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# Stoltenberg: NATO faces most 'complex security' environment

## 15 years of Istanbul Cooperation Initiative marked



KUWAIT: (Left) HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at Bayan Palace yesterday. (Right) Chairman of Kuwait's National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Al-Sabah and Stoltenberg attend the NAC-ICI meeting to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative yesterday. — Photos by KUNA and Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)

KUWAIT: NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said yesterday the powerful western military alliance was facing the most "complex security" environment in its history amid rising tensions between member states. His words come after a NATO summit earlier this month in Britain exposed sharp divisions between leaders. "What we saw in London, at the leaders' meeting, was that there are differences between allies. But we demonstrated unity," said Stoltenberg, speaking in Kuwait to mark 15 years of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. The ICI was launched by NATO to boost security links with the Middle East. "We demonstrated unity on NATO's core task - and that is that we defend and protect each other, one for all and all for one," Stoltenberg added. "In all these years, NATO has never experienced a more complex security environment than it does today," Stoltenberg said. "To maintain our security, we need to be agile and prepared to respond to threats coming from all directions - from land, sea, air, space and cyberspace - also from state and non-state actors."

Continued on Page 24

## Protests rage in India over 'anti-Muslim' law

NEW DELHI: Fresh protests rocked India yesterday as anger grew over new citizenship legislation slammed as anti-Muslim, after six people died in the northeast and up to 200 were injured in New Delhi. The law fast-tracks citizenship for non-Muslims from three neighboring countries. Critics say it is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist agenda to marginalize the 200-million strong Islamic minority.

Modi yesterday denied this, tweeting that the new law "does not affect any citizen of India of any religion", while accusing "vested interest groups" of stoking the "deeply distressing" unrest. Rahul Gandhi, former opposi-

tion Congress chief, tweeted that the law and a mooted nationwide register of citizens also seen as anti-Muslim were "weapons of mass polarization unleashed by fascists".

The UN human rights office said last week it was concerned the law "would appear to undermine the commitment to equality before the law enshrined in India's constitution", while Washington and the European Union have also expressed unease. Yesterday, fresh protests took place including in Chennai, Bangalore and Lucknow, where hundreds of students - most of them Muslims, television pictures indicated - tried to storm a police station.

The northeast, where even allowing non-Muslims citizenship is opposed by many locals and which in recent days has been the epicenter of protests with six people dead, also saw fresh demonstrations. Authorities there in Assam's main city Guwahati lifted a daytime curfew but night-time restrictions remained, as did internet curbs. Ten people remain in hospital with gunshot wounds, while 190 people

have been detained. "The curfew is from 9:00 pm to 6:00 am," Assam finance minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

In the east in Kolkata, capital of West Bengal, more than 10,000 people took part yesterday in a march led by state premier Mamata Banerjee, a firebrand Modi opponent. Banerjee told the crowd that the law would be implemented in her state "over my dead body", Indian media reported. "India is being divided," said Meera Hajra, a protester in Kolkata. State police said they fired tear gas to disperse hundreds of protesters elsewhere after they threw stones. More than 350 people were detained.

No major incidents were reported nationwide by yesterday evening, although several metro stations were closed in Delhi as demonstrations there continued for a second day. On Sunday evening rioters torched vehicles and police with batons fired tear gas and charged protesting students before storming the Delhi's

Continued on Page 24



CHENNAI: Demonstrators shout slogans and hold placards to protest against the Indian government's Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) yesterday. — AFP

## Qatar FM says talks with Saudi break 'stalemate'

DOHA: Qatar's foreign minister has voiced optimism over ending a bitter rift with Riyadh, saying early talks broke a "stalemate" but stressed Doha's unwillingness to downgrade ties with Turkey as a pre-condition. Saudi Arabia along with its allies the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut all diplomatic and transport ties with Qatar in June 2017. The four nations accused Doha of backing radical Islamists, including the Muslim Brotherhood, and seeking closer ties with Saudi arch rival Tehran - allegations Qatar vehemently denies.

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## Saudis resist 'culture of food waste'

RIYADH: The plate is designed to make a meal look bigger - a gastronomic illusion and an innovative way to tame Saudi Arabia's pervasive throwaway culture which results in colossal food waste. Across much of the Gulf lavish displays of food are seen as a cultural totem of generosity and hospitality. But much of it ends up in the trash. Saudi households typically serve large oval-shaped platters piled high with rice, a daily staple, but a lot goes to waste as many just nibble on the sides and rarely even reach the middle.

Entrepreneur Mashal Al-Kharashi is fighting back - with a rice plate that makes the portion of food appear bigger. With a mound in the center, the plate minimizes the middle area, prompting people to serve less and save more. "The innovative design, elevated from the middle, reduces waste by 30 percent," Kharashi told AFP, adding that the plate, adopted in recent years by multiple Saudi restaurants, has saved more than 3,000 tons of rice. "This way we preserve the generosity part while cutting waste."

The desert kingdom - which because of its limited arable land and scarce water resources is heavily reliant on imports to meet its growing food demand - has the highest rate of waste globally. The average Saudi wastes up to 250 kg of food annually, compared to a

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RIYADH: A kitchen worker prepares an order in the Mashal plate for a customer at a restaurant as the plate's creator Mashal Al-Kharashi watches on July 25, 2019. — AFP



KUWAIT: Roads were flooded across Kuwait after heavy rain hit the country yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Local

# NATO Security General praises 'tailored' training, support to Gulf

## NATO-ICI celebrates 15 years of exemplary partnership - NSB chief



KUWAIT: A group photo taken during a ceremony marking the 15th anniversary of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) in Kuwait yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg praised the tailored training and practical support provided by NATO to all Gulf countries. This came in a speech during a ceremony marking the 15th anniversary of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), held in Kuwait yesterday. Stoltenberg expressed appreciation for the support given by the Gulf partners to NATO-led operations in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan. He also welcomed that NATO and its Gulf partners cooperate closely within the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh. "I am proud of the cooperation that has taken place between our nations and I very much look forward to deepening our partnership in the future," he said.

Stoltenberg also expressed gratitude for the hospitality and the superb support during his current visit to Kuwait. This is the second time in two years that the North Atlantic Council is meeting in Kuwait, he noted. "We are here together to celebrate 15 years of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. And to discuss how we all can work even more closely together for the benefit of our mutual security," he said. The launch of the Initiative at the NATO Summit in 2004, sent a powerful signal, he added. "We share common interest and common challenges. Not least fighting international terrorism, and maintaining stability for trade and commerce," he said.

Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have recognized the importance of dialogue and practical cooperation with NATO, he pointed out. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Sultanate of Oman have also increased their engagement with NATO Allies, he stressed.

"This is vital, because the closer our cooperation, the safer we all will be," he added. For 15 years, NATO has engaged in regular consultation and practical cooperation with all Gulf partners at all levels. Individual Partnership Cooperation Programs have brought structure and focus to cooperation with Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partners, he added. Under these agreements, a wide range of bilateral activities have taken place, including on energy and maritime security, cyber defense, civil emergency planning, and non-proliferation and arms control.

Some of these activities have been facilitated by the Regional Centre here in Kuwait, Stoltenberg noted. "To maintain our security, we need to be agile and prepared to respond to threats coming from all directions. From land, sea, air, space and cyber-space. From all directions. Also from State and non-state actors," he confirmed. NATO plays a key role in this fight, he carried on saying, adding that working with partners around the world to train local forces and a strong national defense is one of the best tools NATO have. NATO works to build stronger defense and security institutions with all partners in the Middle East and North Africa, he stressed, noting that the membership of Gulf States in the Global Coalition has been crucial. Because of the capabilities bring to bear. "The bilateral relationships between NATO and individual Gulf states are of great importance. They enable NATO to better understand specific issues and concerns. This year NATO have celebrated several important milestones, the 70th anniversary of NATO, 25 years of the Mediterranean Dialogue and now 15 years of the Istanbul Cooperation

Initiative," he pointed out. The partnership between NATO and the ICI has grown stronger over the years, he said. "So as we look to the future together, we must work even closer together. To deliver the stability we need in the neighborhood we share," he concluded.

### Exemplary partnership

Kuwait Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah has been a solid supporter of relationship and partnership with NATO and within the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), National Security Bureau (NSB) Chief Sheikh Thamer Ali Al-Sabah said. "His Highness has in the past, been the driving force behind our relationship with NATO and will remain one of its staunchest supporters in the future," Sheikh Thamer said during the ceremony. In a speech delivered on behalf of His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Thamer conveyed warm greetings of His Highness the Prime Minister to all those in attendance, wishing NATO, the ICI and the GCC success and growth in the days to come. "I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude and appreciation to His Highness the Prime Minister for his gracious patronage of this distinguished event," Sheikh Thamer said. The gathering is to celebrate 15 years of an exemplary partnership that has merged the requirements of a region confronted with complex security challenges and the capabilities of a historic alliance, Sheikh Thamer stressed. In 2004 with the launching of the ICI, the State of Kuwait found itself mirrored by the ideas presented by the Initiative, striving towards global and regional peace and stability, he added. "The State of Kuwait

and other ICI countries found in the ICI a means to engender those ends. Since then we have worked diligently with our partners in Brussels to meet those goals," he said.

In 2006, Kuwait hosted the first NATO Gulf conference with the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in attendance. During the NAC-ICI meeting in 2012, Kuwait committed to building a NATO-ICI regional center. Sheikh Thamer said. In 2017, NATO-ICI the regional center serves to provide personnel from the Kingdom of Bahrain, Qatar, UAE in addition to the Sultanate of Oman and Saudi Arabia with training courses and events that reflect NATO's expertise in a multiplicity of different fields both civil and military, Sheikh Thamer added in his speech. The vision is also to enhance the partnership with the State of Kuwait and NATO through the ICI framework, he added.

"A mission of providing ICI state personnel with NATO Experience. The NATO ICI regional center has to this day successfully completed 24 courses and 10 various events, with 889 trainees successfully completing programs since late 2017," he said. "More than 200 experts passing through the building and in the center and will remain a hallmark of the success story, bringing together the State of Kuwait, ICI members and NATO," Sheikh Thamer stressed. "Our successful relationship with NATO is a case in how interagency teamwork on one hand and on the other hand the collaboration with the GCC government entities can generate maximum outcomes," Sheikh Thamer said. Sheikh Thamer express hope of further expanding to political discussion during NAC-ICI meeting, and looking forward to the exchange in views and ideas. — KUNA



KUWAIT: NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana (left) speaks during a forum held on the sidelines of a ceremony to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) in Kuwait. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

## Kuwait meeting to take stock of progress made in ICI: NATO Official

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Despite some differences in opinions and views within the alliance with issues especially related to peace and security, NATO members always get together eventually to make sure their alliance remains strong, a senior NATO official said yesterday. "Whatever differences they had in the past, they would always come out a stronger and better alliance," NATO Deputy Secretary General Mircea Geoana said while speaking to reporters after a forum attended by the NATO-Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) four member countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

"We have been operating like this ever since; with different views and opinions from among our members, starting from the issue of Swiss Canal; even the Coalition of the Willing in Iraq, where some of our NATO allies where very much unhappy about the operation," he said. "Even with the crisis situation in Syria, we had some differences in views, and we recognized that, but the magic of NATO is that when we get together, whatever differences we had in the past, we set it aside and we come out stronger and a better alliance."

The purpose of the meeting of the North Atlantic Council, NATO's principal political decision-making body, with "our Gulf partners" at the NATO-ICI Regional Centre in Kuwait is to take stock of the progress made within the framework of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI),

Geoana said. In a briefing session, the official said, "The meeting is to discuss a common way forward to make our partnership even more efficient." The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative was launched at the NATO Summit in Istanbul in 2004. Since then it has been the bedrock of NATO's relationship with four of the Gulf countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, he said.

A lot has been achieved so far, he said, adding, "We have conducted a wide range of practical activities, including for instance military training and education, crisis management and dealing with natural and man-made disasters." "The NATO-ICI Regional Centre in Kuwait which the NATO Secretary General inaugurated in 2017 has played an important role in this regard. "We have welcomed more than 1,000 officers and experts from NATO and the Gulf there, for joint training, cooperation and capacity building." "We are also working together to develop national expertise and resilience on crisis management, cyber, energy, and maritime security, in addition to defense against chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats," he said.

Furthermore, the center has helped NATO's outreach to the Gulf Cooperation Council, to Saudi Arabia and Oman. "The security of our Istanbul Cooperation Initiative partners is of strategic importance to NATO. The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative remains a unique platform in which to discuss security issues of common concern. With instability in the Middle East and North Africa, NATO's partnerships are more valuable than ever," he added. The recent NATO meeting in London, leaders reaffirmed that NATO is a defensive Alliance and poses no threat to any country and work to increase security for all. "In this respect, NATO have strengthened partnerships in neighborhood and beyond and we deepened political dialogue, support, and engagement with partner countries and international organizations," the official added.

## OPEC, 10 non-OPEC countries sign deal to ensure oil stability

KUWAIT: OPEC and 10 non-OPEC countries, spearheaded by Russia, have signed a long-term agreement aimed at promoting cooperation and ensuring stability of oil markets, a Kuwaiti official said yesterday. This agreement, signed at recent OPEC+ meeting in Vienna, guarantees "sustainability of cooperation between OPEC and non-OPEC in areas beyond maintenance of international oil markets' stability," Haitham Al-Ghais, Kuwait's Governor at OPEC, said. He was speaking during an interview following his return from Vienna where he took part in a meeting between OPEC and non-OPEC, known as OPEC+, which approved further production cuts of 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) until March. The new cuts, added to the already 1.2 million bpd reduction, will start next month. "The door is open for other oil producers to join the new agreement," he said.

Ghais underlined importance of abiding by the production cuts, which aimed at countering glut in supply. A member of the executive committee that monitors implementation of cuts, Ghais said, "you can't see only three or four countries take the burden upon themselves and cut production, but it is a collective responsibility by the 24 countries." Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) led an action at the OPEC+, which met on December 6, to encourage producers reduce further amounts of oil. Projections for 2020 show that oil supply would increase by 2.2 million bpd against a demand of 1.1 million bpd, with half of the supply coming from shale oil, said Ghais, who cited big non-OPEC+ producers like Canada, Norway and Brazil. "Had OPEC+ failed to agree on further cuts, there would have been additional 63 million barrels in the first quarter," he said.

He said projections showed a rise of 600,000-700,000 bpd in stocks during the first quarter 2020, which came from outside OPEC+. "If we start the year with huge stocks the second quarter will be tough," added Ghais. The new cuts, he went on, aimed at maintaining stability of oil markets and this decision would be reviewed in the March 5-6 meetings, "which will examine economic developments like the US-China trade dispute and Brexit." The new cuts, said Ghais, took into consideration that global economic growth be up to three percent in addition to international trade. "Honestly OPEC and its allies don't seek a specific price, but we want to see international oil stocks at comfortable levels, which means the average of the past five years," he said.

"The price is set by the seller and buyer not the countries. There are oil markets in London and New York where prices are being set on a daily basis. OPEC does not eye a specific price and this is a very important point to make," Ghais asserted. Bank of America has recently anticipated a solid commitment by OPEC+ that could raise prices to \$70 bpd before end of first quarter 2020. OPEC+ countries produce around 45 million bpd, or almost half of global output, but Ghais said economic and political developments were out of control of OPEC+. According to Ghais, OPEC+ sought a balance between supply and demand in order to prevent a markets' collapse similar to the one in 2014, which not only affected producers but the oil industry as a whole.

### Medium-term challenge

Ghais, meanwhile, said shale oil posed a medium-term challenge to OPEC, despite its slow development. Ghais expected that if we wanted to stay in this competition as OPEC oil producers, despite the boom in shale production technologies, and increasing the ability of shale oil producers, they must adapt to a low price environment, "but when compared to GCC oil countries, for example, the difference is still large." Indeed, he expects demand for OPEC oil to rise during the next 3-5 years, to reach in the year 2040 to 39 million barrel, compared to the current 29.5 million barrel, i.e. an increase of about 10 million barrels per day. He said that this will be at the expense of other producers, adding, "the demand for OPEC oil is the one that will remain and grow in the future, and this will coincide with a decline in shale oil production. This has begun to be shown by a decline in the pace of growth recently."

"In fact, shale oil is not only a challenge for OPEC, but also for the oil industry in general, because the production mechanism is not organized and there is no one to control production. Although major companies such as Chevron and Exxon Mobil recently entered this field. I think shale oil will remain a challenge to OPEC oil during the next five years," he added. Ghais affirms that Russia is a partner to OPEC, not a competitor, saying that "the Russian commitment is currently very good, and Moscow made promises of 100 percent commitment," noting that excluding condensate from the Russian cut will help them abide by the agreement. He confirmed that there is no basis for what is reported about the end of the era of oil or its peak.

In this context, the British magazine 'The Economist' quoted a few days ago the International Energy Agency, which said that by 2040 the energy derived from the sun and wind will increase by about five times to seven percent of the total global energy mix, and added these sources would not substitute for fossil fuels that produce energy without interruption. "This is almost in line with OPEC's expectations that the proportion of renewable energy will be between seven and 10 percent of the global energy mix by 2040," Ghais replied. "We all believe in OPEC and we cannot rely only on oil and gas. The world will grow more and will need all kinds of energy sources," he added.

Regarding the challenges facing OPEC, he pointed out the "fierce attack on the part of environmental activists," whom he believes need to increase awareness, especially in the west, that oil is not harmful if used in an environmentally friendly manner. "Therefore, we suggested to the organization's secretariat that a media campaign should be launched to communicate with environmental activists and make them aware of the role of oil and its importance in global economic growth," he noted. By early January 2020, the OPEC share after the new cut production plan will reach 372,000 bpd while its allies share will reach 131,000 bpd to reach total of 503,000 bpd, bringing total reduction from 1.2 to 1.7 million barrels per day.

Saudi Arabia is the largest operator of OPEC with the new reduction of 167,000 bpd, followed by the UAE with 60,000, Kuwait with 55,000; Iraq with 50,000 barrels, and from OPEC allies, Russia comes with 70,000 bpd, followed by Mexico with 18,000 barrels per day. Venezuela, Iran and Libya are excluded which either are suffering from sanctions or security and economic turmoil. Ghais concluded his statement by saying that oil prices did not wait for the OPEC Plus agreement to enter into force with Brent futures rose by 0.4 percent to reach \$64 a barrel, and what remains now is strict adherence to production quotas. — KUNA

Local

# Amir receives NATO Secretary General, Central Bank Governor

## Sheikh Sabah mourns loss of Emirati sheikh



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace the visiting NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg with the attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The reception was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah and Head of the National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince separately

received Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on the occasion of the latter's visit to the country. The reception was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Ambassador of Kuwait to Belgium and head of its missions to the EU and NATO Jassem Al-Bidaiwi and head of National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday expressed deepest sympathies over the death of Emirati Sheikh Sultan Bin Abdullah Al-Qasemi. His Highness the Amir extended his condolences in a cable he sent to Dr Sultan Bin Mohammad Al-Qasemi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Sharjah's ruler. — KUNA

## Amir receives letters from Guinea-Bissau, Palestinian presidents



KUWAIT: Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Guinea-Bissau to Saudi Arabia and to the State of Kuwait Mamadou Sanou. — Amiri Diwan photos



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received a verbal message from President of the Republic of Guinea-Bissau Jose Mario, that included bilateral relations and ways of developing them in various fields. Ambassador of Guinea-Bissau to Saudi Arabia and to the State of Kuwait Mamadou Sanou conveyed the

message to Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received a letter from Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas over bilateral ties between the two countries. Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub handed the letter to Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. — KUNA

## Kuwait leads action to condemn Islamophobia

PARIS: Kuwait had led a collective action by Arab and Islamic countries at an international heritage meeting in Colombia because the draft resolution, already approved by consensus, did not include Islamophobia condemnation. Adam Al-Mulla, Kuwait's permanent representative to UNESCO who participated in the annual meeting of an Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, said he rejected the fact member countries failed to mention Islamophobia in the draft resolution.

Speaking to the press yesterday, Mulla said he urged participants to reword the statement issued by the com-

mittee, which met in Bogota on December 9-14. He explained the final statement was approved by consensus but did not include Islamophobia when it was issued by UNESCO. The Arab and Islamic group, said Mulla, urged committee chair to amend the statement. "The Chairperson apologized and included Islamophobia in the statement," he added. The Committee, composed of representatives of 24 States Parties to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), meets once a year. It monitors the implementation of this international legal instrument, which has been ratified by 178 States. —KUNA

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive through heavy rain which hit Kuwait yesterday. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shalkh

# ESCWA Executive Secretary calls for integrating disabled in marketplace

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** United Nations Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) Rola Dashti said it is necessary for people with special needs to contribute to sustainable development by integrating them in the marketplace, stressing the importance of activating a law that calls for employing three percent of people with special needs in the private sector. Dashti spoke at the end of Doha Conference for Disability and Development which was held under the slogan "so not to leave anyone behind," with more than 1,500 deci-

sion makers participating. Dashti said the conferees addressed the inclusive appointment of the disabled and its importance "due to the need of our societies for the contribution of this group, of which there are 60 million in the Arab World." She added that statistics show that 85 percent of women and 65 percent of men with special needs are unemployed. "People with special needs are important parts of society with a lot of untapped potential," she said, urging states to work hard in order to utilize their capabilities and promote their integration. "This is not achieved by legislations only, rather by implementing the laws," she noted.



DOHA: Members of Kuwait's delegation participating in the conference.

## US embassy cautions over police imposters

**KUWAIT:** The US Embassy in Kuwait released the following security alert about cases of police imposters approaching people recently in Kuwait, specifically in Kuwait City, Fahaheel and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. The following is a transcript of the statement which the embassy sent to US citizens in the country:

"The US Embassy in Kuwait advises US citizens to take care when approached by persons claiming to be police officers. Two recent incidents have been reported to the Embassy's Regional Security Office. In one incident, an individual walking was stopped and robbed by an assailant who showed a wallet as though it were a police identification and badge. The assailant was not in police uniform. In the second incident, two individuals in a vehicle attempted to stop the driver of another

automobile by showing something appearing to be police identification. The individuals were not driving police cars, nor wearing police uniforms. These two incidents apparently occurred in the Fahaheel and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh areas and targeted third country nationals.

"Kuwaiti Police will be in police uniform, with a marked police car or an unmarked police vehicle with the police emergency lights on the dashboard. Do not stop and/or give civil identification cards to anyone claiming to be a police officer if there is any uncertainty. If unsure of the authenticity of a police officer, call 112 with your location and drive to an inhabited area, restaurant, gas station, police station, etc. It is advisable to stay on the line with 112 while driving to a safer location and explain the circumstances to the emergency telephone operator. "Actions to Take: Keep a low profile. Beware of your surroundings. Carry proper identification, either your US passport with current Kuwait visa or your Kuwait civil ID. Use caution when walking or driving at night. Have travel documents up to date and easily accessible."

## 1,230 students received free evening tuitions

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Around 1,230 high school students benefited from free evening classes organized by Ahmad Al-Rabee secondary school before the midterm exams, said informed

sources, noting that the classes were delivered by 39 Kuwaiti and expat teachers assisted by eight volunteering administrative staff members. The sources added the students received a total of 78 hours of free tuition.

The sources explained that this was the fourth year to hold these classes and that 800 students from Hawally, 83 from the Capital, 79 from Farwaniya, 30 from Mubarak Al-Kabeer, seven from Jahra, 161 from the private schools and three from the seniors' schools attended this year's classes.

In another educational concern, the Ministry of Education explained that reshuffling school directors during grade 12 midterm exams only involves public school directors, especially since private school grade 12 students usually sit for their exams in public schools.

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## Local

# Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation recognizes Zain during Waqf Forum

## Under the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, was recognized by the Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation (KAPF) during the 26th Waqf Forum. The event, held at Four Seasons Kuwait Hotel, came under the patronage of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

During the ceremony, Zain was recognized by His Highness the Crown Prince's representative, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahad Al-Shula, Secretary-General of the Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation Mohammad Al-Jalahma, and Deputy Secretary-General for Management and Support Services and Head of the Forum's Organizing Committee Saqer Al-Sejari. The recognition came to shed light on Zain's allocation of the entire proceeds of the company's Waqf for this year to the humanitarian efforts and campaigns of the Kuwait Food Bank, which operates inside and outside of Kuwait.

Zain expressed its pride in this recognition from KAPF, which further highlights the company's commitment in enriching the culture of giving and social contribution through launching humanitarian campaigns and supporting initiatives adopted by leading non-profit organizations inside and outside of Kuwait. Zain prides itself on the long track of records

and contributions it has put in philanthropic areas over the years, being one of the leading companies in the private sector.

The Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation recognized Zain last year for its role as one of the first Kuwaiti companies to dedicate a KD 1 million Waqf at KAPF since 1996 as endorsed by the Board of Directors, where all of the Waqf's annual proceeds are dedicated for various charity programs every year. This year's entire proceeds were dedicated to the humanitarian efforts of the Kuwait Food Bank both inside and outside of Kuwait. Such efforts include distributing meals, holding iftar banquets, offering food baskets, as well as conducting relief campaigns all year round.

Zain spares no efforts to achieve its comprehensive Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy that closely focuses on supporting humanitarian initiatives. The company strongly believes that launching and supporting humanitarian initiatives help infuse a sense of responsibility into members of the society, and help support those who are in need of help.

The 26th Waqf Forum was held to highlight the most prominent achievements, charity initiatives, and relief projects adopted by the Kuwait Awqaf Public



**KUWAIT:** Fahad Al-Shula, Mohammad Al-Jalahma, and Saqer Al-Sejari recognize Zain's efforts.

Foundation across local and international levels and in collaboration with the various entities and organizations from the public and private sectors in Kuwait. The event also witnessed the recognition of these entities and organizations as success partners.

Zain is proud of its long list of programs and contributions that serve noble causes through strategically partnering with entities that adopt humanitarian work, including non-profit organizations, governmental institutions, and global entities.



### Waqf proceeds donated to Kuwait Food Bank

## Kuwaiti engineers chosen for int'l award judging panel

**KUWAIT:** The international e-content award has chosen Kuwaiti IT expert and engineer Manar Al-Hashash as a member of its judging panel for the ninth time, during a meeting held in Tunisia. In a statement to the press yesterday, Hashash said she was honored to be chosen for the ninth time since 2005, due to her expertise in the e-content and entrepreneurship field. She added that there are two other female experts from Ghana and India who also took part in the award for nine times. The last round of the competition included over 600 projects from about 120 countries, she said. The judging panel includes 17 experts from the US, the UK, Austria, Chile, Mexico, India, Poland, Congo, Ghana and others, while Kuwait and Lebanon are the only Arab participants. Hashash noted. The award is held every two years and each country can participate with one project in every category, she added. The winning



**Manar Al-Hashash**

projects will be honored during the world congress for e-content in Austria in March, said Hashash. Hashash received a certificate in computer engineering and a Master's degree in e-content from Kuwait University and was appointed by the UN as a 'guide' for technology and youth affairs in 2008. —KUNA



**KUWAIT:** A group photo taken on the sidelines of ACK's first Alumni Entrepreneurs Exhibition.

## ACK hosts first alumni entrepreneurs exhibition

**KUWAIT:** The Alumni and Career Placement Center at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) organized the very first Alumni Entrepreneurs Exhibition. The two-day exhibition hosted ACK alumni who have successfully created their own businesses and was attended by members of ACK management and representatives of the Australian Embassy. Among the visitors representing the Australian Embassy were Elise Cole Andrews, Head of the Political Section; Shaza Ayesh, Public Diplomacy Officer.

The Alumni and Career Placement Center

organized the exhibition to serve as a platform for ACK Alumni entrepreneurs to showcase their products and the services provided by their own businesses. The exhibition featured a diverse range of businesses with varied offerings to ACK staff and students including travel agencies, fitness centers, beauty and health centers, construction and advertising companies.

All the businesses hosted were conceptualized and developed by ACK graduates and their promotional booths helped them highlight their achievements, share their success

with existing students and it was a chance for them to offer ACK undergraduate students opportunities to join their companies as internes, volunteers and, in some cases, full time employees.

Dr Zeina Nehme, Manager of the Alumni and Career Placement Center, praised the alumni business owners for their efforts at the exhibition and for helping to inspire the students in attendance. "We are very proud of them," said Dr Nehme. "Their success after graduation is inspiring and we hope more of our students follow in their footsteps."



## Burgan Bank participates in banks exhibition

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank, recently participated in the Local Banks Exhibition that was conducted by the Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (KGOC) at Al-Ahmedi Park. Committed to continuously providing high quality customer care and comprehensive banking solutions throughout Kuwait, visitors at the event witnessed the wide array of products including their respective

benefits through the bank's representatives. The Local Banks Exhibition by KGOC was held in the midst of several prominent banks from Kuwait. Burgan Bank highlighted Al-Thuraya salary account which gives customers the opportunity to win KD 10,000 every month in addition to choosing between a KD 250 cash gift or interest free loan of up to KD 12,000.

## Kuwait says youth priority for development

**SHARM EL SHEIKH:** The head of a Kuwait state-funded youth program highlighted the importance of engaging the next generation and private enterprises in the development of nations at the World Youth Forum in Egypt. "We need to be closer to the youth, enabling them to participate effectively through their own proposals and ideas and monitor how they are adopted by various state bodies," Fatima Al-

Mousawi, executive director of Kafo said. Kafo is an e-based platform that provides tailor-made workshops and training according to the needs of the labor market. Funded by the Amiri Diwan, it is open to 18-35 year-olds. Mousawi said she had briefed attendees on the initiative, which comes amid Kuwait's development plans targeting e-governance in collaboration with the youth and businesses. —KUNA

## Gulf Bank distributes cash prizes to Qout Market visitors

**KUWAIT:** As part of its ongoing efforts to support the local economy and the development of the local economy, Gulf Bank participated as a title sponsor at this year's Qout Market. The market, which is currently in its seventh season, took place last Saturday at Abraj Park in Adailiya. At the market, Gulf Bank hosted an entertainment area with a variety of activities in which guests took home cash prizes and more.

This year's Qout Market hosted a variety of restaurants, artisanal craft shops, farm produce, and other businesses owned by young entrepreneurs, who used this opportunity to showcase their fresh goods to the market's visitors. Local chefs also attended the market, and prepared freshly cooked meals for market-goers. Qout Market launched its seventh season this past weekend at Abraj Park in Adailiya, and is set to take place over the course of three more Saturdays from January to March. The upcoming markets will take place on Jan 11, Feb 8, and Mar 7 from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Commenting on this year's Qout Market, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "We are very excited to be part of such a vibrant community event like Qout Market. Year after year, the market is an incredible opportunity to engage with our local community that is comprised of so many active Kuwaiti youth. We had the opportunity to meet so many creative talents and young entrepreneurs, and it makes us very proud to be able to support them as part of our ongoing efforts to encourage local businesses and young talent. We are anticipating even more beautiful days at the market in the upcoming months, and can't wait to see what more Qout Market has in store."

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



**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank's team in a group photo during the event.



**Visitors at Gulf Bank's entertainment area.**



Battle of the Bulge heroes remembered 75 years on

## NZ observes silence as PM warns of long volcano probe



FAMAGUSTA, Cyprus: The Bayraktar TB2 drone is pictured yesterday at Gecitkale Airport in the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). —AFP

# Turkey sends armed drone to N Cyprus

## Erdogan threatens to close 2 US military bases

**FAMAGUSTA, Cyprus:** A Turkish military drone was delivered to northern Cyprus yesterday amid growing tensions over Turkey's deal with Libya that extended its claims to the gas-rich eastern Mediterranean. The Bayraktar TB2 drone landed at Gecitkale Airport in Famagusta around 0700 GMT, an AFP correspondent said, after the breakaway northern Cyprus government approved the use of the airport for unmanned aerial vehicles.

It followed a deal signed last month between Libya and Turkey that could prove crucial in the scramble for recently discovered gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean. The agreement claimed extensive areas of the sea for Turkey, undercutting claims by Greece and the internationally recognized Republic of Cyprus, which runs the southern part of the island.

Analysts say Turkey was pushing back against rival efforts to claim exploration rights in the area after Cyprus, Greece, Egypt and Israel excluded Turkey from a new "East Mediterranean Gas Forum" that also includes Jordan, Italy and the Palestinian territories. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which is only recognized by Turkey, said approval for the drone was given last week "in light of the latest developments in the eastern Mediterranean region" and "to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the TRNC and Turkey".

The TRNC's transport minister, Tolga Atakan, said Turkish drones were partly a response to the acquisition of Israeli drones by Cyprus in October to monitor its exclusive economic zone. Cyprus has been divided since Turkish troops occupied the northern third of the island in 1974 in response to a coup sponsored by

the Greek military junta. Turkey already has two drilling vessels in the eastern Mediterranean despite the threat of European Union sanctions. Ankara does not recognize the Republic of Cyprus, an EU member, and says the TRNC has the right to explore around the entire island.

Meanwhile, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday threatened to close two strategic military bases used by the United States in Turkey, after Washington warned of sanctions over Ankara buying Russian arms. "If necessary, we can close Incirlik and we can close Kurecik," Erdogan on the pro-government A Haber television channel. The two bases sit on Turkey's southwest coast, near the border with Syria.

Erdogan has regularly raised this possibility in the past, at times of tension between the two countries. The US air force uses the airbase at Incirlik for raids

on positions held by the so-called Islamic State group in Syria. The Kurecik base houses a major NATO radar station. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu raised the issue of the bases last week. Responding to the US threat of fresh sanctions, he warned that their closure could be "put on the table".

Turkey faces US sanctions over its decision to buy the Russian S-400 missile defense system, despite warnings from Washington. And on Friday, Turkey summoned the US ambassador after the US Senate followed the lower house and voted to recognize the 1915 killings of Armenians as genocide. The bill has yet to be signed by President Donald Trump. Armenia claims 1.5 million died in the killings. Turkey says the number of deaths was far lower and Turks also died, blaming the killings on the First World War. —Agencies

## Downsized US force in Afghanistan would still pack 'lethal punch'

**KABUL:** The US military can slash its troop presence in Afghanistan and still pack a "lethal punch," an influential American lawmaker and close confidant to President Donald Trump said yesterday. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham also said it would be "insane" for the US to trust the Taliban to keep Al-Qaeda and other militants in check, attacking a cornerstone of a prospective deal between Washington and the Taliban.



Lindsey Graham

Graham's remarks came a day after US media reported that the Trump administration could announce plans as early this week to withdraw around 4,000 troops from Afghanistan. The drawdown would mean about 8,600 US troops remained in Afghanistan, down from the current total of between 12-13,000. Graham suggested the official announcement might not be as imminent as was suggested in the American press. "If President Trump decides in the next few weeks to reduce our forces below the 12,000 we have, I could support that," Graham told reporters in Kabul. "With 8,600 American forces aligned in the right configuration, we would have a very lethal punch".

Addressing the on-again, off-again negotiations between the US and the Taliban that have been taking place in Doha this year, Graham took issue with a central component of an eventual deal, which centres on the US withdrawing forces in return for a Taliban promise to fight Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. "The Taliban may not be trusted to be a reliable counterterrorism force," Graham said. "The idea that any agreement would count on the Taliban to police, be the counterterrorism force to the American homeland, is a nonstarter." Graham is thought to have been key in persuading Trump in September to drop the deal with the Taliban, even though the US and the insurgents had all but signed off on it. In order to get talks back on track, the Taliban in recent weeks have reduced violence in Kabul. But Graham suggested the insurgents were still not to be trusted, referencing a deadly attack at Bagram air base outside of Kabul last week.

"To the brilliant masterminds who planned the Bagram attack, you've probably done more to set back the process than anything I could think of," the senator said. "It would be insane for America to rely on the Taliban to ensure that Al-Qaeda and ISIS-K doesn't come back," he said.

Graham also briefly visited Pakistan, where he met with Prime Minister Imran Khan. Graham, who has made various public assessments about the extent of Islamabad's support of the Taliban, said Trump's relationship with Khan was strong and possible trade deals could be coming. "I told President Trump that the one thing that no one's really ever done in this long war is set out in Pakistan and say, OK, let's talk about a free trade agreement. ... But here are the things that we want you to do on the security side," Graham said. —AFP

## India court convicts BJP ex-lawmaker of teen rape

**NEW DELHI:** A former ruling party lawmaker was convicted yesterday of raping a teenager in a high-profile case that underscored India's rampant sexual violence and the impunity enjoyed by the elite. Kuldeep Singh Sengar, a powerful four-time state legislator for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was found guilty of raping the then 17-year-old at his home in Uttar Pradesh in 2017, lawyers said. Sentencing will be announced later this week.

The verdict came amid renewed public anger about sexual assaults in India and the failures of the overloaded criminal justice system in tackling such crimes. Early this month, four rapemurder suspects were killed in what police claimed was a "shootout" in the

southern city of Hyderabad, and a woman died after her alleged attackers set her on fire en route to court in Uttar Pradesh state. It also falls on the anniversary of the brutal 2012 gang rape of a young woman on a bus in New Delhi that triggered nationwide protests and international outrage.

Sengar, who was expelled from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's BJP in August, broke down in tears as the verdict was announced in the district court in New Delhi. Judge Dharmesh Sharma said the "unshaken testimony" of the victim and "sufficient evidence" had proved Sengar's guilt. "I found her statement truthful and unblemished that she was sexually assaulted," the judge said in the verdict.

The case was heard from August 5 after the Supreme Court ordered the trial be moved to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh, where the politician enjoyed considerable clout. The victim's father died last year in police custody after being accused of keeping firearms illegally, with the family alleging he was arrested and tortured by police for trying to pursue the case. The woman was also critically injured in a suspi-



AMRITSAR, India: Parents protest against school authorities after an eight-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a schoolboy at the Sacred Heart Convent School in Beas yesterday. —AFP

cious car crash in July. A separate trial is being held over the accident amid allegations it was a hit carried out on Sengar's orders.

The sense of impunity enjoyed by Sengar, 53, sparked revulsion and protests across India. Sengar, who was tried under child protection laws

as the victim was a minor at the time of the assault, denied the charges. India's rape laws were overhauled after the 2012 bus gang rape but high numbers of assaults persist. More than 33,000 rape cases were reported in 2017, according to latest available official data. —AFP

## E-cigarettes raise disease risks, but less than smoking

**WASHINGTON:** E-cigarette use significantly increases the risk of developing chronic lung diseases like asthma, bronchitis, emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, according to a long term study published yesterday that also found vaping was less harmful than smoking.

The results of the research, published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, are unrelated to the recent outbreak of an acute lung disease that has killed more than 50 people and has been linked to a substance commonly

added to vaping products containing THC, the psychoactive component of cannabis. Scientists at UC San Francisco examined publicly available data that tracked e-cigarette and tobacco habits as well as new lung disease diagnoses in over 32,000 American adults from 2013 to 2016. They found that current and former e-cigarette users were 1.3 times more likely to develop chronic lung disease, while tobacco smokers increased their risk by a factor of 2.6. For people who both smoked and vaped, the risks of developing lung disease more than tripled. "What we found is that for e-cigarette users, the odds of developing lung disease increased by about a third, even after controlling for their tobacco use and their clinical and demographic information," said senior author Stanton Glantz, a UCSF professor of medicine.

### Dual users

"We concluded that e-cigarettes are harmful on their own, and the effects are independent of smoking conven-

tional tobacco," he added. The paper did not offer a new biological explanation for how vaping causes such harm, but cited earlier physiological studies in both animals and humans that have found that e-cigarettes suppress the immune system and increase the levels of stress-related proteins in the lung. There have been several earlier population studies that found an association between e-cigarette use and lung disease at a single point in time, but it was impossible to determine whether the illnesses were caused by e-cigarettes or if people with lung disease were more likely to vape.

The authors of the new study wrote that by starting with people who had no prior history of lung disease and then taking account of their use of e-cigarettes and smoking, they could identify a stronger causal link. Vaping advocates contend that e-cigarettes offer people addicted to smoking a less harmful alternative, but according to Glantz, most of the participants in the nationally representative sample both smoked and vaped. —AFP

## International

# No consensus yet on new Iraqi PM as deadline looms

## Parliament has two weeks to designate a new prime minister

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi political parties struggled to reach a consensus on a new prime minister yesterday amid unprecedented protests as the deadline for a parliamentary vote loomed. Iraq's competing factions typically engage in drawn-out discussions before any official decision, but replacing outgoing premier Adel Abdel Mahdi has been further complicated by the scrutiny of the months-old protest movement that forced his resignation.

For over two months, Baghdad and the Shiite-majority south have been rocked by protests against the government and Iranian influence, rejecting in advance any politician from the "corrupt system" in place since the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003. The protest movement erupted on October 1 and was met with violent suppression, with some 460 people killed and 25,000 wounded to date.

Abdel Mahdi's resignation on December 1 was precipitated by a wave of violence against demonstrators and the intervention by top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, whose influence looms large in Iraqi politics. Abdel Mahdi continues to carry out day-to-day government business pending the naming of a new premier.

### Several names circulated

In an official letter made public late Sunday, President Barham Saleh said he'd received a letter from the speaker of parliament accepting Abdel Mahdi's resignation "on December 4". According to the constitution, parliament has two weeks to designate a new

prime minister, making the deadline Thursday.

In his own letter, Saleh asks parliament to tell him "what is the largest coalition" in the assembly, from which the new premier should theoretically come. When naming Abdel Mahdi 13 months ago, parliament remained vague on the "largest coalition" and the premier was approved as soon as he was designated by Saleh. The prime minister then formed his government with the support of two allies, now divided in their responses to the protest movement.

In one corner is the powerful Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr, who holds the largest bloc in parliament and supports the protesters calling for an overhaul of the political system. In the other is the bloc made up of veterans of the Hashed al-Shaabi pro-Iranian paramilitary group now integrated into Iraqi security forces. Making up the second largest bloc, they see the protest movement as the product of a foreign "conspiracy".

Several names have circulated, including 49-year-old Mohammed Al-Soudani, a former minister and ex-governor of a southern province. He has already been rejected by protesters, who demand an "independent" candidate. Several sources told AFP Soudani's approval by parliament was "risky", with one saying "there is a big risk his candidature will be rejected". Saleh "is betting on this rejection, so he can present the candidate of his choice" without needing parliament's approval, as the constitution stipulates, this source added.

Another complication in the negotiations is the unusual disassociation from the process of Sistani, 89. While he



**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi protesters gather in Tahrir Square in the capital yesterday during ongoing anti-government demonstrations. —AFP

has played kingmaker of Iraqi governments since 2003, Sistani said ten days ago that this time he intended to

play "no role", only expressing a wish that the choice be made without "foreign interference". —AFP

## Boorish boars hog highways in Haifa

**HAIFA:** A man approaches a group of wild boars rooting up roadside grass in Israel's Haifa, shooing them away - but after lazily trotting a few steps, they resume their activity. Dozens of the beasts have taken up residence in the northern coastal city since it banned culling them. The wild pigs rip up vegetation and rummage through bins, sparking a fierce debate between animal rights defenders and those in favor of driving them out or killing them.

The city nestles at the foot of the Carmel Mountains, home to boars, foxes, jackals and other animals, all protected by Israeli law. Boars have long entered Haifa at night looking for food and water. But residents say in recent months they have been increasingly brazen, blocking traffic, digging up public gardens and even overturning large refuse bins. Haifa mayor Einat Kalisch-Rotem has defended the ban on killing them, saying they are part of nature. When AFP visited, a group of boars crossed a road in mid-morning, unbothered by traffic or the film crew following them. One amorous male even mounted a female in a public garden. "They've turned our lives into a

nightmare," one woman shouted.

### Looking for a home

Ilana Dihno, Haifa resident and one of the organizers of a protest against the boars later this month, said the animals used to stay out of the city until nightfall. "Now they are walking around in broad daylight," she said. "We chose to live in a city, but we live in a jungle." Boars, a species of wild pig found across Europe, Asia and North Africa, can grow up to two metres in length - although most are smaller. They primarily feed on plants, berries and fruits but are adept scavengers and thrive on human leftovers.

In Haifa there have been no recent cases of them attacking people, but some residents are concerned. "They come to our houses and gardens. We're scared for our children," said a woman who gave her name only as Avital. "Some kids might scare the piglets which might aggravate (the older boars) and make them attack children." She wanted to see the animals forced from the area completely, saying the municipality had done "nothing".

Other residents take a more favorable view of the creatures. Sarit Shai admitted to feeding the animals, saying they had been displaced by human activity. "They are looking for a place to be," she said. "They were here before us." Erez Kaplan, a gardener, said the pigs were "harmless" and damage they did to gardens could be easily repaired. "They check the ground and when they find it wet, they believe there's



**HAIFA:** Wild boars gather in a residential area in this northern Israeli city on Dec 5, 2019. —AFP

water, so they start digging," he said.

### 'Hair like a brush'

Haifa, Israel's third-largest city with around 300,000 people, is mainly Jewish with a significant Arab minority. Both Jewish and Islamic religious rules ban the eating of pigs, including boars. They have no natural predators in Haifa, so their numbers can grow rapidly. Until Kalisch-Rotem's 2018 victory, the city periodically allowed hunters to shoot them to keep numbers down, said Shlomit Shavit, a

spokeswoman for Israel's nature and parks authority. But the new leftwing mayor banned the cull. She has called for other solutions to keep the animals outside the city, such as ensuring they have regular food supplies in the wild. Haifa municipality has also sought to encourage tolerance of the animals, publishing a song on its Facebook page in which a group of children profess their love for the boar. "A Haifa girl isn't afraid of two tusks and hair like a brush, she says good morning to the neighborhood boar," the song goes. —AFP

## Protest-hit Lebanon postpones talks to pick new PM

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon's president yesterday postponed consultations to select a new prime minister after weeks of largely peaceful street protests descended into violence, leaving dozens wounded in clashes with security forces. The government stepped down on Oct 29 in the face of unprecedented nationwide demonstrations demanding the complete overhaul of a political class deemed inept and corrupt.

Yesterday, the presidency announced that President Michel Aoun had "responded to the wishes of (caretaker) prime minister Saad Hariri to postpone parliamentary consultations until Thursday December 19". Hariri's office said the deferral came to avoid "a nomination without any major Christian bloc taking part". It is not the first time the talks have been delayed. Parliamentary consultations had been scheduled for Dec 9 before being pushed back a week.

The names of various potential candidates to replace Hariri have been circu-

lated in recent weeks, but bitterly divided political parties have failed to agree on a new premier. Cabinet formation can drag on for months in the multi-confessional country, with Hariri taking almost nine months to reach an agreement with all political sides for the last one.

According to a complex political system that seeks to maintain a fragile balance between religious communities, Lebanon's prime minister is always a Sunni Muslim. Earlier this month, the Sunni Muslim establishment threw its support behind Hariri returning, further angering protesters who have demanded a cabinet of independent experts.

### 'Widespread chaos'

The powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah, a key political player with ministers in the outgoing government, has repeatedly dismissed the idea of an exclusively technocratic cabinet. Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said on Friday he would support a "government of national partnership" that did not exclude any of the major parties. He said it could be headed by Hariri or someone designated by the outgoing premier.

Consensus on the name of a new prime minister is frequently reached before parliamentary consultations begin. But Nasrallah warned parliamentary blocs had not agreed on a name and



**BEIRUT:** A Lebanese demonstrator kicks back a tear-gas canister during clashes with riot police in the capital on Sunday. —AFP

cabinet formation would be "no easy feat". Hariri has said he would only head a cabinet of independent experts. The latest delay to the consultations on a new premier came the day after clashes near the parliament building in the capital Beirut between protesters and security forces.

Rallies had begun peacefully with protesters waving Lebanese flags and

chanting "Hariri will not return", but escalated later, with demonstrators throwing water bottles and firecrackers at the security forces who responded with tear gas and water cannon. The Lebanese Red Cross said it treated 45 people on site. "Twenty-eight people were transported to hospital," the organisation's director George Kettaneh told AFP. —AFP

## Morocco seeks to 'turn page' on tense ties with Algeria

**RABAT:** King Mohammed VI has called for an easing of bilateral tensions with Algeria, long stoked by the disputed Western Sahara region, official Moroccan media said Sunday. The king issued the call in a message to congratulate Abdelmajid Tebboune for winning

Algeria's presidential election, which took place on Thursday. MAP news agency said. "The King also reiterated his previous call to open a new page in relations between the two neighboring countries, based on mutual trust and constructive dialogue," it said.

The North African neighbors have been at loggerheads for decades over Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony disputed between Morocco and the Polisario Front, an Algeria-backed independence movement. Morocco fought a war with the Polisario Front from 1975 to 1991, when a ceasefire deal was agreed. Algeria and Morocco have had frequent diplomatic rows and their land border has been closed since 1994.

Heads of state from the two countries have not met since 2005.

The international community has long advocated that a referendum be held to decide the status of Western Sahara. But Morocco, which annexed the territory after Spain withdrew in 1975 and considers it an integral part of the kingdom, has instead offered autonomy for Western Sahara. The Polisario Front insists on a UN referendum on independence. After a long break, a UN-led dialogue between Morocco, the Polisario Front, Algeria and Mauritania resumed in Switzerland in December 2018, followed by a second round in March, but no breakthrough was made. —AFP

## Aid agencies throw lifeline to hungry Zimbabweans

**EPWORTH, Zimbabwe:** It's a meagre sum - just \$9 per month - but for many families in poverty-stricken Zimbabwe, it is their last shred of hope. The innovative scheme by the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), UKAID and Denmark's DanChurchAid (DCA) is helping thousands of urban households that each day face a struggle to survive. "We used to fill the children's school lunch boxes with porridge, but now they get popcorn and crisps - they are happy," said Anna Kubeta, a 63-year-old beneficiary.

The visually-impaired grandmother shares a cramped three-bedroom brick cottage with one of her adult children and four grandchildren, all of them school-going age. Her 35-year-old son Aaron Munyoro, who has been unemployed for 15 years, receives the family's cash aid on his phone every month. "Thanks to the cash transfers, their (kids') diet is less monotonous these days. We actually can afford some meat and flour," Munyoro said.

The combination of an economic meltdown and extreme drought has seriously worsened the plight of Zimbabweans, who were already struggling. Nearly half of Zimbabwe's 15 million people live in a state of chronic food insecurity - some 2.2 million in urban areas and five million in the countryside, according to UN figures. In a visit last month, the UN special rapporteur on the right to food, Hilal Elver, warned that Zimbabwe was on the "brink of man-made starvation".

### 'More food for children'

Epworth, an informal settlement some 15 km southeast of Harare, is an area in desperate need. Most of its residents are unemployed and have never had running water, sewage facilities or access to healthcare. Nearly 4,000 households are food-insecure, according to a survey. A Danish Lutheran charity, DanChurchAid (DCA) has additionally funded a mushroom farming project within the WFP's pilot scheme.

"We hope that after the end of the disbursements, households are able to stand on their own through the resilience and livelihoods activities that complement their food security and income," said Chipu Chipudhla, DCA's program head. After aid dries up, she explained, many people are forced into dropping out of school, early marriage and prostitution as they have no other options.

Memory Ruvinga, a mother of three, said the cash transfer, combined with the farming, had enabled her to feed her family three times a day. "I am getting US\$45 to feed myself and the children," she said, standing in front of the brick structure where she grows her oyster mushrooms. Her husband left home to look for work as an artisanal miner months ago when the family first signed up for aid, but has not returned. —AFP



**EPWORTH, Zimbabwe:** Memory Ruvinga poses for a portrait with colonized mushroom substrate from her growing room at her home on the outskirts of Harare on Dec 10, 2019. —AFP

## International

# Battle of the Bulge heroes remembered 75 years on

## Solemn ceremonies held in Belgium and Luxembourg

**BASTOGNE, Belgium:** Seventy-five years after the snow bound hills of the Ardennes saw the bloody turning point of World War II, surviving veterans gathered for perhaps the last time. Yesterday, they were honored by a king, a grand duke, two presidents, two prime ministers and a US defense chief at solemn ceremonies in both Belgium and Luxembourg. The Battle of the Bulge was the last German offensive of the war, and the Siege of Bastogne was the scene of a heroic and now famous defence by American paratroopers.

"Outnumbered nearly five-to-one, lacking cold-weather gear, and short on food, ammunition, and medical supplies, the American paratroopers refused to give up," US defense secretary Mark Esper said. "Many of these men perished amid the thundering forests of the Ardennes," said Esper, himself a more recent combat veteran of the 101st Airborne, which in 1944 held the line bravely. "And since the battlefield fell silent long ago, most of the veterans of that era have passed. However, we are blessed to have with us today a group of heroes who still walk among us."

Today, Belgium, the United States and Germany are allies, and Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier took part at a memorial at Mardasson in chill fog and driving rain. "It is with sadness that I bow my head to all these dead ... victims of the hate and fury that was born in my country," said Steinmeier, accepting German responsibility for unleashing the war.

Veterans, historians and military enthusiasts marked the now legendary close-quarters battle of Bastogne with a spectacular series of weekend re-enactments ahead of yesterday's ceremonies. Bastogne's rescue in late December 1944 by General George "Old Blood and Guts" Patton helped seal his reputation as an American military giant. But the out-gunned paratroopers of the 101st Airborne - who held the pocket for a week against advancing German armor - also claim a share of the glory. Esper was an officer of these "Screaming Eagles" in the 1991 Gulf War, but yesterday he paid tribute to his comrades from an era that is passing from memory into history.

### 'Nuts!'

The Belgian town of Bastogne, close to the Luxembourg border in the Ardennes hills, is the focus of the commemoration, as it was of the fighting. On Dec 16, 1944, German forces - which had been falling back before the Allied advance from France since June's D-Day landings - counter-attacked. Their goal was to seize the port of Antwerp to deny it to Allied resupply ships, and five of their roads north converged on the small Belgian town.

By Dec 20, the battle-hardened but lightly armed US paratroopers were surrounded and a German Panzer general demanded their surrender. "Nuts!" was the one-word reply from the US commander, and the ensuing week-long siege lasted until Patton's Third Army came to the rescue. Yesterday, Philippe, King of the Belgians, and Belgium's prime minister Sophie Wilmes were joined at the Mardasson Memorial by Esper and Steinmeier, and senior envoys from Britain, Canada and France. The king praised the courage and "determination of our liberators" and recalled the need to always oppose the racist ideology embodied by Nazism.

In the afternoon, the convoy crossed the border to the Luxembourg Military Cemetery and Memorial in Hamm, Patton's last resting place, received by the duchy's Grand Duke Henri and Prime Minister Xavier Bettel. General Patton died in a road accident during the 1945 occupation of a defeated Germany, but was buried in the Ardennes with comrades from his famous victory. His granddaughter Helen Patton has spent the days leading up to the memorial greeting veterans on battlefield visits. The then 59-year-old Patton reached the summit of his glory when he relieved Bastogne and the survivors of the 18,000 encircled men.

### Artillery barrage

The overall Battle of the Bulge would rage across the Ardennes for six weeks - drawing in 600,000 American and 25,000 British troops against 400,000 Germans -



**BASTOGNE, Belgium:** Leaders and soldiers attend a ceremony as part of the commemorations of the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge yesterday at the Mardasson Memorial. — AFP

until the Allies prevailed in January 1945. Between 15,000 and 20,000 German troops died, against between 10,000 and 19,000 Americans. And 3,000 Belgian civilians perished under artillery bombardments or in massacres carried out by the Waffen-SS in villages like Houffalize.

The Bastogne fighting has been recounted by veter-

ans interviewed for the book and television series "Band of Brothers" and entered US military folklore. But 75 years on, the number of former combatants and witnesses who can attend ceremonies is declining, and Belgium's War Heritage Institute has invited as many as they still can. — AFP

## N Ireland parties revive power sharing talks

**BELFAST:** Northern Ireland's squabbling parties met yesterday in the hope of reviving their power-sharing regional government after three years, with the UK election having cleared the path to Brexit. The politically and socially volatile province has been without an administration since Jan 2017. The power-sharing executive between the pro-British, conservative Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and left-wing Irish republicans Sinn Féin crumbled in a breakdown of trust following a misspending scandal.

But the United Kingdom's impending exit from the European Union has given the parties new impetus to find common ground. Thursday's general election returned a majority Conservative government, paving the way for the UK to leave the EU on Jan 31. Brexit's implications for Northern Ireland and the border with the Irish Republic, an EU member state, have been the most contentious part of the departure process.

The Brexit deal agreed between London and Brussels would see Northern Ireland diverge from mainland Britain and retain some EU rules, subject to four-yearly approval of the Northern Ireland Assembly. "The election has changed things very dramatically," Sinn Féin president Mary Lou McDonald told BBC radio. The UK election in



**BELFAST:** Activists calling for an Irish language act demonstrate as Britain's Northern Ireland Secretary Julian Smith holds talk with leaders of Northern Ireland's political parties at Stormont House yesterday. — AFP

2017 stripped then-prime minister Theresa May of her majority in the British parliament, forcing her into an alliance with the DUP. The DUP kingmakers wielded an outsized influence in London during the intense Brexit negotiations.

But the party lost that role in Thursday's election which Prime Minister Boris Johnson a thumping majority. "I hope now that their attention can come back home and that we can together lift what needs to be lifted," said McDonald. "The fact that the British government is identifying the restoration of government in the North as a key priority, I hope they're true to that."

### 'New arithmetic'

Some analysts agreed that Thursday's election outcome could alter the power dynamic in the negotiations on forming a new executive at Stormont in Belfast. "The new arithmetic at Westminster will give the DUP much greater incentive to reach a deal with Sinn Féin," Queen's University Belfast politics lecturer Jamie Pow told AFP. "If it wants to remain relevant, it will need to show voters that it can deliver."

Northern Ireland returns 18 MPs to the 650-member British parliament and the DUP fell back from 10 seats to eight on Thursday, losing their Westminster frontman Nigel Dodds, the party's deputy leader. Sinn Féin won seven seats but does not take them up as it does not recognize the British parliament's jurisdiction over Northern Ireland. But both main parties reduced their overall vote share as more moderate movements gained ground - an apparent response to frustrations over stalling Stormont talks.

The deadlock between the two main parties may begin to loosen as they grow wary of sustaining losses in a looming Northern Ireland Assembly election. Britain's Northern Ireland secretary has promised to call fresh regional elections if the executive is not restored by Jan 13. Northern Ireland has been run by civil servants for three years, in the absence of an executive. "I hope that change is in the air," DUP leader Arlene Foster told BBC radio. "I will come to the table in a way that allows us to bring forward a deal that is that is balanced, that is proportional, that represents the fact that there are divided communities in Northern Ireland and that all of those communities must have a place." — AFP

## Suspect in 'dirty war' murder extradited to Argentina

**BUENOS AIRES:** An Argentine ex-police officer linked to the murder of hundreds of people during the country's "dirty war" arrived in Buenos Aires yesterday, after France extradited him to face trial over the disappearance of a student. Mario Sandoval was arrested Wednesday at his home near Paris, after French authorities gave the final go-ahead for his extradition, ending an eight-year legal battle.

The 66-year-old who had been living in France since 1985 and obtained French citizenship with few aware of his full identity was sent back on a plane that left Paris around midnight on Sunday. "Everything happened as expected," a lawyer for the Argentine state told AFP. Argentina suspects that Sandoval took part in more than 500 cases of kidnappings, torture and murder at a time when some 30,000 were "disappeared" during the 1976-83 military dictatorship.

But the extradition concerns only the alleged kidnapping in Oct 1976 of Hernan Abriata, an architecture student whose body has never been found. Argentine authorities say investigators have several witness accounts linking Sandoval - known there as the "butcher" of the dictatorship - to Abriata's killing. Sandoval's lawyers had argued that he would not get a fair trial in Argentina where he would face torture or poor detention conditions. But their appeals to the European Court of Human Rights to take up his case failed.

Abriata was detained at the notorious ESMA navy training school in Buenos Aires, where an estimated 5,000 people were held and tortured after the military coup of 1976 - many of them thrown from planes into the sea or the River Plate. Sophie Thonon, a lawyer acting for Argentina, told AFP that Abriata's 92-year-old mother Beatriz Cantarini de Abriata had been "desperately waiting" for Sandoval to "explain himself before Argentine justice".

Sandoval, who has dismissed the accusations as fabrications, fled Argentina after the military junta fell. Despite taking French nationality, he can be extradited as the alleged crime took place beforehand. Sandoval was a professor at the Sorbonne's Institute of Latin American Studies in Paris and the University of Marne-la-Vallée outside the French capital. His colleagues at both schools called for his arrest when they recognized his picture during his legal battles. — AFP



**TIMISOARA, Romania:** People march on the streets during a commemoration of the Romanian Revolution's first victims on Sunday. — AFP

## 'Freedom march' marks 30 years since Romania revolution

**TIMISOARA, Romania:** Romania kicked off a series of commemorations to mark 30 years since the overthrow of the tyrannical regime of Nicolae Ceausescu, staging a "freedom march" in the town of Timisoara, cradle of the 1989 revolution. Waving Romanian flags in the torchlit procession, several hundred people marched to the red-brick temple whose Reformed Church pastor Laszlo Tokes was expelled for criticizing the Ceausescu dictatorship in his sermons.

A protest against his expulsion was the spark for the revolution that brought down Europe's last communist regime, as the Iron Curtain between the continent's east and west had begun to disintegrate in the spring of 1989. "I couldn't imagine that people would respond to my call... that they would come to my church to express their solidarity," Tokes, now 67, told AFP. "This solidarity morphed into a protest movement against the communist regime."

A plaque beside the sanctuary's door reads in

Romanian, Hungarian, German and Serbian - the languages of Timisoara's different communities: "The revolution that ended the dictatorship began here." The slogans of 30 years ago such as "Today in Timisoara, tomorrow across the country" could be heard again on Sunday. One of the marchers, 41-year-old Codruta Cesnea, said: "We want the sacrifice of the youths never to be forgotten. I told my son that he must respect the memory of the revolution."

Two days after the start of gatherings in support of the pastor, Ceausescu gave the order to fire on protesters. Around 60 were killed, and more than 2,000 were wounded on December 17, 1989, in Timisoara. History professor Adrian Kali, 51, said the wave of change exceeded his expectations: "Today anyone can travel abroad, buy a car or a house." He regretted however that young people seem to know little of the history.

Gerhard Ullmann, an engineer, disagreed that things are much better. "Look at the wages, people's standard of living." Yet he said he travelled to Timisoara specially from Germany - where he emigrated in 1994 - to take part in the commemorations. The anti-regime demonstrations reached the capital Bucharest on Dec 21, 1989. The next day Ceausescu and his wife fled the city in a helicopter before being arrested. They were condemned and summarily executed on Christmas Day 1989. In all, 1,104 people were killed in fighting for Romania's revolution and 3,552 were injured. — AFP

## Dem: Impeachment needed to stop 'a crime in progress'

**WASHINGTON:** A key Democratic lawmaker said Sunday that President Donald Trump's misconduct amounted to "a crime in progress" that threatens US democracy, as the full House prepares for a historic vote on impeachment. "Do we have a constitutional democracy, or do we have a monarchy, where the president is unaccountable?" Representative Jerry Nadler asked on ABC's "This Week". "That's what's at stake here."

He expressed anger with Senate Republicans who said they had already made up their mind to exonerate the president - even without hearing evidence or testimony - in the Senate trial expected next month. When the Democratic-controlled House convenes Wednesday to weigh the two charges approved by Nadler's Judiciary Committee, Trump is expected to become only the third US president to be impeached, after Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998.

Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 just before a House impeachment vote. Neither Johnson nor Clinton was convicted in the Senate. Trump is counting on the Republican majority in the Senate to exonerate him. In repeated tweets Sunday he mocked a process that, to judge by his frequent tweets, appears to consume him. He retweeted one conservative commentator as saying: "The President did nothing wrong here. There is no crime," before adding: "Impeachment Hoax!"

### 'Total coordination'

Some influential Senate Republicans have suggested they have already made up their minds and don't need to hear the evidence compiled by House Democrats in several weeks of hearings. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell has promised "total coordination" with the White House and said there is no chance Trump will be convicted. And Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, a Trump confidant, told CNN, "I'm not trying to pretend to be a fair juror here," dismissing the charges against Trump as "partisan nonsense."

House impeachment manager Democrat Adam Schiff, appearing on ABC alongside Nadler, called Graham's attitude "disgraceful". And Nadler said McConnell and Graham would be defying the oath required of all senators in an impeachment trial: "to do impartial justice".

### 'A subversion'

But Senator Ted Cruz, a Republican, said Sunday that Democrats had come up with "zero evidence" of the "high crimes and misdemeanors" the US Constitution sets as the standard for impeachment. "I think this is the beginning of the end for this show trial that we've seen in the House," he told ABC's "This Week." Nadler, however, painted a dire picture of what is at stake. "This president conspired - sought foreign interference in the 2016 election," he said, referring to Russian meddling. "He is openly seeking foreign interference in the 2020 election" by asking Ukraine to investigate Trump's Democratic rivals. "We cannot permit that to continue," he said, adding that to allow such behavior would be "a subversion of the constitutional order."

Sunday evening, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer released a letter to McConnell, putting forward the structure for a Senate impeachment trial that would begin the week of Jan 6. Schumer also proposed issuing subpoenas for several senior White House officials, including acting Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney and former national security advisor John Bolton.

"Conducting the trial according to this plan will... allow the public to have confidence in the process and will demonstrate that the Senate can put aside partisan concerns and fulfill its constitutional duty," Schumer wrote. — AFP



## International

# NZ observes silence as PM warns of long volcano probe

## Police release names of another four fatalities

WELLINGTON: New Zealand marked one week since the deadly White Island eruption with a minute's silence yesterday, as Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern warned grieving families they face a lengthy wait for answers. At 2:11pm (0111 GMT) - exactly a week since the eruption - offices and shops fell silent as New Zealanders remembered the 16 international tourists and two local guides who died, along with at least 18 more now receiving intensive treatment for severe burns.

Flags flew at half-mast outside Wellington's distinctive "Beehive" parliament building, while inside Ardern suspended a cabinet meeting and stood head bowed to reflect quietly on the disaster. "Our thoughts continue to be with the families of those who have passed and those who are injured," she said. A total of 47 day-trippers and guides were on the island at the time, hailing from Australia, the United States, Britain, China, Germany, Malaysia and New Zealand.

Whakatane mayor Judy Turner said authorities took grieving families out on boats to within a safe distance of the volcanic island to mark the event. However, Ardern it would take time to determine why tour operators were allowed to take travellers onto the rim of an active volcano just days after scientists had raised its eruption threat level. She said officials had advised her that a probe by workplace regulator WorkSafe New Zealand may take a year and a separate coronial inquiry was "also likely to continue for some time".

"Look, as we've seen, inquiries can sometimes take more than that time, so it's not for me to judge whether that's an appropriate time frame," she said. "They need to do their job properly and it needs to be properly considered." Under New Zealand workplace law, individuals

can face a maximum three years jail for reckless conduct resulting in death, while companies can be fined NZ\$3.0 million (US\$2.0 million).

The country also has a scheme called the Accident Compensation Commission, which covers victims' medical bills and provides modest compensation but does not allow civil suits seeking multimillion-dollar damages payouts. Ardern denied this had promoted a dangerous culture in New Zealand's adventure tourism sector.

Police yesterday released the names of another four fatalities. All four were Australian - Jessica Richards, 20, Jason David Griffiths, 33, Martin Berend Hollander, 48, and Kristine Elizabeth Langford, 45. It brings the number of Australians identified as fatalities in the eruption to eight, along with two US citizens who had permanent residency in Australia.

### 'Days or weeks'

Special forces troops retrieved six bodies from the island last Friday but the remains of two people have still not been found, despite a second land search on Sunday. Police commissioner Mike Bush said they were believed to be in the water off White Island, so helicopters and divers would be deployed to aid the search. "We've been working with all the experts, including the harbor master who knows those waters better than anyone, to try to predict where those persons might be," Bush told RNZ.

"We will continue the operation for as long as we have a chance of recovering those bodies," he said, adding in a separate interview to Auckland radio station Magic "it can take days and weeks". Many of those affected were passengers on the cruise liner Ovation of the Seas, which berthed in Sydney early yesterday. "It



WELLINGTON: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters stand with cabinet ministers as they observe a minute's silence in respect for victims of the Dec 9 White Island volcanic eruption in parliament yesterday. —AFP

was) a bit sombre," Australian man Troy, who did not give his surname, told Channel Nine television after completing the voyage across the Tasman Sea. "The crew

were really good and trying to stay upbeat but you could tell they were hurting. I think the captain was breaking down crying a fair bit." —AFP

## Workout, horse ride, song: A day in life of Turkmen leader

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan: Effortlessly bowling a strike, netting a basketball and riding a horse before thrashing out a new song with his grandson - Turkmenistan's president has showcased his hobbies in a festive television news feature. The "day in the life" of Central Asian leader Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, a former dentist with a pervasive cult of personality, took up much of a weekend news broadcast in the tightly controlled country.

State television in the gas-rich authoritarian state regularly gives time to the president's leisure activities but the Sunday evening broadcast to celebrate the forthcoming New Year holiday was longer than usual. Berdimukhamedov was shown trotting around a racecourse on a beautifully schooled Akhal-Teke horse - a breed of racehorse for which Turkmenistan is famous - before driving off in his white Mercedes

4X4 to a sports centre. Here the 62-year-old was shown casually netting a basketball while giving officials a masterclass in basketball, and ten-pin bowling, where he smoothly hit two strikes. He also demonstrated a move rolling on a gym ball, watched by nodding officials who took notes. The leader has promoted healthy living and sport - including mandatory public stretching sessions for civil servants.

He also regularly shows off his physical prowess in stunts reminiscent of judo-loving ice-hockey fan Vladimir Putin. The Russian president has also been known to bash out American and Russian hits on the piano - and the Turkmen leader too has a penchant for music, writing songs and performing. The finale of Sunday's news item was a seven-minute segment devoted to his music-making with teenage grandson Kerimguly, considered to be his favorite. The duo were shown working in the studio on a cover of "Karakum" - a pop song from the 1980s about the desert that covers much of Turkmenistan. Berdimukhamedov was pictured sporting tinted glasses and strumming a guitar during the clip. The pair's duet is "an example of dialogue between the generations... important for the harmonious development and aesthetic education of the Turkmen youth", a presenter said during the report.



ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan: In this file photograph taken on April 28, 2018, Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov holds a Turkmen shepherd dog while mounted on a horse as he takes part in celebrations for the Day of the Horse. —AFP

State television rarely shows any of Berdimukhamedov's family except his son Serdar Berdimukhamedov, a provincial governor, and grandson Kerimguly. While Serdar Berdimukhamedov's rise through the state bureaucracy has sparked talk of his succeeding his father, Kerimguly's appearances seem

designed to show a softer side to the hardliner. Berdimukhamedov came to power in 2006 after the death of his eccentric predecessor Saparmurat Niyazov, who styled himself as "Father of the Turkmen" and revelled in a personality cult that drew regular comparisons with North Korea. —AFP

## Rescuers race to find survivors after Philippine quake

PADADA, Philippines: Rescuers in the southern Philippines used heavy equipment and their bare hands yesterday in hopes of finding several people feared trapped beneath a building toppled by a powerful earthquake that claimed at least three lives. Sunday's tremor cracked schools, toppled homes and injured dozens but largely spared big cities on the island of Mindanao, which is still recovering from a string of deadly quakes in October.

Searchers have pulled survivors from the collapsed market building in the town of Padada, but were still looking for a person who had texted authorities saying six people were trapped under the rubble. "The person can no longer be reached," fire official Fred Trajeras told reporters, adding that rescuers' held out hope survivors could be found. A young child was killed when a family home collapsed near the epicentre, and searchers pulled the bodies of two victims from the collapsed market building.

However applause erupted after Lesley Jane Gatos, 31, was pulled from the rubble on Sunday, shortly after the tremor.



PADADA, Philippines: A collapsed building is seen in this town in Davao del Sur province on the southern island of Mindanao yesterday following a 6.8-magnitude earthquake on Dec 15. —AFP

Gatos used her phone to call for help and then began making noise to attract the attention of rescuers, who reached her after clearing a path in the debris. "Finally I was able to get out. I saw people. They clapped because I was the first one rescued," she told AFP. —AFP

## Drugged, smuggled Bali orangutan headed back to wild

BALI: A baby orangutan that was drugged by a Russian trafficker in a failed bid to smuggle it out of Bali will be released back into the wild. The case made headlines in March when suspicious authorities on the Indonesian holiday island stopped Andrei Zhestkov, who was flying back to Russia, and opened his luggage to find a two-year-old orangutan sleeping inside a rattan basket.

Zhestkov, sentenced to a year in prison in July, had packed baby formula and blankets for the orangutan. He was also carrying two live geckos and five lizards inside the suitcase. Yesterday, conservation authorities in Bali rolled out a big fruit plate for fuzzy-haired Bon Bon as he prepares to move to a conservation centre in Sumatra - one of just two places where the critically endangered species is found in the wild.

Bon Bon's caretaker, Ketut Diandika, confessed to being a little bit sad at the ape's departure. "I actually want Bon Bon to stay here so that I can still take care of him," he said. The Southeast Asian archipelago's rainforests boast some of the highest levels of biodiversity in the



DENPASAR, Indonesia: A keeper holds orangutan Bon Bon at the Ngurah Rai International Airport on the resort island of Bali yesterday. —AFP

world and it is a key source and transit point for animal trafficking. In a separate case at the weekend, officials in Sumatra's Riau province said they arrested two men, allegedly part of an international trafficking ring, who were attempting to smuggle four lion cubs and a baby leopard from Africa, along with dozens of tortoises. —AFP

## Sydney bushfire haze a 'public health emergency'

SYDNEY: Australia's biggest city is facing a "public health emergency" over the bushfire smoke that has choked Sydney for weeks, leading doctors warned yesterday after hospitals reported a dramatic spike in casualty department visits. Hundreds of climate change-fuelled bushfires have been raging across Australia for months, with efforts to contain a "mega-blaze" burning north of Sydney destroying an estimated 20 homes overnight and fires near Perth threatening towns.

More than 20 medical groups including the Royal Australasian College of Physicians - which represents 25,000 doctors and trainees - released a joint statement yesterday calling on Australia's government to address the toxic air pollution. "The air pollution in NSW is a public health emergency," the Climate and Health Alliance said. "Smoke from bushfires has produced air pollution of up to 11 times the base 'hazardous' level in parts of Sydney and New South Wales. "Bushfire smoke is particularly hazardous because of the high levels of tiny particles (PM2.5)." —AFP

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How US goods flood  
Venezuela stores

While US President Donald Trump wants to drive Venezuela's socialist ruler out of power with economic sanctions, there has in fact been a burgeoning influx of American-bought goods from Nutella spread to Oreo cookies. Many toiletries, food items and other imports became impossible to find during Venezuela's economic implosion under President Nicolas Maduro. Yet now they line the shelves in scores of new US dollar-only shops known as "bodegones", providing an unlikely safety valve for Maduro.

The reason? Venezuelan businessmen have taken advantage of his government's quiet abandonment of price, currency and import controls to buy direct from US wholesalers including Costco and Walmart. The goods are delivered to Florida-based door-to-door services run by Venezuelans, according to 11 interviews with customs agents, operators and businessmen. The products move in bulk via shipping companies with bases in south Florida who have this year enjoyed a 100 percent exemption of import duties and waiver of some paperwork at the Venezuelan end, the sources added.

"Everything our customers want from the United States, we've managed to offer here!" enthused Hector Mambel, who runs a "bodega" in Puerto Cabello port with a "Mini Walmart" sign outside using the same design as the US giant he buys from. The shift shows how Venezuela's economy is evolving to survive sanctions that have hit oil exports. The trade from Florida does not violate Trump's sanctions because they target business with Maduro's government not with private entrepreneurs. It has, however, bemused some Venezuelans used to constant "anti-imperialist" rhetoric.

"I don't understand this government that speaks ill of the 'gringos' and yet we now see US products abound in stores and everything is in dollars," said teacher Ligia Martinez, 38, holding a bag with purchases of cereal, tuna and cake mix. She bought the goods at a "bodega" in the city of Valencia with dollar remittances sent from family abroad.

It was only last year, as the local bolivar currency depreciated precipitously amid hyperinflation, that Maduro lifted a longstanding prohibition on dollar transactions. Though the goods in the corner-shops are out of reach for most bolivar-earning Venezuelans, a well-heeled elite with dollars makes for a viable business in indulgence products.

## 'I sell everything'

The "bodegones" are reminiscent of the dollar-only stores communist Cuba ran for foreigners in the 1990s. Reuters found 120 new such stores in Caracas alone, primarily in middle class areas, outnumbering the 27 bolivar supermarkets in those areas. Competition has brought down the price of niche-market items such as boutique hair products. The abundance on shelves contrasts with years of scarcity of basics from shampoo to milk borne out of socialist regulations that often forced merchants to sell below cost. "Bodega" owners often buy online or partner with door-to-door services who scour chains for knock-down prices. "Our customers ask us to buy at Costco or (Walmart affiliate) Sam's Club in the United States and we import what they ask for them," said an operator of a shipping company that brings supplies from Miami to Caracas.

At least half of the stores Reuters visited sold products from Members Mark, which is Sam's Club's private brand, and Costco's Kirkland brand. Popular items include pancake mix, Pringles, ketchup and cereal, often selling for double or more their US price. Some of the "bodegones" buy from wholesale importers, meaning they have to hike prices further for margins, so pancake mix for \$6.50 or thereabouts in Costco goes for \$14 to \$20 in Venezuela depending on how many hands it has been through.

Some Venezuelans offer imports direct via Instagram. "Everything I bring from Miami, I sell," said one small online merchant, noting his compatriots' love of foreign goods. "There's more competition these days, but it's still good business because Venezuelans are snobbish." Costco declined to comment, while Walmart did not respond to a request. Venezuela's Information Ministry, tax authority and state port agency also did not respond to requests for comment. Asked for its view of the trade, given the underlying aim of sanctions, the US Treasury Department did not respond. This year's waiver of import duties and some documentation has been a boon to businessmen, used to crippling bureaucracy and regulations for years. "These imports move with ease, everything is exempted," said one trader, who brings in products at La Guaira port outside Caracas. The exemptions expire this month but may be extended. Felipe Capozzolo, head of Consecmercio chamber of commerce, said the "bodegones" had become an unofficial part of "state policy" to enable Venezuela to stay supplied under sanctions and thus ease pressure on the government. — Reuters

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Thai Future Forward Party's leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit addresses his supporters during an unauthorized flash mob rally in downtown Bangkok on Dec 14, 2019. — AFP

## From tweet to street: New gen joins Thai protest

It wasn't only the moves to ban Thailand's most vocal opposition party that brought Gift onto the street for the first time. The 25-year-old landscape architect was also stung by taunts that her generation was not brave enough to go beyond online comments in challenging the army-dominated establishment's enduring hold since elections to end junta rule. She and other first-timers joined veterans of Bangkok's turbulent decades of street protest as thousands rallied at the weekend in the biggest demonstration since a 2014 coup.

"They say the new generation only exists on social media, so we're out here to show we have a voice too," said Chattip Aphibanpoonpon, who like many Thais goes by her nickname. "The conflict used to be about people on two sides. Now it's a battle between the military and the people. It's not fair." In a country long roiled by bloody protests - and punctuated by coups in the name of ending them - Saturday's peaceful rally was a reminder of the tension that is building again rapidly between the establishment and those seeking change.

At the forefront is 41-year-old auto-parts billionaire Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, who was recently banned as a member of parliament and whose Future Forward party faces dissolution. In both cases, party supporters believe the legal grounds are spurious and designed to eliminate a challenge to Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-Ocha, the former junta leader who stayed on after March elections the opposition says were manipulated.

## 'Just the beginning'

"This is just the beginning," Thanathorn told protesters

Iranian trailblazer's  
Olympic dream faces  
US immigration hurdle

With Tokyo 2020 looming, Iranian sprinter Maryam Toosi has been desperately trying to come to the US to pursue her Olympic Games dream, but is still trying to overcome one seemingly insurmountable hurdle - President Donald Trump's travel ban. The 31-year-old, who shot to fame by winning gold in the 400 metres at the 2012 Asian Indoor Championships while wearing a hijab headscarf, has been waiting in legal limbo for three years after applying for an American visa to train and compete.

Toosi wants to come to the US to take advantage of the superior facilities, better coaching and a culture that celebrates track and field because she knows Tokyo could be her last shot at competing at an Olympics. And since falling in love and getting engaged to Iranian-born US citizen Moein Mohsen, a DJ in Los Angeles, she has been even more determined to make the move. "Getting the visa would mean everything. Everything," she told Reuters in a telephone interview from her current training camp in Cyprus. "Moein travels here every other

month, spending thousands of dollars to come see me ... If he didn't push me, I probably wouldn't be in Cyprus right now training. I would have given up this dream."

Toosi's career has been one long battle to prove that the people who say her dreams are impossible have got it wrong. "When I first started chasing the dream of winning a gold medal or even qualifying for the Asian Games, everyone made fun of me - the federation, all the other athletes," she explained. "They asked, 'how are you going to even qualify with the hijab, or the training you do?' Even with the lack of training, I was still able to set those records and win that medal, and I'm here in Cyprus to prove I can do it at the Olympics too."

The Iranian record holder at 100m, 200m and 400m, Toosi has suffered the agony of missing out on Olympic qualification twice before, in part due to technical errors made by race officials. After those disappointments, she applied for a visa so she could train in the US, but despite having her interview in August 2016, she has still not received a decision.

"The problem is that Maryam is stuck in administrative processing due to President Trump's Presidential Proclamation 9645 - that is, the travel ban," Parviz Malakouti, Toosi's lawyer, told Reuters. That proclamation, the third in a series of travel bans implemented in 2017, seriously restricts citizens of several, mostly Muslim-majority nations to get US visas. The US State Department did not respond to a request for comment on Toosi's case. Toosi believes that given the chance to train

Forward into third place in the March election, after the traditional opposition party Pheu Thai and a pro-army party backing Prayuth. The question has been whether online activism would translate into a readiness to take to the street. And it hasn't only been establishment parties casting doubt. Before Saturday's rally, veteran activist Anurak Jeantawanich challenged Future Forward supporters as "only using hashtags, but afraid to take to the streets". If fewer than 2,000 people showed up "you might as well just let your party be disbanded", he said. Several thousand gathered, if not the 10,000 plus claimed by organizers.

"I'm come from social media," read a placard held by Pisit Iewlatanawadee, a 29-year-old business owner from Nakhon Pathom in central Thailand. "We're not only good at typing," he said. "We also want to participate in opposition to authoritarian government." Rafah Supanphong, 25, told Reuters: "They keep saying we are only brave on online platforms, it encouraged me to come out." The younger protesters joined many older "red shirts" who recalled years of street clashes and bullets in their support for ousted populist prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra in clashes with pro-establishment "yellow shirts".

At the weekend protest, veteran Thaksin protesters sat munching sticky rice from wicker containers as young professionals took selfies nearby. Earlier, the Pheu Thai party of the self-exiled Thaksin said it backed the rally by "younger brother" Thanathorn. A small group of police challenged the rally organizers for holding a demonstration without notice, but they made no attempt to stop it. On yesterday police said they were investigating whether the law had been broken. — Reuters

and prepare in the same manner as athletes like six-time Olympic champion Allyson Felix, she can qualify for Tokyo. "When I met Allyson, I looked at her and I cried, because I realized that the difference between us was not talent. It was the training, the ability to prepare," she explained.

## Competing in a hijab

Though she says her distinctive hijab is something of a hindrance on the track, she takes her position as a role model for Muslim women and girls very seriously. "All the clothes that the other girls wear weigh about as much as my headscarf on its own. I have to wrap it tightly around me, but in another way, I don't see it as a limitation. I am proud of my religion. "When I first started competing, and all of a sudden a woman in a hijab was being seen next to Swedish girls or girls in regular track outfits, everybody was really shocked when they saw me," she says. "But after I started competing and breaking records, I started to see more and more females in hijabs."

As Toosi continues to train in Iran and Cyprus, Malakouti is exploring all legal avenues to get her a visa while fiance Mohsen keeps rooting for her. "I love Maryam, and I'm sad she hasn't been able to reach anywhere close to her potential as a talented runner because of being stuck in Iran," Mohsen said. "I pray that Immigration gives her a travel ban waiver so she can come to the United States to live the American dream as an athlete and we can start our life together." — Reuters

Intel agencies  
distrust Trump

Donald Trump's relations with his own intelligence services have never been so fraught: The US president doesn't listen to his spy chiefs, doesn't seem to rank his sources and makes snap decisions without giving them any warning. The two sides have clashed repeatedly, including in May when, as part of efforts to defend himself against collusion accusations, Trump agreed that files on the investigation into Russian election meddling in 2016 could be declassified.

A few weeks later, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats announced he would step down as head of the 17 agencies that make up the intelligence community. Trump proposed as Coats' replacement John Ratcliffe, a member of Congress known for repeating conspiracy theories on Fox News. Under withering criticism, Ratcliffe withdrew his nomination.

But the president passed over Coats' deputy Sue Gordon, who was in line to serve as acting director. Gordon, who spent a quarter-century in the CIA, told the Women's Foreign Policy Group this month that Trump was the first president "in my experience that had no foundation or framework to understand what the limits of intelli-

gence are, what the purpose of it was and the way that we discuss it". She said Trump's typical response in briefings was, "I don't think that's true." Her experience was borne out by a former CIA analyst who now works at a prestigious institution in Washington.

## 'Fox and Friends' briefings

"When I was in the CIA, the big thing to do was to get an article in the presidential daily brief. It was always a big thing. That was gold, professionally speaking," he said. The former analyst, who served under both George W Bush and Barack Obama, added that "I knew that both of them took that thing extremely seriously. "Now, I really get the impression that whatever is presented to (Trump), he doesn't care about it, and really he's getting his briefing from 'Fox and Friends,'" one of his favorite TV shows.

Still, Mike Pompeo, the current Secretary of State, was Trump's first CIA director. He became a central figure in the administration and regularly visited the White House for briefings, which Trump appreciated. But the president counts the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which opened the Russia inquiry into 2016 electoral interference, among his adversaries. Last week, Trump suggested the FBI director whom he appointed, Christopher Wray, "will never be able to fix" the "badly broken" agency.

The disdain has its effect. At the end of 2018, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis resigned over Trump's plan to pull troops from Syria. While Trump called the battle-hardened ex-Marine general Mattis the "world's most over-

rated general", it was the entire intelligence and military services that felt insulted. "People are exceptionally frustrated," said Brian Perkins, a former Navy signals analyst who is now with the Jamestown Foundation think tank. "They are putting forward what they think their bigger concerns are, and how to go about things, and they're being completely ignored," he said. Many members of the intelligence community have left, he said, alarmed particularly by the frustrations that Mattis confronted on Syria and Afghanistan.

## 'Open mind' needed

"Intelligence is meant to be objective, but if things are not going to be actually consumed and listened to with an open mind, what is the point?" said Perkins. In January, the president branded his intelligence services "naive" about the danger posed by Iran. "Perhaps Intelligence should go back to school!" he tweeted, but later assured that he was in agreement with them on the major issues.

More recently, Trump abruptly decided in October to pull US forces from the Turkish-Syrian border, leaving Washington's Kurdish allies to face a Turkish offensive. The result was total disorder. Aside from torpedoing a major alliance, US disengagement reinforced the regional position of Washington's strategic rival Russia. Kurds played a crucial role in fighting the Islamic State group and tracking down its leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi. In the fight against terrorism, information-sharing between powers is of vital importance. — AFP

# Business

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**12** After relief, currencies await details on US-China trade deal

**13** World stocks rise; investors cheer preliminary US-China trade deal

**14** Qantas to put more experienced crew on board the longest flights



**GUWAHATI:** A rickshaw puller rides on a road in Guwahati. World stock markets rose yesterday, trading a notch below a record high hit last week on the back of a preliminary trade deal agreed between the United States and China. —AFP (See Page 13)

## Euro-zone economy stuck in 'malaise'

### French economy provides a key area of support

**BRUSSELS:** The euro-zone's economy remained at a near standstill in December, extending the worst quarterly performance since 2013, said a closely watched survey by the company IHS Markit. "The euro-zone economy closes out 2019 mired in its worst spell since 2013, with businesses struggling against the headwinds of near-stagnant demand and gloomy prospects for the year ahead," said Chris Williamson, the firm's chief business economist.

The forecast only feeds into the gloom also predicted by the European Central Bank, which downgraded growth in the euro-zone for next year to a feeble 1.1 per-

cent. IHS Markit said its composite euro-zone PMI, a key business indicator, stagnated at 50.6 points in December, unchanged from the previous month. A reading above 50 points to an expansion. The index's decline showed business sentiment remained just over the threshold into positive territory.

"The December malaise was once again led by manufacturing, where output slumped at the fastest rate since October 2012," the report said. By country, business activity fell for a fourth consecutive month in Germany, where the economy has been destabilized by the US-China trade war and slumping demand

for autos. France outperformed Germany, though the survey indicated that growth had ticked lower at the end of the year.

The French economy, despite a wave of anti-reform strikes, is "providing a key area of support to help keep the euro-zone growing," Williamson added. French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire, however, on Monday said he now expected his country's economy to grow by just 1.3 percent this year, down from a previous 1.4 percent estimate. This brings the French government's outlook into line with growth forecasts by both the Bank of France and the Insee national statistics bureau. —AFP



**MECKLENBURG-VORPOMMERN, Germany:** Aerial view shows the ship 'Audacia', from where parts of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline are laid in the Baltic Sea off the coast the island of Ruegen, northeastern Germany. The German-Russian Chamber of Commerce has called for retaliatory sanctions after US lawmakers gave initial approval to a bill that would punish contractors working on the Russian pipeline to Germany. The 9.5-billion-euro (\$10.6 billion) Nord Stream 2 pipeline will run under the Baltic Sea and is set to double shipments of Russian natural gas to Germany. —AFP

### Boeing could suspend or cut 737 MAX output

**WASHINGTON:** Boeing could announce whether to further cut or suspend production of its grounded 737 MAX plane, The Wall Street Journal reported Sunday. Citing people familiar with the matter, the Journal said the US firm's management increasingly sees a production pause as the most viable option.

Boeing had already decided to reduce its production pace from 52 to 42 planes per month after two crashes led authorities around the world to ground the entire 737 MAX fleet in mid-March. Steve Dickson, head of the Federal Aviation Administration, met Thursday with Boeing chief Dennis Muilenburg to express concerns the company was rushing to get the jets back in the air, the agency said. Boeing then acknowledged that the 737 MAX would not return to the skies until next year. The

company had repeatedly said it expected approval for the planes to fly again before 2020.

Though the MAX has not flown for nine months following the fatal crashes, Boeing has continued production, accumulating months' worth of airplanes. "We continue to work closely with the FAA and global regulators towards certification and the safe return to service of the MAX," a Boeing spokesperson said when asked for comment by AFP. "We will continue to assess production decisions based on the timing and conditions of return to service, which will be based on regulatory approvals and may vary by jurisdiction," the spokesperson added.

A halt in production would signal the plane's grounding could last longer than previously thought. Global regulators ordered a halt to MAX flights following the deadly Lion Air crash of October 2018 in Indonesia and the Ethiopian Airlines disaster in March, which together killed 346 people. 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. —AFP



**RENTON:** In this file photo, employees work on Boeing 737 MAX airplanes at the Boeing Renton Factory in Renton, Washington. —AFP

Business

# After relief, currencies await details on US-China trade deal

## Trade deal relief gives way to caution

LONDON: Trade-sensitive currencies such as the Australian and New Zealand dollars drifted lower yesterday as relief following last week's US, China trade agreement gave way to frustration over a lack of details and a reluctance to make big bets as Christmas draws near. Sterling continued to outperform other major currencies in the wake of last week's resounding election win for British Prime Boris Johnson's Conservative Party, while the euro was a touch firmer ahead of key business activity data. Washington and Beijing cooled their trade war last week, reducing some US tariffs in exchange for what US officials said would be a big jump in Chinese purchases of American farm products and other goods.

That had lifted the Australian dollar and pushed down the safe-harbor yen last week, before profit taking set in. "While there is significant relief over the trade deal, a lot of that would have been in the price already, so now there is a chance that trade relations could be strained again and we know a second

phase of the trade agreement will be difficult," said Jane Foley, senior currency strategist at Rabobank in London. The trade-sensitive Australian dollar fetched \$0.6874, easing from Friday's four-month high of \$0.6939.

The New Zealand dollar was down 0.5% at \$0.6596 after climbing to \$0.6636 at one stage on Friday, a four-month high. The Chinese yuan traded at 6.9959 per US dollar, still stronger than the symbolic 7 mark but below the four-month high of 6.9589 that it hit last week. Both currencies found some support from slightly stronger-than-expected Chinese production and consumption data. The euro was a touch firmer at \$1.133, with focus in Europe turning to the release of "flash" business activity data for the single currency bloc.

The dollar was a tad firmer at 109.45 yen although the dollar index, which measures the greenback's value against a basket of currencies, was almost 0.2% lower on the day at 97.00. Markets were awaiting fine details of the trade deal,

which has not been signed yet. US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said on Sunday the deal would nearly double US exports to China over the next two years and was "totally done" despite the need for translation and revisions to its text. A date for senior US and Chinese officials to formally sign the agreement was still being determined, he added.

"We have seen over time more reports about the differences between what the US said and what China said about the agreement," said Takafumi Yamawaki, head of fixed income research at JPMorgan Securities in Tokyo. "The US talks about the size of US farm products China will buy but China stayed mum." Elsewhere, sterling climbed back towards Friday's peaks against the dollar and euro, on expectations that last week's election win for the ruling Conservative Party will end near-term Brexit uncertainty. The British pound was last trading at \$1.3380, 0.4% firmer on the day. —Reuters



SHANGHAI: Photo shows bundles of 100 yuan (\$14.6) notes at a bank in Shanghai. —AFP

## China's factory, retail sectors shine as trade tensions thaw

BEIJING: Growth in China's industrial and retail sectors beat expectations in November, as government support propped up demand in the world's second-largest economy and amid easing trade hostilities with Washington. The set of upbeat figures released yesterday follow firm signs of progress in Sino-US trade negotiations over the weekend after the world's two largest economies announced a "phase one" trade deal that would nearly double US exports to China.

However, growth in infrastructure and the property sector, both key growth drivers, remained lacklustre in November, underlining key challenges for Beijing in its efforts to stabilize economic performance next year. Industrial production rose 6.2% year-on-year in November, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed, beating the median forecast of 5.0% growth in a Reuters poll and quickening from 4.7% in October.

It was also the fastest year-on-year growth in five months. "Activity and spending indicators strengthened across the board last month, though we think this uptick will prove short-lived," said Martin Lynge Rasmussen, China Economist at Capital Economics. "Admittedly, the phase-one US-China trade deal could boost both export activity and corporate investment in the near term."

But real estate, a key prop to growth in recent quarters, is primed for a moderation as financing to the sector is being squeezed by a regulatory crackdown. Cement, crude steel and pig iron production all rose from a year earlier in November, compared with a fall

in the previous month. Output growth in steel, auto and telecommunications sectors accelerated from October.

The strong industrial figures aligned with the surprising improvement seen in other factory indicators in November, including purchasing managers indexes, which suggested government support is helping domestic demand, even as exports and producer prices shrank. Japanese construction machinery maker Komatsu Ltd said its machine usage hours in China rose for the first time in eight months in November, echoing the trends seen in the PMIs.

Retail sales rose 8.0% year-on-year in November, compared with an expected 7.6%, buoyed by stimulus measures and the November Singles Day shopping extravaganza, the statistics bureau said. The United States and China on Friday cooled their 17-month long trade war, which has roiled financial markets, hit global exports and disrupted supply chains. The "phase one" agreement was first flagged by US President Donald Trump in October but fuller details of the agreement only emerged over the weekend.

### Mixed signals

The recent positive developments remove some clouds from China's economic outlook and also mitigate the immediate need for stimulus to support ambitious growth targets. China's economic growth cooled to 6.0% in the third quarter, a near 30-year low, but policymakers have been more cautious about growth boosting measures than in past downturns.

Oxford Economics yesterday raised its 2020 growth forecast for China to 6.0% from 5.7% "following signs that growth has stabilized" and said significant policy easing was less likely, given Beijing's desire to "keep its powder dry." However, that would still mark a likely moderation in growth. China plans to set a lower economic growth target of around 6% in 2020 from this year's 6-6.5%, relying on increased state infrastructure spending to ward off a sharper slowdown, policy sources said.

Fixed asset investment showed few signs of improvement, growing 5.2% from January-November,



BEIJING: An electric pedicab rider waits for customers in Beijing's central business district yesterday. China yesterday posted better-than-expected economic data for November, giving further breathing space to Beijing after the country agreed a partial trade deal with the US last week. —AFP

in line with the increase seen in the first 10 months, which was the weakest in decades. Infrastructure investment growth, a key driver of activity, slowed to 4.0% in January-November from 4.2% in the first 10 months. As Beijing seeks to avert a sharper economic slowdown, policymakers have brought forward 1 trillion yuan (\$142.07 billion) of the 2020 local government special bonds quota, used to finance infrastructure projects, to this year.

China will keep economic policies stable while making them more effective in 2020 to help achieve its annual growth target, state media reported last week following a top economics meeting. Soft patches were also seen in the property sector, once a bright spot in the economy. Real estate investment growth marked its weakest pace in nearly a year while new home prices rose at their slowest pace in nearly two years in November. —Reuters

## Gulf Bank announces Al Danah draw winners

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 15th December 2019 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 8 - 12 December 2019. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week. The winners this week are: Ajoy Thaiparambil Felix; Jafar Qulum Ahmad Mohammad; Talal Hussain Ali Modhaffar; Yousef Alsayed Hashem Alrefae and Waleed Abdulaziz Abdulrahman AlAwadi.

Gulf Bank's final Al Danah draw for KD1,000,000 will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al Danah millionaire will be announced at a live event. Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

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

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

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

To take part in the Al Danah 2020 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw. Customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 58 branches, transfer online, place queries through the official Gulf Bank WhatsApp service on 65805805 or call the customer contact center on 1805805 for assistance and guidance. Customers can visit the website to find out more about Al Danah and its winners.

## Kuwait consumers can enjoy extensive line-up of US cheeses

KUWAIT: Nina Bakht Halal, Director, Middle East, US Dairy Export Council responded to Kuwait Times questions.

(1) What are the various US Dairy products available in Kuwait? Consumers in Kuwait can enjoy an extensive line-up of US cheeses including cheddar, mozzarella, Parmesan, Asiago, Romano, Colby Jack, Monterey Jack, Gorgonzola, provolone, Gouda, Pepper Jack, feta and Muenster, further to dairy products such as butter, non-fat dry milk and whey powders. The certified award-winning US cheeses are a mix of tradition and innovation, from farm to plate and our team is on hand to support in developing comfort food, classic recipes and high-end gastronomic fare.

(2) What are the highlights of the event and who are the participating retailers in Kuwait?

We participated in the Discover America Week at The Sultan Center - Sharq, where attendees had the chance to sample several recipes prepared using a variety of US cheeses in the presence of Chef Antonio El Khoury, the director of culinary programs for the USA Cheese Guild(tm), Middle East and North Africa (MENA). He developed unique recipes with distinct US cheese varieties. Highlights from the samples included cheesecake with US cream cheese and Mascarpone;

Cheese and Turkey crepe using US Pepper Jack; and Salty Crackers with US Gorgonzola cheese and dates.

Charge d'affaires at the US Embassy in Kuwait, Larry L. Memmott; TSC officials including Khadija Oubala, Group Chief Executive Officer at Sultan Center Food Products Co and Makram Malaeb, Corporate Commercial Director were among the VIPs who attended the opening. Cheese in-store promotions were conducted as well in various other branches of The Sultan Center including Salmiya, Hawally, Kout, Egaila, Salwa, Jabriya, and Boulevard. It is also worth adding that Discover America Week has also been held in other parts of the region including Qatar, Oman and the UAE.

(3) What are the future projects in Kuwait, including expansion plans if any?

There will be continued retail training for all deli staff, supervisors and managers at major supermarkets and hypermarkets in Kuwait to educate them about US cheeses - touching upon their history, cheese-making practices, cheese handling, food safety, pairings, preparations of cheese boards, etc. Cheese-in store promotions will continue in partnership with major retailers in Kuwait.

(4) What is your role and vision for USDEC in Kuwait?

As Director of the MENA region for the USA Cheese Guild, our team is on a mission to spread the word about all of the award-winning USA cheesemaking history and offerings. It's not well-known that the United States is the largest single-country cheese producer and exporter in the globe. From small batch artisan cheese to high quality foodservice quantities for multinational chains, there are USA cheeses for every occasion and our support extends not only for Western-style foods, but also

finding creative ways to incorporate into the local cuisine.

My team and I work towards meeting the evolving needs of the region's dairy demand by establishing partnerships with retailers, high-end foodservice entities, culinary institutes and universities. Through our culinary programs headed by Chef Antonio, we aim to broaden the reach of US cheese applications and varieties in the foodservice and retail sectors in Kuwait and throughout the GCC.

Future plans include partnering with hotel chain and food service operators in the region. Our efforts are yielding consistent results. Cheese consumption in the region is steadily on the rise. Kuwait, along with the UAE and KSA imported 15,437 MT of US cheese between January and September 2019, worth USD 59 million. This is nearly 34% increase compared to the same time frame last year.

Economic growth in the MENA region is forecast to reach an average of 2.6% in 2019-2020, directly supporting imports of dairy products. MENA2 will account for as much as 24% of world dairy imports in 2027. We aim to increase engagement and visibility in the MENA region of both cheese and ingredients to benefit the region's vibrant business success.



Nina Bakht Halal

## EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
<b>EUROPEAN &amp; AMERICAN COUNTRIES</b>	
US Dollar Transfer	304.050
Euro	340.080
Sterling Pound	408.800
Canadian dollar	231.920
Turkish lira	53.810
Swiss Franc	310.570
US Dollar Buying	296.600
<b>ASIAN COUNTRIES</b>	
Japanese Yen	2.780
Indian Rupees	4.287
Pakistani Rupees	1.973
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.676
Nepali Rupees	2.680
Singapore Dollar	225.390
Hongkong Dollar	39.036
Bangladesh Taka	3.542
Philippine Peso	6.012
Thai Baht	10.086
Malaysian ringgit	77.762
<b>GCC COUNTRIES</b>	
Saudi Riyal	81.134
Qatari Riyal	83.565
Omani Riyal	790.253
Bahraini Dinar	807.890
UAE Dirham	82.836
<b>ARAB COUNTRIES</b>	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.800

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd	
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18,903
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.221
Tunisian Dinar	110.160
Jordanian Dinar	428.990
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.209
<b>Rate for Transfer</b>	
US Dollar	303.700
Canadian Dollar	231.280
Sterling Pound	408.015
Euro	339.695
Swiss Frank	301.485
Bahrain Dinar	807.650
UAE Dirhams	83.090
Qatari Riyals	84.325
Saudi Riyals	81.880
Jordanian Dinar	429.635
Egyptian Pound	18.870
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.676
Indian Rupees	4.283
Pakistani Rupees	1.960
Bangladesh Taka	3.541
Philippines Peso	6.008
Cyprus pound	18.070
Japanese Yen	3.775
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.686
Malaysian Ringgit	74.265

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.399625	0.413525
Czech Korune	0.005270	0.014570
Danish Krone	0.041192	0.046192
Euro	0.330659	0.344359
Georgian Lari	0.114041	0.114041
Hungarian 0.001146	0.001336	0.001336
Norwegian Krone	0.029635	0.034835
Romanian Leu	0.065136	0.081986
Russian ruble	0.004857	0.004857
Slovakia	0.009083	0.019083
Swedish Krona	0.028359	0.033359
Swiss Franc	0.302157	0.313157
<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.200462	0.212462
New Zealand Dollar	0.194059	0.203559
<b>America</b>		
Canadian Dollar	0.225290	0.234290
US Dollars	0.299850	0.305250
US Dollars Mint	0.300450	0.304500
<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002973	0.003774

Chinese Yuan	0.042053	0.045553
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036891	0.039641
Indian Rupee	0.003609	0.004381
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002697	0.002877
Korean Won	0.000249	0.000264
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069539	0.075539
Nepalese Rupee	0.002621	0.002961
Pakistan Rupee	0.001285	0.002055
Philippine Peso	0.005988	0.006288
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.219205	0.229205
Singapore Dollar	0.001316	0.001896
Taiwan	0.010114	0.010294
Thai Baht	0.009724	0.010274
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013
<b>Arab</b>		
Bahraini Dinar	0.800056	0.808398
Egyptian Pound	0.018916	0.021657
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000199	0.000259
Jordanian Dinar	0.422857	0.431857
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000103	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021153	0.024513
Omani Riyal	0.784617	0.792499
Qatar Riyal	0.083089	0.083921
Saudi Riyal	0.079993	0.081293
Syrian Pound	0.001289	0.001509
Tunisian Dinar	0.102858	0.110858
Turkish Lira	0.045757	0.055602
UAE Dirhams	0.082150	0.082976
Yemeni Riyal	0.000988	0.001068

## Business

# World stocks rise; investors cheer preliminary US-China trade deal

## German, French manufacturing PMIs disappoint

**LONDON:** World stock markets rose yesterday, trading a notch below a record high hit last week on the back of a preliminary trade deal agreed between the United States and China. European shares built on the previous week's gains at the open. In early deals, the pan-European STOXX 600 index was up by 1% and hit a record high. Germany's DAX rose 0.5%, Britain's FTSE 100 index was up 1.14%, moving in tandem with the pound which rose 0.4%. US stock futures also pointed to stronger gains to start the week, with the S&P 500 e-minis up 0.3%.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said on Sunday a deal was "totally done", notwithstanding some needed revisions, and would nearly double US exports to China over the next two years. The "phase one" agreement suspended a threatened round of US tariffs on a \$160 billion list of Chinese imports that was scheduled to take effect on Sunday. The United States also agreed to halve the tariff rate, to 7.5%, on \$120 billion worth of Chinese goods.

The 17-month-old trade dispute between the world's two largest economies has roiled financial markets and taken a toll on world economic growth. German private sector activity shrank for the fourth month running in December as a downturn in manufacturing offset services sector growth in Europe's largest economy, a survey showed, although it was taken before news of the trade deal. French business grew at a steady pace in December despite a nationwide strike against pension reform, although activity in the manufacturing sector came unexpectedly close to stagnating.

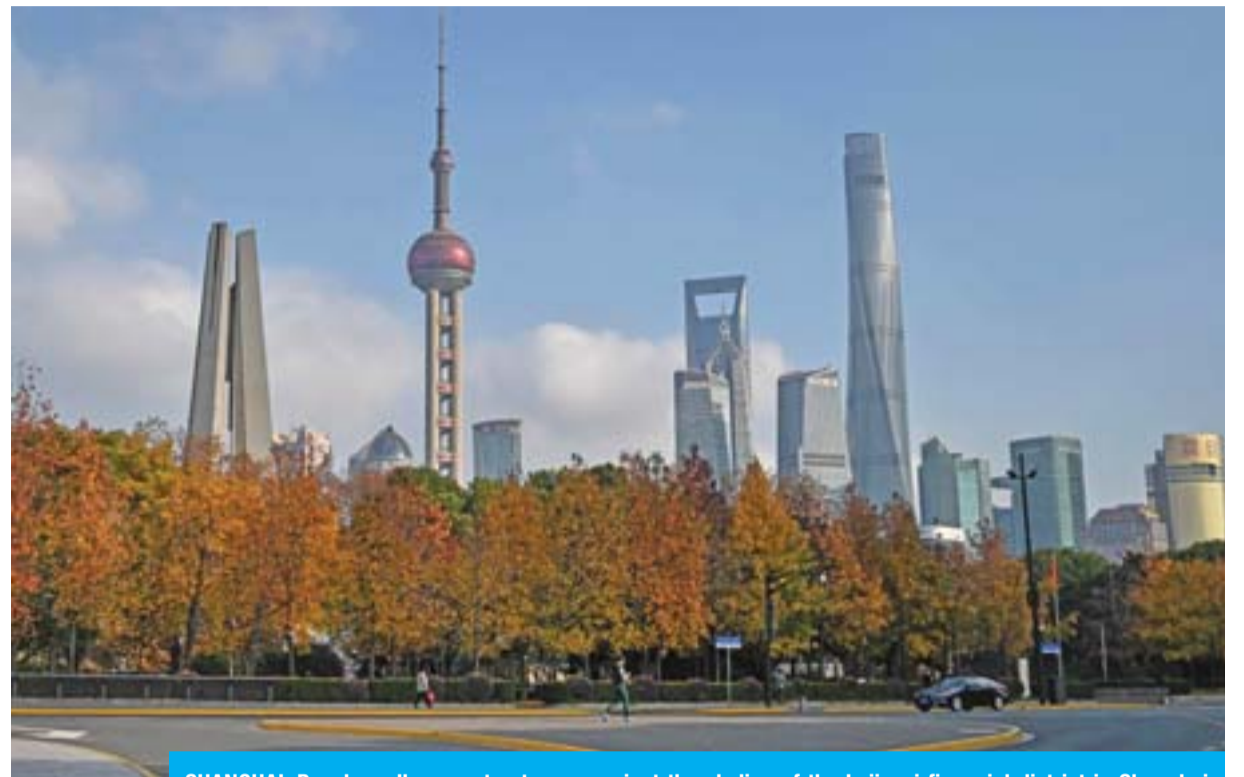
Positive sentiment helped push MSCI's All Country World Index up 0.15%. The index, which tracks stocks across 47 countries, hit an all-time high on Friday when the trade deal was agreed. "We may have reached the point of 'peak tariffs' and this deal could be the start of a series of phased rollbacks, which could unlock further upside for equity markets, driven by an improvement in business confidence and a recovery in investment," said Mark Haefele, chief investment officer, UBS Global

Wealth Management in a note to clients. Earlier in Asia, MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan to its highest level since April 18. It was last up 0.13%. Australia's S&P/ASX 200 led the way as it jumped 1.63%, while shares in Taiwan added 0.22%. Japan's Nikkei 225 succumbed to some profit-taking, falling 0.29% after surging 2.55% to a 14-month closing high on Friday. Ryan Felsman, senior economist at CommSec in Sydney, said the trade deal and the receding risk of a disorderly Brexit after the British election produced a strong Conservative majority provided support for sentiment in Australia.

A lower-than-expected Australian budget surplus due to a sluggish economy has also "built expectations by markets for further easing from the Reserve Bank (of Australia)," he said. Chinese investors initially had a more tepid reaction to the trade news, with the blue-chip CSI300 index struggling to rise further after trade hopes fanned a near 2% rise on Friday. But after a lackluster morning session, the CSI300 index turned higher in the afternoon and was last up 0.3%, helped by data showing the country's industrial output growth and retail sales jumped more than expected in November.

Felsman at CommSec said investors wanted more details and the reduction in US tariffs may have disappointed some looking for more aggressive action. "Certainly there were expectations perhaps that the rollback would be more significant than just 50%," he said. US shares had struck a cautious note on Friday, paring initial gains to end barely higher as weary investors awaited signs of a concrete deal.

However, the news of a deal was still enough to send the S&P 500 to a record closing high of 3,168.8, up 0.01%. The Nasdaq Composite added 0.2% to end at 8,734.88, also a record, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.01% to 28,135.38. US Treasury yields moved higher yesterday, reflecting a more positive mood. Benchmark 10-year Treasury notes rose to 1.8452% com-



SHANGHAI: People walk on a street seen against the skyline of the Lujiazui financial district in Shanghai yesterday. — AFP

pared with their US close of 1.821% on Friday, and the two-year yield touched 1.6304% compared with a US close of 1.604%.

The dollar was slightly higher against the yen at 109.45 and the euro was up 0.13% at \$1.1135. The dollar index, which tracks the greenback against a basket of six major

rivals, was down 0.17% at 97.006. Oil prices, which had risen on Friday following the deal, climbed further yesterday. Brent crude rose 0.1% to \$65.28 per barrel, and US West Texas Intermediate crude was down 0.05% at \$60.11 per barrel. Spot gold prices were down 0.06% at \$1,474.64 per ounce. — Reuters

## German economy stagnating despite industrial rebound

**BERLIN:** The German economy is more or less stagnating, the economy ministry said yesterday, adding there are initial signs that an industrial recession could be coming to an end as orders stabilize. The ministry also said in its monthly report that indicators at the start of the fourth quarter pointed to subdued private consumption even though disposable incomes continued to rise.

Consumption has helped keep Europe's biggest economy humming by compensating for weak exports. Trade tensions this year pushed the German manufacturing sector into a recession but the overall economy narrowly escaped the same fate. "Industrial production has probably not reached the trough," the ministry said. "But orders and sales have stabilized at a low level. This suggests that industry has gradually stabilized and could pick up slightly in the New Year." There are fears that should the manufacturing sector continue to shrink, the slowdown could spread to an otherwise resilient services sector.

IHS Markit's flash composite Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for December yesterday confirmed the diverging trends: manufacturing activity slipped and services rose. Markit said the rate of decline in new orders and exports was stabilizing, giving hope for the manufacturing sector. The German central bank said last week that



BERLIN: A man dressed as Father Christmas stands on top of the Kollhoff tower in front of the Berlin skyline with the TV tower in Berlin as part of an annual climbing performance before the festive season. — AFP

Germany faced another sluggish year despite a likely rebound in exports as households see their spending power shrink.

The Bundesbank said households' real disposable income fell due to a slowdown in employment growth. It trimmed its growth forecast for this year to 0.5 percent

and halved its prediction for 2020 to 0.6 percent. In another grim sign for the economy, the BGA trade association said yesterday that wholesalers planned to cut investments and their tendency to hire new staff had decreased despite expectations that their nominal revenue will rise by 2.3 percent to 1.3 billion euros this year. — Reuters

and the refugees in Uganda look unlikely to return any time soon, with a peace deal signed more than a year ago yet to be implemented. Global aid budgets are being squeezed with the UNHCR warning this month that the "gap between needs and available funding continues to grow" and the United States, which once accepted large numbers of refugees for resettlement, now takes far fewer. Although Uganda's refugees live relatively harmoniously with the host population, there are tensions over resources such as firewood.

Last week the UNHCR said two refugees and two Ugandans had been killed in clashes in Nyumanzi, a settlement near Bidi Bidi. It was not clear what sparked the violence. Uganda's minister for disaster relief and preparedness, Musa Eweru, said his country needed more funds to help refugees develop new skills and farm better.

But he said the world had a responsibility to create the conditions that would allow refugees to return home, calling the surge in numbers a "collective failure".

"It is the only durable solution," said Eweru in an interview in Kampala. "For as long as they are persecuted, I will welcome them. But that does not suggest that I am capable of protecting them." Ministers from around the world will gather at the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva this week to address these challenges after a decade in which the UNHCR says the number of refugees worldwide has doubled to well over 25 million.

Among their goals is to increase the self-reliance of refugees, making them less dependent on U.N. aid and better able to sustain themselves. In Uganda, a developing country where land is still relatively plentiful, refugees are already encouraged to build their own houses and use their gardens to grow food to supplement their UN rations. Many have set up small businesses, but the remoteness of their settlements means work opportunities are limited. Although allowed to move freely, they need to stay close to the settlements to access food and medical assistance. Victor Odero, regional advocacy director for the global aid agency International Rescue Committee (IRC), said there needs to be a shift in focus from stand-alone interventions in a crisis to economic empowerment of refugees. "Humanitarian aid is short term and largely underfunded. Those long-term development goals are the first to be cut when budgets are reduced," he said, calling for a "total paradigm shift" in refugee aid.

### 'Life became good'

The IRC provides new farmers in Bidi Bidi with seeds, and funds the hire of a tractor to plough newly acquired land. Among those who have received such help is Samuel Sokire, 61, who has had to flee his home in South Sudan for Uganda three times, most recently during a flare-up of violence in late 2016. By January 2017, he had built a house in Bidi Bidi. But he wanted more. "When people were still building, I was already begging a place to culti-



ADELAIDE: A farm worker of farmer Steve Bothma separates the male and female merino sheep to be sold before they are slaughtered outside of Adelaide. — AFP

vate. That was in January and by the time the rains came (in March), I got more land. Life became good," said Sokire, who also borrowed land through a farming cooperative. "The UN only gives 2.4kg of beans per person per month. It's not enough." Sokire had two big advantages - his knowledge of Swahili, spoken by many older Ugandans in the area, and the grinding machine he had carried from South Sudan and could lend or hire out to neighbors.

The land he farms belongs to local landowner Ojobile Kennedy, who had his own reason for wanting to share his land with refugees - their presence has scared off the wild animals that used to destroy his crops. "Before, the monkeys and warthogs would destroy everything, even if I spent half the night banging jerry cans to scare them off," said the 42-year-old, gesticulating to demonstrate. "We let them (refugees) clear the land, let them do their own thing. We are happy about the refugees."

Not everyone in the group is thriving though. Single mother Buludina Sumure's asthma means she cannot walk far, limiting her access to farmland. This year she paid to rent a small plot near her house, but it became waterlogged in the rainy season, and the sesame and maize seeds she had planted failed. Asked if she hoped to find a better plot next planting season, Sumure raised her hands in resignation. "I don't know how the land will be," she said. "This land is not ours". Even those refugees who are managing to make a go of farming know their situation is precarious. Bronte has a good relationship with his landlord, who does not charge rent. But he fears that could change if the U.N. were to stop providing food to the refugees because they would struggle to give away a share of their harvest. — Reuters

## Electricity access and climate change: Kemp

**LONDON:** Ensuring everyone in developing countries has the same access to modern energy services that residents of the advanced economies take for granted will require an enormous rise in electricity generation. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which were agreed by governments in 2015, commit member states to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. But they also include a commitment to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable modern energy services ("Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development", United Nations, 2015).

In practice, that means providing universal access to electricity in adequate amounts, at reasonable prices, and generated without releasing excessive emissions of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Environmental campaigners and governments in the advanced economies, where electricity has been plentiful for half a century, and consumption has been flat recently, tend to put more emphasis on the climate goal. But for governments in developing countries, where consumption is still much lower, and some households and businesses lack electrical connections at all, increasing energy access is at least as important, if not more so. In these countries, there is still enormous unmet demand for modern energy services - including cooking, air-conditioning, lighting and power for modern appliances, such as refrigerators, televisions and computers.

### Electricity use

In 2014, Nigeria's electricity consumption per capita was just 145 kilowatt-hours (kWh), India averaged 805 kWh and Indonesia averaged 812 kWh, according to data from the World Bank. Per capita electricity consumption in other middle-income countries was substantially higher, including Mexico (2,150 kWh) and Brazil (2,600 kWh) ("World development indicators", World Bank, 2019).

Further along the development path, China was consuming an average of 3,900 kWh, while the EU was using almost 6,000 kWh and the United States was at nearly 13,000 kWh. If populous developing countries such as India, Indonesia and Nigeria want to lift consumption to the same level as China, let alone the EU or the United States, generation will have to rise by almost an order of magnitude. Per capita electricity consumption has been falling slightly in North America and Western Europe for more than a decade as a result of rising prices, efficiency improvements and offshoring of many energy-intensive industries. But consumption is still rising rapidly in most developing economies, with gains averaging 1-3% per year in Mexico and Brazil, 5-6% in India and Indonesia, and as much as 7-10% in China, over the decade from 2004 to 2014.

### Energy transition

Under existing climate change agreements, policymakers envisage a worldwide energy transition from CO2-emitting fossil fuels to cleaner electricity generated from zero-emission wind, solar and nuclear sources. But the challenge is not just to install a few rooftop solar panels or windfarms to replace existing coal, gas and diesel-fired power plants or provide a few hours of electricity each day to communities that currently have none. The real challenge is to replace existing CO2-emitting power plants; while simultaneously meeting an increase in electricity consumption of roughly an order of magnitude; and shift much of the petroleum-based transportation system to electricity, increasing electricity consumption even further.

The massive implied increase in electricity generation will be very difficult to achieve without using coal and gas for the next several decades, as well as wind, solar and nuclear generating stations. The scale of the challenge helps explain why atmospheric CO2 is not even close to stabilizing, as policymakers have promised under the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. — Reuters

## Uganda's refugee farmers sow seeds of change

**BIDI BIDI:** One of the few possessions refugee Emily Bronte carried with him when he fled war in South Sudan for Uganda was a battered copy of an aid agency booklet on how to run a farming cooperative. The booklet, with its cartoon donkeys illustrating negotiation techniques and instructions to pray after every cooperative meeting, might not seem like the first thing you would grab if you were running for your life.

Yet its contents have helped the 46-year-old, who got his unusual name at the suggestion of an Italian missionary, to feed and educate his children, and given him hope for a future in which they do not rely solely on handouts. Bronte is one of a number of refugee farmers in Bidi Bidi, a vast settlement in northern Uganda that covers an area more than twice the size of Paris, in a rare example of cooperation between refugees and their hosts.

Groups of refugees have formed cooperatives with local farmers who are unable to cultivate all their land and would rather see it farmed than lie fallow. "I talked to the landlord and he gave me one acre ... He said he wanted the land to go to good use," Bronte told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in Bidi Bidi, home to about 230,000 South Sudanese refugees.

The landowners lend the refugees plots of land that they farm, either solely or in groups. Some charge rent, but most take only a share of the harvest - a generosity attributed to the fact that many have themselves been refugees. "I didn't pay," said Bronte outside his mud-brick home, as small children played at his feet while older ones helped fetch firewood for cooking. "He (the landlord) didn't even ask for money from me. He said that during the Ugandan war, they (Ugandans) ran to South Sudan and that in the place where he settled, the people helped him."

### Struggle

Uganda has been widely praised for its open-door policy towards refugees. The country has about 1.4 million refugees, estimates the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR), the third highest number in the world after Turkey and Pakistan. The government allocates new arrivals a plot of land big enough to build a mud-brick house and plant a small vegetable garden, gives them freedom of movement - they live in settlements, not camps - and the right to work. But like many host countries, it is struggling. The South Sudanese who make up the bulk of

## Business

# Qantas to put more experienced crew on board the longest flights

## Airline to order up to 12 A350s contingent on pilot deal

**SYDNEY:** Qantas Airways Ltd plans to have more experienced pilots on board the world's longest non-stop flights than on its current long-haul flights for the first 18 months as it evaluates fatigue, said sources with knowledge of the matter. The airline said last week it could buy up to 12 Airbus SE A350 planes for the commercial flights of up to 21 hours that includes the Sydney-London route, but the deal depends on pilots voting to approve a pay agreement in March.

"To be clear, we have not yet placed an order for this aircraft because we still have a gap to close in the business case," Qantas Chief Pilot Dick Tobiano said in an internal memo to pilots seen by Reuters. Qantas said Australia's aviation regulator had provisionally advised it saw no regulatory obstacles to the flights, which could extend pilot duty times to as long as 23 hours to account for potential delays.

The airline has conducted crew fatigue studies on London-Sydney and New York-Sydney test flights. On its current long-haul flights, Qantas has a crew of one captain, one first officer and two second officers, the latter of which can only fly at cruising altitudes and cannot perform takeoffs or landings.

Rival Singapore Airlines Ltd uses two captains and two first officers on its near-19 hours flights from Singapore to New York.

Qantas has offered to crew non-stop flights to London and New York with one captain, two first officers and one second officer for the first 18 months so it can evaluate fatigue-related issues, according to its pilot union newsletter, two pilots and a company source familiar with the matter who were not authorized to speak with media. Qantas declined to comment.

### Qantas wants to cap pay of new second officers

Qantas has proposed the pilots on its A330 fleet, which fly mostly cross-country and Asian flights, also fly the ultra-long haul missions on the A350, since they can be licensed on both models. A Civil Aviation Safety Authority spokesman said it had yet to receive a formal application for the flights

that would allow it to make specific requests on matters such as experience levels but the airline's overall ultra-long haul safety framework provided a "satisfactory and detailed analysis of the identified risks".

Adam Susz, a 737 captain and union negotiator for the Australian and International Pilots Association, said Qantas had tabled a draft proposal that had been deemed unacceptable by the union committee, in part



because it introduced a lower pay scale for new second officers. But he said talks would resume in the new year. "I am pretty confident that we will get agreement in the end," Susz said yesterday. "I don't

think the issues are insurmountable but there are a couple of elements to the Qantas proposal that we find extremely unpalatable and we will avoid those the best we can." —Reuters

## Our verdict about the HUAWEI nova 5T: The Trendy Flagship

**KUWAIT:** With the wide range of smartphones to choose from in the mid-tier segment, finding the one device that does them all is easily a time-consuming task. However, Huawei's latest smartphone might just have made things easier. We got to play with the new HUAWEI nova 5T, its latest entrant in the mid-tier sector and we are more than impressed with what we saw. Packing powerful camera hardware, flagship-grade features and a stunning design, the HUAWEI nova 5T is easily one of our favorite smartphones this year, which we like to dub a "light flagship".

### 5 AI cameras

Starting things off is the camera setup on the HUAWEI nova 5T. Huawei has packed in not one or two, but 5 AI powered cameras into the new device. The Quad camera setup on the back consists of a 48MP HD lens, 16MP wide-angle lens, 2MP macro lens and 2MP bokeh lens, that ensure stunning results in low-light, wide landscape shots, extreme close ups and even portrait shots with a smooth blur effect.

On the rear camera setup, the AI system is capable of recognizing 22 categories and adjusting the settings accordingly to ensure that the final result is crisp and clear. Additionally, the AI features also include AIS Super Night Mode and AI HDR+ backlit photo, which uses complex algorithms for better results in low light while compensating for exposure or shadows.

For the creative folk, the camera also packs AI Portrait Color, which records videos in greyscale while just the subject stays in color. This stunning cinematic effect is great for creative video production in cases such as a dance performance where the focus should be just on the dancer. Additionally, you can also enjoy Super Slow-mo recording at 960fps and capture some of the best moments in true cinematic style.

Meanwhile, the 32MP AI Selfie Superstar camera upfront does live up to its name, taking some of the best selfies seen on a smartphone. The AI features also extend to the front camera, which is capable of recognizing 8 scenes and adjusts the settings accordingly. Additionally, it can also further enhance beauty with AI Beautification and includes a 4-in-1 Pixel fusion technology for brighter night selfies. Similar to the rear cameras, the front camera is also packed with AI HDR+, which allows for great portrait shots even in low light situations.

The AI powered Movie Editor and Spotlight Reel is also a nice touch, catering to today's content creator who opts for recording on smartphones. The AI Movie Editor allows you to do complex video editing with great ease which puts you in the director seat of your next best creating. On the other hand, the Spotlight Reel feature uses powerful AI algorithms to automatically pick highlights and recurring subjects from your videos and brings simplicity to the editing process.

### Flagship powerful performance

Now the performance is where the HUAWEI nova 5T really shines. Thanks to its power-packed hardware, the HUAWEI nova 5T rides on performance levels that are on par with modern flagship devices. With the Kirin 980, Huawei's flagship chipset, powering the smartphone with 8GB of RAM, the phone is butter smooth and super-fast while running and switching through multiple apps. In terms of storage, the phone comes with 128GB space. For a smoother user experience, the HUAWEI nova 5T also comes with EMUI 9.1 out of the box. Along with the powerful hardware, the HUAWEI nova 5T is powered by Android and allows users full access to their favorite applications.

Huawei devices are known for its extended battery life, a trend that has carried on to the HUAWEI nova 5T. Packed with a solid 3750 mAh battery, the HUAWEI nova 5T promises extended usage periods and the 22.5W Huawei SuperCharge feature recharges the battery back to 50% in 30 minutes. In addition to this, the HUAWEI nova 5T also packs in GPU Turbo 3.0, a premium feature seen on flagship devices that enhances graphics quality to boost gameplay experience.

## ICT talent development will help drive economic empowerment for Kuwait

By Li Xiangyu

**N**o matter how you look at it, tomorrow's world will revolve around technology. From smart homes to digital government services, autonomous vehicles to space travel, our society will revolve around intelligent systems that rely upon the latest communications networks. Today's youth need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to not only navigate a hyper-connected environment, but to become its architects, pioneers, and leaders.

Around the region, countries have established promising national plans and ambitious visions that emphasize the role technology has to play in empowering all sectors and industries, in addition to realizing economic diversification and societal development. Take the 'New Kuwait' National Development Plan, for example, and it's clear to see the instrumental role technology has in moving nations towards ambitious goals of increased global competitiveness, sustainability, community empowerment and more.

A visionary framework, however, needs talented individuals to push it forwards into reality. Today's regional workforce, however, does not yet have sufficient digital talent to meet future needs. There must, therefore, be an increased focus on incorporating the



## VIVA launches Samsung Galaxy Note10+ 5G

**KUWAIT:** VIVA, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and a subsidiary of STC Group, has announced the launch of the highly-anticipated Samsung Galaxy Note10+ 5G in Kuwait, with VIVA Postpaid plan at KD 37 monthly for limited time offer, available at VIVA's official website [www.viva.com.kw](http://www.viva.com.kw), VIVA stores and on the VIVA App.

To take full advantage of the increased power of 5G, the Galaxy Note10+ 5G includes new advanced features that expand the viewing experience with the largest display available on a Note device, create stunning photos and videos with intelligence and offer the powerful performance needed to keep pace.

The Galaxy Note10+ 5G puts the unrivaled power, speed and connectivity of 5G networks directly into the hands of consumers. Up to 20 times faster than 4G, 5G on Galaxy Note10+ 5G introduces hyper-fast streaming and download speeds, powerful mobile hot-spotting, 4K video calling and an elevated mobile gaming experience.

Haneen Al-Fulaij, Chief Consumer Officer at VIVA said: "Our main goal is to give our customers in Kuwait the very best experience - providing the fastest and most reliable connection when they need it the most. VIVA is excited to partner with Samsung at the start of the 5G era, working together to provide Kuwait customers with innovative devices such as the Galaxy Note10+ 5G so they can enjoy the benefits of advanced speeds and great services."

Osman Albora, Head of IT and Mobile division at Samsung Gulf Electronics said: "The Galaxy Note10+ 5G is designed for consumers who want it all, and optimized to take full advantage of the incredible speed, power and connectivity that comes with 5G networks. Samsung's partnership with VIVA reflects our deep commitment to collaboration, so that we can continue to deliver meaningful innovations and unparalleled connectivity that will fundamentally change the way we work, communicate and engage with content."

The Galaxy Note10+ 5G's 6.8-inch Infinity-O display with edge-to-edge screen allows digital 5G content to be seen as it was intended. Samsung has developed a visual display that fully immerses consumers in the high-quality HD content, games, augmented reality and video conferencing made possible through 5G.

The Galaxy Note10+ 5G significantly upgrades the smartphone camera with a neural processing unit (NPU), to help with the perfect shot, as well as five total cameras including the 3D Depth Camera. In addition to delivering the speed to download a season of HD television in minutes or buffer-free experiences for uninterrupted streaming, the Galaxy Note10+ 5G packs a 4,500mAh battery for streaming content and playing games without needing to recharge frequently.

To mark the launch of the first 5G enabled device in Kuwait, Samsung has launched the Galaxy Note10+ 5G with a new special color, Aura Blue. The device is also available in Aura Glow, Aura White and Aura Black colors. To find out more, customers can follow VIVA's official platforms on social media, visit one of VIVA's stores, VIVA app, VIVA's official website at [www.viva.com.kw](http://www.viva.com.kw), or access round the clock assistance from a team of specialists available on the VIVA's customer care line 102.

## KFH launches 'The Journey of 18 Million Miles Begins with a Card' campaign

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched "The Journey of 18 Million Miles Begins with a Card" Campaign, exclusively for KFH Oasis Club prepaid MasterCard cardholders and in collaboration with Kuwait Airways and Oasis Club. "Due to the successful campaigns of 'Journey of 6 Million Miles Begins with a Card' and 'Journey of 12 Million Miles Begins with a Card', that KFH had launched and received huge praise from customers, KFH has launched the new exclusive campaign 'The Journey of 18 Million Miles Begins with a Card' with multiple benefits", said Group Deputy General Manager Cards at KFH, Nimer Yasin.

He added in a press release, that the 3-month campaign ends on March 12th, 2020, indicating there will be 311 winners for total prizes up to 18 Million miles. He explained that the 1st winner gets 1,000,000 Miles, the 2nd winner get 500,000 Miles, the 3rd to 6th winners get 250,000 Miles, the 7th to 11th winners get 100,000 Miles, and 300 winners get 50,000 Miles each.

Yasin pointed out that customers get 1 chance to enter draw for every KD 1 of total local purchases, and 2 chances to enter draw for every KD 1 of total international purchases, applicable for purchase transactions and Online transactions only. "KFH Oasis Club card is a prepaid card issued in cooperation between KFH and Kuwait



Airways "Oasis Club". In addition to the privileges and discounts, it offers chances to gain extra miles from "Oasis Club" with every transaction.

Accumulated miles can be later exchanged for special promotions and privileges from Kuwait Airways," Yasin explained. He pointed out that the collaboration with Kuwait Airways in introducing the KFH Oasis Card is aimed at serving their joint customers, stressing that KFH is keen through its products and services to support the activities of the national companies. This improves the quality of performance and the rolled-out services.

Yasin confirmed KFH is keen on launching exclusive campaigns that meet the expectations of customers and strengthen KFH's position in the banking cards market. This maintains the leadership position of KFH in offering services, products and promotions that meet the needs and expectations of customers. It is worth noting that one million miles can allow a passenger to fly first class 10 times to the United States and 12 times to Europe, worth about KD 20,000.

What's On



# NBK 2019 CSR initiatives: A significant approach to sustainability



Manal Al Mattar

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) pioneered its corporate social responsibility programs in 2019, maintaining its position as the largest contributor to the Kuwait community in the private sector and moving a significant step forward towards a more sustainable community.

"NBK considers sustainability an integral part of our success as a bank. On the occasion of the release of our 2019 sustainability report, we take the opportunity to shed the light on our CSR sustainability focused initiatives," said Manal Al Mattar, NBK Public Relations, Assistant General Manager.

"NBK has a long tradition supporting social and community oriented activities in the country. Our 2019 sustainable practices succeeded to maximize the positive impacts on our society enabling a socially smarter world, thereby making us a responsible bank today and for generations to come," added Al Mattar.

### NBK Implemented Community Related Programs

#### NBK's Children Hospital

"We are proud to see our project striving to the international standards regarding strategies, policies, processes and day-to-day practices," she noted. "NBK will always be committed in supporting the Specialty Hospital and its new unit to move forward in progress at the level of services and care," she claimed.



During 2019, NBK continued its social program for children the NBK Specialty Hospital and Stem Cell Therapy Unit. The program included the introduction of a library corner, storytelling sessions, fun children-oriented events and movie nights, honoring weekly heroes from the patients and rewarding a nurse every month.

#### I Dream To Be Initiative

For the fifth year in a row, NBK continued to implement the first-of-its-kind 'I Dream to Be' program for children in hospitals Kuwait who are facing life-threatening conditions. The initiative rewarded more than 23 patients by the end of 2019 with the support of BACCH and KACCH. The initiative helps children live their 'dreams' in order to promote their emotional and psychological wellbeing and help them fight their illnesses with a positive mind.

#### Summer Internship

For more than 18 years in a row, NBK organized its Summer Internship Program for school and college students. "This program is the beginning of a long road ahead to empower youth and provide them with valuable insight into real business scenarios," Al Mattar said. A total of 124 students between the ages 14 and 21 years participated in the 2019 program.

#### Annual Walkathon

NBK's 25th annual walkathon kicked off the morning of Saturday 7 December from the Green Island with an astonishing 19,600 participants who have registered for the 11 kilometers race. NBK organized this special occasion to celebrate two and a half decades of this sports festival.

This year, NBK walkathon celebrates its 25th anniversary. As the first sports event in Kuwait and the GCC, NBK walkathon continues today its long tradition in supporting its community. NBK celebrated the top 100 participants, giving away many valuable prizes to both winners and participants.

#### Do Good Deeds in Ramadan

For more than 25 years, NBK has provided charitable, social and philanthropic programs during the Holy Month of Ramadan. Among its most prominent and successful Ramadan programs is the 'Do Good Deeds in Ramadan' initiative. Comprised of a series of activities and events aimed at encouraging community engagement and charity in Kuwait, Do Good Deeds exemplifies NBK's efforts to serve as a role model and community leader. This year the program reached more than 48,000 Muslims fasting during this Holy month by distributing more than 50,000 iftar banquets. 30 children in need were also aided during this month as a part of the initiative.

#### Supporting Youth and Education

As part of this strategy, NBK honored outstanding high school graduates of public schools for the school year 2018-2019. The Bank expressed its appreciation to the 150 students for their hard work through cash rewards and more importantly, professional training opportunities to encourage them to always work hard and excel.

#### Al Shaheed Park

As part of its social responsibility, NBK sponsored Al Shaheed park's cultural events during the year 2018-2019 in order to support cultural and heritage activities and encourage Kuwait's youth to develop community responsibility and engagement.

#### KALD, LOYAC & KRCS

NBK continued its commitment and support for educational institutions and non-governmental organizations as well as with other social welfare programs partnerships for the development of Kuwait such as KRCS, LOYAC, KALD and Center 21 for Children with Autism.

NBK is Kuwait Red Crescent Society's Humanitarian strategic partner for its social support and initiatives with

the society. In 2019, the bank continued its support to KRCS's initiative to help fund the education of children of low-income families in Kuwait. Also, NBK and KRCS distributed winter supplies for families in different areas in Kuwait including electrical appliances and necessity food items as part of its "Winter supplies" Campaign.

#### BACCH and KACCH

NBK works closely with the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH) and Bayt Abdullah for the Care of Children in Hospice (BACCH) to maximize its reach to children in need and to give top priority to sick children with life-threatening illnesses. In 2019, NBK organized and supported a children's carnival at Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice, an initiative which included entertainment and activities for resident children.



#### Environment

As an integral part of its approach towards sustainable development, NBK launched several recycling campaigns in collaboration with Omniya Project Management Company. The campaigns started by placing recycling containers at NBK's Headquarters and NBK Children's Hospital, as well as collecting the waste of the Iftar tables from the NBK Ramadan Tent. In addition, NBK launched a competition with Omniya among Kuwait's public schools targeting waste collecting of plastic bottles.

#### Awareness programs

NBK actively supported and celebrated many awareness programs through the year such as Autism Awareness Day, International Children Book Day, Cancer Survivor Day, Mother's Day, World Cancer Day and Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

#### Sports Related Initiatives

Throughout the year 2019, NBK supported several sports related events such as NBK Football and Cricket teams, Flare Fitness Festival, KBA Night Run and Battle Fitness Challenge.

#### Employee Volunteering

National Bank of Kuwait organized many volunteer and charity initiatives during 2019. Employees arranged volunteer groups to help in organizing the Walkathon, distributing Iftar meals during the month of Ramadan and much more.



# Double burden of obesity, undernourishment stalks world

PARIS: Low- and middle-income countries risk seeing their development progress slashed by the double-edged sword of obesity and undernutrition, both caused by a lack of access to affordable healthy food, a report in The Lancet warned yesterday.

This "double burden of malnutrition," or DBM, affects more than a third of some 130 countries classed as low- and middle-income, the report in the medical journal said. More alarming, it is increasingly seen in the same household — most commonly an overweight mother and a child stunted by undernutrition living under the same roof. Both forms of malnutrition are linked to health problems and premature death, weighing heavily on a country's health system and labor productivity.

The report, compiled in collaboration with the World Health Organization, said being overweight can no longer be considered a rich country problem, nor undernourishment a preserve of the poor. "While more than 149 million children have stunted growth, childhood overweight and obesity are increasing almost everywhere, and suboptimal diets are responsible for one in five (22 percent) adult deaths globally," it said.

"The economic, social, and environmental costs of inaction will hinder the growth and development of individuals and societies for decades to come," it warned. Nowhere has the prevalence of DBM grown more than in the poorest countries, the report found, mainly reflecting a rapid rise in overweight people adding to the long-standing challenge of hunger.

It pointed to the rise in cheap, satisfying foods high in salt, sugar and fat, combined with a "major reduction" in physical activity at work, at home and in transportation. The report said DBM was a feature in

up to 35 percent of households in some countries, with the highest levels in Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Egypt, Comoros and Sao Tome and Principe. Sometimes DBM is even measured in a single child — a combination of overweight and stunted development due to lacking nutrients. This rate was highest in Albania, at 15 percent.

### Major shift required

Nearly all countries saw declines in child wasting or stunting, according to the research, but conversely, nearly all countries saw an increase in overweight women. To report blamed "very rapid changes in the diets and food systems" of most low-to middle-income countries, with fresh markets increasingly making way for takeaway food retailers. "Offsetting the effects of any ultra-processed food is difficult — eg by drinking a 355 ml bottle of sugar-sweetened beverage, the consumer would be required to undertake a 1.5-mile (2.4-kilometre) walk or run for at least 15 minutes."

A trial conducted by the US National Institutes of Health, it added, showed that adults of normal weight lost 0.9 kilograms (two pounds) when given a healthy "real food" diet for two weeks, and gained the same amount when fed ultra-processed foods. In Latin America and the Caribbean, sales of packaged, processed food increased from about 10 percent of all food bought in 1990 to 60 percent in just ten years.

Breaking the trend will require "major societal shifts," the Lancet report said. Steps could include subsidies for healthy foods, providing nutritious meals at schools, and food education — including promoting the inexpensive and nutritious option of breastfeeding infants. — AFP

## New autism guidelines focus in early diagnosis

CHICAGO: The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) yesterday issued its first new autism treatment guidelines in 12 years aimed at helping doctors identify at-risk children and getting them the care they need as early as possible.

Since developmental delays are often present in very young children with autism, the report, published in the journal Pediatrics, urges doctors to check for issues during all well-baby visits and refer children for treatment at the first sign of an issue, rather than wait for a formal autism evaluation. More than five million Americans are living with autism, a spectrum of disorders marked by deficits in social communication and interaction and repetitive behaviors of widely varying severity.

"The benefit of identifying children as early as possible is they can then be referred for treatment," Dr. Susan Levy, a developmental and behavioral pediatrician at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and co-author of the report, said in a phone interview. Early treatment, and particularly behavioral interventions, do make a difference, Levy said.

Since 2007, when AAP published its last two guid-

ance documents, the number of children in the United States diagnosed with autism has risen sharply. Autism now affects one in 59 children in the United States, up from one in 155 in 2007.

In that time, scientists have developed a better understanding of the potential risk factors and genes that contribute to autism, the related medical and behavioral conditions that commonly occur in children with the condition, and have detailed evidence on which interventions work best.

"This report is really focused on educating pediatricians and other healthcare providers about all the options and issues, and working to empower them since they're in the front lines to make the early referrals," Levy said. The report urges doctors to steer families toward interventions backed by research and away from those with flimsy evidence. It specifically calls out many nutritional interventions that "do not have evidence to support their use."

It also focuses on the need to screen for and treat other conditions that commonly occur in children with autism. Some 40 percent of individuals with autism have intellectual disability, the report said, and about 40 percent to 60 percent of school-aged children and adults with autism have anxiety disorders. Others include attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), language disorders, sleep and feeding disorders, gastrointestinal symptoms and seizures. The report encourages doctors to share decision making with families and help them plan for when a child transitions to adolescence and adulthood. — Reuters

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Stars

CROSSWORD 2387



ACROSS

1. In bed.
5. English financier (1519-1579).
12. A state-chartered savings bank owned by its depositors and managed by a board of trustees.
15. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
16. Either of the club-like rudimentary hind wings of dipterous insects.
17. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
18. (physics and chemistry) The smallest component of an element having the chemical properties of the element.
19. A capacitance unit equal to one billion farads.
20. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
21. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
22. The ball-shaped capsule containing the vertebrate eye.
23. (Polynesian) An alcoholic drink made from the aromatic roots of the kava shrub.
26. Grains used as food either unpolished or more often polished.
28. Inspired by a feeling of fearful wonderment or reverence.
29. An informal term for a father.
32. North American republic containing 50 states - 48 continental states in North America plus Alaska in northwest North America and the Hawaiian Islands in the Pacific Ocean.
34. Lower in esteem.
37. Jordan's port.
40. Having the color of caramel.
42. A score in baseball made by a runner touching all four bases safely.
43. A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
45. A state in New England.
46. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
48. A criminal who takes property belonging to someone else with the intention of keeping it or selling it.
51. Either of two large African antelopes of the genus Taurotragus having short spirally twisted horns in both sexes.
52. A genus of Placoidae.
54. National capital of Kiribati.
56. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
57. A flexible container with a single opening.
59. A gonadotropin hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
60. A person active in party politics.
61. Pain in the gums.
64. Hidden and difficult to see.
67. Showing extreme cupidity.
70. A platform built out from the shore into the water and supported by piles.
73. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
74. A cut of meat taken from the side and back of an animal between the ribs and the rump.
78. A silvery malleable metallic element that resists corrosion.
79. Tropical American flat-jointed prickly pear.
80. Shah of Iran who was deposed in 1979 by Islamic fundamentalists (1919-1980).
81. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.

DOWN

1. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
2. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
3. An organic compound that contains a hydroxyl group bonded to a carbon atom which in turn is doubly bonded to another carbon atom.
4. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
5. A horse-drawn carriage in India.
6. Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation.
7. (folklore) Fairies that are somewhat mischievous.
8. The money risked on a gamble.
9. Queen of the Olympian gods in ancient Greek mythology.
10. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
11. British immunologist (born in Brazil) who studied tissue transplants and discovered that the rejection of grafts was an immune response (1915-1987).
12. Covered with paving material.
13. Speaking a Slavic language.
14. A small cake leavened with yeast.
24. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
25. A light touch or stroke.
27. A ductile malleable reddish-brown corrosion-resistant diamagnetic metallic element.
30. A constellation in the Milky Way near Cygnus.
31. Someone who procures customers for whores (in England they call a pimp a ponce).
33. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
35. Living quarters reserved for wives and concubines and female relatives in a Muslim household.
36. A Hebrew prophet in the Old Testament who opposed the worship of idols.
38. Striped hyena of southeast Africa that feeds chiefly on insects.
39. A protocol (utilizing TCP) to transfer hypertext requests and information between servers and browsers.
41. Diffusing warmth and friendliness.
44. Or or relating to or caused by tides.
47. Wife of Siva and a benevolent aspect of Devi.
49. (Judaism) An eight-day Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem.
50. A metric unit of length equal to 100 meters.
53. Moving quickly and lightly.
55. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
58. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
62. A genus of Placataea.
63. The large trunk artery that carries blood from the left ventricle of the heart to branch arteries.
65. The imperial dynasty of China from 1122 to 221 BC.
66. (Old Testament) Cain and Abel were the first children of Adam and Eve born after the Fall of Man.
68. Any division of quantity accepted as a standard of measurement or exchange.
69. 100 sene equal 1 lala.
71. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
72. A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.
75. A physician who is not a specialist but treats all illnesses.
76. A state in the western United States.
77. Of or relating to the stomach and intestines.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It may seem you are the center of attention. Today could find you in the limelight. Your superiors at work seem to be paying close attention. Your job has become something you find great pleasure in and you actually enjoy going to work. Your peers seem to find great value in your ability to make practical decisions and admire you for your work ethic. You are able to clearly see what others want and need and seem to be in the right place at the right time to provide this for them. That brings much admiration your way. You may find you are looked at as a role model for many. You seem to have the ability to make clear decisions and will find this to be an extremely productive day.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may find yourself wanting to discover more about your roots. Where did you come from? What obstacles did your ancestors face? This is a great time to do some research and discover more about your heritage. Just as the past seems to be of great importance to you, so is the future. You are in a great frame of mind to do some future planning. Get your affairs in order. Spend some time researching the financial investments you have been considering. Change can bring great reward. Taurus. This is a great time to develop a financial plan for your future and for the future of your descendants.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may find yourself in a bit of a conflict when it comes to balancing your home life and work life. You may find yourself passing an opportunity by at work because it will interfere with time with your family. This may be a hard decision to make at this time, but the payoff with your family will be well worth it. In a time for you to make sure your priorities are straight. You have a strong appreciation of your past. You are able to reflect and realize the obstacles and problems of your past talk to the lessons that made you and you are today. You are able to appreciate hardships and look at them in a more positive manner knowing you will come at a stronger person in the end.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Love and expressing all the deep emotions you have for others becomes very important to you. You may be feeling a need to be needed. Never doubt that you are. You may find yourself in deep appreciation of everyone and everything around you. You are able to find beauty in every situation and in everything that surrounds you. This is time in your life filled with love and others are drawn to your loving ways and kind heart. Be careful though, as all around you becomes so appealing. You may want steer clear of the mall to resist the urge to bring all that catches your eye home with you. Cancer, a shopping spree could not only find you loving all you see, but also wanting to bring home everything you see!



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may be feeling emotionally detached from your surroundings at this time. You tend to be viewed as detached by others when you are in all reality your mind is highly focused and your wheels are turning. You are fascinated by the unusual and are finding yourself lost in your thoughts. You may find it hard to focus in the workplace today. Today may not be the best day for important decisions in the work place as you have lost yourself in your thoughts. You are quick witted and are no stranger to finding yourself having to apologize for having offended someone. Bite your tongue, keep it to yourself today as this could result in a battle of words with someone close to you. Leo, settle in with a book tonight and give your mind a break from reality. This will provide a much-needed escape for you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

What a great day to spend some time with those you love. Enjoy some time sitting around with friends and family. You may find taking a walk down memory lane will bring much laughter into your life today. You live and learn. You have had your share of both. Good times are yours for the taking. You may find yourself extremely sensitive to the needs of others. You find yourself very understanding. Others seem drawn to you today. You are the friend others want to have.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You seem to have placed great focus not only on your sexual desires but also you long for power and control. This seems to be a time of curiosity in your life. Trying new things may lead to new levels of satisfaction and a sense of completion. You have a deep desire to earn the respect of someone close to you. Their feelings of admiration and respect may be revealed to you today. You are driven by your determination and desire today. You may discover close colleagues have much more respect for you than you once thought.



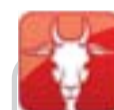
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Discipline and patience are two things you desperately need to practice today. Do not make any decisions without thinking things through. Account for every detail and carefully make careful measurements. This will keep your mind active. You may find yourself leaning toward a healthier lifestyle. Changes are forthcoming. This can bring great reward in the future. Decisions made today will be good ones.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You are feeling some financial stress. That's because you have trouble distinguishing between "Needs" and "Wants." Solve the problem by listing your expenditures in the two categories. To assure objectivity, you may want to enlist the help of a friend to verify the lists. (Utilities are Needs, that new purse is a Want.) Set aside money for Needs, including payments on current debts. Allow yourself the balance to spend on wants. Resisting the temptation to spend more than you have will be difficult at first, but it will soon become habit. And you will be surprised at how quickly you will feel freer, less stressed.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday. The sun came up this morning, and you are still here. Try to focus on the present. Stressing ahead rarely changes outcomes. Many of the "what ifs" you fret about will never happen. Save your energy to deal with the realities. You are flexible, and you have the coping skills to handle whatever comes up. No problem is too large for you to conquer.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may feel as if you are encountering negativity and not everyone is supportive when it comes to very sensitive issues you are dealing with in your life. These issues are very personal, and you may just be sharing with the wrong people. You will find someone close to you who will serve as a confidant who is extremely understanding and supportive of all that makes you unique. Aquarius, now is a great time to think outside of the box and follow that new path or project that is calling your name. You may reap great reward from trying something new.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are a practical person with an abundance of common sense. You are able to use both of these qualities as assets to make your way to the top in the career world. You may be feeling a need to change your focus and tighten your circle a bit. You feel as if you need to spend more of your time and attention on you and yours. At this point you may have accomplished your goal in the workplace but feel you need to continue to work on your goal at home. This will be a balancing act to continue to make sure you thrive in every area of your life. Your communication skills are at all time high and you are able to relate and interact with ease to all who surround you.

Wordsearch Puzzle

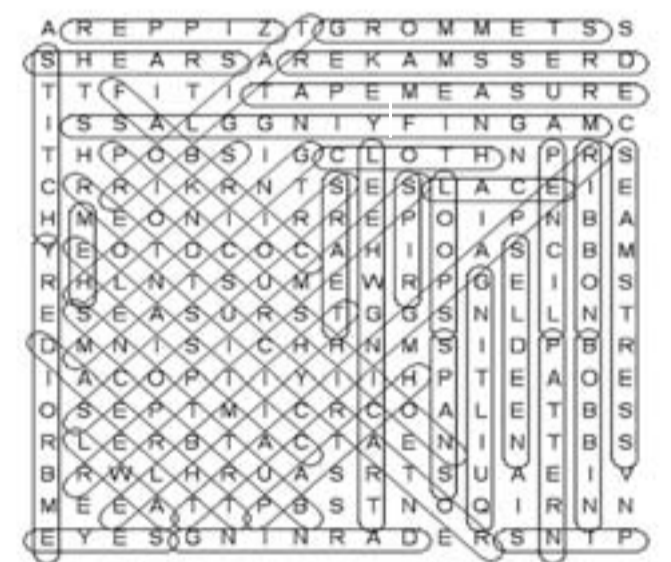
Shakespeare: Hamlet

Find and circle all of the words relating to Hamlet that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Hamlet quotation.



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Sewing



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| EMBROIDERY | PATTERN          | SEAMSTRESS    | TRACING PAPER |
| EYES       | PENCIL           | SHEARS        | TRACING WHEEL |
| FABRIC     | PINCUSHION       | SNAPS         | ZIPPER        |
| GROMMETS   |                  |               |               |

The hidden sentence is: A STITCH IN TIME SAVES NINE

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 2019



A Gnawa traditional group performs in the city of Essaouira to celebrate the decision of adding the Gnawa culture to UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Gnawa culture, a centuries-old Moroccan practice rooted in music, African rituals and Sufi traditions, was added to UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity last week. — AFP Photos

## RHYTHM AND SMILES AS MOROCCO'S GNAWA ARTISTS CHEER UNESCO LISTING

In a riot of color, acrobatics and drum beats, Morocco's gnawa artists joyously celebrated the inclusion of their ancient art-form in UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Troupes of the artists in traditional costumes paraded

great Gnawa masters, with a broad grin. Gnawa culture is a centuries-old Moroccan practice rooted in African rituals, Sufi traditions and music played with the guembri, a type of lute with three strings, and steel castanets called krakebs. The tradition, which includes the veneration of Islamic holy men, dates back to at least the 16th century and combines ancestral African practices, Arab-Muslim and Berber influences.

Mokhtar Gania's father, like his grandfather, was an emblematic figure of Gnawa ritual music, which traces its roots to the descendants of former slaves from sub-Saharan Africa. Gnawa was once a set of esoteric rituals of rhythm and trance practiced by brotherhoods and reserved for initiates, but it has since spread throughout the world. The genre was popularized by a festival that started in 1997 in Essaouira, a small fortified city clinging to a rocky peninsula on the Atlantic coast that is also known as the "City of the Trade Winds".

### 'Universal language'

Now the picturesque port town attracts waves of fans each year from across the globe to the Gnawa and World Music Festival. It has seen jazz greats such as Pat Metheny, Didier Lockwood and Marcus

Miller perform with the most famous Gnawa masters. Before the festivals, "this culture, recognized by major names on the world music scene, did not have the place it deserved in the Moroccan popular imagination," said Neila Tazi, producer of the event. For Andre Azoulay, adviser to King Mohammed VI and president of a local cultural association, the UNESCO listing is "a recognition of Essaouira's pioneering commitment" to a community that was long marginalised.

Malaam Seddik El Arch, 68, is a privileged witness of this evolution. Today, "musicians of all nationalities come here to learn guembri," he said in the old city of Essaouira, itself a UNESCO World Heritage Site. "Despite the language barrier, we manage to get along and play together," he said. "Music is a universal language." Mokhtar Gania, who has shared the stage with Carlos Santana, is preparing to release an album with Universal Music and go touring with his group of Moroccan and West African musicians.

There is also a new generation, ready to take over - among them Abdeslam Benaddi, 25, who together with other local young musicians has created the group "Oussoul gnaoua", meaning "the origins of Gnawa". Together, they



A Gnawa traditional group performs in the city of Essaouira.

through the white-and-blue citadel town of Essaouira in southern Morocco Saturday, the sound of their lute strings and steel castanets filling the streets.

"Our goal is to bring this music to the world," said Mokhtar Gania, 56, one of the



A Gnawa traditional group performs in the city of Essaouira.

launched the "Gnawa Generation" festival three years ago, where groups of young artists perform to Gnawa standards "with respect for tradition" before a jury of elder masters. For everyone involved, said the young musician, "it is important to preserve this culture and pass it on to the next generation". — AFP



A Gnawa traditional group performs in the city of Essaouira.



## Kourtney Kardashian branded Khloe 'bully'

**T**he 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star fumed at her sibling during a recent trip to Wyoming, where they took part in a cattle drive. She said: "When Khloe calls me a bully, it's just the exact opposite. I feel like I've been bullied for the last two years by Kim and Khloe, if I don't do something that fits their mold of how they want me to be. I just think no matter what, my sisters, are always looking for a reason to give me s\*\*t." And when they returned to the lodge, Kourtney - who has Mason, 10, Penelope, seven, and Reign, five - admitted she wanted to go home because she felt incredibly "picked" on. She added: "Why

would I want to be here with a bunch of people who literally, they just pick on me? Why is there this constant need to criticise? ... After Khloe lashing out at me at the ropes course, I just feel defeated. I can never win. It can never be light and fun anymore, everyone takes everything so personally, including myself. It's just not enjoyable to hang out together." Meanwhile, Kourtney previously insisted she will always rely on her sisters - including Kim Kardashian West, Khloe as well as half sisters Kendall Jenner and Kylie Jenner - "unconditionally".

## Kristin Cavallari threatens to move out of the family home



**T**he 32-year-old television personality jokingly fumed with her husband Jay Cutler after he asked to put up a blow-up Christmas figure outside the house to mark the festive period. She said: "I really love Jay's enthusiasm for decorating for Christmas. However, sometimes there's a few casualties ... I can't do blow-ups. I refuse to have a blow-up. I will probably move out." And Kristin revealed her husband considers himself to be an "authority" on Christmas because he had grown up in Santa Claus, Indiana. Speaking on Sunday's 'A Very Merry Cavallari' holiday special, she said: "Jay grew up in a little teeny-tiny town, called Santa Claus,

Indiana. And this place is truly Christmas year-round. You know, all the streets are like Candy Cane Lane and Rudolph Road. And he thinks that makes him an authority on Christmas." Kristin previously revealed her and her spouse Jay have decided to have a low-key Christmas at home this year because it's too stressful trying to travel with the kids. She said: "We are just going to stay put at our house. It's too hard to travel with three little kids - Santa isn't great at that! My family will come a few days before Christmas then Jay's family a couple days after but it will just be us on Christmas Eve and Christmas.

## Aaron Paul was at 'lowest' point before Breaking Bad

**T**he 40-year-old actor admits he was really struggling before he came to international recognition for his role as Jesse Pinkman in the AMC series. He said: "Before 'Breaking Bad' was the lowest point in my career. I had lots of ups and lots of downs, and more downs than ups, but I was also just super happy to be working. But there was this looming writers' strike, just around the corner, and I was terrified." And Aaron believes that everything happens for a reason as he admitted he nearly missed his audition for 'Breaking Bad'. He added to Collider.com: "I had a film that was accepted at the Berlin Film Festival, that I was starring in, that was a super small indie that my friend directed. We are all going out to Berlin to represent the film, and the day before I was supposed to leave, I called my reps and went, 'I can't go. It's during pilot season. I can't be gone for a week.' I was so stressed. Everyone got super mad at me, but I insisted that I had to stay. Three days later, I got the audition for 'Breaking Bad'. If I was gone, I would never even have heard of that audition or that script. I would have been obsessed with the show, and I would've been pissed that I didn't get to audition. It's crazy how luck comes into play, but also destiny."



## Liam Hemsworth sparks Brooks dating rumors

**T**he 'Hunger Games' star was seen introducing the Sydney based model to his family over the weekend, prompting speculation they are dating. Pictures show Liam introducing Gabriella to Craig and Leonie in Byron Bay, with the model seen shaking Leonie's hand. Liam recently split from Miley Cyrus, with the actor filing for divorce from Miley several days after their split, whilst she was romancing Kaitlynn Carter. The 'Slide Away' hitmaker has since ended things with the 'Hills: New Beginnings' star, and is now dating Cody Simpson. In a statement released at the time of their break up, a representative for Liam and Miley said: "Ever-evolving,

changing as partners and individuals, they have decided this is what's best while they both focus on themselves and careers. They still remain dedicated parents to all of their animals they share while lovingly taking this time apart. Please respect their process and privacy." Days before he filed for divorce, Liam wrote on Instagram: "Hi all, Just a quick note to say that Miley and I have recently separated and I wish her nothing but health and happiness going forward." Meanwhile, Elsa Pataky - who is married to Liam's brother Chris - previously revealed she thinks Liam "deserves much more" than Miley.



## Amy Schumer heaps praise on 'good, kind' Kardashian family

**T**he 38-year-old actress took to social media after Sunday night's season finale of 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' as she revealed the girls have "always been very kind" to her, and able to laugh at themselves. She wrote on Instagram: "I watched the season finale of @kuwtk and it was a true delight. I have made a million jokes over the years. "But I love that family. They are good, kind girls and I appreciate how open they are. "They are such great sports and have always been very kind to me and my family and are the first one to laugh at jokes about themselves. Especially @kimkardashian... that's how I really feel."

Back in 2015, comedienne Amy pretended to trip and fall in front of Kim Kardashian West and her rapper husband Kanye West as they arrived on the red carpet at the Time 100 Gala at the Lincoln Centre in New York City. Amy's comments come after Kourtney opened up as the final episode of the series aired, and admitted she didn't want to film the show anymore. She explained: "I have three kids that are my priority more than the show ... Why do I have to say it 25 times? I'm not going to change my mind. What I'm saying is I'm getting to the point where I'm not happy.



## Kerry Katona made her boyfriend take STI test



**T**he former Atomic Kitten singer - who has five children from her relationships with her three ex-husbands - didn't want to take any risks with her health so insisted Ryan Mahoney underwent a full sexual health screening before agreeing to make love with him without the use of a condom. Following Mel B's similar confession that she makes prospective partners have an STI check before they sleep together, Kerry said in New! magazine: "I marched Ryan down there when we were first dating. "Once I knew it was getting serious and we wanted to ditch condoms for a different type of birth control, I felt it was important to make sure we were both OK. It's essential to stay on top of your sexual health. "Ryan's younger than me, he's gorgeous and I'm pretty sure he's had a lot more

lovers than me, so it was a no-brainer. "And let's face it, you're not gonna say no to Mel when she tells you to get down the clinic - she's called Scary for a reason." Kerry's confession comes after Mel B publicly spoke out about how it is important to discuss sexual health with prospective partners. She said: "I do think it's important to have that conversation before you have sex with them. I've done it. You'd be surprised if it's just part of the conversation how willing and able that conversation's outcome ends up being. "I've been out on the however-many date, and I can see it's heading down that area, and I've gone, 'Let's go to the clinic together and get it done.' "

## Juice WRLD's girlfriend has broken her silence

**A**lly Lotti took to the stage at the Rolling Loud festival at the Banc of California Stadium in Los Angeles over the weekend and reassured fans that the late star - whose real name was Jarad Anthony Higgins - loved them very much. She said: "I just wanted to come out here and let everyone know that Jarad loved every single person that he helped on this earth. He literally loved every single one of you guys," she said. "There is not a time when he had shown me any different love then he felt for you. He wants everyone to know that you need to take any negative, any negative thing in your life, he would tell you every time he saw you and change that

to a positive situation." Juice WRLD, 21, passed away earlier this month after reportedly suffering a seizure in Chicago's Midway airport and his funeral recently took place at the Holy Temple Cathedral Church of God in Harvey, Illinois, near his Chicago hometown. Following his death, his mother Carmela Wallace and Juice WRLD's family revealed that the young rapper had been battling drug addiction before his death. They said: "We loved Jarad with all of our hearts and cannot believe our time with him has been cut short. As he often addressed in his music and to his fans, Jarad battled with prescription drug dependency.



## Hayley Kiyoko struggled with defining beauty

**T**he 28-year-old singer - who identifies as lesbian - admitted that she has been torn between dressing in a feminine or masculine way but ultimately decided that beauty is within and she now has the confidence to wear whatever she wants. Hayley told Allure: "I've definitely struggled with defining beauty and what that means on the scale of femininity and masculinity. It's OK to want to dress feminine one day and masculine another day," she says over the phone. "Beauty is within. Beauty is about confidence and embracing who you are. That's something that took me a long time growing up to see, 'Oh, it's about how I feel, and being comfortable in my own skin.'" And Hayley revealed that she is now more comfortable in her skin than ever before. She said: "Self-care and skin care go hand in hand. Taking care of my skin makes me more present to focus on what I'm working on and the people I'm surrounded by. Do everything you can to be comfortable in your own skin.



Chinese tourists take photos as villages (back) on the sea are seen from Dong An Island in Xiapu in China's Fujian province. — AFP Photos



The sunrise is seen from the Niu Yu mudflat in Xiapu in China's Fujian province.



Tourists take photos of the sunset from Dong An Island in Xiapu in China's Fujian province.

## PICTURE THIS: CHINA COASTAL FLATS DEVELOP INTO MAJOR PHOTO DRAW

It's dawn in Xiapu county and sunrise over southeastern China is welcomed by dozens of clicking camera shutters. Locals along this rather isolated stretch of coast in Fujian province have drawn their livelihood from the sea since ancient times. But another thriving industry has emerged as steadily rising incomes put cameras and smartphones into the hands of countless Chinese.

Xiapu is a major attraction for budding Chinese photographers drawn to its striking

imagery and a traditional way of life far removed from the skyscrapers and bustle of the country's mega-cities. The chief attraction is the coastal flats, alternately exposed and flooded by the ebb and flow of the tide, which wind around Xiapu's maze of inlets, coves and promontories.

Seaweed production is perhaps the most visible industry, and the wide shimmering flats are marked by long graceful rows of bamboo seaweed-farming frames stretching into the

distance. Elsewhere, oddly geometric patterns emerge, created by sandbars whose winding ridges are gradually exposed by the tide. Nearby, fishermen in conical hats toss billowing nets, while beached fishing boats lean on their sides until the water rises again.

The photography rush hour comes at dawn when the east-facing coastline is bathed in the golds and salmon-pinks of sunrise over the East China Sea. "The people, scenery and food are all beautiful in Xiapu," said Liu Hong,

a 67-year-old retiree who travelled from distant northern China to capture Xiapu's colors. "I'm obsessed with the sunrise over the sea and the view of fishing boats dotting the horizon," added Liu, standing on a hill overlooking hundreds of floating fish farms topped by wooden houses.

Local media said more than 400,000 professional and amateur photographers came to Xiapu in 2016, a figure expected to have grown since then, with the autumn sea-

weed harvest a particular draw. The influx has triggered a tourism boom and resulting local government investment in the development of photographic vantage points and other infrastructure, as well as photo contests that receive tens of thousands of entries annually. — AFP



US singer Taylor Swift performs onstage during the Z100's iHeartRadio Jingle Ball 2019 at Madison Square Garden in New York. — AFP

## Taylor Swift to headline UK Glastonbury Festival

Pop superstar Taylor Swift will headline at Britain's famous Glastonbury Festival for the first time next year, organizers and the singer have announced. The "You Need to Calm Down" singer will perform on the storied Pyramid Stage on Sunday June 28, the final day of the music bash, the festival said on its website. "I'm ecstatic to tell you that I'll be headlining Glastonbury on its 50th anniversary - See you there!" the Grammy Award-winner tweeted Sunday. "She's one of the biggest stars in the world and her songs are absolutely amazing. We're so delighted," said organiser Michael Eavis.

The American singer-songwriter, who celebrated her 30th birthday last week, recently released her seventh album "Lover", after signing a new deal with Universal Music Group. Former Beatles frontman Paul McCartney has already been announced as the top-billing for Saturday night, having previously headlined in 2004, while Motown star Diana Ross will play the Sunday afternoon legend slot. This year's headliner was grime star Stormzy. All 135,000 tickets for the 50th anniversary festival went on sale in October and sold out in 34 minutes. — AFP

## 'Jumanji' sequel bests 'Frozen II' to top North America box office

"Jumanji: The Next Level" iced out "Frozen II" at the North American box office this weekend, raking in an estimated \$60.1 million in its debut, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations reported Sunday. Sony's latest "Jumanji" sequel stars Jack Black, Dwayne ("The Rock") Johnson and Kevin Hart as a group of friends returning to the dangerous but fascinating world of the Jumanji game.

Disney's "Frozen II" — a return to Arendelle and the magical animated world of Queen Elsa, sister Anna and the gang — took in an estimated \$19.2 million for the Friday-to-Sunday period. In third place was Lionsgate's droll murder mystery "Knives Out," at \$9.3 million. Daniel Craig stars as a Southern detective hired by an anonymous client to unravel the bloody death of a wealthy

patriarch. Fourth spot went to new Warner Bros. release "Richard Jewell," a revisiting of the real-life tale of an Atlanta security guard falsely accused of playing a part in the 1996 Olympics bombing.

The film sparked controversy by suggesting that a now-dead female journalist traded sex for inside information. At \$5 million, it was one of the poorest openings ever for a Clint Eastwood movie. In fifth was Universal's new slasher film "Black Christmas," which appropriately opened on Friday the 13th, with a \$4.4 million take that nearly recouped the film's \$5 million cost. It features a group of sorority sisters stranded on a deserted campus over the holidays — naturally, fending off a killer. — AFP



US actor Jack Black arrives for the World Premiere of 'Jumanji: The Next Level' at the TCL Chinese theatre in Hollywood. — AFP



Artists from the Ikarus troupe perform during the 7th annual Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Wuzhen in Zhejiang province.

## DRAMATISTS WAGE 'GUERRILLA' FIGHT FOR ARTISTIC FREEDOM

An actress playing US espionage whistleblower Edward Snowden imitates a gun with her hand, aims it at a security camera, and fires—not exactly the sort of stage content that's green-lighted in China's surveillance state. But artists like the scene's writer-director Wang Chong operate in what might be considered China's version of "off-off-Broadway", small, often impromptu, avant-garde performances in which independent show-runners walk a razor-thin line between censorship and artistic freedom.

But even in Wuzhen, Wang, a tall and lanky 37-year-old, employs what he calls "tricks" to avoid trouble from a government that is pushing "red" theatre extolling the one-party Communist state. Independent directors today often perform pop-up style, in art galleries, museums, or coffee shops, avoiding proper theatre venues, which require pre-approval of scripts and are frequented by government officials monitoring for sensitive content. "If you stick to giving a voice to deep social issues, you will finally figure out a way around the rules," Wang added.

ist on vague accusations of "insulting Chinese people" with satirical cartoons depicting them as pig-headed gluttons. Wang's darkly comic piece was performed by actors wearing animal heads. "As long as you don't sell tickets, you won't be asked for qualifications and can keep your artistic freedom," said Wang, who formed his self-funded troupe this year.

### Guerrilla style

Self-taught theatre director Huang Baosheng also stages his plays, which revolve around the pressures faced by Chinese young people, in what he calls "guerrilla" style-in friends' homes, coffee shops, even an underground parking lot. But that's due more to financing than politics.

"Money is my biggest trouble, a drag on my creativity," said Huang, 25, who co-founded a troupe three years ago in the nearby city of Hangzhou, supporting it with his earnings as a copy writer at an internet company. His lack of formal theatre training makes government or private funding elusive, while others say edgy content also repels sponsors. Still, growing numbers of Chinese independent impresarios are emerging to find increasing interest from young Chinese, Huang said.

But censorship hovers overhead, said Wang Chong. "(Chinese authorities) want theatre to become an industry like Broadway, to make money like movies do and contribute to national GDP," he said, but they also want it "pure and strictly controllable". Wang, who regularly stages his edgier performances overseas, will perform a new one-man play in Australia next year starring himself. The theme: censorship. "It's my long-term dream that China's theatre censorship system will collapse one day. If so, the (forthcoming) play will have accomplished its mission." — AFP

### Glass ceiling

Many theatres in China host modern Western-style dramas, but much stage fare still consists of Communist paeons or re-tellings of ancient tales. But Wang and his peers push the envelope with avant-garde productions that skirt the censor's red line. His latest—a thinly veiled swipe at China's surveillance state—was performed outdoors in Wuzhen by four randomly selected audience members who received their lines and prompts via headphones.

The founder of 11-year-old Beijing-based performance group Theatre du Reve Experimental, Wang has had plays shut down before. "Mr Big", a production centring on early 20th-century dissident writer Lu Xun that touched on sensitive issues, opened in theatres in 2016, but was later abruptly closed. Wang likened it to the death of a child and indicative of what he calls a "glass ceiling" for sensitive content. Another innovative playwright, Wang Boxin, the 34-year-old founder of a Shanghai-based theatre troupe, uses satire and dark humour in productions that shine a light on what he considers contemporary China's declining moral values.

His latest, which debuted on Wuzhen's centuries-old plazas, was inspired by the police detention this year of a young Chinese cartoon-



People watch a Beijing Opera performance during the 7th annual Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Wuzhen in Zhejiang province.

"A rebellious spirit is very dangerous. If an artist is in trouble in China everybody will cut connections, cooperation and conversation with them," Wang said of the risks. Wang spoke to AFP on the sidelines of the recent 7th annual Wuzhen Theatre Festival in the eponymous ancient canal town near Shanghai. Wuzhen's government promotes the town as an arts centre, which affords directors a sliver more creative leeway than elsewhere.



Artists perform during the 7th annual Wuzhen Theatre Festival in Wuzhen.



French artist Julien Delime perform during the 7th annual Wuzhen Theatre Festival.



Artists perform during the 7th annual Wuzhen Theatre Festival.— AFP photos

## Cineworld tops North American box office with Cineplex deal

Cineworld will buy Canada's Cineplex for \$1.65 billion in cash, making the British firm the biggest cinema operator in North America as it looks to tackle increasing competition from online streaming services. Cineworld said yesterday the deal, which values Cineplex at \$2.1 billion including debt, would involve it seeking \$2.3 billion in loans, sending shares of the FTSE-250 member down as much as 9% and erasing early gains. The C\$34 (\$25.56) per share offer is at a premium of 42% to the Toronto-based company's closing price on Friday.

While cinemas rely on big movie releases to generate gains, streaming services like Netflix and Amazon's Prime Video are invading that space with direct to stream movies or releasing movies within a few weeks of their cinema debut. "It (Cineworld) is effectively betting that Hollywood studios will consistently release films we all want to see, and that a recession won't hurt demand for a trip to the flicks," AJ Bell investment director Russ Mould said.

"If this doesn't turn out to be the case then Cineworld could start to sink under the weight of its debt." Cineworld's adjusted net debt stood at \$3.3 billion as at June 30, which was 3.3 times adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA). It said it would focus on capital allocation to bring down its net debt to EBITDA ratio to around three times by end of fiscal 2021. The ratio is a key measure which can tell investors how long a company would take to repay its debt.

### Canadian box office

Earlier this month, Cineworld hinted at slightly lower annual performance and the deal comes nearly two years after its \$3.6 billion acquisition of Regal cinemas, which made it the world's second largest theatre operator by number of screens. The Cineplex deal would add 165 cinemas and 1,695 screens to Cineworld's network of 9,498 screens across 786 sites.

Currently, US-based AMC Entertainment Holdings is the world's largest cinema operator. It has about 11,000 screens in 1,000 theatres, according to its website. "We see the cinema industry as broadly stable and are therefore positive about today's earnings-enhancing acquisition ... although the debt level does make us grip the edge of our seat," Peel Hunt analysts said in a note.

The deal also allows Cineworld to tap into the Canadian box office which grossed about \$770 million last year. Cineplex has a 75% share of this market. "Our immediate post-acquisition objectives will be to combine Cineplex with our US business," Cineworld Chairman Anthony Bloom said. CEO Moshe Greidinger said on a call with analysts that he does not expect the deal to face any antitrust issues since Cineworld has no existing businesses in Canada. Cineworld's largest shareholder Global City Theatres BV - with a stake of about 28% - has agreed to back the deal. — Reuters

## Vatican's 'vampire' prints of rarely seen 20th century art on show

They could be called the Vatican's vampire prints - works by masters such as Henri Matisse, Edvard Munch and Salvador Dali so delicate that they usually lie dormant for years in dark storage in its museums. Now, 150 etchings, woodcuts, aquatints, lithographs and other types of 20th century graphic art are being shown in the light of day - many for the first time - at the Braccio Carlo Magno exhibition hall off St. Peter's Square. Called "The Signs of the Sacred - The Imprints of the Real", the show is a mix of works on spiritual themes, modern interpretations of biblical scenes, still lifes, nature scenes and pieces reflecting everyday life, war and maternity.

"They definitely don't love the light," said Francesca Boschetti, the exhibition's curator, explaining they can be shown only for a brief period to avoid fading and deterioration. They are emerging from what Micol Forti, head of the Vatican Museums' department of modern and contemporary art, calls a "hidden and secret life, spent in the darkness of cabinets and vaults". Some of the artists whose works are on display, such as Edvard Munch, most famous for "The Scream," lived bohemian and at times hedonistic lifestyles and were not known to be religious.

But they were attracted by spiritual themes and Munch's "Old Man Praying", a 1902 woodcut on Japanese rice paper, is one example. "In times of personal travails or great social upheaval such as during and between the two world wars, even artists who did not normally do religious themes turned to them as a metaphor for suffering and violence," Boschetti said. The exhibition includes Dali's "Christ of Gala" a stereoscopic suite of two lithographs, which the surrealist intended to give a three dimensional effect when viewed together.

The exhibition, which is free of charge, closes at the end of February, when the works will be returned to dark storage with temperature and humidity controls. The 150 works, which also include pieces by Max Ernst, Paul Klee, Oskar Kokoschka, and Marc Chagall, hail from the Vatican Museums' contemporary arts collection. Many were donated, some by the artists themselves, to Pope Paul VI, who reigned from 1963 to 1978. Unlike some of his predecessors, Pope Paul appreciated modern art and founded a collection entirely dedicated to 20th century works. — Reuters

# Classifieds

Tuesday, December 17, 2019



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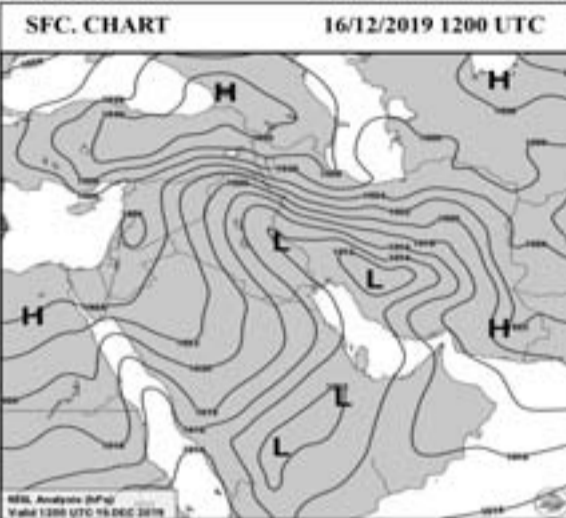


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## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY NIGHT:** Unstable with moderate to fresh south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 25 - 60 km/h with a chance for thunder rain.

**BY DAY:** Mostly Sunny with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 40 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			Thunder rain + Fresh wind	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 16/12/2019 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	17 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	14 °C		
ABDALY	19 °C	14 °C		
BUBYAN	20 °C	17 °C		
JAHRA	21 °C	16 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	21 °C	17 °C		
AHMADI	21 °C	17 °C		
NUWASIB	22 °C	19 °C		
WAFRA	21 °C	18 °C		
SALMY	22 °C	14 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	12/17	Mostly Sunny	19 °C	14 °C	NW	12 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	12/18	Mostly Sunny with a chance for light fog forming at night	19 °C	09 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Thursday	12/19	Mostly Sunny	20 °C	08 °C	NW	15 - 38 km/h
Friday	12/20	Sunny	21 °C	07 °C	NW	12 - 35 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:11
Sunrise	06:36
Zuhr	11:44
Asr	14:34
Sunset	16:52
Isha	18:14

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	11 °C
MAX. RH	99 %
MIN. RH	48 %
MAX. Wind	NE 21 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

## CHANGE OF NAME

**I, Aboobacker Siddhique** Abdu Salam, Illathail house, Kallur 679562, Kerala holder of Indian Passport No. J2019956 issued at Embassy of India, Kuwait, civil ID No. 292052901289 hereby change my name as **Abdu Salam Aboobacker Siddhique** with immediate effect. (C 5478) 17-12-2019

## SHARING ACCOMMODATION

**Sharing accommodation** for Filipino ONLY Farwaniya block 4, near Big Jamiya, available on December 25, Contact 55571873. 17-12-2019

**EMERGENCY 112**

## Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

## Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page ([www.kuwait-airport.com.kw](http://www.kuwait-airport.com.kw))

### Flight Schedule

### DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 17/12/2019				Departure Flights on Tuesday 17/12/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	ME	405	Beirut	12:55
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
JZR	716	Sohag	00:35	JZR	115	Doha	13:00
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	GFA	210	Bahrain	13:05
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	MSR	611	Cairo	13:25
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	781	Jeddah	13:30
KAC	102	London	01:25	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KAC	541	Cairo	13:45
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	UAE	878	UAE	15:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:45
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	673	Dubai	15:50
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	SV	501	Jeddah	16:00
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	KAC	743	Dammam	16:20
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:25
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:30
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:35
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:45
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	JZR	103	Bahrain	16:50
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	ZAV	4132	Baghdad	17:00
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	KAC	619	Doha	17:35
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	FE	242	Alexandria	17:35
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	357	Kochi	17:35
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	FDB	052	Dubai	17:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	KAC	331	Trivandrum	17:55
GEL	500	Baku	05:30	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	QTR	1073	Doha	18:00
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:35	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:45	SV	511	Riyadh	18:20
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
UAE	873	Dubai	05:50	KAC	301	Mumbai	18:35
KAC	106	London	06:00	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
KAC	332	Trivandrum	06:00	KAC	371	Hyderabad	18:40
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	381	Delhi	18:45
FE	341	Sohag	06:05	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:55
KAC	362	Colombo	06:30	SYR	342	Damascus	18:55
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	JZR	253	Amman	19:20
JZR	120	Dubai	07:00	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
BAW	157	London	07:05	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
KAC	5514	BRU	07:30	FE	342	Sohag	19:55
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
JZR	212D	Jeddah	08:00	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	JZR	653	OSS	20:05
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:10	RJA	641	Amman	20:10
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	NIA	162	Cairo	20:30
THY	6376	ISL	08:35	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:35
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	JZR	501	Lahore	20:40
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	FDB	058	Dubai	20:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	QTR	1091	Doha	21:00
IRA	675	Lar	09:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	DLH	624	Dammam	21:45
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	QTR	1089	Doha	21:55
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:15
NIA	361	Alexandria	10:00	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
SV	512	Riyadh	10:00	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:25
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	10:40	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	ICV	6752	Hong Kong	22:35
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	UAE	860	UAE	22:55
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	RBG	214	Sohag	23:10
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	KAC	383	Delhi	23:20
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	KAC	543	Cairo	23:30
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	KAC	795	Madinah	23:30
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50	KAC	303	Mumbai	23:40



A woman walks past large numbers for the upcoming year 2020 as part of Christmas and New Year decorations in central Moscow on Sunday. — AFP

## Harvey Weinstein's 'forgotten man' comments anger accusers

**NEW YORK:** Harvey Weinstein's accusers hit back at the disgraced Hollywood mogul yesterday after he complained that the world had forgotten how he "pioneered" women-led films following dozens of sex-crime allegations. The once powerful producer, whose case sparked the #MeToo movement, gave a rare interview just three weeks before the start of a criminal trial that could see him jailed for life.

Weinstein, 67, told the New York Post tabloid, speaking in a hospital following a back operation, that he felt "like the forgotten man". "I made more movies directed by women and about women than any filmmaker and I'm talking about 30 years ago," said the producer of "Shakespeare in Love" and "Pulp Fiction". "I'm not talking about now when it's vogue. I did it first! I pio-

neered it! It all got eviscerated because of what happened," he added.

Twenty-three women who have accused Weinstein of sexual misconduct, including actresses Ashley Judd and Rose McGowan, said the comments were an attempt to "gaslight society again". "He says in a new interview he doesn't want to be forgotten. Well, he won't be," they said in a statement posted on the Time's Up Twitter page. "He will be remembered as a sexual predator and an unrepentant abuser who took everything and deserves nothing. He will be remembered by the collective will of countless women who stood up and said enough," they added.

Weinstein's comments came after he reached a \$25 million settlement last week to be shared among more

than 30 actresses and former employees who have sued him for offenses ranging from sexual harassment to rape. Weinstein will not have to admit wrongdoing or pay from his own pocket, according to news portal TMZ. Instead the bill will be met by insurers for his bankrupt former movie studio, The Weinstein Company.

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. Weinstein has always insisted his sexual relationships were consensual and has pleaded not guilty to five charges of sexual assault relating to two women. One of the women alleges Weinstein raped her in 2013, while the other claims he forcibly performed oral sex on her in 2006. His trial is

scheduled to start on Jan 6, 2020.

Lawyer Douglas Wigdor, who represents three of Weinstein's alleged victims, said the producer's cinematic accomplishments had rightly been overshadowed "by his horrific actions". "Mr Weinstein's latest public relations stunt on the eve of his criminal trial provides even more motivation to continue to prosecute the claims that will expose him for who he is," he said in a statement emailed to AFP.

Joseph Cabosky, a professor of public relations at the University of North Carolina, called Weinstein's interview "terrible". "You have a right to tell your own story. But, if the best case scenario is you seem like a jerk who seems to have learned nothing but might be innocent, it might be best just to shut up," he said. —AFP

## Saudis resist 'culture of...'

Continued from Page 1

global average of 115 kg, according to the ministry of environment, water and agriculture. The ministry estimates the waste costs Saudi Arabia, which is scrambling to boost state coffers amid low oil prices, around \$13 billion annually.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, the consumption is far higher than the official estimate: it says the average Saudi wastes as much as 427 kg every year, underscoring what observers call a throwaway consumer culture that undervalues food. "Since food items and groceries are abundantly available to all living in (Saudi Arabia) and they are highly subsidized, the residents take food for granted," academics from Riyadh's King Saud University wrote in a research report last year. "Food waste in restaurants, celebrations, social events is enormous ... (as) the custom is to provide more food than required."

The Saudi Food Bank, or Etaam, a charity which collects surplus food from hotels and wedding halls and distributes it to the needy, has called on the government to penalize waste. In Saudi Arabia, where vast oil reserves reaped enormous wealth in a few dizzying decades, food is not simply a source of nutrition but also an expression of cultural identity. In a traditional society where social interactions often revolve around food, enormous displays of it connote affluence.

"In just one generation Saudi Arabia went from conditions of scarcity to plenty and, for some, immense wealth," Kristin Diwan, from the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, told AFP. "It's easy to see then how this rather austere culture would project its wealth

into the socially acceptable area of hospitality and food."

Many Saudis are shrugging off stereotypes of being gluttons in a country where local media says more than 40 percent of the population is obese. A recent newspaper cartoon portrayed a single man hunched over a sumptuous spread of steaming food and asking a woman donning a kitchen apron: "Is this all?" "The only real freedom we have in an absolute monarchy is the freedom to eat," a Saudi academic told AFP, declining to be named. "For a long time, the only entertainment for Saudis was restaurants and food."

"Shop, eat and pray" was long the motto for many Saudis in an age of high oil prices which long supported the government's cradle-to-grave subsidies. But many are rethinking their lifestyles amid rising economic pressures as the conservative kingdom pares back subsidies but also opens up once-unthinkable outlets for entertainment such as cinemas and concerts. Environmentalists say Saudi Arabia's high demand for meat fuels wildfires in the Amazon rainforests, which make way for livestock. The kingdom is one of the biggest importers of Brazilian beef.

Many young Saudis are shunning a culture of excess to promote minimalism and meatless diets, among them the chef Almaha Al-Dossari, well known on social media as "The Bedouin Vegan". Waste, however, is a relic of the oil boom era, limited not just to food. It is common to see car engines idling for hours, a habit that stems from an era when oil was cheaper than water.

Water, too, is wasted even as the arid kingdom faces declining resources. Saudi Arabia consumes 263 litres of water per capita per day, double the daily world average, and the government aims to reduce it to 150 litres by 2030. "Cultural change is hard but concerns about environmentalism, sustainability, and more healthy living amongst a certain class of Saudis will have some impact," said Diwan. "These are the seeds of change." —AFP

rambling press appearances.

The run-up to the summit was also marked by France's President Emmanuel Macron branding the alliance "brain dead" and demanding a new strategy, reopening a dialogue with Russia and refocusing on the fight against Islamist terrorism. Despite the rancor, the 29 leaders managed to agree a "London Declaration" which was the first from NATO to acknowledge the growing strategic challenge posed by China. It also stressed the need for a stronger coordinated response against "terrorism". "We must continue to fight terrorism. NATO plays a key role in this fight, working with our partners around the world to train local forces," said Stoltenberg. "All NATO allies as well as NATO itself are part of the US-led global coalition against Daesh," he added, using the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group. —AFP

## Qatar FM says talks with Saudi...

Continued from Page 1

"There (is) some progress... We have broken the stalemate of non-communication to starting communication with the Saudis," Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani told CNN in an interview broadcast on Sunday. "Honestly, from our perspective in Qatar, we want to understand the grievances. We want to study them and to assess them and to look at the solutions that can safeguard us in the future from any other potential crisis."

The Saudi-led bloc made 13 key demands to resolve the dispute, including shutting down broadcaster Al Jazeera, downgrading ties with Iran and closing a Turkish military base on its territory. But the UAE has sought to downplay the emerging reconciliation effort. "The recent Qatari leaks regarding resolving Doha's crisis with Saudi Arabia, without the three other countries, are a repetition of Doha's quest to divide ranks and evade commitments," Abu Dhabi's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash wrote on Twitter at the weekend.

Several diplomats and analysts have suggested to

## Protests rage in India over...

Continued from Page 1

Jamia Millia Islamia university. The university's vice-chancellor Najma Akhtar said yesterday that 200 people were injured but police put the number at 39 students hurt with 30 officers also injured, one of them critically.

"It is not expected of the police to enter the university and beat up students," Akhtar told a news conference. Students said police fired tear gas and windows were broken in the library. They ducked under desks and switched off the lights as advised by teachers. Hundreds of people gathered outside the New Delhi police headquarters to protest against alleged police brutality and the detention of students.

Police spokesman MS Randhawa said that four buses, 100 private vehicles and 10 police bikes were damaged, and that officers exercised "maximum restraint, minimum force" despite being "provoked". He denied some media reports that police opened fire. News channel NDTV reported that two people were in hospital with bullet injuries. The clashes prompted university students to demonstrate elsewhere including in the southern state of Tamil Nadu and in Bangalore.

"I want to make it clear, nobody is scared. Like people in Hong Kong are protesting, in Chile they are protesting, and

AFP that Saudi Arabia could embrace a rapprochement with Doha while the UAE keeps its distance, a position echoed by sources briefed on the nascent talks. Responding to the charges of Gulf boycott countries, Qatar's foreign minister denied Doha had direct ties with the Brotherhood, branded by several countries - including Saudi Arabia - as a terrorist organization.

He added that Qatar was unwilling to alter its relationship with Turkey, which he said helped Doha weather the two-and-a-half-year crisis. "Any country that opened up for us and helped us during our crisis, we will remain grateful (to) them... we will never turn our back (on) them," he said. Last week, Qatar's amir skipped a Gulf summit in the Saudi capital billed as a potential "reconciliation conference", but leaders' calls for integration offered signs of a thaw between Doha and Riyadh.

In a sign of the changing mood, the Doha delegation led by Qatar's prime minister received a warm welcome in Riyadh. Recent "sports diplomacy", which saw football teams from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain travel to Qatar for the Gulf Cup, has raised hopes of a thaw. They travelled to Doha despite earlier indications that they would boycott the tournament. The rift has seen the two sides trade barbs on everything from access to the holy city of Makkah to alleged Twitter hacking. It has also seen families divided, while Qatari businesses face increased costs as well as complicated regional travel. —AFP

they are not scared," student Bhumika Saraswati told AFP in the capital. Fellow student Shree Kumar said that the citizenship law was "against the Muslims. It's against the ethos of India. It's against the secular ideas of India."

Protests were held in Mumbai's Indian Institute of Technology and Tata Institute of Social Sciences overnight and yesterday and more were planned at Bombay University and in the southern city of Bengaluru later in the day. Some Bollywood celebrities like actress Konkona Sen Sharma, and directors Mahesh Bhatt and Anubhav Sinha, also criticized the police action on Twitter and called on others to speak up. "We are with the students! Shame on you @DelhiPolice," Sen Sharma tweeted.

Authorities in Uttar Pradesh state cut Internet access in some parts following clashes between demonstrators and police in Aligarh on Sunday that saw 21 people arrested, authorities said. On the same day, Modi said the citizenship law is "1,000 percent correct" and that Muslims from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are not covered because they have no need of India's protection. Modi blamed the Congress party and its allies of "stoking fire", saying those creating violence "can be identified by their clothes" - a comment interpreted by some as referring to Muslims.

Modi has said Muslims from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are not covered by the law because they have no need of India's protection. Ashok Swain, a professor at Sweden's Uppsala University said that the scale of the protests had caught Modi's government off guard. "This certainly will add pressure on the regime when the economy has failed," Swain said. —Agencies

## Stoltenberg: NATO faces most...

Continued from Page 1

NATO's 29 members vowed earlier this month to stick together against threats from Russia and terrorism and recognized the challenge of a rising China at the two-day meeting in Britain. But leaders clashed over personality and policy, with US President Donald Trump branding Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau "two-faced" after a group of allied leaders were caught on video at a Buckingham Palace reception mocking the US leader's



## Sports

# Kipchoge's new shoes shatter two-hour barrier, fans shun Doha

## First human to run a marathon in under two hours

LONDON: Most people said it couldn't be done and the record books say it hasn't been, but for the thousands watching in Vienna and millions more online, Eliud Kipchoge unquestionably this year became the first human to run a marathon in under two hours.

When the peerless Kenyan unleashed a final kick to charge through the tape in one hour, 59 minutes and 40 seconds in the specially set-up event in October, the sporting world reeled at not only that such a notable barrier could be broken, but destroyed - and seemingly with ease.

It did not count as an official world record due to the use of "in and out" pacers and a moving drinks provider, yet probably the greatest aid of all - the latest version of Nike's Vaporfly shoes - were entirely legal.

Anyone still unsure how much the combination of carbon plates and super-compressed foam was the x-factor that enabled Kipchoge to reach such levels, would have been convinced 24 hours later when Brigid Kosgei used Vaporfly trainers to smash the women's marathon record.

The Kenyan took 81 seconds off Paula Radcliffe's official mark that had never been threatened in the previous 16 years. Then in December, the six year-old 10km world road record was also blown away by Joshua Cheptegei - the Ugandan also wearing "the shoes". The sport's governing body World Athletics says it is comfortable that the technology gives no "mechanical advantage".

But, fair or foul, its arrival means that comparisons with previous records are now about as useful as looking at today's golf driving distances using metal and carbon clubs versus the persimmon and bamboo shafts of yesteryear.

Kipchoge's amazing feat - coming a year after he

claimed the official world record of 2:01.39 in Berlin, kept distance running in the spotlight and how the sport needed some attention after the Doha world championships lived down to all expectations.

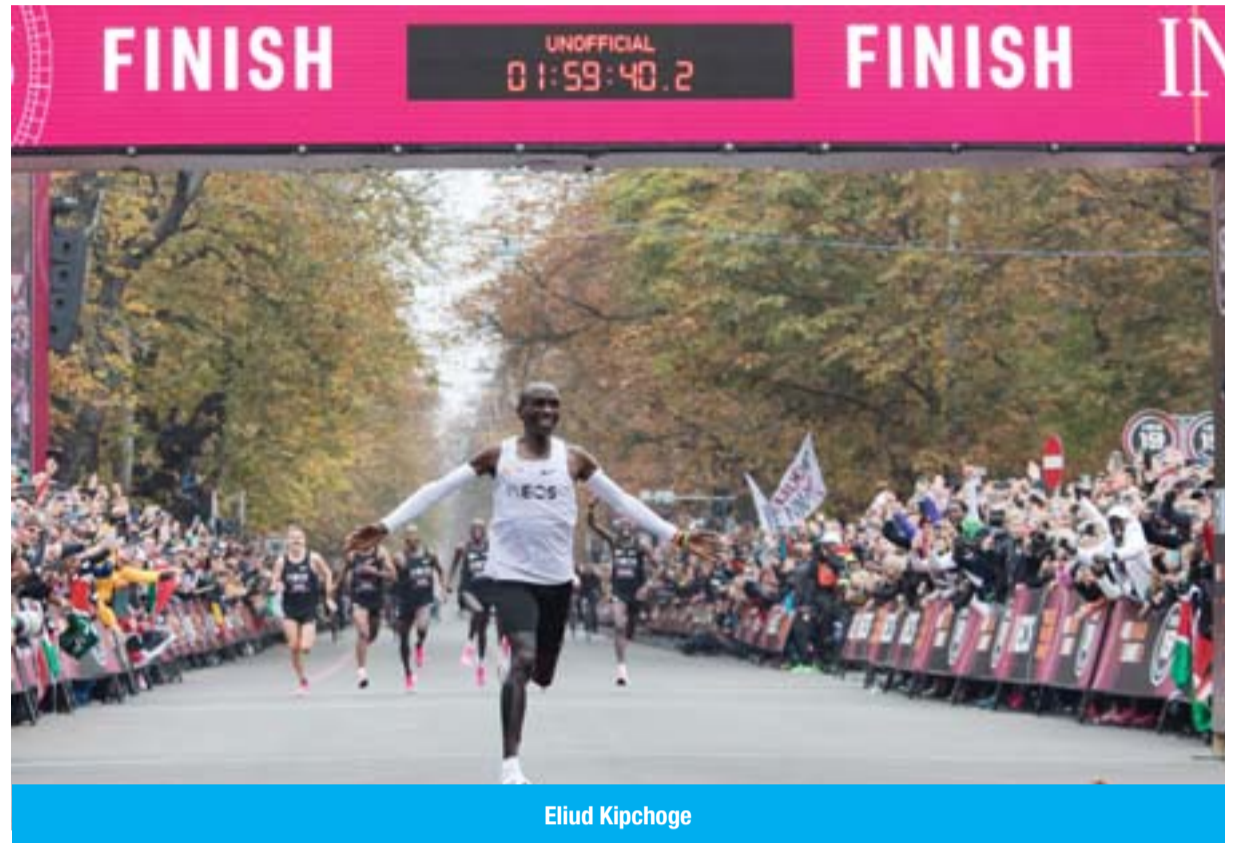
The blue riband event, the men's 100 metres, was tainted before it began by the ludicrous situation that allowed Christian Coleman to escape, on a technicality, what should have been an automatic ban for missing doping tests under the whereabouts system within 12 months.

Having made a laughing stock of the sport's anti-doping programme, the American duly took gold in a scorching 9.76 seconds - the sixth-fastest legal time ever - with evergreen, twice dope-banned compatriot Justin Gatlin taking silver in a virtually empty stadium.

That patent lack of interest, repeated for the women's 100m, in what is normally the hottest ticket in town, was only one of the fallouts of the controversial decision to take the event to Doha, where cooling technology worked inside the stadium but could do nothing for those on the roads.

It was a harrowing sight to see more than 40% of athletes dropping out of the women's marathon in distress due to the heat and humidity, despite a midnight start. It made such an impression on the International Olympic Committee that they almost immediately shifted the marathon and walk events in next year's Olympics from Tokyo to the cooler northern city of Sapporo. While Coleman beat the system, highly-rated distance coach Alberto Salazar could not, as, despite none of his athletes failing a test, he was given a four-year ban for doping violations.

That came as music to the ears of many Russians, who have long claimed that they are being victimised in the battle against doping while others got away with it.



Eliud Kipchoge

However, few were really listening after the country endured another sorry year on the drugs front.

World Athletics and their task force were spectacularly unimpressed with Russia's efforts to follow the

"road map" back towards acceptance and by reports from WADA that evidence had been tampered with and so the Russian Federation remains banned heading into the Olympic year of 2020. —Reuters

## Kuwait to compete in the ranking stage after losing to USA



By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The quarter finals of FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championship being hosted by Kuwait until Friday will start today, as well as the ranking for 9 to 20th places.

The tournament is being held under the patronage of House Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem at III Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Olympic Swimming Pools Complex, as Kuwait team will compete in the ranking stage after losing to USA 8-16 in the fourth round. Leaders of the four groups will play the quarterfinals starting tomorrow by facing second and third place teams. Greece, the current champion, Spain and Serbia are guaranteed to lead their groups and it is most likely for Italy to join them.

Those who end in fourth and fifth place in each group will play for the ranking from 9 to 20. Serbia was able to secure first place with eight points by defeating Croatia 11-6 in the fourth round, then China in the fifth round 16-4. Croatia is second with six points by

beating Japan 14-12 in fifth round yesterday. Japan took third place with four points after defeating South Africa 26-11 in the fourth round. China with two points and pointless South Africa will play in the ranking stage.

Spain guaranteed its leadership of the Group 2 with eight points by defeating Canada 15-7 while Hungary defeated Russia 12-9. Hungary and Canada will play in the quarterfinals, while Russia and Egypt will be in the ranking stage.

Kuwait team lost for the third consecutive time, guaranteeing the USA to reach the quarterfinals along with Italy, though Italy drew with Montenegro 12-12. Greece was harsh on Uzbekistan and beat it 27-4 to guarantee its eight points on top of the group, while Australia defeated Brazil 9-6.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chairman of Kuwait Swimming Federation Hameed Al-Ghareeb said all matters related to the championship are moving smoothly in a way that pleased all participating delegations. He said the KSF spares no effort in serving Kuwait youth and host major world events. Members of FINA



Taha Al-Kushari from Oman and Khalil Al-Jaber from Qatar agreed that Kuwait impressed everyone with its high ability to organize a world championship with complete professionalism for the second time following that in 1999.

Al-Kushari and Al-Jaber, who attended the opening ceremony and FINA meetings hoped this event will be a prelude for Kuwait hosting bigger events, bearing in mind it has all the necessary facilities.

## Momota trumps badminton greats with record-smashing year

SHANGHAI: Kento Momota was banned from badminton for gambling in 2016. Fast forward to 2019 and the Japanese has enjoyed one of the most successful years in the sport's history. Momota has cleaned up in men's badminton over the past 12 months, winning a record 11 titles including the World Championships, Asia Championships and All England Open.

The 25-year-old capped his remarkable campaign by fighting back from a game down to defeat Indonesia's Anthony Ginting in Sunday's decider at the BWF World Tour Finals in Guangzhou.

No men's badminton player, not even Malaysia's Lee Chong Wei or Chinese great Lin Dan, has won as many tournaments in a season. The left-handed Momota has played 73 matches this year, losing just six times, and admits that he has surprised even himself with his blistering form. Malaysia's Lee won 10 titles in 2010, but Momota said: "Although I broke the record of Lee Chong Wei, I don't think I

can be compared to him as a player and as a human being. "I feel like I am not yet a legendary player but I will work hard in order to play well in future tournaments." There is now only one major individual title missing from the all-action Japanese player's trophy haul - Olympic gold. Barring injury, loss of form or more controversy, Momota will be hot favourite to rectify that on home soil in Tokyo next summer.

Winning gold would be particularly satisfying for Momota after Japanese badminton chiefs barred him from the Rio 2016 Olympics for visiting an illegal casino. He did not watch any of the Olympics because it was too painful.

"I still feel remorse and cannot be sorry enough for what happened," he told the Olympic Channel at the weekend, having been forced out of badminton for more than a year. "I'd be lying if I said I don't think about the Olympics (next year)."

"I troubled a lot of people last time,



GUANGZHOU: Kento Momota of Japan poses with his trophy after winning his men's singles final match against Anthony Sinisuka Ginting of Indonesia at the BWF World Tour Finals badminton tournament in Guangzhou in China's southern Guangdong province. —AFP

"For those who supported me when I wasn't playing, I want to repay them somehow at Tokyo." Momota was down at 282 in the world rankings in July 2017, but his ascension since his return to the sport has been breathtaking.

He was seventh in the rankings in August last year when he became the first

Japanese man to win the singles title at the World Championships. In August this year, by then the undisputed number one, Momota retained his crown.

It is all a far cry from the days when as a youngster he would follow his sister to her badminton practice. "Before I knew it, I was also playing," Momota said. —AFP

## Woods completes road to redemption

MELBOURNE: Two years ago the future for Tiger Woods looked bleak to the point of darkness. Four back surgeries, countless knee operations, marital strife and run-ins with the law meant Woods had not won a major since 2008, had no tournament victories since 2013 and had seen his world ranking plummet to 656.

But on Sunday, US player-captain Tiger Woods capped a year that has seen one of the most memorable comebacks in sporting history by driving his team to a 16-14 victory over Ernie Els' Internationals in the 13th Presidents Cup in Melbourne.

The second coming of Tiger began with a drought-ending victory at the Tour Championship 15 months ago and accelerated with a 15th major and fifth green jacket at the US Masters in Augusta. Having returned to the world's top 10, Woods needed yet more surgery to his troublesome left knee in August before writing another remarkable chapter of his storied career.

In his first tournament appearance after the arthroscopic operation, Woods equalled Sam Snead's record of 82 US PGA Tour wins when he won the inaugural Zozo Championship in Japan. "It's been an amazing year," a beaming Woods told Golf TV in Melbourne. "I'm speechless."

"To have won a major championship, a green jacket, to have tied Sam and to have won a cup with all these guys, I couldn't have asked for a better year." The road to redemption began with his long-awaited win at the Tour Championship, the FedEx Cup finale, at East Lake, Atlanta, in September 2018.

Woods had endured two years out of the game and shuffled out of the February 2018 Dubai Desert Classic, his tournament return, with back spasms, causing observers to question whether he could compete again at the highest level.

The thought had also crossed the mind of Woods. Less than a year earlier he had hobbled into the Champions Dinner on the eve of the 2017 US Masters nursing yet another back injury, telling those assembled: "I'm done, I don't think I'll ever play golf again."

But two-and-a-half years later, Woods was unsurpassed at Royal Melbourne as he won all three of his matches and overtook Phil Mickelson for the most wins in Presidents Cup history. "How about that? I like that stat," smiled Woods, after being told his win-loss-tie Cup record was now 27-15-1 against his great rival Mickelson's 26-16-13.

It left Els, not for the first time in his career, having to pick up the pieces after a defeat to Woods. The big South African, widely praised for his captaincy which saw the Internationals lead after every session until Sunday when it mattered, might also regret his words on the eve of the tournament.

"I don't think today (Woods) has the same kind of aura he had in the past," Els had said. Young Mexican Abraham Ancer is another player who might want to be careful about what he says in future.

"I would like to play against Tiger," Ancer said before the Presidents Cup began. "Winning a match in the singles would be very special." He came up against a ruthless Woods who won 3 and 2.

"Abe wanted it," chided Woods. "And he got it." Woods will fly home today to celebrate Christmas and then his 44th birthday on December 30. Soon it will be 2020 and the continuation of the second coming of Tiger, with no one doubting more majors can follow to put him closer to Jack Nicklaus's all-time mark of 18.

There could also be a crack at Olympic gold in Tokyo. But first he can be forgiven for putting his feet up. "I am now retired for the year," laughed Woods, before heading off to join the US team's celebrations. —AFP

## Sports

## Cowboys pummel Rams, stay even with Philadelphia Eagles

**DALLAS:** With their grasp on the NFC East lead slipping, the Dallas Cowboys made a statement Sunday, ending a three-game losing streak with an impressive 44-21 victory over the visiting Los Angeles Rams. Notching their first victory of the season against a team with a winning record, the Cowboys (7-7) remained in a first-place tie with the Philadelphia Eagles, who beat Washington earlier Sunday. That sets up a showdown game between the division rivals next weekend in Philadelphia. The Cowboys would clinch the NFC East with a victory. Dak Prescott threw for 212 yards and two touchdowns, while Ezekiel Elliott rushed for 117 yards and two scores of his own. Tony Pollard added 131 yards on the ground and a late 44-yard score to seal the victory. The Cowboys rushed for a season-high 263 yards. Jared Goff threw for 284 yards and two touchdowns and an interception, while running back Todd Gurley rushed for 20 yards on 11 carries with a rushing and receiving TD as the Rams' playoff chances took a severe blow. Los Angeles (8-6) must win out and have Minnesota lose out to reach the postseason.

**BILLS 17, STEELERS 10**

Visiting Buffalo clinched a playoff spot when Josh Allen's 14-yard tiebreaking touchdown pass to Tyler Kroft was the difference in a win over Pittsburgh. Buffalo (10-4) has won four of its past five games, and Pittsburgh (8-6) had won seven of eight. Allen was 13 of 25 passing for 139 yards with an interception, and he also ran for a touchdown. Steelers quarterback Devlin "Duck" Hodges, an undrafted rookie who had been 3-0 as a starter, was 23 of 38 passing for 202 yards and a touchdown to James Conner, who returned from a shoulder injury.

**EAGLES 37, REDSKINS 27**

Carson Wentz tossed a 4-yard touchdown pass to Greg Ward with 26 seconds remaining to lift visiting Philadelphia past Washington. Wentz, who threw three touchdown passes, helped move the Eagles to 7-7 and in position to win the NFC East if they win their final two games. Wentz finished 30 of 43 for 266 yards, while running back Miles Sanders rushed for 122 yards and a score and caught another. Redskins rookie quarterback Dwayne Haskins was 19 of 28 for 261 yards and two touchdown passes, losing a fumble on a final-play lateral that resulted in a touchdown. The Redskins fell to 3-11.

**FALCONS 27, 49ERS 21**

Matt Ryan found Julio Jones for a game-winning 5-yard touchdown pass with two seconds left to lift visiting Atlanta to an upset victory against San Francisco at Santa Clara, Calif., in a wild finish. The 49ers (11-3) clinched a spot in the NFC postseason with the Los Angeles Rams' road loss to the Dallas Cowboys, but fell out of the top spot in the conference with their last-second defeat. The 49ers still would secure the top NFC seed if they win their final two games. Ryan finished 25-of-39 passing for 210 yards and two touchdowns to Jones. Jones initially was ruled to be short of the goal line on the duo's final connection, but a replay review showed that he had crossed the plane of the goal line, and the call was overturned as Atlanta (5-9) prevailed.

**SEAHAWKS 30, PANTHERS 24**

Russell Wilson threw for two touchdowns as Seattle defeated Carolina at Charlotte, N.C. and ultimately

secured a playoff berth. Seattle (11-3) clinched a spot in the NFC postseason with the Rams' loss at Dallas in the late afternoon window. The Seahawks also vaulted into the top spot in the NFC standings after San Francisco was stunned by Atlanta at home. The 49ers (11-3) host the Seahawks in Week 17. Wilson was 20-for-26 passing for 286 yards, and Chris Carson rushed for 133 yards and two touchdowns, picking up key yards on the final possession as the Seahawks ran out the clock.

**TEXANS 24, TITANS 21**

Carlos Hyde had 26 carries for 104 yards and scored the go-ahead touchdown early in the fourth quarter, and Houston held on for a win over host Tennessee. Deshaun Watson completed 19 of 27 passes for 243 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions for the Texans (9-5), who took sole possession of first place in the AFC South. Kenny Stills had both of the Texans' touchdown catches. Ryan Tannehill passed for two touchdowns and rushed for another for the Titans (8-6), whose four-game winning streak came to an end. Tannehill completed 22 of 36 passes for 279 yards with one interception.

**CHIEFS 23, BRONCOS 3**

Patrick Mahomes passed for 340 yards and two touchdowns in the snow as host Kansas City won its fourth straight overall and defeated Denver for the ninth straight time. Mahomes went 27 of 34 passing with an interception for the Chiefs (10-4), who have already clinching the AFC West title. Travis Kelce became the first tight end in NFL history to record 1,000 yards receiving in four consecutive seasons. He snagged 11 catches for 142 yards. The Chiefs totaled 419 yards. Denver (5-9) generated just 251 yards as it came off back-to-back wins in the first two starts by rookie quarterback Drew Lock, who completed 18 of 40 passes for 208 yards and an interception. He grew up just 15 miles from Arrowhead Stadium in Lee's Summit, Mo.

**PATRIOTS 34, BENGALS 13**

Tom Brady threw two touchdown passes, and New England forced five turnovers en route to securing a playoff berth for the 11th straight season with a victory over host Cincinnati. Stephon Gilmore returned one of his two interceptions for a touchdown, and fellow cornerback J.C. Jackson also had two picks as the Patriots (11-3) averted their first three-game losing skid since 2002. Former Bengals running back Rex Burkhead had a career-long 33-yard rushing touchdown in the fourth quarter to highlight New England's season-high 175 yards on the ground.

**PACKERS 21, BEARS 13**

Green Bay rode the trio of Aaron Rodgers, Aaron Jones and Davante Adams to a victory over visiting Chicago in the 200th edition of the rivalry at frigid Lambeau Field. Rodgers threw for 203 yards and one touchdown, Adams caught seven passes for 103 yards and the score, and Jones ran for 51 yards and two touchdowns. The Packers (11-3) have won three in a row and can clinch the NFC North title with a win at powerful Minnesota next Monday night. The Bears (7-7), the defending division champion, had won three in a row but were officially eliminated from postseason contention.

**VIKINGS 39, CHARGERS 10**

Defensive end Ifeadi Odenigbo returned a fumble



**ARLINGTON:** Ezekiel Elliott #21 of the Dallas Cowboys gets hit by Tanel Smart #92 and Dante Fowler #56 of the Los Angeles Rams at AT&T Stadium in Arlington, Texas. — AFP

56 yards for a touchdown, and Minnesota withstood the loss of running back Dalvin Cook to injury in defeating host Los Angeles. Cook, who entered the game as the NFL's fourth-leading rusher, exited after being tackled for a loss by linebacker Denzel Perryman little more than a minute into the third quarter. Michael Boone, benefitting from Cook's absence, ran for the first two touchdowns of his two-year career. Quarterback Kirk Cousins completed 19 of 25 for 207 yards, a TD and one interception, and Dan Bailey kicked four field goals for the Vikings (10-4). Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers was 28 of 39 for 307 yards with one TD and three interceptions for the Chargers (5-9), who had seven turnovers.

**JAGUARS 20, RAIDERS 16**

Gardner Minshew's 4-yard touchdown pass to Chris Conley with 31 seconds left gave Jacksonville a win over Oakland, ruining the Raiders' last game in the Bay Area before their move to Las Vegas next year. Oakland (6-8) led 16-3 at halftime but coughed up the lead. Minshew led a seven-play, 65-yard drive — after Raiders kicker Daniel Carlson missed wide left from 45 yards out — to give the Raiders a six-point edge. Minshew shrugged off a rough first half to finish 17 of 29 for 201 yards and two scores. When Derek Carr's last-ditch pass into the end zone from the Jacksonville 40 was broken up as time expired, the fans booed and tossed objects on the field. Earlier in the fourth quarter, game officials cautioned fans not to use laser pointers. Carr was 22 of 36 for 267 yards and a score in Oakland's fourth straight loss.

**GIANTS 36, DOLPHINS 20**

Eli Manning threw two touchdown passes, and Saquon Barkley ran for a pair of scores as the host New York snapped a nine-game losing streak with a win over Miami in East Rutherford, N.J. Manning, 38, playing perhaps his final season with the Giants and maybe his last home game as he filled in for injured

starter Daniel Jones (ankle), completed 20 of 28 passes for 283 yards with three interceptions. Barkley, the Offensive Rookie of the Year last season, ran 24 times for 112 yards. It was his first 100-yard game since the second week of the season and his first time scoring since Week 7. New York's leading receiver was Sterling Shepard, who caught nine passes for 111 yards.

**BUCCANEERS 38, LIONS 17**

James Winston completed 28 of 42 passes for a career-high 458 yards and four touchdowns to power Tampa Bay past host Detroit. Winston also added to his league-leading total of interceptions when he threw his 24th, but he became the first quarterback in NFL history to throw for at least 450 yards in consecutive games. Three of Winston's touchdown passes went to wideout Breshad Perriman. A key play came when Bucs cornerback Sean Murphy-Bunting picked off a pass from David Blough and returned it 70 yards for a touchdown to make it 31-17 with 5:12 left. Tampa Bay (7-7) won its fourth straight game, while Detroit (3-10-1) lost its seventh straight.

**CARDINALS 38, BROWNS 24**

Kenyan Drake had 22 carries for career highs of 137 yards and four touchdowns, and Kyler Murray passed for 219 yards and one touchdown as Arizona ran through Cleveland in Glendale, Ariz. Drake scored on runs of 5, 1, 1 and 17 yards, the last for a 35-17 lead with 7:25 remaining, while surpassing his previous career rushing high of 120 yards. Murray, the first pick in the 2019 draft, rushed for 56 yards and set the franchise season record for quarterback rushing yards at 504, passing Charley Trippi. Mayfield, the first pick of the 2018 draft and Murray's teammate at Oklahoma, completed 30 of 43 passes for 247 yards and two touchdowns. Nick Chubb had 127 yards rushing and a touchdown for the Browns (6-8), who will miss the playoffs for the 17th straight season. — Reuters

## From 'ignored' to adored: Abid turns hero in Pakistan's homecoming Test



Abid Ali

**RAWALPINDI:** Abid Ali was once shunned by Pakistan selectors who thought he was overweight, but his persistence and patience paid off as he set a world first in the homecoming Test against Sri Lanka. Ten years after a militant attack on Sri Lanka's team made Pakistan a no-go zone for foreign sides, Abid was the hero in an otherwise disappointing return for Test cricket to the cricket-mad nation.

A weather-hit draw failed to set pulses racing but Abid completed the unique feat of scoring hundreds in both his ODI and Test debuts, hitting 109 not out in Rawalpindi following his 112 against Australia in his first one-day international in March.

International success has come late for Abid, 32, who has persevered despite constant snubs by selectors and coaches alike. At one point Abid, who like legendary fast bowler Wasim Akram comes from Lahore's Mozang area, was even discarded by city selectors.

He responded by playing out of the Islamabad region — and piled up the runs, 1,083 in the 2012-2013 season. But despite his prolific batting, national selectors continually overlooked Abid, saying he was carrying too much weight and lacking in fitness.

The most recent snub came at this year's one-day World Cup, where Abid was left out of Pakistan's squad after being dismissed for just five against England. It meant that Abid missed a rare chance to meet his idol, Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar, to whom he is sometimes compared because of his skill and diminutive stature.

"I had never grumbled on being ignored," said Abid. "I could not meet Tendulkar because I did not play the World Cup," he added. "I had patience and I had a belief that my time will come and then I will prove what I am capable

off." Abid smashed 249 not out for Sindh in the revamped Quaid-e-Azam trophy in September, earning a place on Pakistan's Test tour of Australia. But he missed out on a place in the team for both Tests, which Pakistan lost heavily.

Finally, he was handed a green cap last week in Rawalpindi, the first Test in Pakistan since the 2009 militant attack that left eight people dead and several players and officials wounded. Unfortunately, the game was badly affected by weather, with only 91.3 overs possible on the first three days and the fourth washed out completely. But Abid got enough time on the fifth day to make it a memorable moment in his career, in front of a roaring home crowd. "I knew someday I will get a chance and I was always ready for it. Thankfully I got it and a hundred on debut game is what else you ask for," he said.

"I waited for long for this very day to come and here I am." Abid is a similar height to Tendulkar and his batting is not unlike that of the Indian maestro, but despite his recent success he shies away from any comparisons.

"I am an ordinary player and I can't match those great players," Abid said. "I am Abid Ali and please see me as Abid Ali only. "I am a down-to-earth person, so I would like to keep on performing and serve Pakistan with distinction." He added: "I need to raise my game and with every chance I have to perform well. I have self-belief, I waited for my time and finally I got it." — AFP

## Stokes voted BBC Sports Personality of the Year

**LONDON:** Cricketer Ben Stokes was voted the 2019 BBC Sports Personality of the Year on Sunday for his World Cup-winning and Ashes heroics during the summer.

The all-rounder won the prestigious award, which is voted for annually by the British public, for his incredible feats for an England side that also

landed the Team of the Year award.

The 28-year-old was man of the match for his brilliant innings in both the run chase and decisive super over that saw England's men win the World Cup for the first time in a dramatic final against New Zealand at Lord's.

He then topped even that by playing one of the great match-winning test

innings against Australia, his 135 not out that guided England to the most nail-biting and unlikely one-wicket victory at Headingley.

Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton finished runner-up in the voting while sprinter Dina Asher-Smith, the world 200 metres champion, was third. — Reuters

## Tendulkar finds hotel worker who gave him batting advice

**NEW DELHI:** A hotel worker whose unsolicited advice helped the batting of cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar has been located after the Indian superstar launched an appeal. The worker approached Tendulkar about 19 years ago at the hotel where he worked in Chennai, saying he had noticed he swung his bat differently when he was wearing an arm guard.

Tendulkar, who was midway through his record-breaking career at the time, said the advice was valuable as he redesigned his arm guard and went from strength to strength. "I don't think I had spoken about this to anyone in the world. I was the only person who was aware of that," he said in a video posted on Twitter.

"After that I actually came back to the room from the ground, carried my elbow guard and I re-designed my elbow guard according to the correct size and the amount of padding and I played."

The hotel said it had found the worker and offered to set up a meeting, while an Indian news website also said it had located the man. "I asked him (Tendulkar) if I can give him a suggestion concerning cricket," the worker, identified as a member of the secu-



File photo of Sachin Tendulkar with Taj hotel worker Guruprasad.

rity staff named Guruprasad, was quoted as saying by the 'The News Minute'.

"I really wasn't sure if he would listen to someone like me but he readily agreed." The meeting apparently took place in early 2001 during the Test

series against Australia, when Tendulkar scored 126 in the first innings in Chennai. The 46-year-old Tendulkar retired in 2013 after scoring more than 34,000 runs in Tests and one-day internationals, including a record 100 centuries. — AFP

## Sports

# Benzema salvages draw at Valencia with Clasico looming

## Real miss chance to replace Barcelona at top of La Liga

**MADRID:** Real Madrid missed the chance to replace Barcelona at the top of La Liga ahead of tomorrow's Clasico but salvaged a 1-1 draw against Valencia as Karim Benzema scored a dramatic injury-time equaliser on Sunday.

Madrid goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois ventured up for a final corner at Mestalla and it was his header that caused panic in the Valencia box, before the ball fell perfectly for Benzema to strike in the 95th minute.

"Opponents can get a little nervous if I go up," said Courtois. "Toni (Kroos) hit the corner to the near post and I just saw the ball was at my height and I caught it well." Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane said: "He decided to go up and that shows we want more, than we never give up. The draw is a reward for the effort we made, which was a lot. This is Real Madrid, a team that never gives up."

Valencia looked set for an impressive victory after Carlos Soler had put them ahead in the second half but both sides had to settle for a point at the end of a compelling contest between two of the league's form teams. It means Barcelona remain top of the table but in front of Madrid only on goal difference, after they were also held to a 2-2 draw away at Real Sociedad on Saturday. Madrid were celebrating at the final whistle but the result completes a strong week for Valencia, who won away at Ajax on Tuesday to go through as group winners to the Champions League last 16.

They stay eighth, now three points adrift of the top four. Real Madrid have been on a good run too, now 10 matches unbeaten to crank up the pressure on Barca and leave behind their early-season stumbles that had put Zidane's future in doubt.

Zidane had said on Saturday nobody at the club

would be looking ahead to the Clasico prematurely and while the draw against Valencia may mean an opportunity was missed, their late show still sends them to Camp Nou with a spring in their step.

"The team keeps up the unbeaten run and the boost to the mood from today is fantastic," said defender Dani Carvajal. "Now we have to win at Camp Nou to go into the break at the top." Benzema, in particular, will be a key threat. The Frenchman had Courtois to thank for his latest effort but he now has 15 goals already this season and nine in his last eight games.

Zidane left Casemiro on the bench, with the Brazilian one yellow card away from a suspension. Gareth Bale also started as a substitute but came on in the second half, putting him in contention for a start in midfield.

Madrid had the better of the early stages as Benzema rose to meet Nacho Fernandez's cross but headed wide before Rodrygo peeled free at the back post but nodded into the hands of Jasper Cillessen.

Valencia grew in confidence as the half wore on, with Ferran Torres testing Courtois and then almost racing clear after a slip by Sergio Ramos, only for Courtois to intercept just in time.

The contest remained in the balance early in the second period as Madrid shaded possession but Valencia looked dangerous on the break.

Both teams fancied a winner as Celades brought on another forward in Manu Vallejo while Zidane threw on Bale and Vinicius Junior for Rodrygo and Isco with just over 20 minutes left.

Valencia thought they had snatched it as Nacho was beaten in the air and Daniel Wass skipped free down the right. His pull-back was just angled enough to



**VALENCIA:** Real Madrid's Croatian midfielder Luka Modric (R) vies with Valencia's Spanish defender Jose Luis Gaya Pena during the Spanish League football match between Valencia CF and Real Madrid, at the Mestalla stadium in Valencia. — AFP

evade the stretching leg of Raphael Varane and find Soler, who smashed in. But Madrid poured forward late on. Luka Jovic, on as a substitute, poked in but was ruled out for offside. Then in the last play of the

game, Courtois marauded up for a corner and it was his head that first met Toni Kroos' cross. Cillessen palmed away but Valencia failed to clear and in the scramble, Benzema struck. — AFP

## China says Ozil 'deceived by fake news'

**SHANGHAI:** China accused Mesut Ozil yesterday of being "deceived by fake news" and said he should visit Xinjiang to see for himself after the Arsenal footballer decried the treatment of the region's Uighur minority.

Ozil, a German national of Turkish origin, condemned China's crackdown on Muslim minorities in the western region in a tweet Friday and criticised Muslim countries for failing to speak up about the alleged abuses.

Arsenal have distanced themselves from his com-

ments, but the English Premier League club's 3-0 home defeat to Manchester City on Sunday was pulled from Chinese TV by state broadcaster CCTV.

The furor, which has potentially damaging repercussions for Arsenal and the Premier League in the lucrative Chinese market, follows the opprobrium heaped on the NBA in October after Houston Rockets general manager Daryl Morey tweeted his support for Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters.

"I don't know if Mr. Ozil has been to Xinjiang himself. But it seems he has been deceived by fake news, and that his judgment was influenced by untruthful remarks," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said. "If Mr. Ozil has the opportunity, we will be pleased to see him going to Xinjiang and having a look," Geng said. "As long as he has common sense, can make a clear distinction between right and wrong, and upholds the principles of objectivity and fairness, he will see a different

Xinjiang." Earlier, a Global Times editorial slammed what it called a "clownish performance" from Ozil, 31, describing him as "confused" and "reckless" and saying he had abused his position as a public figure.

"Ozil's move has ruined his image among Chinese fans and will have serious implications for Arsenal," warned the state newspaper. But some Weibo users expressed delight at the team's heavy defeat to City, which left the London club ninth in the Premier League.

Leading streaming service PPTV also appeared to have cancelled its screening of the match in China. "I'm an Arsenal fan and today I cheered for City's victory," posted one user. "Manchester City is a good friend of the Chinese people," added another.

Ozil played only an hour of the City defeat before being substituted. His slow walk to the touchline before booting away his gloves in frustration drew the wrath of some disgruntled Arsenal fans. — AFP

## Mbappe helps PSG to extend Ligue 1 lead

**PARIS:** Kylian Mbappe helped Paris Saint-Germain extend their Ligue 1 lead on Sunday with a brace in a comfortable 4-0 win over 10-man Saint-Etienne, while Memphis Depay's cruciate ligament tear looks to have ruled him out of Euro 2020. France forward Mbappe took his league tally to nine in 11 appearances as his side took advantage of second-placed Marseille only drawing at Metz on Saturday to move seven points clear and tighten their grip on the French championship, which they have won six out of the last seven seasons.

"We have played three matches with a good mentality and lots of quality," said coach Thomas Tuchel. "We played with the ball with intensity and seriousness. We created lots of chances and never stopped working defensively ... I'm happy."

Leandro Paredes set the ball rolling in the 10th minute with a deflected strike and once Jean Eudes Aholou was sent off in the 25th minute for a dreadful late tackle on the Argentine PSG could stroll their way to three points.

Mbappe then ended any question of a Saint-Etienne comeback a minute before the break when he swiftly collected Neymar's brilliant through ball before sweeping his finish past Stephane Ruffier.

Brazilian Neymar then missed the chance to make it three from the penalty spot just after the hour mark, his spot-kick clipping the outside of the post, before Mauro Icardi made it 13 goals in all competitions this season with a tap-in 11 minutes later.

Mbappe put the cherry on the cake in the final minute as the home fans let off a cascade of fireworks in the stands to celebrate the birthday of one of their hardcore supporter groups. The 20-year-old collected another Neymar pass and burst past Wesley Fofana before lashing his shot in the far corner, celebrating by the stands as flares and fireworks billowed smoke and flame towards the pitch. Earlier Lyon fell further behind in the reckoning after losing 1-0 at home to Rennes, but the worst news of the night for Rudi Garcia's side was the cruciate ligament injury that ended star attacker Memphis Depay's season. Lyon said that Depay would be out for "no less than six months", which if correct would also rule him out of Euro 2020, which begins on June 12 in Rome.

Depay has scored eight times in his last eight matches in all competitions for Lyon, including the goal that took them to the last 16 of the Champions League midweek.

On a dreadful day for Lyon, Depay's teammate Jeff Reine-Adelaide is also out for the season after tearing the same ligament in his right knee.

"Memphis' injury is a catastrophe for because he is our most decisive player ... we'll have to forget about him for the rest of the season," said Lyon's sporting director Juninho.

Lyon were booed off following a dismal defeat to Rennes, who moved into fourth thanks to youngster Eduardo Camavinga's late strike that gave Rennes their fourth league win in a row.

The 17-year-old's first ever Ligue 1 goal moved his side to 30 points in the Europa League spot, just one point away from the Champions League places. Lyon meanwhile are eighth, five points behind Rennes and a whopping 17 points behind PSG. The game looked to be heading for a goalless draw when Rennes goalkeeper Edouard Mendy pulled off a sensational double save with six minutes left to deny Maxence Caqueret and Bertrand Traore. However, Camavinga stunned the home fans after 89 minutes when he collected Romain Del Castillo's pass and slalomed past Rafael and Joachim Andersen before squeezing his shot past Anthony Lopes. — AFP

## Three things we learned from Premier League

**LONDON:** Liverpool's lead at the top of the Premier League is up to 10 points as Jurgen Klopp's men ground out a 2-0 win over Watford despite being far from their best, while Leicester's chase finally faltered in a 1-1 draw with Norwich. Manchester City looked more like their old selves with Kevin De Bruyne scoring twice in a 3-0 win at Arsenal, but the damage to their title bid already looks done as they remain 14 points behind the runaway leaders.

AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from the Premier League weekend:

### ARSENAL GOING NOWHERE

Arsenal hoped to replicate the bounce created by Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's appointment at Manchester United a year ago by putting a legendary former player in temporary charge, but Freddie Ljungberg's first five games have reaped just one win with no noticeable upturn since Unai Emery was sacked. Only City's mercy kept the scoreline down at the Emirates as after De Bruyne ran riot by scoring twice and setting up Raheem Sterling for another before the break, the champions eased their foot off the accelerator. The statistics of a depressing season for the Gunners are damning. Arsenal are ninth with a -3 goal difference after 17 games; have won just once in 12 in all competitions and are seven points off the top four despite Chelsea's faltering form.

### LIVERPOOL KEEP LEICESTER'S DREAMS IN CHECK

As City's title challenge has fallen away, Leicester stepped up as the surprise challengers to Liverpool thanks to a club-record run of eight straight league wins.

However, the difference between the Foxes' incredible title triumph four seasons ago and now is that they are now up against a relentless Liverpool side sensing their time has finally come. Leicester paid for a slow start as Norwich took a deserved lead through Teemu Pukki before Tim Krul's own goal brought Brendan Rodgers's men level. But while Liverpool have always found a way to win over the past few months, including on Saturday as Watford wasted a host of huge chances at Anfield, there was no late Leicester winner against the side second bottom of the league.

### LAMPARD LOSES PATIENCE

For the first time in his Chelsea reign, Frank Lampard felt compelled to blast his players in public following their latest shock defeat against Bournemouth. Lampard had enjoyed a sustained honeymoon period following the club's all-time top scorer's return to Stamford Bridge as manager. His development of youngsters Tammy Abraham, Mason Mount and Fikayo Tomori alongside a string of good results earned plenty of plaudits.

But Chelsea have hit a major dip after suffering a fourth defeat in their last five league games. Lampard responded by demanding his players "show some balls" and questioning their ability to cope with defensive opponents. That war cry needs to garner an instant response if his side are to ward off Tottenham's charge towards the top four. — AFP



**TURIN:** Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (L) challenges Udinese's Argentinian forward Rodrigo de Paul during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs Udinese at the Juventus Allianz stadium in Turin. — AFP

## Juventus back joint top in Serie A

**MILAN:** Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice as Juventus beat Udinese 3-1 to join Inter Milan at the top of the Serie A table on Sunday after Antonio Conte's side were held 1-1 at Fiorentina. Dusan Vlahovic snatched a point for Fiorentina two minutes into injury time to frustrate Inter Milan who had led following Borja Valero's opener after eight minutes in Tuscany.

Both Juventus and Inter Milan have 39 points from 16 games, with Antonio Conte's side ahead on goal difference. Ronaldo struck twice in the first half to make it five goals in four games as the reigning champions got back winning after last weekend's first defeat of the season to Lazio.

"That's how we have to play, with confidence," said Ronaldo. The Portuguese star tapped in a Paulo Dybala rebound after nine minutes at the Allianz Stadium, and burst through to finish off a Gonzalo Higuain cross on 36 minutes. Leonardo Bonucci sealed the three points just before the break when he headed in from close range. Ignacio Pussetto pulled a goal back for 17th-placed Udinese four minutes into injury time.

"It is the first time after a Champions League match that we managed to attack the game well," said Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri. "We played very well for 60 minutes." In Florence, Valero scored off a Marcelo Brozovic cross against his former club. But the visitors failed to kill off the game. Lautaro Martinez had the ball in the net after 39 minutes but it was disallowed because of Romelu Lukaku's offside position.

And Fiorentina goalkeeper Bartlomiej Dragowski did well to deny Lukaku minutes later at full stretch. But just as it looked like Fiorentina were set to fall to a fifth consecutive defeat, 19-year-old Serb Vlahovic broke through from

his own half, outpacing Milan Skriniar to rifle in from an angle. It condemned Inter to their second consecutive stalemate after Roma last weekend, and follows their Champions League exit to Barcelona today. "It's the third game where we did not get what we deserved," said Conte. "We weren't good at taking our many chances. "Maybe we're paying for fatigue. We've had seven games in 21 days, with Lautaro and Lukaku playing constantly." The pressure remains on coach Vincenzo Montella with Fiorentina's last win on October 30, and their next game against in-form Roma.

Roma moved up to fourth and into the Champions League places after three second-half goals sealed a 3-1 win over rock bottom SPAL. Andrea Petagna had put SPAL ahead from the spot just before the break after Aleksandar Kolarov clumsily brought down Thiago Cionek in the box.

But Lorenzo Pellegrini pulled the hosts level eight minutes after the interval with a shot that took a deflection off Nenad Tomovic. Diego Perotti put Roma ahead with a 66th-minute penalty before substitute Henrikh Mkhitaryan sealed victory seven minutes from time.

Roma are one point behind third-placed city rivals Lazio, who play fifth-placed Cagliari. "Today it was important to win," said Roma coach Paulo Fonseca. Napoli drop to eighth — 11 points off the top four — after last season's runners-up lost 2-1 to Parma on Saturday.

Atalanta are sixth after falling 2-1 at Bologna just days after the Champions League newcomers sealed their place in the competition's last 16. Rodrigo Palacios opened the scoring after 12 minutes for Bologna off a rebound after a Riccardo Orsolini effort came off the post.

Andrea Poli nodded in the second eight minutes after the break, before Ruslan Malinovskyi pulled a goal back on the hour mark. Gian Piero Gasperini's side are sixth on 28 points, four points off the Champions League places.

AC Milan were held to a goalless draw against Sassuolo at the San Siro as the former European giants marked their 120th anniversary in tepid style. — AFP

**25** Kipchoge's new shoes shatter two-hour barrier, fans shun Doha

**26** Tendulkar finds hotel worker who gave him batting advice

**27** Juventus back joint top in Serie A



## Nets snap Embiid-less Sixers' win streak

Magic send Pelicans to 12th consecutive loss



BROOKLYN: Timothe Luwawu-Cabarrot #15 of the Brooklyn Nets shoots the ball against the Philadelphia 76ers at Barclays Center in Brooklyn, New York. — AFP

**NEW YORK:** Spencer Dinwiddie scored 24 points as the Brooklyn Nets capitalized on Joel Embiid's absence and led most of the way in a 109-89 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Sunday night in New York. The Nets led for the final 41:54 in the first meeting between the teams since the first round of last spring's postseason. Embiid averaged 24.8 points in the four games he played in that series but sat out with an upper respiratory illness and missed his sixth game of the season. Dinwiddie helped the Nets improve to 10-5 without Kyrie Irving (right shoulder impingement) by shooting 9 of 21 from the field and adding six assists. It was Dinwiddie's fourth straight 24-point game and 13th game scoring at least 20 since being elevated to the starting lineup to replace Irving. Joe Harris added 16 for the Nets, who led by as many as 23 and shot 45.7 percent. Garrett Temple added 13 while DeAndre Jordan had 13 points and 11 rebounds as the Nets scored 64 points in the paint and outrebounded Philadelphia 51-38.

**ORLANDO MAGIC 130 - NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 119**  
Eight Orlando players scored in double figures in handing host New Orleans its franchise-worst 12th

consecutive loss. Jonathan Isaac led the Magic with 21 points and 11 rebounds. Nikola Vucevic, returning from an 11-game absence due to a sprained ankle, scored 20. D.J. Augustin scored 17, while Evan Fournier had 16. Terrence Ross added 14, Mo Bamba 13 and Michael Carter-Williams and Markelle Fultz had 10 each. The Magic, who made 17 of 34 3-pointers, ended a three-game losing streak. Jrue Holiday scored 29 points, JJ Redick added 23, Brandon Ingram had 21 and Josh Hart had 20 for the Pelicans, who haven't won since a 124-121 victory at Phoenix on Nov. 21.

**LOS ANGELES LAKERS 101 - ATLANTA HAWKS 96**  
LeBron James scored 32 points to lead visiting Los Angeles to a win over Atlanta and extend their road win streak to 14 games. James made 12 of 21 from the field, four of them 3-pointers, and added 13 rebounds, seven assists and three blocks to help the Lakers extend their overall winning streak to seven. The Lakers' road winning streak is the longest by the club since they won 18 straight away from home during their NBA record 33-game winning streak in 1972-73. Their only road loss this season was in their own building in their first regu-

lar-season contest, when the Clippers were the "home" team at Staples Center, which the teams share.

**INDIANA PACERS 107 - CHARLOTTE HORNETS 85**  
Aaron Holiday scored 23 points off the bench as Indiana rode a dominant fourth quarter to a victory over Charlotte in Indianapolis. Indiana's Domantas Sabonis recorded his 12th consecutive double-double after collecting 12 points and 12 rebounds to propel the Pacers to their 11th win in 14 games. Myles Turner added 14 points and 10 boards as Indiana outscored Charlotte by a 35-19 margin in the fourth quarter to avenge a 122-120 overtime loss on Nov. 5. Cody Zeller collected 19 points and 12 rebounds and Bismack Biyombo added 11 points and a season-high 17 boards for the Hornets, who saw their three-game winning streak come to a halt.

**DENVER NUGGETS 111 - NEW YORK KNICKS 105**  
Nikola Jokic had game highs of 25 points and 10 rebounds, Will Barton scored 16 points and grabbed nine rebounds, and host Denver beat New York. Jokic has recorded double-doubles in six straight games,

including a triple-double against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Saturday night. Gary Harris had 15 points and Jamal Murray and Mason Plumlee scored 14 points each to help the Nuggets beat New York for the 12th straight time in Denver. Marcus Morris Sr. led the Knicks with 22 points, Julius Randle had 20 points and nine rebounds, and Frank Ntilikina scored 13 and had four steals and four assists for New York.

**SACRAMENTO KINGS 100 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 79**  
Bogdan Bogdanovic recorded 25 points, five rebounds and five assists off the bench to lead Sacramento to a win over Golden State in San Francisco. Buddy Hield scored 19 points and Marvin Bagley III added 17 points as the Kings won for the fourth time in their past five games. Harrison Barnes tallied 15 points as Sacramento ended a five-game losing streak to the Warriors. Willie Cauley-Stein had 14 points on 7-of-9 shooting and notched a season-high six steals for Golden State. Damion Lee scored 13 points and Alec Burks had 11 for the Warriors, who lost their fourth straight game to drop their NBA-worst record to 5-23. — Reuters

## Real Madrid face Man City, Liverpool to meet Atletico

**NYON:** Thirteen-times winners Real Madrid were drawn against English champions Manchester City while titleholders Liverpool must face Diego Simeone's Atletico Madrid in the Champions League round of 16 following yesterday's draw. Real Madrid ended up in pot two after finishing second in their group behind Paris St Germain and City were the unlucky team to be paired with them when their name was pulled out at UEFA headquarters.

City, who will be at home in the second leg, have yet to beat the Spanish side with two draws and two defeats in their previous four meetings. However, their manager Pep Guardiola has a much more encouraging record with nine wins, four draws and four defeats in 17 meetings as coach of Barcelona and then Bayern Munich. "It's a difficult one," said Manchester City's director of football Txiki Begiristain. "Real Madrid are the best. We want to be the best so we have to try and beat them. It's always a pleasure to play against Real Madrid. We know them very well. They know our manager." Liverpool and Atletico Madrid's previous meetings have produced one win for each team and two draws with both teams scoring four goals. Only Europe's biggest five leagues — England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain — were represented in the draw and 11 of the 16 teams also reached the knockout stages last season. Both England and Spain managed to get all four of their teams into knockout stages. Elsewhere, Serie A champions Juventus will

face French side Olympique Lyonnais and PSG will play Borussia Dortmund. Barcelona were pitted against an unpredictable Napoli, the first time the two sides have ever met.

Napoli fired coach Carlo Ancelotti immediately after beating Genk to make sure of their place in the last 16 and replaced him with Gennaro Gattuso, who has never coached in the Champions League before.

"A great team, a great challenge, two fascinating races. We will face them without fear," he said. Jose Mourinho's Tottenham Hotspur side, who reached the final last season, will play RB Leipzig, who are in the knockout stages for the first time, while Chelsea were drawn against Bayern Munich.

Despite their erratic domestic form, Bayern were the only team to complete the group stage with a 100% record. Serie A side Atalanta, who reached the last 16 on their first participation in the Champions League despite losing their first three group matches, were drawn against Valencia. — Reuters



NYON: UEFA Champions League ambassador Kelly Smith holds the slip of Real Madrid during the UEFA Champions League football cup round of 16 draw ceremony yesterday. — AFP