its value at around \$1.36 trillion, which compares with US energy giant Exxon Mobil's valuation of less than \$300 billion.

"Saudi Aramco is the largest, most profitable oil company in the world - but size is not everything," they wrote, flagging the risk of slow net income growth if oil prices stay flat. Bernstein said Aramco should trade at a discount rather than a premium to international oil majors, with corporate governance "the key risk" as the Saudi government owns more than 98% of it. Aramco,

whose shares gained the maximum 10% allowed by the Riyadh exchange on their first day of trading, hit 38.7 riyals (\$10.32) yesterday, before easing to 37.5 riyals, putting its market value at \$2 trillion.

"Initial price action has validated our thesis that Aramco discounted its IPO price to leave upside on the table and allow regional investors to benefit from the listing of its crown jewel," Zachary Cefaratti, CEO of Dubai-based Dalma Capital, which invested in the IPO, said in a note yesterday. "The average institutional investor received less than 1/6th of the shares they bid for in the IPO, and have had to buy shares on the open market," Cefaratti added.

'Quick gains'

Aramco's IPO has become the world's biggest, topping the \$25 billion 2014 listing of

China's Alibaba, despite limited interest from foreign investors. It opted instead to sell a smaller proportion of shares and rely mainly on domestic and regional buyers, with some analysts predicting a lag before the Aramco price settles and some investors take profits.

"After Aramco hits \$2 trillion, investors will debate: why should it go higher ... while its owners value it at \$2 trillion?" a Gulf analyst who asked not to be identified said. The analyst added that when National Commercial Bank (NCB) was listed in 2014 its shares rose by the maximum limit for 10 days before investors started selling. A trader in Riyadh, who asked not to be identified, said that most of the trading was small scale, of 1,000-1,500 shares, "signaling that some retail investors opted to make quick gains" as they were "happy with a 6 riyal per share gain". —Reuters

Business

Asian shares climb on dovish Fed, but Brexit hurdle looms

Traders around the world brace for British election

TOKYO: Asian stocks rose yesterday to the highest in a month after the Federal Reserve signalled rate settings were likely to remain accommodative, but the imminent UK election and a deadline for Sino-U.S. trade talks kept investors cautious. The Fed kept interest rates unchanged, as expected, at its policy meeting on Wednesday but indicated interest rates would remain on hold, which nudged Wall Street stocks higher.

That helped MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan climb 0.98% to the highest since Nov. 11. Japan's Nikkei stock index rose 0.22% and U.S. stock futures edged up 0.1%. Australian shares were down 0.65%, however, weighed by the financial sector after a money-laundering scandal. Pan-region Euro Stoxx 50 futures were up 0.03%, German DAX futures were up 0.02%, while FTSE futures were up 0.16%.

"The Fed's accommodative stance does support equities, but the chance of a disruptive election outcome in Britain is very real," said Michael McCarthy, chief market strategist at CMC Markets in Sydney. "You also have the US-China trade problem. We're likely to see subdued trading and some investors may lock in profits as the day progresses." The S&P 500 rose 0.29% on Wednesday after the Fed's rate decision, which included enough dovish tones to cheer markets.

Traders are bracing for a series of make-or-break events over the next few days that have the potential to cause huge swings in financial markets for months to come. Sterling traded near the highest in more than two years versus the euro and close to an eight-month high versus the dollar before voting begins in an election that will determine whether Britain exits the European Union in an orderly fashion. Polls show the Conservatives' lead shrinking ahead of an election starting later on Thursday, which could jeopardize chances of a smooth Brexit.

Exit polls for Britain's election will begin around 2200 GMT after voting closes, then official results will begin to trickle in. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's ruling Conservative Party is running on a pledge to enact a swift split from the EU, ending more than three years of uncertainty. Traders say a hung parliament or a victory for the main opposition Labor Party could cause huge disruptions because Labor is promising another referendum on membership of the bloc.

Against the euro, sterling rose 0.1% to 84.32 pence, close to its firmest level since May 2017. The pound rose 0.2% to \$1.3218, just shy of its highest since March. The euro rose 0.1% to \$1.1142, close to a five-week high before a European Central Bank meeting later on Thursday where policymakers are expected to keep rates on hold. Chinese shares slipped 0.2%. Activity was subdued as investors awaited more news about the Sino-U.S. trade war.

US President Donald Trump is expected to meet Thursday with top advisers to discuss tariffs on nearly \$160 billion of Chinese consumer goods that are scheduled to take effect on Dec. 15, three sources told Reuters. Trump is expected to go ahead with the tariffs, a separate source told Reuters, which could scuttle efforts to end a 17-month long trade dispute between the world's two-largest economies. The dollar index against a basket of six major currencies fell 0.37% to 97.057, briefly touching a new four-month low after Powell it would take a significant pick-up in inflation to cause the Fed to raise rates.

Treasury yields initially fell in reaction to Powell's comments, but they rebounded slightly in Asia. The yield on benchmark 10-year Treasury notes rose to 1.7966%. US crude edged up 0.15% to \$58.85 a barrel. Brent crude rose 0.39% to \$63.97 per barrel. A report by OPEC released on Wednesday suggested that oil markets are tighter than previously thought. Traders are also fo-



RIYADH: A handout picture provided by Saudi Aramco shows the energy giant's President and CEO Amin Nasser writing a note during the official ceremony launching the debut of Saudi Aramco's initial public offering (IPO) on the Riyadh's stock market. — AFP

cused on state oil company Saudi Aramco, whose shares surged the maximum permitted 10% above their IPO price on their Riyadh stock market debut on Wednesday, making it the world's most valuable listed company. — Reuters

Turkish central bank may cut rates 150 points to 12.5%

ISTANBUL: Turkey's central bank is expected to cut its key interest rate to 12.5% from 14%, a Reuters poll showed yesterday, sustaining an easing cycle designed to revive the economy and bringing real rates below levels in most emerging markets. The central bank has cut rates three times since July, when the policy rate stood at 24% following a currency crisis which knocked nearly a third off the value of the lira last year and pushed Turkey into recession. After peaking at more than 25% in October last year, inflation has since slowed substantially and stood at 10.56% in November, near its three-year lows, reinforcing expectations for a sizeable policy rate cut at next week's policy meeting.

In a Reuters poll of 20 economists, the median estimate was for a 150-basis point interest rate cut to 12.50%. Estimates ranged between 12% and 13%. "We think the policy rate easing will continue. However, since a large amount of the room for monetary policy easing has been used up with front-loaded rate cuts, the pace will decline," said Deniz Cicek, an economist at QNB Finansbank.

The central bank says it sets its monetary stance to leave a "reasonable" real rate. Turkey's current real interest rate stood at 3.44% while average real rate in peer emerging market economies is calculated at 2.88%. The central bank and economists polled by Reuters expect inflation to stand at 12% at end-2019 while Turkish Finance Minister Berat Albayrak said it may end up lower than that. — Reuters

Chinese businesses boost self-reliance as trade war rolls on

BEIJING: Whether Beijing and Washington reach a trade deal or not, China is already speeding up efforts to break its reliance on a country that is one of its biggest economic partners but also its biggest adversary. The effort has gained greater urgency for Beijing after more than a year and a half of protracted negotiations, painful tariffs and US sanctions against leading Chinese technology companies. Negotiators are working towards a potential "phase one" deal but tensions could escalate again if President Donald Trump goes through with a planned tariff hike on Sunday.

To fortify themselves for future levies or political waves, Chinese companies are looking to new markets, adapting supply chains, sourcing homegrown parts and shifting to domestic suppliers. President Xi Jinping issued his own directive in May, calling for self-reliance in "key core technologies" while warning of a "Long March" against foreign challengers — a reference to a now-legendary 1934-35 strategic retreat by China's Communist revolutionaries.

A manager surnamed Liang at Weipai Industrial Ltd, a tablet computer maker in the southern tech hub of Shenzhen, said the company was diversifying supply chains to reduce reliance on US parts, and looking for a Chinese company to provide semiconductors. But other industries have also had to rethink their plans. A sales executive surnamed Lu at textile exporter Zhejiang Zhuang En said after shipments to the US almost halved this year they were targeting European and African fashion brands instead.

Tech leads the drive

Samm Sacks, China digital economy fellow at think tank New

America, said the trade war "has added fuel to the fire of the Chinese government's ambitions to duplicate industries inside China that they in the past got from the outside world". Joerg Wuttke, president of the EU Chamber of Commerce in China, said the two countries were in the process of "decoupling" — a term that has regularly sprung up during the trade war. "China has realised that it can't rely on some of the foreign suppliers," Wuttke told reporters on Monday.

"And the US has deliberately decided to contain China in many ways and decided to withhold technologies which they deem is beneficial to the Chinese industrial military complex." Sunday's potential tariff hike would target Chinese goods that were not previously hit by US duties — including about \$12 billion worth of Chinese toy imports, plus cellphones, laptops and tablet computers. Electronics and technology companies are at the forefront of China's drive to become self-sufficient.

Chinese tech giant Huawei launched its own operating system Harmony OS in August, as it faces the threat of losing access to Android systems with US-China tensions escalating. The company was swept into the trade war in May when it was blacklisted by Trump owing to suspicions its equipment could provide a backdoor for Chinese intelligence services, something the firm denies. Another tech firm, ZTE, nearly collapsed after US companies were prevented from selling it vital components over its continued dealings with Iran and North Korea.

Sacks said the ZTE case was a "watershed moment" for the Chinese government, and gave "a glimpse of what things might actually be like if they were cut off from global suppliers". Trump later allowed ZTE to resume imports under tough conditions.

The trade war is now "a critical battle of ideology, value systems, and morality", said Larry Ong, senior analyst with political risk consultancy SinoInsider. This week state news agency Xinhua reported that two Chinese companies were to jointly build a domestic operating system, seemingly in a bid to unseat the dominance of US giant Microsoft's Windows. — AFP

Shipping industry sails into unknown with new rules

Regulation kicks in Jan 1, shipping sector nervous

LONDON: Faced with imminent new global marine pollution rules, shipping companies and insurers are puzzling over the risks. To reduce emissions of toxic sulphur that cause premature deaths, shipowners who have long relied on the dirtiest residues of oil extraction will have to either switch to low-sulphur fuel or install exhaust gas cleaning systems from Jan. 1.

Neither option has been fully tested for long, and some problems have already been reported, both with the more expensive new fuels and with devices known as scrubbers which extract the sulphur on board. Interviews with key players in the industry show varying levels of alarm at potential risks, which they say range from unexpected fires or collisions due to engine failure to liability for inadvertently flouting the rules.

The container shipping industry alone is having to invest \$10 billion to adhere to the new rules, analysts say, and is concerned about extra costs were things to go wrong. If different types of the new, cleaner fuel are mixed, for example, they may produce a residue which could eventually clog up an engine and, in a worst-case scenario, damage or break it. Several large ship owners said handling the new fuels correctly and making sure the scrubbers were properly deployed would minimize danger, but that if care was not taken, problems could arise.

"The big guys are going to be serviced by the right people ... there is bigger risk for the smaller ships," Hugo De Stoop, chief executive of leading Belgian tanker operator Euronav said. Euronav has bought the equivalent of almost six months' supply of compliant fuel and is storing it in a megatanker off Malaysia. If a ship is too

far away and has to buy fuel, it will try to buy a single type, or, if only a blend is available, ask to see the seller's lab tests. "We don't always believe that people have done the test, been diligent about it," he said.

Future proofing

Khalid Hashim, managing director of one of Thailand's largest dry cargo ship owners, Precious Shipping, said it had not allowed co-mingling of marine fuel, also known as bunker fuel, for over five years and required all of it to be sample tested. "Of course this costs us annually around \$100,000, but we prefer that cost than to use untested bunker oil based solely on the Bunker Delivery Receipt and find that we have a massive problem on our ship," he said.

The company had taken measures to reduce its ships' fuel consumption to offset some of the extra costs and had installed extra compartments for the tanks on board to avoid mixing, he said. "That way we would have future-proofed our ships for the IMO 2020 regime," Hashim said, referring the UN International Maritime Organization's rules, agreed by more than 90 countries in hopes of saving more than half a million lives by 2025 alone.

Around 172 ships have avoided the problem because they are powered by sulphur-free liquefied natural gas (LNG), data from Norwegian risk management and certification company DNV GL showed, but this in an expensive option. Some ship owners have balked at paying for the new 0.5% sulphur fuel, which is quoted at more than twice the price of the 3.5% high-sulphur grade in northern Europe at the moment.

More than 3,000 ships - around 5% of the

global fleet - will have scrubbers fitted by 2020 so they can clean the exhaust gas and so continue using existing fuel, the DNV GL data showed. Some ports have banned one type of scrubber, the open-loop version which empties washwater residues into the sea, and insurers have reported cases of fires or corrosion with the devices. Norwegian ship insurer Gard cited a few cases where sparks from welding or cutting fell into a scrubber through uncovered openings: in one case it spread to the engine room through glass reinforced epoxy piping.

If corrosion was legally deemed to be inevitable, underwriters might try to deny related claims, said Stephen Harris, senior vice president with insurance broker Marsh. "Whether underwriters adopt this line or not could depend on how frequent and how big the problem becomes next year." Roger Stevens, VP of global sustainability with Norwegian shipping company Wallenius Wilhelmsen, said its experience with scrubbers had shown risks could be minimized if done properly. "If you buy cheap, you'll pay twice," he said. —Reuters

Fracking leaves heavy footprint in Argentina's Patagonia

ANELO: Pumpjack oil wells peck like giant birds at the ground, plumes of yellow flames flare from gas pipelines, lakes accumulate contaminated waste - Patagonia and its indigenous people are paying a heavy price for Argentina's economic progress. Vaca Muerta, a huge sweep of western Patagonian wilderness, sits on the world's second largest reserve of shale gas and its fourth largest oil reserves.

A push to develop extraction amid Argentina's crippling economic crisis has made the area a magnet for international oil companies. Crucially, Vaca Muerta is also home to indigenous Mapuche communities who say their rights are being denied. "They came in as a state enterprise and just blew up the land. Without measuring the conse-

quences or seeing that there were people living here — a Mapuche community living on the land," says Lorena Bravo, spokeswoman for the Mapuche community in Campo Maripe.

"And from then on they denied our existence." The Mapuche claim that the burgeoning oil and shale gas industry, in particular the controversial fracking technique used to extract it, has irreversibly damaged their ancestral homelands, and with it their traditional way of life. "One day all this activity will cease, because the oil is going to run out, the gas is going to run out. We are going to be left only with polluted land," says Bravo.

Mapuche land

The Vaca Muerta deposit extends over 30,000 square kilometers in Patagonia, between the provinces of Neuquen, Rio Negro, la Pampa and Mendoza. It represents 43 percent of the country's total oil production — 505,000 barrels per day in July - and 60 percent of its gas production. In the past few years, the town of Anelo has sprouted up from a Patagonian desert village where goats grazed to become a thriving oil hub of 8,000 people, with hotels and shops for workers, and a huge casino. —AFP



ABK emphasizes the importance of 'Customer Protection'

Ali Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) has recently announced the completion of its training courses to increase the awareness of the Bank's 'Customer Protection Manual'. The courses included the concept of transparency, and disclosure of the financial and banking transactions carried out by the bank for the various customers of all sectors, pursuant to the instructions issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait in this regard.

The Head of the Complaints and Customer Protection Unit at ABK, Ali Bu Hamad, stated that the "Customer Protection Manual" includes an important set of guidelines and controls that create an environment suitable for the preservation of the customers' rights within the framework of a balanced relationship that maintains protection for the

banking sector. ABK has further developed and updated new policies, procedures, internal controls and principles that comply with the requirements of the Manual. The staff members are well trained to activate these controls and to put them into practice to enhance the employees' awareness and to provide better services to clients.

The lectures, courses and workshops organized by the bank create the proper cultural and professional environment to enhance the protection of the customers' rights, which is in compliance with the instructions and controls issued by Central Bank of Kuwait and is also one of ABK's core values based on Transparency & Integrity.

Business

World first commercial electric aircraft takes flight in Canada

E-plane tested to confirm its reliability and safety

VANCOUVER: The world's first fully electric commercial aircraft took its inaugural test flight on Tuesday, taking off from the Canadian city of Vancouver and offering hope that airlines may one day end their polluting emissions. "This proves that commercial aviation in all-electric form can work," said Roei Ganzarski, chief executive of Seattle-based engineering firm magniX.

The company designed the plane's motor and worked in partnership with Harbor Air, which ferries half a million passengers a year between Vancouver, Whistler ski resort and nearby islands and coastal communities. Ganzarski said the technology would mean significant cost savings for airlines—not to mention zero emissions. "This signifies the start of the electric aviation age," he told reporters.

Civil aviation is one of the fastest growing sources of carbon emissions as people increasingly take to the skies and new technologies have been slow to get off the ground. At 285 grams of CO2 emitted per kilometer travelled by each passenger, airline industry emissions far exceed those from all other modes of transport, according to the European Environment Agency. The emissions contribute to global warming and climate change, which scientists say will unleash ever harsher droughts, superstorms, and sea-level rise.

The e-plane—a 62-year-old, six-passenger DHC-2 de Havilland Beaver seaplane retrofitted

with an electric motor—was piloted by Greg McDougall, founder and chief executive of Harbor Air. "For me that flight was just like flying a Beaver, but it was a Beaver on electric steroids. I actually had to back off on the power," he said. McDougall took the plane on a short loop along the Fraser River near Vancouver International Airport in front of around 100 onlookers soon after sunrise.

Environmentally-friendly flying

The flight lasted less than 15 minutes, according to an AFP journalist on the scene. "Our goal is to actually electrify the entire fleet. There's no reason not to," said McDougall. On top of fuel efficiency, the company would save millions in maintenance costs, as electric motors require "drastically" less upkeep, McDougall said. However, Harbor Air will have to wait at least two years before it can begin electrifying its fleet of more than 40 seaplanes.

The e-plane has to be tested further to confirm it is reliable and safe. In addition, the electric motor must be approved and certified by regulators. In Ottawa, Transport Minister Marc Garneau told reporters ahead of the maiden flight that he had his "fingers crossed that the electric plane will work well." If it does, he said, "it could set a trend for more environmentally friendly flying." Battery power is also a challenge. An aircraft like the one flown on Tuesday could only



RICHMOND: Harbor Air Pilot and CEO Greg McDougall flies the world's first all-electric, zero-emission commercial aircraft during a test flight in a de Havilland DHC-2 Beaver from Vancouver International Airport's South Terminal on the Fraser River in Richmond. — AFP

fly about 100 miles on lithium battery power, said Ganzarski.

While that's not far, it's sufficient for the majority of short-haul flights run by Harbor Air. "The range now is not where we'd love it to be, but it's enough to start the revolution," said Ganzarski, who predicts batteries and electric mo-

tors will eventually be developed to power longer flights. While the world waits, he said cheaper short-haul flights powered by electricity could transform the way people connect and where they work. "If people are willing to drive an hour to work, why not fly 15 minutes to work?" he said. — AFP

Huawei wins contract to develop German 5G network

BERLIN: Chinese telecom giant Huawei has won a contract to supply 5G infrastructure in Germany but the politically sensitive deal is subject to government approval following US concerns about snooping. Telefonica Germany, the second biggest operator after Deutsche Telekom, said it was giving Huawei and Finland's Nokia an equal role in the project, calling the two companies "proven strategic partners".

"This cooperation... will be subject to successful security certification of the technology and the companies in accordance with the legal regulations in Germany," Telefonica Germany said in a statement. The company, a unit of Spanish giant Telefonica, said it was "thus responding to the ongoing political process of defining these security guidelines without delaying the start of the 5G roll-out". It said it would begin the 5G upgrade next year and was hoping to supply 30 cities by the end of 2022.

The US and other international powers have voiced concerns that Huawei could be used by Beijing for spying - a claim the company strenuously denies. Germany has so far defied pressure to exclude Huawei from taking part in the bidding process, insisting that it would set stringent security conditions. But critics have accused Berlin of trying to appease China, its largest trading partner, and putting economic interests first. Last month, Economy Minister Peter Altmaier sparked US anger by drawing a parallel between alleged Chinese and US snooping as part of the debate. — AFP

France's pension: How it works and what will change

PARIS: The French government on Wednesday presented the details of a proposed pension reform plan that has triggered a crippling seven-day-old transport strike and brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets. President Emmanuel Macron wants to replace France's dozens of separate pension plans with a single new points-based system that would require many workers, particularly in the public sector, to work longer. Here is a look at some of the proposed changes:

Retirement age

The legal retirement age in France is 62, but millions of people, mainly public sector workers, are covered by special schemes that allow them to stop working earlier and/or receive better-than-average retirement payouts. The average French person retires at just over 60, three years earlier than elsewhere in Europe, and four years before the average for wealthy nations in the OECD, according to OECD figures. To try cut the deficit in the pensions system and offset rising life expectancy, the government wants people to work longer.

On Wednesday, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe unveiled plans for a system of penalties and bonuses aimed at getting people to continue working until 64. The changes will be introduced very gradually, from 2025 for most workers and from 2037 for those like train and metro drivers who currently retire in their fifties. They will not affect the police, who will still be able to retire from the age of 52, while firefighters who can retire from 57. Other workers with arduous jobs, such as nurses, will be allowed to retire be-

fore 62, as will those who start work before 20 years of age and those who work at night.

Pension payouts

France's current system is one of the most generous in the world, with pensions representing on average 75 percent of workers' pre-retirement earnings, compared to an OECD average of 58 percent. The pensions of public sector workers are based on the last six months of their career, a more favourable system than the private sector where the payout is based on the workers' 25 best-paid years. The government wants to bring the public sector in line with the private sector, causing concern among civil servants that their pensions will shrink. Philippe promised that the government would put in place measures "to ensure that no-one loses out" and that teachers' pensions would remain unchanged. He also promised to increase the minimum pension for the lowest-paid workers from 980 euros to 1,000 euros and give top-ups to women who lose income while staying home to look after children.

Quarters vs points

In another major change, the new system will be based on points awarded for hours worked rather than quarters worked — a system the government says will be fairer to those who work odd jobs. Unions have however warned that an arbitrary point, rather than a quarter, could be devalued by future administrations out to cut spending on pensions. Philippe said unions themselves would fix the euro value of a point - the still to be defined unit of calculating pensions - and that the government would introduce a "golden rule" to prevent it ever going down.

Union reaction

The main public sector unions have rejected the reforms out of hand and vowed no let-up in the strike until they are withdrawn. The more moderate CFDT union, which backs the move to a single pension scheme, also slammed Wednesday's announcements, saying attempts to get the French to work longer "crossed a red line". — AFP

Business

China raises concerns over 737 MAX design changes

Reliability and security of design an issue

BEIJING: China's aviation regulator raised "important concerns" with Boeing Co on the reliability and security of design changes to the grounded 737 MAX, it said yesterday, but declined to comment on when the plane might fly again in China. China is reviewing the airworthiness of the plane based on proposed changes to software and flight control systems according to a bilateral agreement with the United States, Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) spokesman Liu Lusong told reporters at a monthly briefing.

He reiterated that for the plane to resume flights in China, it needed to be re-certified, pilots needed comprehensive and effective training to restore confidence in the model and the causes of two crashes that killed 346 people needed to be investigated with effective measures put in place to prevent another one. China was the first country to ground the 737 MAX after the second crash in Ethiopia in March and had set up a task force to review design changes to the aircraft that Boeing had submitted.

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will not allow the 737 MAX to resume flying before the end of 2019, its chief, Steve Dickson, said on Wednesday. Once the FAA approves the reintroduction into service, the 737 MAX can operate in the United States, but individual regulators could keep the planes grounded in other countries until they complete their own reviews.

"Due to the trade war, the jury is still out on when China would reintroduce the aircraft," said

Rob Morris, Global Head of Consultancy at Ascend by Cirium. Chinese airlines had 97 737 MAX jets in operation before the global grounding, the most of any country, according to Cirium Fleets Analyzer.

US aviation chief

Meanwhile, the top US air transport regulator has doused Boeing's hopes that its 737 MAX will return to the skies this year while lawmakers probed why the agency failed to ground the plane after the first of two tragic crashes. In an interview just ahead of a congressional hearing, Federal Aviation Administration chief Steve Dickson told CNBC the aircraft will not be cleared to fly before 2020.

The MAX has been grounded since March following the second of two crashes that killed a total of 346 people. The process for approving the MAX's return to the skies still has 10 or 11 milestones left to complete, including a certification flight and a public comment period on pilot training requirements, the FAA chief said. "If you just do the math, it's going to extend into 2020," he said. Boeing has been aiming to win regulatory approval this month, with flights projected to resume in January. But Dickson said, "I've made it very clear Boeing's plan is not the FAA's plan."

A captured agency?

Many of the questions at the hearing by the House Transportation Committee focused on why the FAA did not move more aggressively

actions are not taken, it allows the complaining country to rescind tariff-free access for the offending facility's products, among other penalties. The text also creates presumptions that any labor or environmental violation affects trade and investment, a legally important distinction that makes it difficult for an offending country to ignore such disputes.

Environment

The deal does not include any provisions to limit climate change, disappointing environmental groups. But the changes require each of the three countries to fulfill their obligations under the 1987 Montreal Protocol to eliminate ozone-depleting substances. Mexico is a member, but the United Nations has cited Mexico for violations as late as 2008. The text also requires compliance with international agreements on endangered species, wetlands, Antarctic marine life, whaling and tuna fisheries.

Pharmaceuticals

The deal aims to hold down drug prices by limiting some patent protections for pharmaceuticals. Eliminated from the text is a required 10-year data exclusivity period for biotech medicines, which US Democrats feared would prolong higher prices for some of the priciest drugs. The deal also removes a provision that would require parties to confirm patents for new uses of known drugs, combating a process called "patent evergreening" that blocks generic competition. —Reuters

How North American trade deal will affect labor, environment

NEW YORK: New amendments to the US-Mexico-Canada trade agreement (USMCA) focus heavily on stronger labor enforcement, outlining a detailed process to address any allegations that Mexican factories are violating workers' rights. Based on a text released on Wednesday, the following are some of the key changes to the pact that underpins the \$1.2 trillion in regional trade and is due to replace the 26-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement. In addition to labor provisions, they include reduced patent protections for pharmaceuticals and a stricter definition for steel required in automotive production.

Labor rights

To ensure that Mexico implements higher labor standards that aim to allow Mexican workers to unionize and to drive up wages, the deal includes a new mechanism under which the United States and Canada can convene panels of international labor experts to complaints that Mexican factories are denying the freedom to organize and collectively bargain. The change stops well short of initial US demands to place foreign inspectors in Mexican plants.

But if such violations are found and remedial



WASHINGTON: People hold up pictures of the victims of Boeing 737 MAX accidents as Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Stephen Dickson testifies before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. —AFP

after the first crash in October 2018. Boeing and the FAA have been under intense scrutiny for their responses to issues with the aircraft, including the flight-handling system involved in both accidents, the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System, or MCAS. Rather than grounding the plane after the Lion Air crash, the FAA did not move until after the Ethiopian Airlines tragedy in March.

In the interim, the agency required Boeing to revise the MCAS flight handling system in a

process overseen by the FAA and issued guidelines to flight crews worldwide on how the respond to a problem with MCAS, an automated system the Lion Air pilots were unable to control. At Wednesday's hearing, Representative Peter DeFazio, an Oregon Democrat leading a congressional probe, cited an internal FAA risk analysis that found that without fixes to MCAS, the MAX could suffer as many as 15 such catastrophic accidents over its decades of expected use. —Agencies

Smooth-talking Lagarde faces first ECB's grilling

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: New European Central Bank president Christine Lagarde makes her first monetary policy announcements Thursday, with observers hunting for clues to her leadership style and the bank's response to stuttering eurozone growth. A 1:45 pm statement is expected to unveil no change to predecessor Mario Draghi's ultra-loose monetary policy following Lagarde's maiden meeting of the ECB's governing council in Frankfurt.

But the former International Monetary Fund chief can expect a grilling at the post-meeting press conference. "Monetary policy involves a lot of subtle signalling and it remains to be seen if and how Lagarde will be willing to drop policy hints, or use code words to guide markets," said Frederik Ducrozet of Pictet Wealth Management. With a background in corporate law, she is the first ECB chief who is not a trained economist. She is also admired as an effective communicator. Lagarde has herself pleaded for patience, saying she has been on a steep "learning curve" since taking up the job last month.

"I am trying to learn German, but I am also trying

to learn central bank language," the one-time French finance minister told MEPs last week, acknowledging the market-moving impact of even a single ambiguous word. Perhaps more than policy shifts, observers will be listening closely for hints about a "strategic review" - the institution's first since 2003. The timing and scope of the review remain unclear, but it could lead to a major shake-up amid calls for the ECB to rethink its inflation target and take more climate action.

Tensions

In his final act as ECB chief, Draghi in September unveiled fresh stimulus to bolster the 19-nation euro area, which has been weighed down by US-China trade tensions, Brexit uncertainty and a weakening manufacturing sector. As well as offering a new round of cheap credit to lenders, Draghi slashed a key interest rate deeper into negative territory and kept others at historic lows.

He also restarted a controversial bond-buying program to the tune of 20 billion euros (\$22 billion) a month, in the hopes of encouraging spending and investment. But several of the ECB's 25 governing council members opposed the asset purchases, leading to an unprecedented public spat led by criticism from Germany's Bundesbank central bank chief Jens Weidmann. One of Lagarde's first moves upon arriving in Frankfurt was to take the council on a retreat to heal the rift - and ECB watchers will be keen for an update. —AFP

Sports

Els elated after 'unbelievable' 4-1 start against Woods-led US

MELBOURNE: Ernie Els' young International team got off to dream Presidents Cup start as they stunned Tiger Woods' star-studded United States to take a 4-1 lead after the opening fourballs yesterday.

The Americans were heavy favourites ahead of the matchplay event at Royal Melbourne, having won all but one of the 12 editions of the biennial clash, with one drawn. But Els boasts intimate knowledge of the difficult sandbelt layout where he holds the course record, and spent hours schooling his team on its fast greens and treacherous bunkers.

It paid dividends with the Internationals in front after the opening day for the first time since 2005. "We've got a long way to go, but this is an unbelievable start. We haven't had a start like this for many years," said an elated Els, adding that he never envisioned having a 4-1 advantage.

"It's really nice to have some points on the board. There were a lot of tight matches and a lot of crucial putts, and great golf shots," he added. Superstar Woods and world number four Justin Thomas put the first point on the board for the US with a 4 and 3 victory over Australian Marc Leishman and Chilean newcomer Joaquin Niemann, with the 43-year-old sinking the winning putt.

But that was as good as it got on a blustery day that began in overcast conditions and light drizzle before the sun burst through. "This is a long four days. I mean, we have to go earn this Cup," said a defiant Woods.

"Just because we lost the session doesn't mean the Cup's over. There's a long way to go. A lot of points available. The guys will

regroup and we'll come out tomorrow ready to go." Bad boy Patrick Reed was heckled on the first tee by a boisterous Australian crowd who loudly jeered the controversial American after he became embroiled in a cheating row earlier in the week.

Undeterred, Reed and partner Webb Simpson dug in and levelled a tense tie on the 16th against Japan's Hideki Matsuyama and Taiwan newcomer CT Pan. But it was not enough with the Japanese star landing a big birdie putt on the 17th to steer them to victory.

South Korea's PGA Tour rookie of the year Im Sung-jae enjoyed a stellar start to his first Presidents Cup, chipping in for an eagle at the first to put him and Canadian partner Adam Hadwin one up.

Patrick Cantlay and Xander Schauffele levelled on the sixth and a tight affair tipped the Internationals way when Hadwin drilled a tough par putt on the 16th for the lead they never relinquished.

Australia's Adam Scott, who like Woods is in his ninth Presidents Cup, and South Korean teammate An Byeong-hun beat Bryson DeChambeau and Tony Finau 2 and 1 and were never threatened after snatching the lead at the third.

The biggest upset saw Mexico's Abraham Ancer and South African Louis Oosthuizen convincingly outgun US Open champion Gary Woodland and former world number one Dustin Johnson 4 and 3.

Woods was in the first group out and was greeted by a small but noisy group of supporters, including one wearing a tiger suit. A beaming Woods, the first player-captain since Hale Irwin at the inaugural event in 1994, sunk back-to-back birdies to



MELBOURNE: International Team captain Ernie Els of South Africa (L) celebrates with player An Byeong-hun during day one of the Presidents Cup golf tournament in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

go two up early against Leishman and Niemann. A vintage chip-in for birdie on the fifth to huge roars put them three-up. They were pegged back to one up by the seventh as the young Chilean rookie Niemann ran hot with the putter.—AFP

But a classy Woods birdie on the 15th sealed the victory to stretch the 15-time

major winner's record to 25 wins, 15 losses and one half at the Presidents Cup, second only to Phil Mickelson's 26 wins.

"It's no coincidence why we won," said Thomas. "He (Woods) really carried me out there." With 30 points at stake over the week, the first to 15 1/2 will secure the cup. —AFP

Reed heckled on first tee

MELBOURNE: Bad boy Patrick Reed was heckled on the first tee at the Presidents Cup yesterday by the Australian crowd who loudly jeered the controversial American, then cheered as his opening drive found a bunker.

Reed, part of Tiger Woods' US team at Royal Melbourne, was docked two strokes for improving his lie in sand in the Bahamas last week, causing International team opponent Cameron Smith of Australia to brand him a cheat.

Reed was greeted by a chorus of boos when his name was called alongside partner Webb Simpson at the first tee of his fourball against Japan's Hideki Matsuyama and Taiwan newcomer CT Pan. Reed's tee shot sped across the fast-running fairway and toppled into the sand to a roar from the partisan fans at Royal Melbourne, but the US pair went on to halve the hole.

The barracking continued, with the local Herald Sun newspaper reporting one person shouting: "Have you got 14 clubs and rake in your bag?" Last week in the Bahamas Reed's practice swings had twice moved sand from behind his ball in a waste bunker, but he insisted he had not deliberately improved his lie, despite being penalised. —AFP

Springbok Elstadt eyes Champions Cup quarter-finals

PARIS: Toulouse's South Africa back-rower Rynhardt Elstadt says clinching a place in the European Champions Cup quarter-finals is on the squad's mind ahead of facing Montpellier this weekend as he also looks to ease any lingering disappointment over missing his country's World Cup triumph.

The Top 14 title holders can close in on a last eight spot with two rounds to go if they win Saturday's all-French affair and Gloucester beat Connacht in Ireland in Pool 5. "There have been talks about it but the mindset of the team is really good, they never overthink things," Elstadt told AFP.

"If we don't win this weekend we have another chance the following weekend of European games. In the back of your mind, if we do take the victory we can be certain of a quarter-final spot," he added.

Elstadt, 29, made his Springboks debut in July but missed out on a spot in the squad which went on to win the World Cup less than four months later. "From day one I knew

where I was standing in team selection so the disappointment wasn't too bad. It would have been between myself and (captain) Siya Kolisi because he had a knee injury," Elstadt said.

"At the end of the day I was still disappointed as I wasn't going to a World Cup, especially when they bloody won the thing," he added. The combative flanker is joined in the record four-time European champions set-up by World Cup winner and fellow former Stormer Cheslin Kolbe, who could start his first Toulouse game of the season this weekend.

The pair lifted the Top 14 title together in June and Kolbe then starred at the World Cup, scoring four tries in as many games. "Nothing has ever changed with him since the day I met him. He's just an incredible human being on and off the field," Elstadt said.

"He's not a really big player but he has a heart of a lion and he's just proved it over and over. He's such an X-factor player," he added. Elsewhere this weekend, last year's runners up Leinster can also take a step towards the knock-out stages with victory over Northampton in Pool 1.

The two other sides with three wins from as many games this season in Exeter Chiefs and Ulster play Harlequins and Sale Sharks respectively. Defending champions Saracens, who have been fined and deducted points in the English Premiership for salary cap irregularities, host Munster in Pool 4. —AFP

Sports

Friday, December 13, 2019

20th FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championship opens



Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem (second right) during the opening ceremony.



Officials from different countries attending the matches.



Water polo games in action.

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem opened the 20th FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championship, Kuwait 2019, being held at HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Olympic Swimming Pools Complex of Al-Nasr Sports Club, with 20 countries participating.

Al-Ghanem, who is the event's patron opened the championship in the presence of FINA president along with other dignitaries including Public Authority for Sports Director General Dr Humoud Fulaiteh, his deputy Dr Saqer Al-Mulla, President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Fahad al-Nasser, Head of Kuwait Swimming Federation Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader along with several ambassadors from participating countries.

The 20th FINA Junior Water Polo Championship being held in Kuwait began with a huge win by Croatia in the opening match against South Africa by the score of 15-6 within group A, which also saw Japan beat China in an "Asian derby". Other results in-

clude Uzbekistan losing to New Zealand 6-22 from group D, Canada beat Egypt 12-8 from Group B, Kuwait lost to Iran by the score of 7-15 in group C.

Kuwait national team will face a tough match against Montenegro at 2:50 pm today in the second round, which will also have an interesting match between Iran and USA at 4:10 pm.

The second round will open with another tough match between Egypt and Spain at 8:30 am, followed by a match between Russia and Canada at 9:50 am.

Greece, the current champion will face New Zealand at 1:30 pm, and Brazil will face Uzbekistan at 5:30 pm. Meanwhile China will play South Africa at 6:50 pm while Serbia will play Japan at 8:10 pm.

Third round matches will see Italy facing Iran at 9:30 am tomorrow, Hungary will play Egypt at 10:50 am, while Australia and New Zealand will face off at 12:10 pm, Greece against Brazil at 1:30 pm, Croatia against China at 2:50 pm, South Africa against Serbia at 4:10 pm, USA against Montenegro at 5:30 and Spain against Rus-

sia at 6:50 pm.

South Africa's team coach said it is a huge prestige for us to be in this tournament, which is the best in the world for this age group, adding that being from Africa to play in the world stage is an incredible opportunity for the players to learn and evolve and compare themselves to the best of the world as the case was with the match with Croatia.

He said that in terms of expectations, "we do not get to attend many of these tournaments in our junior age groups, so for this particular group of players 50% of them are playing in their second major tournament and we try to perform as best as we can. He said that it is too early to tell who is favorite to win this tournament, but Croatia is traditionally a strong team, so is Serbia, Italy and Hungary, in addition Japan has a unique system and it will be interesting how that plays in this tournament.

South Africa's coach thanked Kuwait Swimming Federation and described the facility as amazing.

Croatia's coach on his part was not sat-

isfied with the first half and said his players were sleeping, but improved in the second half and came out with a good results.

He said "we aim to be in the semifinal and look for a medal for sure," adding "I hope to win the tournament as some people predict."

Meanwhile, first Vice-president of FINA Hussain Al-Musallam following the board of director's meeting said Russia will be part of the 20th tournament, adding that the Anti Doping Agency WADA gave Russia 21 days to meet some requirements, then in case Russia fails to do so, they will go to Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) to decide, and Russia has the right to participate during this period.

Al-Musallam said the FINA board approved the referees and officials list for the next Tokyo 2020 Olympics, and a number of upcoming championships were discussed.

He said those in the meeting thanked Kuwait, government and Public Authority for Sport for their obvious efforts to organize the world championship.

Zain official sponsor of FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championships 2019

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its Official Sponsorship of the FINA World Men's Junior (U20s) Water Polo Championships 2019. The tournament, hosted by the State of Kuwait, is organized by the Kuwait Swimming Association and the Public Authority for Sport under official supervision from the International Swimming Federation (FINA). The event takes place from 12-20 December at Sheikh Nasser Al Mohammad Olympic Swimming Pools Complex at Al Naser Sports Club under the patronage of Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Marzouq Al Ghanem.

During the press conference, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti said: "Zain strongly believes in the important role played by the private sector in developing the youth and sports sectors in Kuwait. We make this concept a reality by sponsoring and supporting various major sporting events in Kuwait, including this international tournament, as well as sponsoring and encouraging many Kuwaiti athletes who represent



Kuwait in local, regional, and international arenas".

Al Khashti continued: "Zain offers free 5G Internet coverage at Sheikh Nasser Al Mohammad Olympic Swimming Pools Complex throughout the championship. The high-speed connection is used by the young participants, their parents and families, the official delegations, organizing committees, as well as the attending crowds. We were keen on offering our latest and most advanced services to serve Kuwait's guests and contribute to making this international event a success, reflecting Kuwait's leading position in the international sport scene".

Al Khashti further explained that Zain's support to the tournament comes in line with its keenness on encouraging the various efforts that contribute to developing the Kuwaiti youth and sports sectors. The company puts the support of Kuwaiti sports at the forefront of its priorities under the umbrella

of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy. Zain's support of Kuwaiti champions, many of whom are aquatics athletes, results in many achievements that the company is proud of one year after another.

The State of Kuwait hosts the FINA World Men's Junior (U20s) Water Polo Championships 2019, organized by the Kuwait Swimming Association and the Public Authority for Sport under official supervision from the International Swimming Federation (FINA). The tournament features 830 players and administrators, as well as 280 delegates and players' parents. Each day witnesses 8 to 10 matches.

This year, the tournament features 20 teams: Kuwait, Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Hungary, Spain, Italy, Greece, Russia, Canada, United States of America, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Egypt, South Africa, Japan, China, Iran, and Uzbekistan.

Sports

Historic Pakistan-Lanka Test hit by bad weather

RAWALPINDI: Heavy rain and bad light hit the second day of the historic Test between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in Rawalpindi yesterday, Pakistan's first home Test since a deadly attack in 2009. Sri Lanka, resuming at 220-5, had progressed to 225-5 in 7.5 overs when heavy rain in the morning forced the teams to have early lunch. Play was stopped for two hours and 43 minutes but when it resumed

only 10 overs were possible with Sri Lanka losing Niroshan Dickwella for 33 before bad light accompanied by rain forced an early call-off at 3:30 pm (1030 GMT).

At the close Sri Lanka were 263-6 with Dhananjaya de Silva unbeaten on 72 and Dilruwan Perera not out on two. The stop-start play left both teams frustrated as well as 2,000 fans who had come to watch the revival of Test cricket in Pakistan. When play resumed after lunch Pakistan took the second new ball and with it lanky pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi removed Dickwella, caught at gully by Babar Azam.

Dickwella, who hit four boundaries, added 67 for the sixth wicket with de Silva, thwarting Pakistan's attempts for early wickets. De Silva has so far hit 11 boundaries in his 131-ball stay. Earlier, the brief period of play saw wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan claim a catch to dismiss de Silva off the bowling of 16-year-old Naseem Shah, but third umpire Richard Illingworth ruled the ball had bounced. On the next ball de Silva completed his half-century with two runs off Naseem, who with 2-65 was the pick of Pakistan's bowlers.

The Test is the first in Pakistan since a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus killed eight people in March 2009, leading to the suspension of international cricket in



RAWALPINDI: Sri Lanka's Dhananjaya de Silva (R) plays a shot as Pakistan's wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan looks on during the second day of the first Test cricket match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi yesterday. —AFP

the country as foreign teams refused to visit over security fears. With improved security, Pakistan hosted Zimbabwe, a World XI, West Indies and Sri Lanka in the last four years, but only for limited over matches. Sri

Lanka only agreed to tour after completing a limited over tour (three one-day internationals and as many Twenty20s) in September-October this year under tight security arrangements. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the close on the second day of the first cricket Test between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at Rawalpindi stadium yesterday:

Sri Lanka 1st innings

D. Karunaratne lbw b Shaheen	59
O. Fernando c Sohail b Naseem	40
K. Mendis c Rizwan b Shinwari	10
A. Mathews c Shafiq b Naseem	31
D. Chandimal b Abbas	2
D. de Silva not out	72
N. Dickwella c Azam b Shaheen	33
D. Perera not out	2
Extras: (b 5, lb 6, nb 3)	14
Total: (for six wkts: 86.3 overs)	263

Still to bat: V. Fernando, K. Rajitha, L. Kumara
Fall of wickets: 1-96 (Karunaratne), 2-109 (Fernando), 3-120 (Mendis), 4-127 (Chandimal), 5-189 (Mathews), 6-256 (Dickwella)

Bowling: Abbas 24-9-56-1, Shaheen 19.3-7-47-2 (nb3), Shinwari 15-4-54-1, Naseem 22-4-75-2, Sohail 3-0-12-0, Masood 1-1-0-0, Shafiq 2-0-8-0

Pakistan: Shan Masood, Abid Ali, Azhar Ali, Babar Azam, Haris Sohail, Asad Shafiq, Mohammad Rizwan, Usman Shinwari, Mohammad Abbas, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Bills and Steelers face key playoff-race battle

NEW YORK: The Buffalo Bills have a short distance to travel for their Sunday night game against the Pittsburgh Steelers at Heinz Field, but they could take a huge step. With a win, the Bills (9-4) would clinch a playoff spot. In fact, they could keep alive a shot at the AFC East title. "We're playing games that matter in December," Bills tight end Lee Smith said. "I just know we're trying to go 1-0 against the Pittsburgh Steelers, and if that results is us locking in a playoff spot with two games left in the season, that's a pretty dang good feeling. "It's absolutely a great feeling and an awesome deal that we kind of control (a chance at) playing games in January."

Buffalo is coming off a 24-17 loss against the visiting Baltimore Ravens last week that ended the Bills' three-game winning streak. However, Buffalo is 5-1 on the road. "It's no secret we've got to go win this game," Bills quarterback Josh Allen said. "We've got to go win the next couple games that we have, but we're focused on the Pittsburgh Steelers right now." Buffalo is 7-0 when scoring more than 17 points, but Allen and the Bills face a staunch Pittsburgh defense.

The Steelers (8-5) rank fifth in the NFL at 310.9 yards allowed per game. Their defense features safety Minkah Fitzpatrick, who is tied for the NFL lead with five interceptions, and linebacker T.J. Watt, who is among the league leaders with 12.5 sacks. "They're playing extremely well, taking away the ball, sacking the quarterback at a high rate," Allen said. "They've had a really good pass rush plan. ... It's going to be very tough for us." The Steelers, who started 1-4 and lost quarterback Ben Roethlisberger to elbow surgery during that stretch, have won seven of eight since then. —Reuters

Labuschagne's century powers Australia to day one advantage

PERTH: Batsman Marnus Labuschagne stroked his third straight majestic century, as Australia took advantage of a weakened New Zealand attack in fierce heat on the opening day of the first test yesterday. Australia, who won the toss and batted in the day-nighter, reached 248 for four at stumps with Labuschagne 110 not out and Travis Head unbeaten on 20. Labuschagne batted through the final two sessions on a Perth Stadium pitch which was unresponsive before coming alive under the lights.

South Africa-born Labuschagne became just the ninth Australian batsman to notch three consecutive tons when he clubbed a six - just his second of his 12-test career - down the ground off spinner Mitchell Santner to add to his centuries posted against Pakistan in Brisbane and Adelaide. He shared a 132-run third-wicket partnership with Steve Smith (43) to grab control of the contest when conditions were at their most oppressive.

Stifled by disciplined New Zealand bowling and astute field placements from captain Kane Williamson, Smith was unable to find fluency and fell when he miscued a short delivery from Neil Wagner to leg gully. While the hosts were unchanged, New Zealand were dealt a major blow when spearhead Trent Boult failed to overcome a side strain and were further weakened when debutant quick Lockie Ferguson was forced off the field after injuring his right calf in the second session. Yet New Zealand battled manfully and clawed their way back with the pink ball under lights, highlighted by a Tim Southee pearler to dismiss Matthew Wade for 12 shortly before the close. An unruffled Labuschagne, however, survived through to stumps after impressively rebuilding Australia's innings following the dismissals of their openers in the first session.

Colin de Grandhomme, New Zealand's workhorse all-rounder, returned to the lineup after overcoming an abdominal injury and made an



PERTH: Australia's Marnus Labuschagne makes a run on day one of the first Test cricket match between Australia and New Zealand at the Perth Stadium, in Perth yesterday. —AFP

immediate impact with the wicket of Joe Burns for nine. David Warner, fresh off his unbeaten 335 against Pakistan in Adelaide, fell in spectacular fashion just before the tea break for 43.

He had threatened to bat through the first session but was brilliantly dismissed by the tireless Wagner, who plucked a sharp return catch in his follow through. Both teams wore black armbands as a tribute to the victims of New Zealand's White Island volcano eruption. Most of the 19,081 spectators at the 60,000-seat stadium spent much of day one seeking refuge under the shelter of the stands with the temperature hitting 39 degrees Celsius. New Zealand have only won one test in Australia since their sole series triumph across the Tasman Sea in 1985-86. —Reuters

Sports

Leonard leads Clippers to win in return to Toronto

TORONTO: Kawhi Leonard scored 23 points and added six assists and five rebounds on his return to Toronto, and the visiting Los Angeles Clippers defeated the Raptors 112-92 Wednesday night. Leonard, who led the Raptors to the NBA title last season before leaving as a free agent, was presented with his championship ring in a ceremony before the game. There also was a video tribute. He was greeted with a loud, prolonged ovation. Lou Williams scored 18 points and had eight assists off the bench for the Clippers, who have won five of their past six games. Clippers guard Patrick Beverley left the game with a concussion during the third quarter. Pascal Siakam scored 24 points for the Raptors, who have lost four of their past five games. Norman Powell added 22 points.

BUCKS 127 - PELICANS 112

Eric Bledsoe scored 29 points as host Milwaukee won its 16th consecutive game despite the absence of Giannis Antetokounmpo, routing New Orleans. Antetokounmpo, the reigning NBA MVP, sat out the game because of a sore quad tendon, but three teammates joined Bledsoe in double figures. Khris Middleton scored 24, Ersan Ilyasova added 18 and George Hill had 13. The Bucks matched their longest winning streak since winning 16 in a row over two seasons in 1973. JJ Redick scored 31, Brandon Ingram had 25 points and 10 rebounds, Jrue Holiday scored 21 and rookie Jaxson Hayes had 12 points to lead the Pelicans, who lost their 10th game in a row.

KINGS 94 - THUNDER 93

Bogdan Bogdanovic drained a 3-pointer with 17.3 seconds left to give Sacramento a victory over visiting Oklahoma City. Buddy Hield recorded 23 points, six rebounds and six assists as Sacramento won its third straight contest. Bogdanovic scored 17 points on 7-of-12 shooting. Marvin Bagley III had 11 points and six rebounds in 23 minutes in his return after fracturing his right thumb in the season opener and missing the next 22 games. Chris Paul missed a 15-foot step-back jumper with 1.6 seconds left as Oklahoma City's season-high, three-game winning streak ended.

ROCKETS 116 - CAVALIERS 110

James Harden scored 55 points to lead Houston to a victory at Cleveland. Harden finished 20 of 34 from the floor and drilled 10 of 18 3-point attempts to help the Rockets overcome a 24-0 Cleveland run that bridged the final two periods. Russell Westbrook added 23 points, seven rebounds and six assists for Houston, which has won five of its past seven games. Rookie Kevin Porter Jr. scored a career-high 24 points to pace the Cavaliers, while Collin Sexton chipped in 18. Kevin Love and Clarkson scored 17 apiece, with Love adding 11 rebounds. The Cavaliers have dropped 14 of 15 games.

LAKERS 96 - MAGIC 87

LeBron James collected 25 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his sixth triple-double of the season as visiting Los Angeles posted a victory over Orlando. Reigning Western Conference Player of the Week Anthony Davis added 16 points and 12 rebounds for the Lakers, who have won 15 of 16 overall and 12 in a row on the road. Aaron Gordon collected 14 points and 14 re-

bounds for his fifth double-double of the season, but the Magic dropped their second in a row following a season-high four-game winning streak.

HORNETS 113 - NETS 108

Devonte' Graham scored 27 of his career-high 40 points after halftime as Charlotte overcame a 20-point deficit and recorded a victory over Brooklyn in New York. Graham shot 12 of 21 from the field and hit 7 of 12 3-point attempts. He became the first Hornet other than Kemba Walker to get a 40-point game since Al Jefferson on Jan. 31, 2014, against the Los Angeles Lakers. Miles Bridges added 14 points for Charlotte. Spencer Dinwiddie scored 24 points for the Nets, who fell to 9-4 without Kyrie Irving (right shoulder impingement). Jarrett Allen added 21 points and 10 rebounds for Brooklyn.

PACERS 122 - CELTICS 117

Domantas Sabonis recorded 15 points and 14 rebounds, and the Indiana bench came up big in the fourth quarter to produce a win over Boston in Indianapolis. The Pacers handed the Celtics just their second loss in the past eight games, but Indiana needed to rally in the fourth quarter to do it. The Celtics outscored the Pacers 37-23 in the third quarter to take a 10-point lead into the final period. Kemba Walker scored a season-high 44 points for the Celtics, but his potential game-tying 3-point attempt in the closing seconds came up short. Malcolm Brogdon led the Pacers with 29 points, including the final four free throws to put the game away.

JAZZ 127 - TIMBERWOLVES 116

Donovan Mitchell scored 30 points, dished out six assists and collected five rebounds to lift Utah over Minnesota in Minneapolis. Rudy Gobert finished with 20 points and 16 rebounds to help the Jazz win for just the third time in nine games. Joe Ingles added 23 points, five rebounds and five assists. The Jazz shot 56.6 percent from the field and 45.7 percent from 3-point range. Jeff Teague scored 32 points and dished out six assists to lead the Timberwolves. Andrew Wiggins added 26 points while Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 21 points and 11 rebounds. Minnesota lost its sixth straight game and gave up at least 120 points for the fifth consecutive contest.

GRIZZLIES 115 - SUNS 108

Dillon Brooks had 27 points and Jaren Jackson Jr. had 24 and three 3-pointers as Memphis built a 10-point lead in the fourth quarter and held on to knock off host Phoenix. Brandon Clarke had 15 points and seven rebounds off the bench and Ja Morant had 13 points-four in the final 43 seconds-and six assists for the Grizzlies, who won their second straight game after losing nine of 10. Frank Kaminsky had season highs with 24 points and four 3-pointers. Ricky Rubio had 22 points and eight assists and Kelly Oubre Jr. had 14 points and 13 rebounds for the Suns, who were trying to get back to .500 for the first time in three weeks.

KNICKS 124 - WARRIORS 112 (OT)

Julius Randle capped a double-double performance with a tiebreaking 3-pointer in the second minute of overtime, helping New York give interim coach Mike Miller his first NBA win while



TORONTO: Pascal Siakam #43 of the Toronto Raptors handles the ball during the game against the LA Clippers at the Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

snapping a 10-game losing streak in an entertaining victory over Golden State in San Francisco. Randle finished with 24 points and a team-high 13 rebounds, and Marcus Morris scored 36 points, his most since joining the Knicks as a free agent in the offseason.

New York rebounded from a 28-point shellacking on Tuesday in Portland to deliver Miller a win in his third game since replacing David Fizdale. In a duel between 20-game losers and two of the lowest-scoring teams in the league, Draymond Green recorded a triple-double (14 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists), while D'Angelo Russell scored 32 points for Golden State. The Warriors forced the extra session by outscoring the Knicks 9-3 in the final 40.3 seconds of regulation.

BULLS 136 - HAWKS 102

Zach LaVine scored a game-high 35 points on 12-for-16 shooting, including 7 of 7 from beyond the arc, and host Chicago snapped a three-game losing streak by beating Atlanta. Lauri Markkanen added 22 points on 8-for-9 shooting for Chicago, which recorded a season high in points. Coby White scored 19 points to lead the Bulls' reserves, while Wendell Carter Jr. notched his 13th double-double in 26 games with 11 points and 10 rebounds. Alex Len scored 17 points off the bench to lead Atlanta, which lost its second game in as many nights. Cam Reddish added 16 points off the bench, and Trae Young recorded 15 points and 13 assists despite shooting only 4 of 14 from the field and 1 of 6 from beyond the arc.— Reuters

Caps top Bruins

BOSTON: John Carlson scored the tiebreaking goal and added an assist while teammate T.J. Oshie had two goals as the Washington Capitals defeated the visiting Boston Bruins 3-2 Wednesday night. The victory continued the Capitals' recent string of success against Boston. Washington now is 16-1-0 in its past 17 games versus the Bruins. The Capitals became the first team in the NHL to go over 50 points, with 51 through 33 games. Goalie Braden Holtby continued his career-long string of success against Boston, improving to 18-3-0. He finished with 30 saves. David Pastrnak and Sean Kuraly scored for the Bruins, who got 22 saves from Jaroslav Halak.

AVALANCHE 3, FLYERS 1

Mikko Rantanen scored two goals, Pavel Francouz had 32 saves, and Colorado beat Philadelphia in Denver. Matt Calvert also

scored to lead the Avalanche to their seventh win in the last eight games. Claude Giroux had a goal, and Carter Hart stopped 24 shots for Philadelphia. The Flyers were without their leading scorer, forward Travis Konecny, who sustained a concussion in the 4-3 win over the Ottawa Senators on Saturday.

CANADIENS 3, SENATORS 2 (OT)

Ben Chiarot's goal 1:11 into overtime gave Montreal a win over visiting Ottawa. It was the first overtime winner of Chiarot's six-year NHL career, and the goal snapped a 15-game scoreless drought for the defenseman. Montreal has won four of its last five games, including its past three in a row. Nick Cousins and Tomas Tatar scored goals for the Canadiens, but the Senators got the game to overtime thanks to third-period tallies from Brady Tkachuk and Connor Brown. Playing in his second game for the Canadiens, rookie goalie Cayden Primeau earned his first NHL victory by saving 35 of 37 shots. Senators goaltender Anders Nilsson made 26 saves.—Reuters

Sports

Jesus 'cannot stop scoring' as hat-trick lifts City mood

ZAGREB: Gabriel Jesus said he cannot afford to stop scoring goals after a hat-trick helped Manchester City put their Premier League woes to one side with a 4-1 Champions League win over Dinamo Zagreb in the Croatian capital on Wednesday. The Brazilian is making the most of his extended run in the team in the absence of the injured Sergio Aguero.

But prior to a double in another 4-1 City win at Burnley last week, Jesus had gone 10 games for club and country without a goal. "I have to do my job, my job is to score goals and help the team," he told BT Sports. "Last month I was not scoring so I felt so bad because I have to score, help my teammates. Now the goals are coming, so I am so happy. I cannot stop."

Dinamo needed to win to have any chance of joining Group C winners City in the last 16 and got off to the perfect start through Dani Olmo's sweetly struck volley 10 minutes in. However, even a much-changed City side had way too much quality for the hosts and a trio of fine finishes from Jesus in a 20-minute spell either side of half-time turned the game around before Phil Foden added a late fourth. Defeat means Dinamo bow out of European competition by slipping to the bottom of the group as Champions League debutants Atalanta finish second behind City.

"We played 75 minutes very, very well," said City boss Pep Guardiola. "We'd qualified, but we came here for the club, for the prestige, to learn to play in this competition. "We had many absences, but we got a good result and hopefully

it will help us in the future." Guardiola made eight changes from the side beaten 2-1 at home by Manchester United on Saturday to leave the English champions 14 points off the top of the Premier League table with Raheem Sterling and Kevin De Bruyne among those left on the bench.

Derby defeat meant City had won just two of their previous seven games in all competitions and another poor night beckoned when Damian Kadzior's cross was brilliantly smashed past Claudio Bravo by Olmo, despite the Chilean goalkeeper getting a hand to it. City have now kept just one clean sheet in 12 games, but instead of exploiting the weaknesses in the visitors' defense, Zagreb sat on their lead and were punished as Guardiola's men took control of the game.

Marauding Mendy

City's pressure told with an equalizer 11 minutes ahead of half-time. Dinamo were unhappy play was not stopped as they had a man down injured, but City were within their rights to play on and Jesus rose highest to head home Riyad Mahrez's cross. Benjamin Mendy has struggled for fitness and form on his return from nearly two full seasons out injured, but the French left-back's performance was among the most encouraging of the night for Guardiola. Mendy made his name rampaging forward for the Monaco side that reached the semi-finals of the Champions League three seasons ago and looked more like his old self as he was involved



ZAGREB: Dinamo Zagreb's Spanish forward Daniel Olmo (L) and Manchester City's Spanish midfielder Rodri (2L) vie for the ball during the UEFA Champions League Group C football match between GNK Dinamo Zagreb and Manchester City FC at the Maksimir Stadium in Zagreb. — AFP

in both Jesus's goals inside the first 10 minutes of the second half.

Firstly, neat interplay from Mendy and Foden freed the Brazilian inside the area and he turned onto his right foot before finding the far corner. Foden was also involved for the third as his pass

fed Mendy, whose teasing cross left Jesus with the simple task of prodding into an empty net. And Foden rounded off a great night for his case for more Premier League playing time by slotting home Bernardo Silva's cross six minutes from time.— AFP

UEFA Champions League tables

UEFA Champions League tables after Wednesday's matches in the final round of group games (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Team	P	W	D	L	GF	GA	Pts	Notes
Group A								
Paris SG	6	5	1	0	17	2	16	qualified
Real Madrid	6	3	2	1	14	8	11	qualified
Club Brugge	6	0	3	3	4	12	3	
Galatasaray	6	0	2	4	1	14	2	
Group B								
Bayern Munich	6	6	0	0	24	5	18	qualified
Tottenham	6	3	1	2	18	14	10	qualified
Olympiakos	6	1	1	4	8	14	4	
Red Star Belgrade	6	1	0	5	3	20	3	
Group C								
Man City	6	4	2	0	16	4	14	qualified
Atalanta	6	2	1	3	8	12	7	qualified
Shakhtar Donetsk	6	1	3	2	8	13	6	
Dinamo Zagreb	6	1	2	3	10	13	5	
Group D								
Juventus	6	5	1	0	12	4	16	qualified
Atletico Madrid	6	3	1	2	8	5	10	qualified
Bayer Leverkusen	6	2	0	4	5	9	6	
Lokomotiv Moscow	6	1	0	5	4	11	3	
Group E								
Liverpool	6	4	1	1	13	8	13	qualified
Napoli	6	3	3	0	11	4	12	qualified
Salzburg	6	2	1	3	16	13	7	
RC Genk	6	0	1	5	5	20	1	
Group F								
Barcelona	6	4	2	0	9	4	14	qualified
Borussia Dortmund	6	3	1	2	8	8	10	qualified
Inter Milan	6	2	1	3	10	9	7	
Slavia Prague	6	0	2	4	4	10	2	
Group G								
RB Leipzig	6	3	2	1	10	8	11	qualified
Lyon	6	2	2	2	9	8	8	qualified
Benfica	6	2	1	3	10	11	7	
Zenit St. Petersburg	6	2	1	3	7	9	7	
Group H								
Valencia	6	3	2	1	9	7	11	qualified
Chelsea	6	3	2	1	11	9	11	qualified
Ajax	6	3	1	2	12	6	10	
Lille	6	0	1	5	4	14	1	

No one wants to face Liverpool in last 16: Robertson

LONDON: Defending champions Liverpool will be the team others want to avoid when the draw for the last 16 of the Champions League is held on Monday, left back Andy Robertson has said. Liverpool reached the knockout stages as group winners with a 2-0 victory at Salzburg on Tuesday, and could be drawn against Real Madrid, Atletico Madrid, Borussia Dortmund, Atalanta or Olympique Lyon.

Juergen Klopp's team have made the final of Europe's elite club competition two years in a row, finishing runners-up to Real in 2017-18 and beating Tottenham Hotspur 2-0 to win their first trophy under the German in Madrid last season. "We're respected in this tournament. The way

we've done things in the last two years, nobody wants to play against us," Robertson said. "That's the atmosphere we've created, a team which has been to the final twice and has lost one and won one.

"Maybe the first season when we went to the final... we did not get the respect we deserved. Now we know we are respected in Europe. No one will want us." The draw is set for 1100 GMT in Nyon, Switzerland. "We'll wait... and see who we get," Robertson added. "We know it'll be tough, regardless, but we look forward to the challenge as we want to go far in this tournament again. "We know that now we're the champions everyone wants to beat us." — Reuters

Blades boss seeks reinforcements

LONDON: Sheffield United plan to recruit new players in the January transfer window as their impressive start to the season has put them in a good position to consider investment in the squad, manager Chris Wilder said yesterday. The Blades, who returned to the Premier League after 12 years, were expected to struggle but Wilder's side sit eighth with 22 points from 16 games.

However, Wilder is concerned the high intensity of the Premier League will begin to take its toll on the players and he identified "two or

three" positions that need to be reinforced next month. "I've said to the owners that maybe if we were in a different position you should keep your hand in your pocket," Wilder told a news conference ahead of Saturday's league match against Aston Villa. "But I think now is the moment to strengthen and we'll have conversations regarding where we can go with that. It's important that we get the balance right, get the right players in from a mentality point of view and to strengthen the group.—Reuters

Sports

Neymar makes impression as PSG crush Galatasaray

PARIS: Neymar marked his first start in a Champions League game in a year by scoring one goal and setting up two more as Paris Saint-Germain cruised to a 5-0 win over Galatasaray on Wednesday. Mauro Icardi and Pablo Sarabia netted in the first half at the Parc des Princes, with the world's most expensive player getting his team's third within two minutes of the restart.

Kylian Mbappe scored the fourth goal and substitute Edinson Cavani added a late penalty as PSG — who had already qualified for the last 16 as group winners — made it 16 points out of a possible 18 in Group A to finish five points ahead of Real Madrid. However, it was Neymar who made the biggest impression, four days after starring in a 3-1 domestic victory at Montpellier and an injury-ravaged year to the day after his last start in Europe, against Red Star Belgrade.

“Neymar was already super important in a very difficult game at Montpellier. He was decisive in that game and he is improving,” said coach Thomas Tuchel. “He is working hard off the ball, and going forward he is finding his form. It is easier now for him to accelerate, and he was really, really good.” Despite PSG already being through and France being in the grip of a transport strike that has almost completely shut down the Paris metro system, the Parc des Princes was still largely full.

That included a sizeable travelling support, and there were incidents outside the stadium ahead of the match between rival fan groups, with police responding by firing tear gas before

calm returned. The game itself carried the air of a training exercise for the home side, with Tuchel resting stars such as Angel Di Maria, Thiago Silva, Marco Verratti and goalkeeper Keylor Navas. There was a start in midfield for the 17-year-old Tanguy Kouassi, who made his senior debut last weekend and has still not signed full professional terms.

The two biggest stars were on the pitch, though, and both Neymar and Mbappe proved too hot for the Turkish champions to handle. Mbappe lifted the ball over advancing Galatasaray goalkeeper Fernando Muslera, leaving Icardi with an easy finish to make it 1-0 just after the half-hour mark. It was Icardi's 12th goal of the season and it was followed three minutes later by Sarabia controlling Neymar's pass and firing low into the far corner. After that Red Star game at the end of last season's group phase, in which Neymar scored in a 4-1 win, he went on to miss both legs of the last-16 defeat against Manchester United due to injury.

He then sat out the first three games of this European campaign because of suspension, and was injured again for the following match, a 1-0 win over Club Brugge. Neymar returned for the 2-2 draw at Real Madrid a fortnight ago, but only as a substitute. The Brazilian collected Mbappe's lay-off and fired low into the net to make it 3-0 in the 47th minute and then returned the favor, releasing the French World Cup winner to score his fifth Champions League goal of the season and make it 4-0 after the hour mark.



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Brazilian forward Neymar looks at the ball during the UEFA Champions League Group A football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Galatasaray at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. —AFP

All that was left was for Cavani — the real PSG fans' favorite currently relegated to the role of back-up — to convert a late penalty, making it 5-0 after Mbappe had been brought down, with Neymar happy for the Uruguay striker to take over penalty duties. “We are in this together as

a team and I hope him giving the penalty to ‘Edi’ is a symbol for the team this season,” added Tuchel. Galatasaray finish with a paltry one goal and two points in the group and miss out on the consolation of a Europa League spot in the new year to Club Brugge. — AFP

Relief for Atletico as win over Lokomotiv secures qualification

MADRID: Atletico Madrid lifted the gloom by qualifying for the Champions League last 16 on Wednesday after they beat Lokomotiv Moscow 2-0 to finish runners-up in Group D. Kieran Trippier missed an early penalty at the Wanda Metropolitano but a second Atletico spot-kick gave the lively Joao Felix another chance and he made no mistake. “Joao is growing, he gives a huge number of things to the team,” said Diego Simeone afterwards. “But we need to improve the chemistry between our forwards, we need to make it even better to finish off more chances.”

Felipe's acrobatic volley shortly after half-time put a poor Lokomotiv side out of sight and ensured Atletico go through ahead of Bayer Leverkusen, who lost to group winners Juventus. “Getting to the last 16 is never easy but we have done it again,” Simeone added. Finishing second in this season's competition almost guarantees a formidable opponent in the knock-out stages, with Paris Saint-Germain, Bayern Munich, Manchester City, Liverpool and Leipzig all now lying in wait in Monday's draw.

In theory, Leipzig, or a stumbling Bayern, might be the kindest options but Atletico will likely have to find a different rhythm by February if they are to avoid crashing out at the same stage as last year. Yet it was a morale-boosting victory that spared Simeone's side any further damage after defeat against Barcelona and a draw away at Villarreal

have all-but ended their La Liga title challenge before Christmas.

“We needed this in the Champions League,” said Simeone. “For the fans, for the club and for us.” Draws have been Atletico's problem in the league but they have also been hard to beat and that resilience may yet serve them well in cup competitions, namely the Champions League and Copa del Rey. Goals have been a major concern too and Simeone will have been relieved to see two go in after his team managed only one in their previous four matches.

Sitting one point ahead of Leverkusen before kick-off, Atletico knew a victory would be enough and, in the end, they did not even need that as Juve won in Turin. But nothing was guaranteed and Simeone's side exploded out of the blocks as Alvaro Morata almost nipped in immediately before Felix beat goalkeeper Anton Kochenkov to the ball and was brought down after 43 seconds. Felix grabbed the ball and walked towards the spot like he wanted to take the penalty but he was persuaded to stand down in favor of Trippier.

Kochenkov dived right and tipped Trippier's effort onto the post, even if he was lucky not to see a retake for springing off his line too early. Atletico had a second chance 16 minutes later and this time Felix stepped up without contest. VAR spotted Murilo lifting his arm to control the ball and Felix drove the spot-kick into the corner. —Reuters

Barca, Real face stern tests ahead of Clasico

MADRID: Barcelona and Real Madrid are level on points at the La Liga summit and both face stern tests this weekend ahead of their rearranged Clasico clash next Wednesday. Barca travel to the Basque Country to take on fourth-placed Real Sociedad on Saturday, while Real visit a resurgent Valencia side 24 hours later.

The Catalans, who sit ahead of their great rivals on goal difference with both on 34 points, were able to rest a number of first-team regulars — including Lionel Messi — in Tuesday's 2-1 Champions League victory over Inter Milan having already qualified for the knock-out stages. After a difficult start to the season, Barca have lost just one of their last 16 in all competitions and coach Ernesto Valverde feels they are clicking into gear at the right time. “We're in a good way. It's good to see this kind of consistency. We had to come through a difficult spell to get to where we are now,” he said. “We had difficulties, with a number of forwards injured and they had to try and get back into form on the hoof, with little time. We always have to win at this club, the players know and feel it. We are really happy with how things are going and we've shown once again that we always want to win, whoever we play.” Saturday's opponents Sociedad have stumbled

slightly of late after topping La Liga at the start of November, winning just two of their last six to slip to fourth, seven points off the table toppers.

Meanwhile Madrid, who have won eight of their last 10 in all competitions, travel to a buoyant Valencia, who secured an unlikely berth in the last 16 of the Champions League with an impressive victory away to Ajax Amsterdam in midweek despite missing nine first-team regulars through injury. Real coach Zinedine Zidane faces a difficult decision on whether or not to rest midfield general Casemiro for the trip to Mestalla.

The Brazilian has started in all of the club's La Liga matches this season, but he is a yellow card away from missing Wednesday's Clasico through suspension having picked up four bookings already this campaign. “He's played (in the Champions League) and we'll have a look into it for the next game, and see what we do in Valencia. He hasn't got much rest, but I'm not going to say what my plan is.” Third-placed Sevilla will hope to take advantage if either of the top two slip up when they host Villarreal, while Atletico Madrid host Osasuna and Eibar visit Athletic Bilbao in a Basque derby. — Reuters

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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2019



20th FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championship opens

See Page 43