



6 Rich nations urged to do 'fair share' at global refugee meet



24 Egyptians in Qatar ready for Salah-mania despite boycott



Amir urges ministers to unite against destabilizing forces

Seven new faces in Cabinet • First non-ruling family member named interior minister



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah pose for a group photo with HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and his new Cabinet ministers after they were sworn in at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: After four weeks of consultations, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah yesterday announced his 14-member almost technocrat Cabinet which included seven new faces. The Cabinet was immediately sworn in by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, but the first day of the new government did not pass without threats by MPs, with one of them threatening to grill the premier. And, for the first time, an interior minister from outside the ruling family was appointed, while the ministers of defense and foreign affairs were also changed.

SEE PAGE 2

HH the Amir urged the new ministers yesterday to join hands with the prime minister against "whoever wants to undermine your stability". Addressing the ministers after they were sworn in, HH the Amir said: "You will hear many mean words and you should respond: don't be shy, if there is anyone accusing you, there are courts" to seek.

"We are blessed with peace and security. You should cooperate with each other under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled. I wish you the best of luck," said HH the Amir. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said yesterday that the responsibility entrusted in him by HH the Amir requires him to shoulder it with utmost efforts to serve the homeland.

Anas Al-Saleh, the minister of state for Cabinet affairs in the outgoing Cabinet and who helmed the finance ministry for years, was appointed the interior minister, unprecedented for a non-ruling family member in Kuwait's 58 years of parliamentary democracy. The new Cabinet has three women, one more than the previous government, with Mariam Al-Aqeel assigned to the key finance ministry and newcomer Rana Al-Fares given the portfolio of public works and housing. Ghadeer Aseeri, a liberal academic, was appointed minister of social affairs, but her appointment triggered protests by opposition MPs who threatened to grill the prime minister. Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Sabah, a former defense ministry undersecretary, was promoted to become the defense minister. Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, the son of a former prime minister, was appointed foreign minister to replace the prime minister himself. Sheikh Ahmad has been at the foreign ministry for the past two decades.

The economic team of the Cabinet remained almost intact. Commerce and Industry Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan and Oil and Electricity Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel, in addition to Finance Minister Aqeel, were retained, an indication that economic and financial policies are unlikely to change. Opposition Islamist MP Mohammad Al-Mutair immediately threatened to grill

Continued on Page 24

India protests rage against citizenship law, Modi defiant

NEW DELHI: Protests across Indian cities entered a sixth day yesterday, with police firing tear gas during clashes in the nation's capital as outrage grew over a new citizenship law critics say is anti-Muslim. In what has become a major challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, tens of thousands of people have taken to the streets. Protests, riots and clashes have claimed six lives and injured dozens.

The law, passed by parliament last week, grants citizenship to non-Muslim illegal immigrants from three countries. Modi's Hindu-nationalist ruling party argues the measure protects persecuted minorities from their Muslim-majority neighbors. But opponents say the legislation is part of Modi's Hindu-nationalist masterplan to move modern India away from its secular foundations.

In one of the biggest nationwide protests since an anti-corruption movement swept the South Asian nation in 2011, demonstrations kicked off in the north-east and east before spreading to the capital New Delhi and the south. "(This law) will divide the country," Gautam Ghosh, a protester in West Bengal, told AFP. He joined a march of more than 20,000 people in the state's capital Kolkata. "If the federal government tries to implement the law, there will be more bloodshed. People will not accept it."

Continued on Page 24

Pakistan ex-military leader Musharraf sentenced to death

ISLAMABAD: Exiled former Pakistan military leader Pervez Musharraf was sentenced to death yesterday after being found guilty of treason, a verdict that drew swift condemnation from the country's armed forces which have ruled the country for almost half its 72-year history. The court's decision marks the first time a former leader of the armed forces has been convicted of treason and sentenced to death in Pakistan, where the military maintains strong influence and senior officers are often considered immune from prosecution.

Musharraf has been in self-imposed exile ever since

a travel ban was lifted in 2016 that allowed him to seek medical treatment abroad. The 76-year-old has lately spent most of his time between Dubai and London. Several Pakistan media sources reported the verdict and sentence handed down by a three-member special court, while a senior judicial official confirmed the rulings to AFP.



Pervez Musharraf

Pakistan's military swiftly slammed the special court's ruling, saying in a statement that the armed forces were in "pain and anguish" over the decision. "An ex-Army Chief, Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee and President of Pakistan, who has served the country for over 40 years, fought wars for the defense of the

Continued on Page 24

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Profiles of Kuwait's new Cabinet ministers



KUWAIT: Members of Kuwait's new Cabinet pose for a group picture during a weekly meeting held at Seif Palace yesterday. — KUNA photos



Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah



Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah



Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh



Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan



Minister of Information and Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri



Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah



Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahad Al-Afasi



Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel



Minister of Finance and Acting State Minister for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel



Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah



Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Housing Affairs Dr Rana Al-Fares



Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Saud Al-Harbi



Minister of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseeri



Minister of State for Service Affairs and State Minister for National Assembly Affairs Mubarak Al-Harees



Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Waleed Al-Jassem

KUWAIT: Decried by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the new Kuwaiti cabinet makeup consists of a total of 14 ministers, including seven new ones. The government is led by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The following are profiles the Kuwaiti Cabinet's new members:

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah: Born in Kuwait in 1953, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled acquired a BA in political science from Kuwait University in 1977. He served as Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and represented it at the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) from 1995 to 1998. In 2011, he was appointed as Foreign Minister, and later as Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs in February 2012. In January 2014, an Amiri decree ordered the appointment of Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled as First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. In December 2016, he was re-assigned as Foreign Minister, and became Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in December 2017.

Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah: Born in 1969, Sheikh Ahmad acquired a BA in support media (political science) from the US University of Kansas and a diploma of military science from Ali Al-Sabah Military Academy. He held several posts, including Undersecretary of the Defense Ministry in July 2017, Chairman and Director-General of the Public Authority for

Youth and Sports in 2014 and member of the authority's board of directors in 2006. He was picked chief of the Defense Ministry's purchase department and assistant undersecretary of the ministry for foreign supplies.

Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh: He was born in 1972 and acquired a BBA from Portland University in the US in 1997. He held the portfolio of Commerce and Industry in February in 2012, then July 2012 and December 2012, in addition to the portfolio of state for housing affairs. He became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in August 2013 and December 2016. He was also chosen Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs in December 2017. He was a board member of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry between 2006 and 2010.

Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan: He was born in 1978. He acquired a BBA from Kuwait University. He was became Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs between November 2016 and October 2017.

Minister of Information and Minister for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri: He was born in 1974. He obtained a BA in information systems and master's degree in international relations. He became Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs in December 2016, Minister of Information in December 2017 and then

Minister of Information and State Minister for Youth Affairs in March 2018. He was elected member of parliament in 2013, 2014 and then 2016.

Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah: Born in 1974, he graduated from the Faculty of Medicine, Kuwait University, in 1999. He acquired a doctorate and Canadian board of Otolaryngology from the Canadian McGill University in 2006. He was picked as Minister of Health in December 2017.

Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahad Al-Afasi: He was born in 1971. He obtained a BA in law from Cairo University in 1994 and a PhD in law from the Lebanese University in 2006. He was chosen Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs in December 2017 and Minister of Justice and State for National Assembly Affairs in December 2018.

Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel: Born in 1973, Fadhel acquired a doctorate of mathematical modeling of chemical systems from the US Lehigh University in 2005. He became minister of oil in December 2017. In the December 2018 shakeup, he retained his post, along with the portfolio of electricity and water.

Minister of Finance and Acting State Minister for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel: She was born in 1968. She acquired a BA in accounting from Kuwait University in 1989. She was chosen State Minister for

Economic Affairs and Acting Minister of Finance in December 2017. She held several senior posts at the Ministry of Finance.

Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah: Born in 1971, he obtained a BA in international relations and a BA in foreign languages. He acquired Metriz Certificate for human science from France's University of Strasbourg and a master's degree in international relations and translation from the same university in 1995. He acquired a doctorate in political science from France's Sorbonne University in 2000. He held several high-level posts at the Foreign Ministry, including an extraordinary and plenipotentiary ambassador in 2005. He became Assistant Foreign Minister for the First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Office Affairs in 2016 and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister's Office Affairs in 2017.

Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Housing Affairs Dr Rana Al-Fares: She acquired a BA in civil engineering from South California University in 2004 and a doctorate in geo-technology from the same university. She was a professor at the Faculty of Engineering and Oil at Kuwait University. She was picked deputy chairman of the Central Agency for Tenders in December 2017. She also became assistant undersecretary for governmental follow-up at the Government Performance Follow-up Agency.

Minister of Education and Minister of

Higher Education Dr Saud Al-Harbi: Born in 1961, Harbi obtained a BA in educational psychology from Kuwait University in 1986 and a master's degree in education from Kuwait University in 2000 and a PhD from Cairo University in 2006. He held several posts at the Ministry of Education, mainly the ministry's undersecretary. He was elected director-general of the Arab League's Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO).

Minister of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseeri: She acquired a BA in philosophy from Kuwait University in 2002, a master's degree in social service and policy in 2008 from the UK and a doctorate in social policy from the UK in 2016. She worked in the Social Development Office of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan.

Minister of State for Service Affairs and State Minister for National Assembly Affairs Mubarak Al-Harees: He was born in 1964. He obtained a PhD in law from Kuwait University. He was elected a member of parliament in 2013 and then 2016. He was a legal scholar in the office of the governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait and head of the Fatwa and Legislation Department's legislation development committee.

Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Waleed Al-Jassem: He was born in 1959. He acquired a BA in architecture from the US South Carolina University in 1983. He occupied several posts at Kuwait Municipality, including deputy director-general. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait Amir congratulates Qatar's Sheikh Tamim on national day

Sheikh Sabah receives Sheikh Nawaf, Sheikh Nasser

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of congratulations to the Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the advent of his country's national day, which falls today. His Highness the Amir wished the Qatari leadership and people ever more progress and welfare under the wise rule of Sheikh Tamim. His Highness the Amir also reflected upon the deeply rooted ties linking Kuwait and Qatar, saying that both countries aspire to achieve mutual development and progress in relations on all spheres. 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 Sheikh Tamim.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Sabah then received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. In the meantime, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, as well as Municipal Council Chairman Osama Al-Otaibi.

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable yesterday to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, congratulating him on the new Cabinet, which gained the trust of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In the congratulatory cable, His Highness the Crown Prince appreciated His Highness the Prime Minister's great efforts to live up to the trust and big responsibility, wishing him all the best and success in developing the dear nation. His Highness the Crown Prince also voiced identical sentiments in separate congratulatory cables to the newly appointed cabinet ministers, greeting them on the trust of His Highness the Amir and wishing them all the best in their duty. — KUNA



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



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



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Municipal Council Chairman Osama Al-Otaibi.

Speaker receives foreign ambassadors



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received yesterday a number of foreign ambassadors to Kuwait. Speaker Ghanem received Turkish Ambassador Ayse Koytak, German Ambassador Stefan Mobs, and the European Union's (EU) Ambassador to Kuwait and Qatar Cristian Tudor. — KUNA

Culture gateway to sustained development

TUNIS: Culture constitutes a gateway to sustained development, in addition to being an essential element of peaceful coexistence in the Arab and Islamic worlds, said a Kuwaiti official yesterday. Kuwait has given the culture sector much prominence in recent years, as per instructions from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the secretary general of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Kamel Al-Abduljalil said amid talks bringing

together culture ministers from Islamic nations in the Tunisian capital. The realm of culture encompasses various notions, including but not limited to, promoting such virtues as moderation and tolerance, added the official, citing a number of cultural events that had taken place in Kuwait as of late. On NCCAL's main objective, he said it primarily entails protecting the essence of Arab and Islamic culture, besides its efforts to unearth some hidden cultural gems, he said. — KUNA

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A colorful view of Salmiya's seafront at night. — Photo by Abdullah Ahmadi (KUNA)

Zain takes part in inauguration of Qout Market at Abraj Park

As part of its community partnership of the 7th season



KUWAIT: Waleed Al-Khashtfi with Zain's team.



From Zain's presence at Qout Market.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, took part in the inauguration of Qout Market at Abraj Park in Adailiya. The company's participation came as part of its community partnership of the market in its seventh season, which is considered Kuwait's largest artisanal farmers gathering.

Zain is eager to play a vital role by partnering with Qout Market as part of its ongoing efforts of empowering local talents who contribute to shouldering the national

economy. The company's solid and well-focused Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy continuously works towards identifying initiatives like Qout Market that carry a clear objective of developing local talents. As it does every year, Zain participated in the event via its own dedicated booth, where the company showcased its latest promotions for the enterprise sector, mainly small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) from the market's vendors and visitors. Zain also dedicated a section of its booth for

interactive video games, exciting competitions, and opportunities for winning valuable prizes.

Qout, the community-based farmers market, helps and supports local farmers and artisans to exchange thoughts and ideas while offering the opportunity for visitors to express their opinions towards the products available. Qout Market has a proven record of success, having attracted nearly 18,000 visitors in previous years per season. The market's selection of vendors includes a combina-

tion of fresh produced items as well as handmade items where people can stop by to enjoy on the spot.

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

Shura conference honors AUB for their sponsorship

KUWAIT: The 8th Shura Fiqh Conference, held at the Four Seasons Hotel under the patronage and presence of the Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel, honored Ahli United Bank (AUB) for its sponsorship and participation in the conference, which was received by Dr Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, AUB's Chairman, from Dr Hashel.

Abdullah Al-Shuaib, Head of Sharia Internal Audit at Ahli United Bank, said: "On the basis of the bank's firm belief in the importance of these forums that bring together experts, specialists and Islamic sharia scholars from all over the world to support the development of the Islamic banking industry to comply with the rules of Islamic sharia, while keeping pace with the latest global banking developments, affirming the amplitude of Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) for such developments.

Shuaib emphasized that Ahli United Bank spares no effort to contribute to supporting the Islamic financial



KUWAIT: Dr Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, AUB's Chairman, receives the honor from Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel.

industry, adding that we may all agree that Islamic banking provides more promising opportunities, and at the same time it still has many challenges, and we all have to intensify efforts to advance and support it.

Shuaib extended sincere thanks and appreciation to



Dr Anwar Ali Al-Mudhaf, AUB's Chairman and Jehad Al-Humaidhi, AUB's Acting CEO with a number of AUB employees at the bank's pavilion.

all parties that participated in organizing the conference, particularly Shura Sharia Consultancy Company for their keenness to choose the most important topics in line with the developments of the global economy

and keeping pace with it, wishing them all success and progress in their sustainable endeavor to develop the Islamic financial industry, for the good and prosperity of the Islamic nation.

Local

Sheikha Al-Zain declined offer as premier eyed four female ministers in new Cabinet

Next week meeting sets jurisdiction over govt authorities

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, the former under-secretary of the Ministry of Youth Affairs, was summoned to Seif Palace Monday where she met His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, said high-ranking ministerial sources, noting that the Prime Minister offered her a portfolio in the new Cabinet. But in view of her hesitation, the premier gave her time until yesterday morning to give her answer, when she reportedly declined the offer. The sources noted His Highness the Prime Minister wanted to include four female ministers in his first Cabinet but eventually ended up with three. Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah had resigned from her post as undersecretary of the youth affairs ministry in September 3, 2018, saying that it was time after five years of service at the ministry to hand over the duties to her colleagues "to continue our march towards future development." She has not assumed any government positions since then.

Meanwhile, Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel expressed her appreciation on the trust of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah for reappointing her as a minister in the new Cabinet. Speaking in a press release issued after the Amiri decree on the new Cabinet formation, Aqeel stressed that the coming phase requires more cooperation and joint efforts amongst development partners in the public and private sectors as well as NGOs and lawmakers with the goal of enhancing the development process and achieving HH the Amir's vision of a new Kuwait by 2035. Aqeel also stressed the need to resume tending to issues of interest for citizens such as the economy and efforts to diversify it as a main pillar of development.



Aqeel appreciates leadership's trust

Public authorities
Meanwhile, well-informed sources said the new Cabinet members will allocate part of their weekly meeting next Monday to name the public bodies and authorities to be supervised by each minister. The sources added that the ministers met yesterday after swearing in before His Highness the Amir. "Their meeting was dedicated to introductions, setting the government's future plans and stressing the need for ministers' cooperation to achieve the plan," said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The sources said that the Civil Service Commission (CSC), which is usually headed by the prime minister, will be supervised by Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, while the Environment Public Authority (EPA) will be supervised by either Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah or Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

"The Public Authority for Manpower will remain under the supervision of minister Mariam Al-Aqeel, Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources will remain supervised by Information Minister and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri, who as a former municipality minister had supervised PAAAFR," the sources explained, adding that the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition will be supervised by the health minister, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the former communication ministry bodies will be supervised by Minister of State for Services Mubarak Al-Harees, and Kuwait Airways by Aqeel.

"The minors' authority will remain within the jurisdiction of Justice Minister Fahd Al-Afasi, who will also supervise the awqaf secretariat general and the Quran authority as minister of awqaf," the sources revealed, noting that the disabled authority will be supervised by Minister of Social Affairs Ghadeer Aseeri.



Yousef Al-Ruwaieh and KFV voluntary team at the ceremony.

KFH voluntary team wins award

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) volunteer team won with the 'Best Volunteer Team' award in Kuwait, during the 2019 Kuwait Youth Voluntary and Humanitarian Initiatives Awards, in its fourth edition. The forum was organized by the Arab Media Forum, a member of the Council of Arab Information Ministers at the Arab League.

KFH's voluntary team was honored in recognition of its various contributions and efforts in volunteer work, and as a culmination of its efforts to serve the community and promote the values and concepts of volunteering. The forum was held at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre under the auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Nasser Al-Jabri, and the presence of the representative of his excellency deputy minister of state for youth Affairs Dr Meshaal Al-Shaheen, with the participation of the Chairman of the International Islamic Charitable Organization and Amiri Diwan Advisor Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq.

The Forum for Voluntary and Humanitarian Youth Initiatives witnessed a wide participation from 16 Arab countries, 620 volunteer teams and initiators from all over the Arab world. While 120 initiators along with 17 initiatives were qualified by a judges committee, three other initiatives were selected

through a presentation of youth initiatives.

After receiving the award, Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media at KFH, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh expressed KFH's pride of supporting voluntary and humanitarian youth initiatives, noting that this comes within the framework of social responsibility, volunteering and sustainability strategy of the bank.

Ruwaieh continued: "We are proud that KFH's voluntary team consists of KFH employees and implements various volunteer initiatives and social programs throughout the year." He noted that the number of initiatives and social contributions implemented by KFH's volunteer team exceeds 200 initiatives in 2019, which deservedly qualified the bank to win the award.

"As a top priority, KFH continues to support Kuwaiti youth in different fields and initiatives, empowering them while emphasizing the importance of volunteering and humanitarian initiatives. The youth are the solid base which society depends on in development and improvement and are the true wealth of the country," he added. Ruwaieh stressed that KFH is proud of its meaningful contributions to community, which is a bright and distinctive aspect of its career for more than 40 years, and an important pillar in establishing the rules of sustainable and social development.

Municipality handles heavy rain's aftermath

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality emergency teams showed a great deal of readiness and capability to immediately handle flooding resulting from Monday's heavy rains, said the municipality's public relations department, noting that the emergency teams responded to all distress calls received on its hotline 139. The municipality added that its teams hoovered 111 truckloads of water, removed 85 truckloads of fallen trees and branches, dealt with 15 distress calls and cleared 15 blocked rain drainage manholes.

The municipality explained that Farwaniya emergency teams removed 10 truckloads of water and 10 truckloads of tree debris from Khaitan, Farwaniya, Ishbiliya and

Mohammed Ibn Al-Qassim Street using 40 cleaners, seven trucks, six large and two small bulldozers, two water tankers and two half-lorries.

Meanwhile, Capital teams removed 27 truckloads of water and four truckloads of tree debris from Mubarakiya, Jaber Al-Ahmad, Doha, Sulaibikhat and Sharq, Cairo, Shaheed, Jamal Abdul Nasser, Canada Dry and Damascus streets, and the first, second and third ring roads using 49 cleaners, four sewage water tankers, six water suction machines and two lorries for over six hours.

Jahra teams also removed 26 truckloads of water and six truckloads of tree debris from Abdali, Salmi, Jahra, Saad Al-Abdullah, Naseem, Na'eem, Kabd and Sulaibiya using 90 cleaners, five

trucks, six bulldozers, two sewage water tankers, two lorries and two water pumps.

In addition, Ahmadi teams removed five truckloads of water from Fahd Al-Ahmad, Mangaf and Sabahiya using 30 cleaners, six trucks, three bulldozers and three water tankers. Mubarak Al-Kabeer teams removed five truckloads of water from Sabah Al-Salem, Subhan and Abul Hassaniya using 10 cleaners and two water tankers. Hawally teams removed 40 truckloads of water and 65 truckloads of tree debris, cleared 15 drainage manholes and responded to 15 distress calls using 150 cleaners, 26 large and 17 small trucks, 29 lorries, 14 bulldozers, two water tankers, four electric saws and an oxygen cylinder.

Mohammad Al-Dallal, said the manpower authority's vision towards increasing the percentage of citizens employed in the private sector is according to law 19/2000, whose article 9 authorized the Council of Ministers to decide such percentages and commit non-government entities to comply with them.

She added that the Council of Ministers does not decide the percentage until after the authority has studied the needs of the marketplace and education graduates, then proposes the percentage that must be implemented. The matter will then be sent to the fatwa and legislation department to review it and frame it in a legal text. Meanwhile, Aqeel denied rumors alleging that a government study aims at reducing expat numbers to 150,000 in the private sector was prepared. — Al-Jarida

Govt eyes 10,000 citizens in private sector

KUWAIT: Finance Minister and Acting State Minister for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said the number of citizens targeted for appointment in the private sector during the next two years in 10,000, adding that a decision in this regard will be issued at the start of the new year.

Aqeel, answering a parliamentary question by MP

Kuwait stresses importance of refugee forum

GENEVA: The first-ever Global Refugee Forum in Geneva is an important event to implement international humanitarian mechanisms and efforts for those in need, said a top Kuwaiti diplomat yesterday. Delivering Kuwait's speech to the Geneva event, Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah stressed the importance of the three-day event within the domain of helping refugees to overcome a bit of their hardship.

Providing means to enable refugees to find job opportunities and to face various challenges is a matter that Kuwait was strongly in favor of, Jarallah affirmed, touting Kuwait's role as a global center for humanitarian efforts, an UN-recognized position. The Kuwaiti official took the chance to commend the current forum that helped gather officials to address the important needs of some 70 million people around the globe. A united world vision for refugees require

solemn effort by all countries to enable refugees to depend on themselves and stand their ground, indicated Jarallah who also called for an effort to enhance political discourse in favor of the refugees of the world.

Returning to Kuwait's stance on the issue of refugees, Jarallah stressed that his country will not hesitate to back regional and international efforts aimed at alleviating the suffering of refugees. Between 2010 and 2019, Kuwait had provided a sum of \$434 million to help the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) carry out its mission, said the Kuwaiti diplomat.

In line with the commitment to refugees worldwide, the State of Kuwait will be organizing an international conference next year to help support education in Somalia, revealed Jarallah who added that his country was offering \$151 million to Yemen as part of its second batch to help refugees in the fellow Arab country. Kuwait will also continue to fulfill commitments to the Syrian refugees and the Rohingya Muslims in 2020, he said, adding that his country will provide \$6.4 million for humanitarian causes for various UN bodies. UNHCR is co-hosting the Forum together with Switzerland, and it is being convened by Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Germany, Pakistan, and Turkey. — KUNA

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As Trump vote nears, centrist Dems firm on impeachment

Myanmar navy detains 200 fleeing Rohingya from Bangladesh's camps



NEW DELHI: Students of Jamia Millia Islamia University stage a protest against the government's Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) on Dec 13, 2019. — AFP

Night of horrors: Inside Indian university

Police smash into Jamia Millia University to crush protests against controversial bill

NEW DELHI: As dusk fell on Sunday, police smashed their way into the main library of New Delhi's Jamia Millia University, firing tear gas shells as scores of terrified students barricaded doors and hid inside bathrooms to protect themselves. Video footage shot by a student inside the library and reviewed by Reuters shows dozens of young students - including several women - scrambling for cover, cowering beneath desks, and jumping over metal and broken glass dividers as they attempted to flee.

More than 600 students sought shelter inside the building as violence raged around the university in southeast Delhi, after thousands gathered to protest a controversial new citizenship law that has sparked days of violent unrest.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government insists the Citizenship Amendment Act is necessary to help persecuted minorities from Muslim-majority Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who settled in India before 2015. But the move has triggered a severe backlash, with widespread clashes in the country's north and a rash of protests across universities - including in Jamia.

On Sunday, some protesters set buses alight and battled stick-wielding policemen on a major thoroughfare nearby. In a statement, the student community of Jamia said they disassociated themselves from the violence, which was perpetrated by some elements to discredit their peaceful protests.

Asad Malik, a lecturer in Jamia's law department, said school officials had stood by the campus gates, checking

ID cards to ensure only students entered the nearly 100-year-old public university amid the chaos on Sunday. However, police said some vandals did manage to enter the Jamia and officers only followed them into the campus after they were pelted with stones from inside the university. "Miscreants and rowdy elements had entered the university and police went inside the campus chasing this crowd, to pull them out," M S Randhawa, a police spokesman told reporters on Monday.

Malik, however, said when police started shooting tear gas inside the university, there were only students inside.

Saliha P P, a 22-year-old masters student, said she was on the Jamia campus when she saw more than 100 policemen storm the campus, fire tear gas and charge students with batons. "There were continuous sounds of tear gas," she said. "They were just beating any students they saw so cruelly."

On Monday morning, sections of university library lay in ruins. Windows were smashed, chairs lay broken and scattered. Crushed glass covered corridors and tables. Reuters witnesses saw tear gas shells and blood splattered on the library floor. At least two surveillance cameras had been smashed.

Jamia's Vice Chancellor Najma Akhtar said police had entered the campus without permission, injuring around 200 students. The university, which has a large number of Muslim students, plans to seek a government enquiry into the violence. "The brutality with which they behaved with students is not acceptable," she told media on Monday.

At least five students told Reuters they did not see any women police personnel among the force that stormed the campus, as is required by law in India when females are on the scene.

A police spokesman did not respond to multiple requests for comment on the allegations of brutality or the reported absence of female officers.

'Death is on the other side'

Madiha Aziz, a postgraduate student, was on the first floor of the library, sitting under a desk in the darkness after other students switched off the lights. "We thought we will be safe inside the library, the college authorities will protect us," she said, speaking with Reuters at her home a few kilometers away from Jamia. From a window, looking down, Aziz said she saw dozens of police pounce on students and beat them up. Three other students also told Reuters they had seen police thrash students in and around the library.

Petrified, some tried to barricade themselves inside using library cupboards. "The police beat us a lot, they did a lathi-charge inside the library," said law student Mohammad Anas, using the Hindi word for a baton. With tear gas canisters exploding inside, second-year student Mohammad Shahzad said some ran to the washrooms to hide or wash their eyes with water.

"But police dragged them out and beat them up," he said. Some bathroom doors inside the library building lay smashed on Monday, seemingly kicked in from the outside.

Still cowering under a desk, Aziz thought it was all

over, when police stormed in after banging loudly on the doors. "I thought my death is on the other side," she said. "It was a night of horrors."

It was after 7 pm local time when police began clearing the library building, said three students who had sought refuge inside. "Outside the central library staircase around 200 students were asked to sit down. Then we were asked to keep both our hands on our heads and we were asked to get out," Anas said. Others, who sought shelter in surrounding buildings, met a similar fate.

Hisham Siddiqui, a doctorate student, said he was inside a mosque on the university campus when more than a dozen police burst in. "They smashed the glass doors and entered inside," he said, heavily bandaged and seated in a wheelchair outside Alshifa hospital late on Sunday night.

After being beaten and falling unconscious, Siddiqui said he managed to hobble out, before being taken to a hospital. "Our faith is strong, we will continue fighting," he said, as he was wheeled out of the hospital. Others were left shattered though, and many students were seen wheeling suitcases and leaving the campus on Monday.

"I'm a student here. I study law here. I was to answer an exam on the constitution today, but what's left of it?" Anugya Jha told media as she was leaving the campus on Monday. "What constitution do I go back and study now? Have they left any of it?" said Jha, tears streaming down her face. "I do not feel safe in this entire country anymore. I do not know where I may go and be lynched today, by the police itself." — Reuters

Rich nations urged to do 'fair share' at refugee meet

GENEVA: The UN urged countries yesterday to take joint responsibility for caring for surging numbers of displaced people, while wealthy nations faced criticism for not shouldering their "fair share" of the burden. UN chief Antonio Guterres opened the two-day Global Refugee Forum in Geneva with a call for a more equitable response to refugee crises.

"The world owes all countries and communities that welcome large numbers of refugees a debt of gratitude," he said but added that "gratitude is not enough."

"The international community must do far more to shoulder this responsibility together."

The forum, which will last through today, begins exactly a year after the UN General Assembly adopted a framework aimed at creating a more predictable and fair approach to providing assistance to refugees and host communities. The meeting is the first of its kind, pooling together heads of state, government ministers as well as business leaders, humanitarians and refugees themselves.

A full 80 percent of the world's refugees live in poor and developing countries, which often feel left to bear the heavy economic and societal toll alone. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose country is the world's biggest

refugee host, hammered the demand for wealthier nations to do more.

He stressed that Turkey was currently hosting some five million refugees, including around 3.7 million Syrians, and had spent around \$4 billion (3.5 million euros) to accommodate them.

At the same time, he added, wealthy nations had set quotas to accept only "tiny numbers" of the many fleeing their homes and had largely failed to honor their pledges of financial support to Ankara.

With nearly 71 million people living in forced displacement, including almost 26 million refugees, Erdogan criticized European countries for using "shameful methods" like erecting barbed wire fences to keep fleeing people off their land. "Shameful -

"Nobody seems inclined to help us," he said, suggesting that a lack of support had pushed Turkey to carry out its recent incursion into northeastern Syria to carve out a so-called safe zone to facilitate refugee returns. Turkey has clashed with the EU over October's Syrian offensive against Kurdish fighters, prompting Erdogan to repeat his threat to allow millions of refugees to head to Europe.

Leaders from other countries hosting large numbers of refugees, including Costa Rica, Pakistan and Ethiopia, also stressed the need for



GENEVA: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres (right) speaks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during the opening of the Global Refugee Forum yesterday. — AFP

more solidarity.

"We do need help to fulfil our task. If not we will be failing the most vulnerable," Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado Quesada told the forum. UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi, meanwhile, hailed nations in crisis-affected regions for largely continuing to provide a safe-haven to refugees.

"Yet the hospitality of those countries receiving most refugees has often been eclipsed by manufactured panic in other parts of the world," he said. "We see refugees who have fled for their lives being demonized and turned into figures of fear," he said, denouncing those

"making political capital by stoking public anxiety."

During the forum, more than 700 pledges are expected from countries, organizations and businesses, including financial donations, but also technical and material assistance, legal and policy changes meant to help ensure greater inclusion for refugees. These could include things like making it easier for refugees to get an education or work. The UN said it was also hoping for more resettlement spots in third countries for vulnerable people already living as refugees, and moves to ensure safe returns to their places of origin. — AFP

Dutch arrest 6 after Dubai holds alleged drugs lord

THE HAGUE: Dutch police arrested six people in a series of raids across the country after an alleged cocaine kingpin dubbed the Netherlands' most wanted man was held in Dubai, police said yesterday.

Moroccan-born Ridouan Taghi, 41, who was wanted on international arrest warrants for ordering a series of murders and for drug trafficking, was held on Monday at a luxury villa in the Gulf emirate.

"Following this arrest, eight house searches were made on Monday evening and six suspects were arrested. This concerns five men and a woman between the ages of 29 and 45," Dutch police said in a statement. "The suspects have been arrested for money laundering, possession of weapons and possession of drugs."

The searches were in various locations including the capital Amsterdam and the central city of Utrecht. Dutch media said the Netherlands and Dubai had no extradition treaty but authorities in both countries were working on transferring Taghi, possibly by the end of February. Taghi is also wanted in Morocco over a shooting at a cafe in 2017 that he allegedly masterminded, Dutch media added.

Taghi had been living in Dubai since 2016 and was arrested at a luxury villa that he rarely left, senior Dubai police official Jamal Al Jallaf told Dutch broadcaster NOS. The suspect had been "careful, very careful", he said, adding: "The curtains of the house were always closed, no light came out. You could not see from outside if there was someone inside."

Taghi also attracted international attention in September when a Dutch lawyer for a state witness in major case against him was shot dead near his home in Amsterdam. Taghi is the main suspect in a huge Dutch organized crime trial relating to what local media call the "Mocro-mafia", which involves five murders and several attempted murders.

The Netherlands has long been known for its tolerant attitude towards marijuana but increasingly faces significant problems from drugs and the criminal underworld. In July a Dutch court jailed another notorious gangster-Willem Holleeder, nicknamed "The Nose"-for ordering the murders of five people, including his accomplice in the 1980s kidnapping of a Heineken beer tycoon. — AFP

International

South Sudan rivals agree to form unity government by deadline

Leaders face international censure over faltering peace talks

JUBA: South Sudan's president and its armed opposition leader agreed yesterday to form a power-sharing government by a February deadline, as they face international censure over faltering peace talks. President Salva Kiir and his former deputy, Riek Machar, signed a truce in September 2018 but failed to respect a cornerstone of that agreement—that they form a unity government and lay their differences to rest.

Two deadlines have passed without Kiir and Machar, a former rebel leader who lives in exile, agreeing to join forces. Disagreements linger over territorial boundaries and a commitment to unifying their fighters. On November 12 they were given another 100 days to honor the pillar of the peace deal, and fears have grown that the country's fragile truce could be at stake should they fail to do so once again.

Following talks in Juba, Kiir said the pair had agreed to meet the 100-day deadline.

"We... have said that after the 100 days we have to form the government", Kiir said, adding that any outstanding negotiations would be worked through by the new administration.

Machar said the warring parties "were not able to move ahead" with squabbles over territory. The leaders have long disagreed over the number of states, who

should control them, and where boundaries should lie. But they had made some progress toward bringing their fighters under one umbrella—another key part of the peace deal that brokered the longest ceasefire in South Sudan's brief history as a nation.

"At the end of the 100 days, there should be a joint security force. This is one thing we have agreed on," Machar said. South Sudan plunged into war in 2013, just two years after it achieved independence from Sudan to the north, after a falling-out between Kiir and Machar, who now lives in exile.

Successive peace deals and mediation bids have failed to achieve a lasting peace for the world's youngest country.

But the 2018 agreement largely paused the bloodshed that left nearly 400,000 South Sudanese dead and forced roughly four million people—one-third of the population—from their homes.

Kiir and Machar's failure to stick to the terms of the peace has angered the US, a key supporter of the country's independence in 2011 from Sudan to the north. The talks in Juba between the parties comes a day after Washington imposed sanctions on two sitting ministers in South Sudan, accusing them of obstructing the young country's peace efforts. — AFP



JUBA: South Sudanese President Salva Kiir (left), South Sudan's opposition leader Riek Machar (right) and Mohamed Hamdan Daglo (center), Sudan's deputy head of the Transitional Military Council, hold hands together as they speak to media after their peace talk at the State House in Juba, South Sudan, yesterday. — AFP

Dozens wounded as groups clash with Lebanese police

BEIRUT: Dozens of people were wounded in overnight clashes between security forces and supporters of Lebanon's two main political parties, the civil defense said yesterday. It was the latest incident of violence in what have been largely peaceful protests since October 17 against a political class deemed inept and corrupt.

The street movement pushed the prime minister to step down on October 29, but the country's bitterly divided political parties have failed to agree on a successor. Shortly before midnight on Monday, young supporters of political parties Hezbollah and Amal tried to attack the main anti-government protest camp in central Beirut, an AFP photographer reported.

The angry young men arrived on foot and scooters, apparently fired up by a video shared online that they deemed offensive to Shiites. They lobbed stones and fireworks towards the anti-riot police trying to prevent them from entering the largely empty main square.

The counterdemonstrators also torched several cars. The security forces responded with teargas and a water cannon. Civil defense said 23 people were taken to hospital, while 43 were treated at the scene. It was not immediately clear from which side the wounded were.

In the southern city of Sidon, young protesters also attacked a protest camp during the night, destroying several tents, an AFP correspondent reported. Lebanese academic Imad Salamey said the Monday night clashes could have been an attempt to undermine the protests.

"Stirring sectarian strife is one of the ways used by



BEIRUT: Supporters of Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah and Amal groups hurl fireworks at security forces early yesterday in central Beirut. — AFP

those in power to divide Lebanese and weaken the street movement," he said. But "the economic crisis today reflects a complete regime crisis that cannot be solved or faced with sectarian movements", warned the professor at the Lebanese American University.

Crumbling economy

Lebanon's economy is sliding towards collapse, after years of political deadlock compounded by the outbreak of civil war in neighboring Syria in 2011. The World Bank projects it will contract by more than 0.2 percent this year. It has warned that poverty could shoot up from a third to half the population if the deadlock is not resolved. Salamey said solidarity between Lebanese has only increased "after people started losing their jobs and companies and being unable to with-

draw money from the banks".

"The economic crisis has broken the barrier of fear, or at least the barriers between different religious sects," he said. The international community has urged Lebanon to speed up the formation of a new government to implement economic reforms necessary to unlock billions of dollars in foreign aid.

Prime minister Saad Hariri stepped down under street pressure less than two weeks into the protests.

But no consensus has yet been reached on a replacement and parliamentary consultations to name a new premier have twice been postponed, the latest on Monday. Young Hezbollah and Amal supporters have attacked anti-government demonstrators on several occasions over the past two months, mostly angered by what they viewed as insults to their leaders. — AFP

Netanyahu foe Saar launches leadership challenge

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced his most serious threat from inside his right-wing Likud party in a decade yesterday, as former minister Gideon Saar launched a leadership challenge.

Already facing a third general election in 12 months and a corruption indictment, Netanyahu will first seek to win a primary vote within his party on December 26.

"People want change," Saar said at a launch event on Monday evening in Or Yehuda, an Israeli town close to commercial capital Tel Aviv. The 53-year-old with greying black hair and glasses has been a senior figure in the Likud for a decade and has held multiple ministries.

Netanyahu has long viewed him as a threat because he has repeatedly accused the prime minister of sidelining him from top appointments. Last month, Netanyahu was indicted for fraud, bribery and breach of trust in three corruption cases, each of which he strongly denies.

Saar called for the primaries shortly after. General elections in April and September resulted in deadlock, meaning the country will again head to the polls on March 2. "He (Netanyahu) has failed twice, but it is not because of the Likud's ideas," Saar said on Monday evening, calling for a "renaissance" of the Israeli right.

"If we do not make a change, we are getting close to a left-wing government," he warned.

"Only Saar can," his few hundred supporters chanted. Netanyahu, who also met with supporters Monday night in a series of events in central Israel, did not say anything about Saar's event and has largely refrained from publicly addressing his younger challenger.

Right-wing unifier?

Saar is perceived as being to the right of Netanyahu on many key issues, including relations with the Palestinians. On Monday he praised the legacy of Netanyahu, in power continuously since 2009, but called on him to go further on judicial reforms and to apply Israeli sovereignty to Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

He did not, however, mention the corruption indictment against Netanyahu. "Within Likud it is counterproductive to talk about it, because a large portion of Likud voters think these files are made up," said Emmanuel Navon, professor of political science at Tel Aviv University.

"He (Saar) is to the right of Netanyahu 100 percent," Navon added. Saar has so far sought to play the unifier between the Israeli right and others deeply opposed to Netanyahu.

He has suggested he could cut a deal with Benny Gantz's Blue and White alliance, which finished neck and neck with Likud in both elections. After the corruption indictment, Gantz, who has campaigned for cleaner politics, called on Netanyahu to step down.

Recent polls have suggested if Saar were to lead the Likud, the right-wing bloc in parliament might increase in size. "If you believe the Likud and its path should lead the state of Israel, vote for me," Saar said, arguing he had the "knowledge and experience... to lead Israel into the next decade."

Israel's system of proportional representation means parties must build broad coalitions to command a majority. "Gideon Saar can actually build the next coalition," said Sharron Haskel, one of the few Likud MPs to publicly announce their support for him. "I hope we are not going to lose the government—that is the risk," she told AFP. She admitted she was risking a "political price" by going against Netanyahu.

Saar has called on Netanyahu to hold a debate on policy, but the premier has so far not responded. — AFP

Turkey detains 200 over Gulen links

ANKARA: An opposition mayor was among some 200 people detained in Turkey over suspected ties to the group blamed for a 2016 coup attempt, prosecutors and political sources said yesterday.

Police detained 171 people in Ankara alone, while another 18 suspects, including 10 doctors, were sought in a second probe. The detentions came after the capital's prosecutor issued arrest warrants for 260 people accused of using the encrypted ByLock messaging application which authorities believe was used to coordinate the coup bid.

Tens of thousands have been arrested over alleged ties to US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen who Ankara says ordered the failed coup. Gulen denies this. The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) said Burak Oguz, a mayor for Urla district in the Aegean region of Izmir, was arrested on suspicion of having Gulen links.

"We condemn using the pretense of law to remove elected officials. We support our mayor," Deniz Yucel, CHP chairman in Izmir, tweeted. He added that the secular CHP had no ties to Gulen's Islamic network. Oguz is the first CHP mayor to be arrested since March local elections, but dozens of officials from the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) have been arrested over suspected ties to Kurdish militants. Four HDP co-mayors of Varto and Bulanik districts in the eastern Mus province were detained on Tuesday, the party said. They are accused of links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), an insurgent group outlawed by Ankara and its Western allies. — AFP

Malaysia to host major summit of Muslim leaders

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will this week host a summit of Muslim leaders billed as a forum to look at the Islamic world's problems, but it will be closely watched for Middle East power plays and their stance on China's Uighur minority. Leaders from Iran, Turkey, and Qatar will be among hundreds of delegates attending the three-day event set to discuss myriad challenges faced by Muslims.

The summit has been pushed by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who has long championed greater solidarity among the world's Islamic communities—and wants to boost his country's standing on the international stage. A key question is whether China's treatment of its mostly Muslim Uighur minority, many of whom have been sent to "re-education" camps, will be raised after Islamic leaders faced criticism for largely remaining silent on the issue.

In a statement ahead of the forum, Mahathir's office said the Muslim community was suffering due to "the incarceration of millions (who) are placed in detention camps, civil wars resulting in total destruction of cities... the rise of Islamophobia".

With no high-level Saudi delegation coming but the President of arch-rival Iran and the emir of Qatar—under a Riyadh-led blockade—in attendance, there has been speculation the forum could be used to counter the kingdom's influence. Also present is Turkey's President Recep Tayyip



DOHA: In this file photo taken on December 14, 2019, Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani (right) awards Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (left) during the opening session of the Doha Forum in the Qatari capital. — AFP

Erdogan, whose ties with Riyadh have worsened in recent times.

Saudi Arabia's King Salman was invited but is not coming, Malaysian officials say.

The meeting comes against the backdrop of high tensions between the kingdom and Iran, the Middle East's leading Sunni and Shiite powers, after assaults on oil tankers and installations in the Gulf.

Challenge to the Saudis?

Analysts Giorgio Caliero and Khalid Al-Jaber, in a commentary for the Middle East Institute think-tank, said some Muslim-majority countries were uncomfortable with Saudi Arabia due to de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's rise.

The Kuala Lumpur summit could "serve as an alternative to the Jeddah-headquartered Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which is under Saudi Arabia's de facto leadership", they said. But Mahathir's office swiftly

rejected the suggestion, insisting the summit "is not intended to create a new bloc". There have however been signs Riyadh is unhappy about the event, with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan cancelling his attendance after travelling to the kingdom at the weekend, reportedly to assuage his ally's concerns. While calls have been growing for the summit to address the Uighurs' plight, analysts believe leaders are unlikely to take a hard line for fear of damaging vital economic ties with Beijing.

They are seen as more likely to condemn the treatment of Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar—who fled their mostly Buddhist homeland in droves in 2017 after a bloody military crackdown—and the Palestinians, which would come at a lower cost. Following the summit, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani heads to Japan on Friday in the first trip to the country by an Iranian head of state for two decades, official news agency IRNA reported. — AFP

International

As Trump vote approaches, centrist Dems stand firm on impeachment

New poll shows Trump's approval rating has inched upwards to a high point

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers on Monday careened toward the brink of one of the most divisive and momentous political steps in years: the impeachment of President Donald Trump for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. Days before the historic House vote, several congressional centrists, including some representing Trump-friendly districts, announced they will now support his impeachment, a boost for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's effort to present a united front in her chamber's vote. The group had been under intense political pressure from Trump and other Republicans eager to paint impeachment as extremist liberal overreach.

But seven freshman moderate Democrats published an opinion essay Monday in *The Washington Post* explaining they were holding firm.

"We are veterans of the military and of the nation's defense and intelligence agencies," they wrote. "As members of Congress, we have prioritized delivering for our constituents." "Yet everything we do harks back to our oaths to defend the country. These new allegations are a threat to all we have sworn to protect."

Among the authors was Elissa Slotkin from the swing state of Michigan, who faced a mixture of heckling and cheers when she discussed her decision at a town hall event. "While we may not agree, I hope you believe me when I tell you that I made this decision out of principle," Slotkin said. Slotkin acknowledged she could lose her job by voting yes, but "this is bigger than politics."

Polling shows Americans are almost evenly divided. A series of nationally televised hearings in recent weeks have failed to move public opinion, and signs of impeachment fatigue have emerged. Even as Trump faces disgrace given the likelihood of his impeachment, a new poll shows his approval rating has inched upwards to a high point, although the figure remains underwater.

No Republicans publicly support impeachment, although congressman Justin Amash—who left the party this year and is now an independent—does. Lawmakers were

beginning a consequential week. House Judiciary Committee chairman Jerry Nadler released his panel's final report Monday outlining the case for impeaching Trump and detailing his alleged wrongdoing, including pressuring Ukraine to investigate Democrats. It alleged severe episodes of "criminal" conduct by the president, including bribery—rebutting the Republican argument that Democrats have identified no specific criminal wrongdoing by Trump.

"President Trump's abuse of power encompassed both the constitutional offense of 'bribery' and multiple federal crimes," the 658-page report said, adding Trump's conduct was "unlike anything this nation has ever seen." The House Rules Committee prepared to meet Tuesday to lay down guidelines for floor debate on impeachment.

When the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives convenes today to weigh the two charges, 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.

'Fair justice'

Trump is also unlikely to be removed from office in his Senate trial, where Republicans hold a 53-47 majority. Top Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer said he was aiming for a trial to start January 6 that would mete out "swift but fair justice" to Trump, though Republican loyalists acknowledged they were less interested in being impartial jurors than protecting the president. Schumer has pressed for a fair process, writing Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to demand four key witnesses testify, including acting White House chief of staff Mick Mulvaney.

"To engage in a trial without the facts coming out is to engage in a cover-up," Schumer told reporters.

Schumer also sought to set limits on testimony length and questioning of witnesses. The White House swatted away Schumer's "laughable" letter to McConnell, but some



WASHINGTON: Kerryanne Conway, Counselor to the President of the United States and White House Advisor, speaks during an on-camera interview at the White House on Monday in Washington, DC. Conway criticized former FBI Director James Comey and defended President Trump against Democrats in the impeachment proceedings during the interview. — AFP

Republicans, while not openly advocating for Mulvaney to testify, were looking for a bipartisan agreement to match the gravity of the moment.

"I think that they should try to work together," Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski said of McConnell and Schumer. Senate rules on impeachment are determined by

a simple majority vote in the chamber. Unless at least four Republicans defect, McConnell will be able to set the parameters. Democrats have bridled at McConnell's recent promise of "total coordination" with the White House, as well as Senator Lindsey Graham's apparent dismissal of the need to be a "fair juror" in the process. — AFP

British PM to outlaw Brexit extension beyond 2020

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was seeking yesterday to outlaw extending the Brexit transition period beyond the end of 2020, a move that wiped out sterling's gains since his re-election.

Johnson won a big majority in last week's general election on a promise to "get Brexit done" by taking Britain out of the European Union by the end of January. A transition period will then follow, during which London and Brussels hope to negotiate a trade agreement before the end of December next year. Some European leaders have said the 2020 deadline would be too tight to complete a comprehensive accord, reviving fears of a "no-deal" outcome that could cause fresh uncertainty and chaos.

That was enough to pull the pound sterling lower in late trading in New York, a trend that continued in Asian and European currency trading. Johnson held his first cabinet meeting since the election yesterday, welcoming back his ministers after what he called a "seismic" result.

"The voters of this country have changed this government and our party for the better and we must repay their trust



LONDON: A still image taken from footage broadcast by the UK Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) yesterday shows opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn giving a speech in the House of Commons in London as parliament resumes following a general election. — AFP

now by working flat out to change our country for the better," he said during the meeting at his Downing Street office. The government's domestic agenda should be focused on social justice, better infrastructure and "extending opportunity across the whole of the United Kingdom", he added.

House of Commons returns

Parliament returns yesterday, to install a speaker and swear in MPs. Queen Elizabeth II sets out the government's legislative program tomorrow and Johnson plans to put the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill before lawmakers on Friday. But the government is

planning to block the transition period from going beyond the end of 2020, in a symbolic statement of intent. "We will not extend the implementation period and the new Withdrawal Agreement Bill will legally prohibit government agreeing to any extension," a Downing Street source said. But Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney told Irish broadcaster RTE: "I think the EU will find it strange that the UK is essentially closing off options that it itself could use later on in the process should they choose to." Johnson spoke on the phone with the new European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and the pair agreed to

start trade talks as soon as possible, London and Brussels said. "We agreed to launch negotiations ASAP on future EU-UK partnership. We will meet at the beginning of 2020. The UK will always be a friend, partner and ally," she tweeted. Johnson's spokesman added: "They both said they will work with great energy to achieve the future partnership by December 2020. "Now, with absolute clarity on the timetable we're working to, the UK and the EU will be able to get on with it and have a great future relationship wrapped up by December 2020." The spokesman confirmed Britain was still targeting a "Canada-style" free trade agreement.

Performance theatre'

Sam Lowe, from the Centre for European Reform think-tank, said there would be a lot of "performance theatre" from the government in the next six months to fulfil Johnson's Brexit pledge. "The landing zone for the negotiation probably won't emerge until later next year," he wrote on Twitter. "For a deal to be reached in the space of 11 months, the UK will need to concede to most of the EU's demands. Politically, Johnson can't concede without having put up a jolly good fight first, and alternative needs to be something worse."

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) business lobby said there was no time to lose in striking a good trade deal as quickly as possible. "Business has had enough of uncertainty and shares the prime minister's ambition for a fast EU trade deal," said CBI director-general Carolyn Fairbairn. — AFP

Two years on, murder of Canadian tycoon couple unsolved

MONTREAL: Two years after Canadian pharmaceutical tycoon Barry Sherman and his wife were found dead at their luxury home in "targeted" killings, Toronto's chief homicide detective on Monday made a fresh appeal for public help to solve the mystery murders. Inspector Hank Ildsinga told reporters that a private investigation, begun by the Sherman family, had ended, but police are continuing their own probe.

Sherman, 75, was chairman of global generic drug supplier Apotex. His body, along with that of Honey Sherman, 70, was found at their house in a tony Toronto neighborhood on December 15, 2017. "The family and police urge anyone who has reliable information regarding the murders, no matter how small or unimportant that information may seem, to please contact the police through their usual channels," Ildsinga said.

Police had initially suspected a murder-suicide. The clothed bodies were discovered hanging, partly sitting, by a pool in the basement of the home. An autopsy concluded they died from strangulation.

Investigators later ruled both deaths "targeted" homicides—after the private investigation concluded the couple were murdered. The Shermans' children had strongly refuted the early police suspicion and hired one of Canada's most celebrated criminal defense lawyers, Brian Greenspan, who recruited the private investigators to help. A forensic pathologist also performed a separate autopsy.

The pathologist and private investigators, who included former homicide squad members, found markings on the victims' wrists indicating that their hands had been tied with cords or plastic zip ties. — AFP

Slovak trial puts justice system to test

BRATISLAVA: The trial opens tomorrow of a businessman and three others charged over the murder of an investigative journalist and his fiancée in what is seen as a test of Slovakia's judicial and political system ahead of an election in February. The February 2018 murder of Jan Kuciak and Martina Kusnirova prompted mass demonstrations against corruption that forced the resignation of then prime minister Robert Fico, and the case has dominated Slovakia's civic life since.

Kuciak, 27, and Kusnirova were gunned down in their house outside the capital Bratislava. The killing echoed the murder four months earlier of another journalist investigating corruption in an EU country, Daphne Caruana Galizia, who was killed in Malta. Prosecutors say entrepreneur Marian Kocner, the subject of Kuciak's reporting on corruption, had contracted his killing. Kocner and two alleged accomplices have pleaded not guilty while the fourth suspect has confessed to the shooting, according to public television RTVS, quoting police sources. They face up to life in prison if convicted.

A fifth man has confessed to facilitating the killing and has made a plea deal with prosecutors to act as a witness. At the tomorrow's preliminary hearing, judges will either set the date for the main hearing or ask prosecutors for additional evidence. The case is seen as a test of Slovak police and judicial independence after the investigation exposed business and personal links between Kocner and security officials. Grigorij Meseznikov from the Bratislava-based Institute for Public Affairs told Reuters: "The trial will be closely watched at home and abroad by people hoping for closure of events started by murders that triggered protests that led to resignations, including the prime minister, interior minister and police chief." — Reuters



BANJUL: Protesters take part in a demonstration against Gambian President, in Banjul, Gambia, on Monday. — AFP

Thousands of Gambians demand president quit

BANJUL: Thousands of protesters took to the streets in Gambia's capital Banjul on Monday demanding that President Adama Barrow respect his pledge to quit after three years in office. The president, a relative unknown at the time, defeated former autocrat Yahya Jammeh in elections in the tiny West African state in 2016.

He promised to rule for three years before stepping down but he has since said he will govern until 2021, serving a full presidential term. On Monday, some 10,000 Gambians of all ages marched in the capital in protest at the U-turn, chanting "Three years, three years!" and to the rhythm of Bob Marley music.

AFP was unable to independently confirm the figures. According to the founding charter of Barrow's ruling coalition, the president was meant to lead a provisional govern-

ment for three years and then call elections, and not stand. However in March, Barrow said "we will go to the elections in 2021 and I will hand over power with dignity to whoever wins," according to local press.

At the end of September, part of Barrow's coalition agreed to support a five-year term.

But two parties have rejected the move, including the United Democratic Party, which is Gambia's largest party. Protest organizers on Monday sent Barrow a memorandum reminding him of his commitments and gave him until January 19 — the three-year anniversary of his swearing-in — to step down. The protests were organized by the movement "Operation Three Years Jotna," which means "operation three years enough" in a hybrid between English and the Wolof language.

It was founded this year by Musa Kaira, a Gambian businessman living in the United States.

Abdou Njie, the president of Operation Three Years Jotna, told AFP that promises must be kept. "As Gambian citizens, we are ready for everything," he said. However, Amie Bojang Sissoho, a spokeswoman for Barrow, said the president was elected for five years. "They have the right to demonstrate, they have demonstrated and that's all," she said. — AFP

Estonia minister under fire over 'shop girl' comment

TALLINN: Estonia's opposition called for interior minister Mart Helme to resign yesterday after he labelled Finland's new prime minister a "shop girl". Helme said on Sunday the new Finnish government was trying to destroy its own country, comments that opposition leader Kaja Kallas said were humiliating to Estonia.

Estonia's president has already apologised to Finland, whose new leader 34-year-old Sanna Marin became the world's youngest prime minister last week. Veteran Helme is leader and founder of the far-right Conservative People's Party (EKRE), which joined the governing coalition after winning almost 18 percent of the vote in an election earlier this year. "Mart Helme has repeatedly injured the reputation of the Estonian state, if we let him go on as minister, he'll be able to humiliate Estonia even further," said Kallas.

The Reform Party leader added that her call for him to quit was supported by other opposition parties and even a lawmaker in the governing coalition.

However, a parliamentary motion of no confidence in Helme yesterday got only 44 votes in favor—falling seven votes short of the number required to force him out of his post. Helme had told a radio interviewer that he doubted Marin and her government were capable of running Finland, riffing on Lenin's maxim that a cook should be able to run a country. "Now we see that a shop girl has become a prime minister and some other street activists and uneducated people have also become members of the government," said Helme. — AFP

International

Myanmar navy detains 200 fleeing Rohingya from Bangladesh's camps

Boat seizure comes just days after Suu Kyi's denial of persecution allegations

YANGON: Almost 200 Rohingya Muslims sailed more than 1,500 kilometers to escape Bangladesh refugee camps only to be arrested by Myanmar's navy, the country's military said yesterday.

The boat seizure came just days after Myanmar's leader and Nobel peace laureate Aung San Suu Kyi addressed the UN's top court to deny allegations of a genocidal campaign against the ethnic minority.

With the monsoon over and seas relatively calm, increasing numbers of Rohingya Muslims are once again risking their lives attempting to reach Malaysia or Indonesia.

Bangladeshi authorities say they are stopping one or two boats a week leaving the country's shores, and many more are thought to evade patrols. Few make it as far south as Kawthaung, Myanmar's southern-most tip, where on Sunday the country's navy picked up the 173-strong Rohingya group, including 69 women and 22 children, a military spokesman said.

"We will hand them over to immigration authorities and police to take action," said Zaw Min Tun, adding they had come from camps in Bangladesh and were heading to Malaysia.

"Our navy found them on a suspicious boat in the sea," he told Reuters by phone. "The police will proceed according to the law." More than 730,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar to Bangladesh in 2017 to escape a military-led crackdown that UN investigators have said was carried out with "genocidal intent" and included mass killings and rapes.

Myanmar has denied widespread atrocities, framing the violence as a response to attacks by Rohingya militants, but has acknowledged killings at Inn Din village, where soldiers and Buddhist villagers murdered 10

Muslim men, as well as in another village, Gu Dar Pyin. Myanmar has also denied persecution. Some 600,000 Rohingya remain in largely Buddhist Myanmar, confined to camps and villages in the western Rakhine state where they are unable to travel freely or access health-care and education. Three Rohingya living in Myanmar's western Rakhine state told Reuters by phone they had heard the boat was bound for Malaysia. They asked not to be named for fear of retribution.

For years, Rohingya on both sides of the border have boarded boats organized by smugglers in the dry months between November and March, when the sea is calm. The dangerous journey to Thailand and Malaysia has cost many lives. The exodus peaked in 2015 when an estimated 25,000 people crossed the Andaman Sea, many drowning in unsafe and overloaded boats. But smuggling has continued.

Myat Thu, assistant director of Kawthaung township's administrative office, said it was not yet clear whether the group arrested on Sunday set sail from Myanmar or Bangladesh. "Now we keep them at an island in Kawthaung in the sea, with security guards," he told Reuters by phone. "We are making sure that all of their human rights are protected." Bangladesh coast guard official Saiful Islam told Reuters they were unaware of any boats leaving the camps for Myanmar.

"If we had such information, we would have stopped them," he said by phone. More than 90 Rohingya, including 23 children found on a beach in the Irrawaddy delta region after boarding a boat from Rakhine, appeared in a Myanmar court on Dec. 11 to face charges of traveling illegally.

Hundreds have been imprisoned in jails and youth detention centers across the country. "It shouldn't be



UKHTIA: A Rohingya refugee boy (front) carries a chicken as he walks back to his makeshift house in Jamtoli refugee camp in Ukhtia in this file photo on December 11, 2019. — AFP

that way," Muslim leader Wunna Shwe, joint-secretary of the Islamic Religious Affairs Council in Myanmar, told Reuters. "The government must examine their citizenship

and grant citizenship to those who are eligible. It will be difficult to solve this issue without recognizing the rights of the people in the existing camps." — Agencies

Verdict due in Philippines' worst political massacre

MANILA: The alleged masterminds of the Philippines' worst political massacre will learn their fate tomorrow when a Manila court issues its verdict, in a test of the justice system for a nation with a deep-seated culture of impunity.

A decade ago, 58 people, including 32 media workers, were slaughtered and dumped into roadside pits during an attack that was also one of the world's worst mass killings of journalists. Amid international outrage, the slaughter cast a harsh spotlight on the Philippines' deep-seated problems of all-powerful political dynasties, easy access to guns and official impunity.

Victims' families have endured a trial of 101 defendants marred by allegations of bribery, defense delays, the murder of several witnesses and a fear that the still powerful accused could be acquitted.

A guilty verdict "will be a strong signal to human rights abusers that they can't always get away with murder," researcher



This file photo taken on November 24, 2009 shows a police investigator gathering evidence next to bodies of victims after gunmen shot a group of people including media workers in Ampatuan town, Maguindanao province. — AFP

Carlos Conde of New York-based Human Rights Watch said. "A not guilty verdict would be catastrophic for the cause of human rights and justice," he said, adding acquittal would signal to warlords "that it's business as usual, that they can continue using violence, intimidation and corruption to rule their communities".

Leaders of the powerful Ampatuan family, who ruled the impoverished southern province of Maguindanao, are charged

with organizing the November 23, 2009 mass killing in a bid to quash an election challenge from a rival clan.

'Praying for fair judgment'

Lawyers representing many of the victims' families told AFP the 101 defendants, who have pleaded not guilty, face up to 30 years in prison without parole if convicted of even one of the 58 murders.

The brazen attack was carried out in

broad daylight on a convoy carrying an Ampatuan family rival's wife, relatives, lawyers and the journalists, who were killed in a hail of gunfire. The murders exposed how then president Gloria Arroyo had tolerated the Ampatuans' heavily-armed militia as a buffer against Muslim rebels in the south, home to the Catholic nation's large Islamic minority.

Even routine court cases can take years to make it through the Philippine justice system, which is notoriously overburdened, underfunded and vulnerable to pressure from the powerful. This case is no exception, and victims' families have long worried the Ampatuans, who continue to wield political power and influence, could avoid convictions. Ten clan members remain in jail but another is out on bail along with 10 other defendants, while the charges against eight other defendants have been dropped. "We are hoping and praying that we will get a fair judgment," said Mary Grace Morales, whose sister and husband were among 32 journalists killed. "They (Ampatuans) have power... they have money," she told AFP. "They can pay many lawyers to handle their cases." Out of the original 197 suspects, 80 remain at large including 15 members of the Ampatuan clan. Ampatuans meanwhile won 25 local seats in May's elections including Sajid Ampatuan, a defendant in the massacre case who was released on bail. — AFP

Thousands of Thai fishermen protest against tough rules

BANGKOK: Several thousand Thai fishermen protested outside the agriculture ministry yesterday over strict regulations aimed at combating illegal and unregulated fishing which they say are driving them out of business.

Thailand, one of the world's largest seafood exporters, began cracking down on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing four years ago after the European Union threatened to ban its seafood exports.

The EU lifted its threat in January this year, citing a "major upgrade" in Thai governance, but the reforms enacted by Bangkok in 2015 have hurt the country's fishing sector. The protesters, drawn from 22 provinces around the country, turned the area in front of the ministry into a camp site with makeshift shelters under colorful umbrellas and took turns to air their grievances over megaphones. "We've lost everything in the past five years. If we don't get any answers today, we won't leave," said one fisherman from the southern province of Rayong.

Mongkol Sukcharoenkana, president of the National Fisheries Association of Thailand (NFAT), said the reforms and costly fines had caused many fishermen to lose their jobs. "If the government won't fix the problems for us, we'll just oust them," Mongkol told Reuters. Earlier this month, fishing associations drew up a list of demands that included a relaxation of the restrictions and the allocation of special funds to help the industry. Alongkorn Ponlaboot, an adviser to the agriculture minister, told the gathering yesterday that a loan of 10.3 billion baht (\$341 million) for the fishermen and a scheme worth 7.1 billion baht (\$235 million) to buy out 2,700 ships were awaiting cabinet approval.

But he said amending the law was complicated because it could affect Thailand's commitment to combat IUU fishing, and that consultations were ongoing.

"Dark days"

Thailand's multi-billion-dollar seafood sector came under scrutiny after investigations showed trafficking and exploitative practices against workers on fishing boats. International organizations have welcomed Thailand's reform of its fishing sector, saying it has bolstered traceability and oversight on transshipments at sea and curbed forced labor. Steve Trent, executive director of London-based Environmental Justice Foundation, urged Thailand to entrench the reform rather than water it down.

"If NFAT gets its ways and the reforms are rolled back, it will be a return to the dark days of violence, forced labor, more illegal and unsustainable fishing," Trent told Reuters. Alongkorn told Reuters the government would not do anything that would negatively affect Thailand's IUU status. "We have an obligation and we don't want to turn back. That's the bottom line." — Reuters

10 killed from Afghan family heading to funeral

KHOST: Ten members of the same family were killed yesterday when their car detonated a roadside bomb as they were travelling to a funeral in eastern Afghanistan, officials said. The victims had been driving in Khost province in a large station wagon-type vehicle when the blast occurred, according to local and national officials.

"The casualties include five men, two women and three children all from one family," Talib Mangal, a spokesman for Khost's governor, told AFP. "They were travelling to Logar province to attend a funeral."

Provincial police spokesman Adil Haidar confirmed the toll and incident details, while interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi added it was a Taliban bomb placed by the side of the road.

The Taliban did not immediately comment. The attack came the same day as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) released a report saying an average of nine children were killed or wounded each day in Afghanistan during the first nine months of this year. Deadly violence continues to grip Afghanistan even as the US and the Taliban negotiate on-off talks aimed at reducing America's military footprint in the country in return for the insurgents ensuring an improved security situation. — AFP

Thai serial killer sought over new murder after early release

BANGKOK: Thai police are hunting a convicted serial killer in connection with another murder months after he was released for good behavior, authorities said yesterday. Somkid Pumpuang was sentenced to life in 2005 for the killing of five women believed to be involved in the sex and nightlife industry, leading the media to dub him Thailand's "Jack the Ripper".

But the 55-year-old was deemed an "excellent prisoner" and let free in May, the Thai corrections department said in a statement. Seven months later authorities want to

re-arrest him in connection with the murder of a 51-year-old hotel maid in northeastern Thailand.

Several police stations in the area are cooperating in the hunt for the serial killer, case officer Chatchawan Sriakol said. "We believe that the murder took place on Sunday morning," he said. Authorities are also offering a 50,000 baht (\$1,650) reward for information leading to his capture. Thailand's crime suppression division posted a picture of Somkid on its Facebook page under the heading "Most Wanted". The corrections department said it was urgently reviewing the sentence reduction policies but also said it was operating at three times capacity with 370,000 inmates. Overcrowding remains a serious problem in Thai jails, which has one of the largest prison populations in the world. The number reached an all-time high earlier this year, according to a report this month from the International Federation for Human Rights and the Union for Civil Liberty. — AFP



SEPAKU: This handout picture taken and released yesterday by the Indonesian Presidential Palace shows a motorcade transporting Indonesia's President Joko Widodo accompanied by officials visiting North Penajam Paser district near Sepaku in East Kalimantan where the government is set to build its new capital city replacing Jakarta. — AFP

Indonesia boosts Christmas security over terror threat

JAKARTA: Muslim-majority Indonesia will deploy nearly 200,000 security personnel nationwide ahead of Christmas to guard against potential terror attacks, police said yesterday.

The Southeast Asian archipelago of 260 million has significant numbers of Christians, Hindus and Buddhists who have been targeted by radical Islamist groups. Yesterday, authorities said some 192,000 police and military personnel would be deployed to secure Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations across the country—including in easternmost Papua, a predominantly Christian region.

The deployment, which comes after a recent spate of attacks, is more than the 167,000 personnel deployed last year. "As many as 10,000 personnel will be deployed in Jakarta" alone, said National Police spokesman Argo Yuwono "Based on intelligence data, there are potential risks... so we're taking preventive measures but we are

also ready to take proactive action," he added. Many past attacks in Indonesia, which has dozens of groups loyal to Islamic State's violent ideology, have been against police and other state symbols. Authorities routinely arrest suspected IS-linked militants ahead of alleged planned attacks. In October Indonesian President Joko Widodo ordered beefed-up security after two militants from an IS-linked terror group stabbed his chief security minister. He survived the assassination attempt.

Last month a suicide bomber blew himself up at a police station in Sumatra, killing himself and wounding six civilians. Hundreds of suspects were rounded up after the attacks, which came more than a year after a suicide bomber family killed a dozen congregants in attacks at churches in Indonesia's second-biggest city, Surabaya.

Yesterday the country's new chief security minister Mahfud said high security was also meant to ensure Christian communities could celebrate Christmas without being targeted by groups keen to disrupt the festivities. "We need to anticipate as early as possible things like intolerant incidents and burning down houses of worship," the minister, who goes by one name, told reporters.

Conservative Muslim groups frequently raid shopping malls and other public places to protest against Christmas displays or seasonal attire worn by Muslim employees. — AFP

Analysis

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Ethiopia surveillance network crumbles

Rahmat Hussein once inspired fear and respect for the watchful eye she cast over her Ethiopian neighborhood, keeping files on residents and recommending who should get a loan or be arrested. Now she is mocked and ignored. Her fall - from being the eyes and ears of one of Africa's most repressive governments to a neighborhood punchline - illustrates how Ethiopia's once ubiquitous surveillance network has crumbled. "My work is harder now," she said, wistfully. "People don't listen anymore."

Rahmat worked for a system set up by the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) coalition in the early 2000s, officially to help implement central policies across the country of 105 million people. But the system, which detractors say was twisted into a tool to silence government critics, began to unravel with the outbreak of deadly protests in 2015 which undermined the EPRDF's authority.

The election of reformist Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who has vowed to make society more open and took office in April 2018, has accelerated its decline. That has been welcomed by many. "People were afraid and could not speak up," said Agenagne Abuhay, Rahmat's colleague at a local women's affairs office. Others, like Rahmat, mourn its loss, saying the network drove advances in health, education and agriculture.

It is widely acknowledged among Ethiopians as having played a significant role in society, although many are still too nervous to speak openly about it. Some officials and academics question whether Abiy can control a restive population, amid outbreaks of deadly ethnic violence, and deliver promised economic and political reforms without the system he has allowed to fray. "The local administration is collapsing in some places," said one civil servant in the capital Addis Ababa, who asked not to be identified because he was not authorized to speak with journalists. "The government doesn't seem to have much control."

Abiy holds regular public meetings and is active on Twitter, said an official in the prime minister's office, when asked how he would communicate with people now the old network has weakened. Most Ethiopian households do not have the Internet. The prime minister's spokeswoman referred Reuters to the civil service commission for comment. Its head, Bezabih Gebreyes, said the system was formed for the "noble rationale" of development but acknowledged that ultimately it had been a failure. "The structure was very active for at least five years," he told Reuters. It failed, he said, because workers did not like taking orders from political appointees.

'One to five'

Stacked on top of Rahmat's kitchen cabinet in the town of Debarq, 470 km north of Addis Ababa, are a dozen bulging folders detailing the lives of 150 neighbors: who has money troubles, who has HIV, who is caring for an orphan and who is hosting a stranger. The 27-year-old kept a copy of her handwritten notes and delivered duplicates to a local government office, which crunched the numbers and reported them upwards. "It made me very happy to do this work," she told Reuters one cold morning, as she cooked bean stew in her one-room home. "I did it to serve the people."

Rahmat, wearing a lemon-yellow headscarf, said she helped women seeking a divorce understand their rights, arranged for a fellow single mother to get a loan to start a cafe and ensured families had cards for subsidized staples like oil and sugar. If there were strangers in the neighborhood, she reported them to police. Rahmat was more than a neighborhood fixer. She was a loyal party member, encouraging residents to join the EPRDF and promoting its policies at monthly meetings. She was also part of a network of millions of people in cities and villages, universities and workplaces.

The system was popularly called "one-to-five", because volunteers would typically be assigned five other people to monitor. Some, like Rahmat, supervised more. The work was unpaid, but there were rewards. Rahmat got a government job. Others received preferential access to farming supplies or loans, she and other participants in the system say. The government used the system to drive rapid agricultural and industrial reforms, aimed at transforming a mostly rural society dogged by famine into a middle-income country by 2025.

Volunteers taught farmers how to space their seedlings and use fertilizer, promoted safe birthing practices and kept track of rabble-rousers. The system was also used "for surveying the population and to intimidate any kind of opposition," Lovise Aalen, an Ethiopia expert at Norway-based research institute CMI, wrote in a 2018 paper. Some former and current officials and aid groups credit "one-to-five" for helping Ethiopia achieve development goals.

The system helped reduce maternal mortality, said former health minister Kesete Admasu, in a report on the Gates Foundation website. Volunteers acted as "model families", gathering women over coffee, or at church or in mosques, to promote family planning and hygiene. — Reuters

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Two migrant men play football in the snow by a disused ski lodge near the village of Pollneri in Grevena, some 210 km west of Thessaloniki on Dec 12, 2019. — AFP

Stuck in snow, refugees miss dismal camps

Sitting in the lobby of a disused ski lodge on a northern Greek mountain, Congolese asylum-seeker Sylva Caumba blankly stares at the unfamiliar snow outside. "I would have preferred staying in Moria," the 30-year-old says with a touch of desperation, referring to the dismal camp on the Greek island of Lesbos which is packed six times beyond its official capacity. "At least there, we had contact with the outside world. Here it feels like an open prison," he adds.

Caumba was transported to the ski lodge at Vasilitsa - at an altitude of 1,000 m, and 45 km from the nearest town of Grevena - around two months ago with his wife and two children. Bears and wolves are more common than humans in this area. The facility, which has seen better days and was about to shut down during Greece's economic crisis, currently hosts 116 asylum-seekers from Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia and Syria.

'No way to live'

"We wake up, we watch TV and we go back to sleep. This is no way to live," says 20-year-old former footballer Mabika Zordel, also from DR Congo. Nuredin Intze, a 38-year-old from Somalia, agrees that "things were better" in a similarly overcrowded camp on the Greek Aegean island of Leros. "The hours do not pass. How can you live with nothing to do? All that is left is to hope that something will change," says the former professional driver.

Mixed reception

At the Vasilitsa ski lodge, Zordel says he had asked

The Africans' plight is part of a broader conundrum facing Greece's beleaguered migration authorities. In summer and autumn, the number of asylum-seekers arriving from Turkey on the islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Kos and Leros steadily increased, cramming people into overcrowded facilities at record levels. According to government figures, there are now over 40,000 people on these islands, with more than 37,000 of them in camps built to handle just over 6,000.

Amid rising anger on the islands, the conservative government of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis recently promised to relocate 20,000 asylum-seekers to other facilities on the mainland by the end of the year. But the plan has run into objections and protests in several towns in other parts of Greece earmarked to house additional asylum-seekers. In October, a hotel owner in the town of Vrasna near Thessaloniki said she had received arson threats after agreeing to temporarily host a group of asylum-seekers. Running out of options, authorities have occasionally been forced to resort to out-of-the-box thinking. In November, another group of asylum-seekers were taken to an abandoned Orthodox monastery in the southern Peloponnese peninsula. Within moments, most of them had asked to be relocated elsewhere.

to train with the local football club but his request was turned down. "Maybe it was because of my skin color," he says. Aside from being bussed by police to Grevena for supplies twice a week, and preparing their food, Zordel and his close friend Daniel Elipio, 17, have little to do. So they wait for days when it's not snowing outside to play football in the ski lodge yard.

Both say they fled DR Congo when relatives were murdered. As in most parts of the country, the response here to the presence of asylum-seeker families and unaccompanied minors is mixed. Operators in isolated areas are frequently grateful for any business in the dead of winter, but many elderly locals in sparsely populated villages are fearful. "They keep having children," says a local tavern owner. "We have a falling birth rate. At this rate, they will eventually take over."

Even as he admits that some hostels in the area were "a step away from being auctioned off", Grevena mayor Yiorgos Dastamanis claims that the arrival of refugees and migrants "will undermine the profile of tourism businesses in the area". In the meantime Caumba sits with his wife and children, wondering how he can build a life for them halfway up a Greek mountain. "I want to learn Greek, get a job and live a normal life with my family," he says. "One of my children is 10 and is not in school. I'm not asking for anything outrageous." — AFP

Impeachment hurts but Teflon Trump thrives

Impeachment is about the worst thing that can happen to a president - unless that president is Donald Trump. There is no question that having that historic asterisk as only the third US president ever impeached will hurt him personally. More than any other occupant of the White House, the real estate developer and reality TV performer obsesses over his image. Trump's name and patina of glitzy success is literally a brand he sells for millions of dollars around the world.

But it's equally true that the Republican adores a good fight. And impeachment is the Olympics of Washington brawling. "This moment is (perfect) for a person like him," said Rich Hanley, a professor of communications at Quinnipiac University. The Democrats in the House of Representatives are expected to vote to impeach Trump, probably on Wednesday. Then, as the president knows all too well, his Republican Party, which controls the Senate, will vote to acquit.

The outcome is likely to be as preordained as one of those absurd WWE wrestling bouts that Trump has always loved. Which makes a perfect set-up for

the showman-in-chief. First he gets to demonize opponents, throwing around words like "treason", "crook", "crazy" and "sick". Then he declares victory and turns the entire thing into a campaign ad for his 2020 reelection. "He's already seen the narrative arc of this particular episode of the Trump show," Hanley said.

Inoculated by scandal

From Andrew Johnson, who got impeached in 1868, no president has exactly enjoyed the notoriety. Richard Nixon resigned over the Watergate affair just before he could be impeached, while Bill Clinton fought bitterly to avoid being convicted by the Senate in 1999. But Trump, a veteran of scandals, comes into the ordeal uniquely ready. After all, he has already ridden out allegations of sexual assault and other misconduct by two dozen women over the years.

He has withstood a two year probe by a special prosecutor into whether he was wittingly or unwittingly getting election help from Russian agents. He has brushed off accusations of using his office to benefit his real estate empire, including billeting Air Force personnel at his Scottish golf course and Vice President Mike Pence at his Irish resort. Daily he crudely insults opponents, swears in public, and tells so many lies and exaggerations that fact checkers can barely keep up. The list goes on. As Trump himself said in 2016: "I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody and I wouldn't lose any voters."

Owning impeachment

The Clinton impeachment stemming from his affair with a White House intern was famously nasty - a televised horror show that forever stained the popular Democrat's reputation. But those days seem almost quaint alongside a Trump version supercharged by Twitter, politicized rival television coverage and a president eager to star in, produce and direct his own drama. Far from hunkering down, Trump holds rallies to whip his base into a frenzy over the "witch hunt". He tweets his outrage dozens of times a day - sometimes more than a 100.

"Nixon and Clinton largely stayed out of it. Trump has thrust himself into the middle of it repeatedly," said Allan Lichtman, distinguished professor of history at American University. "He absolutely owns it." It's a high-risk, high-gain tactic that fits in with Trump's entire upending of Washington. And having "shattered" every other norm, Trump's now doing the same to impeachment. Lichtman said, presenting his Republican Party no other option than to defend him all the way. "The real reason Republicans have to defend Donald Trump is that the only thing they're left with is Donald Trump."

So Washington may be in chaos, but Teflon Trump is thriving. The latest poll, from Quinnipiac, showed him with 43 percent job approval. Even if that is the worst score for a president at this stage of an administration in many decades, it is Trump's personal best. "It's a very sad thing for our country," he said last week. "But it seems to be very good for me politically." — AFP

In crime-hit Nigeria city, rape victims find their voice

"They forced their way in at around 2 am. They raped us. And when they left, they stole our phones and money." In those simple words, Sarah describes the nightmare that she and her flatmate endured when two armed men broke into their apartment in Port Harcourt, Nigeria's oil hub. Who the men were was, and remains, a mystery. Both wore masks. Reeling from shame and fearful of stigma, the 25-year-old did not tell anyone she had been raped. Not the police, her family, even her friends. "Here you don't talk about these things," Sarah - her name changed for the purposes of this story - told AFP. Eventually, Sarah, a trained nurse, became worried about her health and plucked up the courage to go to a clinic run by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) that specializes in sexual violence. There she received treatment. Eventually she found the strength to recount her tale to a psychologist.

Rape epidemic

The figures for admissions to the little clinic speak amply about the scale of rape in Port Harcourt. Since the start of the year, more than 1,200 patients have sought help there. In October alone, there were 148 new admissions. Port Harcourt has many of the fundamental problems

of poverty and inequality which are familiar to Nigeria's big cities. But it is also in the grip of notorious gangs called "cults", which emerged from university campuses to become organized crime groups and frequently engage in blood rituals and oaths.

They carry out raids, ransom kidnappings and other crimes, in which the victim often suffers sexual violence. "When there are cultist clashes in the community, people scatter everywhere, and armed robbers go inside the houses and they rape the girls," said Christine Harrison, an MSF coordinator in the rundown district of Diobu. The 42-year-old mother patrols the gritty streets, handing out an emergency number that victims can call - a task that she has been doing for two years. "My job is to let the women know that they need to stand up for their rights," she said. "Before, rape was a normal thing."

The MSF rape awareness campaign includes messages on local radios and stickers which are handed out on public transport. The situation, while grim, is changing bit by bit - a shift that came after nine women were drugged and strangled in Port Harcourt hotels in a string of gruesome ritualistic-style killings. "We never saw something like that. The whole city just rose up. We said: 'Enough is enough,'" said Ibim Semenitari, a well-known local activist who led protest marches joined by hundreds of feminists. A police commissioner in Port Harcourt had initially urged women not to go out at night, and said that the victims were prostitutes - their bloody fate could be avoided by "re-education," he suggested.

As pressure from the street mounted, the police arrested the supposed killer, cult member Gracious David-West. His trial opened on Dec 9. "His arrest was a huge success for us,"



Executive director of the Mother of Good Counsel Initiative (Mater Dei) Doris Onyeneke (left) speaks to a girl undergoing vocational training and mentorship at the centre for training and protection in Port Harcourt on Nov 20, 2019. — AFP

said Doris Onyeneke, a campaigner and head of a centre for protecting and training women called Mater Dei. "Women are vulnerable in Nigeria, and even more (so) in Niger Delta region," she said, referring to the country's oil hub. The gangs are based on a twisted notion of masculinity, she said: "Members have to be aggressive, strong, kill, make a lot of money." Her centre, where she is dubbed "Lady Doris", takes in many girls in need, some of them minors. Theresa, a 21-year-old trainee seamstress, put the final rhinestones to a magnificent hand-made evening gown as she described the plight of many women in Nigeria. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2019

12 First Mercedes-Benz 'Vanchella Festival' in the region launched in Abu Dhabi**13** PwC's seminar discusses technological and regulatory impacts on Kuwaiti businesses**14** Lexus presents its vision of future electrification with LF-30 Concept

NANTES: People take part in a demonstration in Nantes yesterday to protest against the French government's plan to overhaul the country's retirement system, as part of a national general strike. — AFP

Huge rally against French pension reform

Tension escalates as govt vows not to give in to union demands

PARIS: Tens of thousands of protesters hit French streets yesterday in a pensions reform standoff that has sparked nearly two weeks of crippling transport strikes, with the government vowing it will not give in to union demands to drop the overhaul. Teachers, hospital workers and other public employees joined transport workers for the third day of marches since the dispute began on December 5.

More than 200,000 people turned out for dozens of rallies across the country, according to police estimates compiled by AFP, as a huge march began at the Place de la Republique in Paris.

The Eiffel Tower was closed because of the protest and police were on high alert-wary of a repeat of earlier marches when shops were vandalized and vehicles set on fire. The hard-line CGT union said electricity workers cut power to some 50,000 homes near Bordeaux and 40,000 in Lyon overnight as part of the protest, warning that bigger cuts could follow.

The government has insisted it will push through a

single points-based pension system and end the current patchwork of 42 separate schemes that offer early retirement to many in the public sector.

It says the new system will be fairer and more transparent, improving pensions for women and low earners in particular. "My determination, and that of the government and the majority, is total," Prime Minister Edouard Philippe told parliament on the eve of new talks with unions. Critics say the changes could force millions of people to work beyond the official retirement age of 62 — one of the lowest in Europe-by setting a "pivot age" of 64 that would ensure a full pension.

"What scares us about the points system is that we don't know how much a point is worth," said Kelly Grosset-Curtet, a 21-year-old student marching in Lyon. "It seems that it's a way of separating the good pensioners from the bad ones."

'Mess up Christmas'

Pressure on President Emmanuel Macron is growing

just days before the Christmas break after the top official overseeing the pension negotiations was forced to resign on Monday after it emerged he had failed to declare income. Commuters in Paris and other big cities have borne the brunt of the transport stoppages so far but holiday travel plans are now at risk, with just one in four high-speed TGV trains running yesterday.

Strike organizers are hoping for a repeat of 1995 when they forced the government to back down on pension reform after three weeks of metro and rail strikes just before Christmas.

Some 62 percent of respondents to a poll for the RTL broadcaster said they supported the strike but 69 percent said they wanted a "Christmas truce". "Nobody wants to mess up Christmas, not the strikers nor workers nor the French who want to be with their families," Laurent Escure of the UNSA union told France 2 television.

"But this is entirely the government's fault." More than 800,000 people turned out across France for the

first mass demo on December 5, but official figures suggest only 340,000 came out for the second rally five days later.

'Absurd'

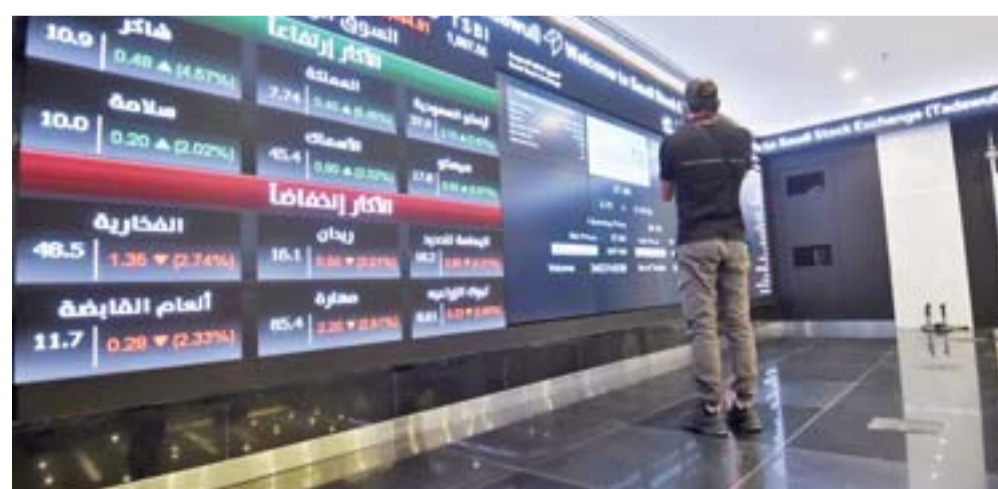
Train operator SNCF has warned that it may now be too late to get services back to normal by December 25. Retailers, hotel owners and restaurants, particularly in Paris, say the strike has severely dented revenues during the crucial holiday season, with some reporting sales drops of up to 60 percent. Several universities have cancelled or postponed year-end exams, and both the Garnier and Bastille Operas in Paris have cancelled dozens of performances, costing millions of euros in lost ticket sales.

"This is absurd," Sylvie Baheux, a 55-year-old gym teacher, said at Paris' Saint-Lazare station yesterday, adding that her usual one-hour commute to work had doubled during the strike. "It's complicated, but this pension reform needed to be done," she said. — AFP

Saudi Aramco share posts first drop since listing

RIYADH: Saudi Aramco shares posted the first drop yesterday after five days of listing on the Saudi Stock Exchange Tadawul, but its valuation stayed above the sensitive \$2 trillion mark. The energy giant was listed on Tadawul on December 11 following the world's largest initial public offering and continued to rise since then, before edging down slightly at close yesterday. Aramco shares closed yesterday trading at 37.75 riyals (\$10), down 0.25 riyals or 0.66 percent on the day, but the stock remains 18 percent higher than the IPO price of 32 riyals.

The market value of the world's largest listed firm still remained slightly above \$2 trillion, a figure de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman had sought when he first floated the sale almost four years ago. Saudi authorities sold 1.5 percent of Aramco in the IPO, raising \$25.6 billion and surpassing China's Alibaba stock sale as the largest in the world.



RIYADH: This picture taken December 12, 2019 shows a view of the board at the Stock Exchange Market (Tadawul) bourse in Riyadh. — AFP

Aramco shares rose to the maximum allowed 10 percent on the debut trading day and elevated its valuation briefly above the \$2 trillion mark the day after. It consolidated its valuation above \$2 trillion in the following days. Aramco has guaranteed that it will distribute dividends of at least \$75 billion every year until 2024. The company also said yesterday that it has completed the acquisition of 17 percent of South Korean Hyundai Oilbank for nearly \$1.2 billion. Hyundai Oilbank is a pri-

ivate oil refining company with a processing capacity of 650,000 barrels per day.

Meanwhile, Wall Street's main stock indexes yesterday were mixed at the open, a day after setting fresh all-time highs on the back of a truce in the US-China trade war. Boeing shares also weighed on the benchmark Dow Jones Industrial Average following the company's decision late Monday to halt production of a top-selling jet that has been grounded worldwide. — AFP

Oil prices rise on optimism about economy in 2020

LONDON: Crude oil traders have become progressively more bullish about the outlook for prices since the beginning of October as the trade war between the United States and China has eased, lifting concerns about a global recession. Deeper production cuts by Saudi Arabia and its allies in the expanded OPEC+ group of oil exporters, announced at the start of this month, have probably accelerated the bullish shift.

But production cuts are a second-order effect. The rise in oil prices has been primarily driven by greater optimism about the outlook for global trade and the economy next year. Manufacturing surveys and data on industrial production in the United States, China, India and Germany have all started to show tentative signs that the recent slowdown in global growth

and trade may be bottoming out.

In the United States, the Federal Reserve has cut interest rates three times by a total of 75 basis points since the middle of the year in a bid to extend the current expansion. In China and India, governments have announced stimulus packages and encouraged increased bank lending to revive their economies. Even Germany has started to discuss using fiscal policy to stimulate more growth.

As it enters a re-election year, the Trump administration's focus is shifting from trade war to stimulating the economy, accelerating growth and boosting jobs and wages. With so much fiscal and monetary stimulus around the world, and the electoral cycle entering a strongly pro-growth phase, crude traders are betting oil consumption will grow faster next year.

Loading up

Hedge funds and other money managers have purchased crude futures and options equivalent to almost 320 million barrels since Oct. 15. Buying started long before OPEC+ announced its decision to deepen production cuts at the start of this month and instead coincided with the rise in US equity prices. — Reuters

Business

First Mercedes-Benz 'Vanchella Festival' in the region launched in Abu Dhabi

Latest range of customized Mercedes-Benz vans showcased



Eissa Abdul Jalil Al-Fahim with a VIP guest in front of Sprinter VIP



Ahmed Abdul Jalil Al-Fahim, Abdul Jalil Taha Al-Fahim, Bilal Al-Ribi and Ahmad Jallad

ABU DHABI: Hosted by Emirates Motor Company Commercial Vehicles (EMC CV) - Mercedes-Benz Authorized General Distributor for the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and member of Al-Fahim Group - in partnership with Mercedes-Benz Vans MENA, the first 'Vanchella Festival' has been welcomed by the region's automotive industry professionals as an innovative way to engage with the latest fleet of vans and mobility options.

The Vanchella Festival was launched at the Fairmont Bab Al Bahr Hotel & Resort in Abu Dhabi serving as a platform for the brand to unveil the latest range of vehicles in a fun, festive setting.

The event was attended by over 200 guests, including: Abdulla Abdul Jalil Al-Fahim - Chairman of Al-Fahim Supervisory Board, Ahmed Abdul Jalil Al-Fahim - Chairman of Al-Fahim Group, Eissa Abdul Jalil Al-Fahim - General Secretary of Abdul Jalil Al-Fahim & Family Charity Foundation, VIP customers, senior stakeholders from around the region and members of the media.

A selection of the new vans were turned

into innovative experience zones to provide guests a way to creatively interact with the vehicles. Other vehicles on display included EMC CV's Sprinter 4x4 VIP and Department of Transport Links Sprinter mini-bus.

Commenting on the event, Thomas Greipel, General Manager of Mercedes-Benz Vans MENA said: "Our latest vehicles offer businesses high quality, innovative solutions that make workflow more efficient, all with the highest standards of safety. To bring this to life, we wanted to create a concept that would be fun, engaging and show our vehicles in their full potential. We are extremely happy with the turnout of our first Vanchella Festival and look forward to developing how we interactively showcase our products as solutions to specific customer needs."

Bilal Alribi, General Manager of Emirates Motor Company Commercial Vehicles in Abu Dhabi, added, "Our aim is to showcase the diversity, versatility, safety and advancement of the Mercedes-Benz vans range coupled with EMC CV's unique customizations. Excellence drives us to provide the best; and, through this entertaining

festival, we provided our guests with a glimpse of how we can add value and convenience to their mobility operations. This included, bespoke solutions for VIPs, innovatively converted people-movers, handicap friendly and accessible rides, among others which are becoming high in demand year-on-year."

Other new vehicles that were also on display from EMC CV included the newly facelifted Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 2020, a van that elevates the benchmark within the large van segment with new technology and intelligence that can be tailored precisely to any customer's needs. Being the first premium van to be launched in the region with the EURO 6 eco-friendly engine, the Sprinter was the hero of the night.

Amongst the most popular at the festival were the units retrofitted with a wheelchair lift to cater to People of Determination passengers and various breath-taking 5-star customizations for shuttle Sprinters. The new V-Class was also displayed, focusing on safety, with demonstrations of the new driver assistance systems, front-end design, exterior colour choices and trim options.



Sprinter VIP

How the 737 MAX production freeze affects airlines across the globe

SYDNEY/CHICAGO: Boeing Co has decided to suspend production of its best-selling 737 MAX model from January, the plane maker's biggest assembly-line halt in more than 20 years, as repercussions from two deadly crashes drag into 2020.

The US manufacturer said on Monday it would prioritize the delivery of the 400 737 MAX jets it had made since the model was grounded globally rather than feeding more airplanes into production. "This temporary move will put our system in a better position to recover and more efficiently deliver completed airplanes once we safely return the 737 MAX to service," Boeing Commercial Airplanes Chief Executive Stan Deal told employees in a memo seen by Reuters.

Global airlines also have more than 370 of the planes that were delivered between the 737 MAX's May 2017 introduction and March 2019 grounding and are now parked at airports and at desert storage around the world.

How will the 737 MAX production freeze impact airlines?

The immediate impact is likely to be muted

because once the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approves the 737 MAX to resume flying, airlines' first priority is to prepare the 737 MAX jets already in their fleets to return to service.

Then they will look to take delivery of the 400 planes that have been produced since the grounding.

Analysts estimate Boeing has the ability to deliver a maximum of 70 of the planes to customers per month, meaning getting through that backlog would take nearly six months, even if it kept the pause on production for that entire period.

FAA approval to resume flying is not likely until at least February and could be delayed until March, US officials have told Reuters. Other global regulators, including in Europe and China, have indicated they could take even longer to approve the plane's return.

737 MAX operators Southwest Airlines Co, United Airlines Holdings Inc and Fiji Airways said they were studying Boeing's announcement on the production halt and were unable to comment immediately on the impact to their schedules and capacity plans.

How long will it take Airlines to return the 737 MAX to service once regulators approve it?

Airlines will have to install Boeing's new software, run a series of maintenance checks on their idled jets and implement the recommended pilot training, the latter of which could vary from country to country.

US carriers have said the process will take at

least a month following FAA approval.

The return could also depend on regulators outside an airline's home jurisdiction. Singapore Airlines Ltd has said that even if Singapore approves the return of the 737 MAX, it will need permission from authorities in Indonesia and China for its planes to resume their normal routes.

Will the return of hundreds of grounded planes lead to over-capacity?

The impact will vary in different regions. In the United States, 737 MAX operators like Southwest, United and American Airlines Group Inc have said they see demand for the flight frequencies and routes they plan to restore or launch when the model returns.

Analysts, however, have expressed concern about the impact of any slowdown in US consumer spending. In Europe and Asia, travel demand has been more muted in recent months as economic growth slows, leading to a risk of heightened competition and declining fares once the 737 MAX returns.

"Airlines in Europe are actually quite happy with the delay as it removes over-capacity from the market at a time when the economy is in slo-mo," Bernstein analyst Daniel Roeska said. Passenger demand growth in Asia fell to 3.5 percent in October from 6.2 percent a year earlier, showed data from the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines. Its members are cautious about the outlook for 2020 after trade disputes undermined confidence and led to economic growth below initial forecasts this year. — Reuters



RENTON: MAX production line inside the Boeing factory is pictured on Monday in Renton, Washington. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.050
Euro	340.540
Sterling Pound	405.600
Canadian dollar	232.010
Turkish Lira	52.510
Swiss Franc	311.050
US Dollar Buying	296.600

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.775
Indian Rupees	4.285
Pakistani Rupees	1.971
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.676
Nepali Rupees	2.674
Singapore Dollar	225.390
Hongkong Dollar	39.026
Bangladesh Taka	3.542
Philippine Peso	6.014
Thai Baht	10.080
Malaysian ringgit	77.762

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.134
Qatari Riyal	83.565
Omani Riyal	790.253
Bahraini Dinar	807.890
UAE Dirham	82.836

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.800
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.963
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

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.700
Canadian Dollar	231.400
Sterling Pound	405.275
Euro	340.135
Swiss Frank	301.105
Bahrain Dinar	807.650
UAE Dirhams	83.090
Qatari Riyals	84.325
Saudi Riyals	81.880
Jordanian Dinar	429.635
Egyptian Pound	18.976
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.677
Indian Rupees	4.280
Pakistani Rupees	1.959
Bangladesh Taka	3.541
Philippines Peso	6.006
Cyprus pound	18.070
Japanese Yen	3.770
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.672
Malaysian Ringgit	74.265
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.830

Thai Bhat	11.030
Turkish Lira	52.350
Singapore dollars	223.015

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.396622	0.410522
Czech Korune	0.005289	0.014586
Danish Krone	0.041252	0.046252
Euro	0.331205	0.344905
Georgian Lari	0.104621	0.104621
Hungarian 0.000939	0.001129	
Norwegian Krone	0.029631	0.034831
Romanian Leu	0.054020	0.070870
Russian ruble	0.004841	0.004841
Slovakia	0.009083	0.019083
Slovenia Krona	0.028381	0.033381
Swiss Franc	0.302643	0.313643

Australasia	BUY	SELL
Australian Dollar	0.200371	0.212371
New Zealand Dollar	0.194181	0.203681

America	BUY	SELL
Canadian Dollar	0.225465	0.234465
US Dollars	0.299950	0.305250
US Dollars Mint	0.300450	0.304500

Asia	0.002973	0.003774
Bangladesh Taka		

Chinese Yuan	0.042085	0.045585
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036936	0.039686
Indian Rupee	0.003609	0.004381
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002689	0.002869
Korean Won	0.000250	0.000265
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069495	0.075495
Nepalese Rupee	0.002621	0.002961
Pakistan Rupee	0.001285	0.002055
Philippine Peso	0.005988	0.006288
Singapore Dollar	0.218974	0.228974
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001316	0.001896
Taiwan	0.009724	0.010274
Thai Baht	0.009724	0.010274
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013

Arab	BUY	SELL
Bahraini Dinar	0.800355	0.808399
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	0.000101	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021153	0.045153
Omani Riyal	0.784615	0.792501
Qatar Riyal	0.082860	0.083692
Saudi Riyal	0.079983	0.081293
Syrian Pound	0.001289	0.001509
Tunisian Dinar	0.102858	0.110858
Turkish Lira	0.045665	0.055501
UAE Dirhams	0.082149	0.082975
Yemeni Riyal	0.000988	0.001068

Business

PwC's seminar discusses technological and regulatory impacts on Kuwaiti businesses

Seminar held in collaboration with Union of Investment Companies

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: PwC's annual seminar in collaboration with Union of Investment Companies in Kuwait attracted many Kuwaiti and multinational companies yesterday.

The event was focused on providing updates around the business, tax and risk assurance landscape, and looked at the opportunities and challenges of doing business in Kuwait. The event also covered the far-reaching economic, fiscal and regulatory developments that are impacting businesses, and the steps companies need to take to transform their organizations and prosper in the digital era.

Topics centered around the role of technology and its potential to play a significant role in the transformation and fulfillment of Kuwait's vision 2035 and KDIPA one of its key drivers. Other topics on the agenda included, among others, a glimpse on a year of transfer pricing, VAT dispute hurdles and lessons learned, International Tax Change and its impact on Financial Institutions, as well as the emerging trends in regulatory technologies and corporate governance.

Sherif Shawki, Kuwait Country Senior

Partner provided insights on the overall tax landscape having to shed light on the increased interest in tax and other assurance matters affecting the business environment. A lot of these changes are due to Vision 2035 and the opening up of the economy. We see Kuwait participating in international agreements around taxation, which in turn is driving a lot of change businesses are having to deal with on-ground. Another factor affecting the tax landscape is the foreign investment influx due to massive government project. The role of tax in technology and global tax trends that will develop in Kuwait, as well as OECD's importance in relation to tax, are just some of the areas organizations should consider in response to these changes."

Based on the changes taking place, Kuwait is adopting all the new measures with a view of matching the global trends taking place around the world and of course become the new financial hub in the Middle East.

Taking the matter forward and ensuring such vision and objective is met, Kuwait is to take on such initiatives of having to implement such actions i.e Digital Transformation, more robust tax and financial structures and aligning Kuwait organizations with a more global

outlook to become one of the go to destinations for business opportunities. PwC's Middle East Tax Leader, Mark Schofield said: "The tax landscape is changing at a great pace affecting the way we do business. Every organization needs to acquire and develop the proper expertise and the know-how in order to respond to tax authorities in a timely manner."

UIC's Technical Support, Fadwa Darweesh also shed light on the importance of such collaboration with PwC on having to touch base on the significant impact of raising awareness on the latest updates taking place in Kuwait for the benefit of Investment Companies in addition to all entities in Kuwait.

"UIC is cooperating with PwC to shed light on the latest developments related to added value and financial supervision. UIC has raised many important issues on the agenda, especially after the stock market privatization and the requirements required by Borsa regarding regulatory commitment," she added. She noted that UIC role is to urge companies to attend the seminar to be prepared and ready for any decision issued by the Ministry of Finance regarding tax, new laws, or related issues, especially to be aware



Sherif Shawki — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

of the field of digitization where UIC aims to developments so that they can prepare for the time of imposing the tax in Kuwait.

Mexico to hike daily minimum wage by 20%

MEXICO CITY: The Mexican government on Monday agreed to raise the daily minimum wage by 20 percent, the second consecutive major increase, but experts said a large hike could make it challenging for the central bank to keep core inflation under control.

"We continue to gradually recover the value that the minimum salary has lost over time without creating instability, without creating inflation," Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said. "This is an important increase." The daily minimum wage will be 123.22

pesos (\$6.36) in 2020; in the northern border region, where it was raised by 5 percent, it will be 185.56 pesos. Nearly 11 million Mexican workers earn the equivalent of a minimum wage.

Lopez Obrador, a leftist who took office in December 2018, has vowed to close the wage gap in a country where almost half of the population lives in poverty.

Mexico increased the minimum wage by 16 percent this year, during which inflation eased to 2.97 percent in November, just below the central bank's target of 3 percent. But, core inflation, which strips out some volatile elements, was higher last month at 3.65 percent.

"In the past, real wage growth had been generally aligned with productivity," economists at JPMorgan wrote in a note issued ahead of the decision. "The new wage policy has opened a significant wedge between the two, which eventually will likely create economic imbalances."

The central bank, known as Banxico, did not immedi-

ately respond to a request for comment. In its most recent minutes, some Banxico members raised uncertainty around changes to the minimum wage. However, experts said a significant change to the minimum wage could put the breaks on the central bank's trend of cutting interest rates, which were cut from 8.25 percent at the end of last year to 7.50 percent.

Banxico will likely cut interest rates again on Thursday, to 7.25 percent, according to a Reuters poll of 16 analysts. At the end of 2020, the rate could be at 6.50 percent. Experts also said that a significant increase of the minimum wage would put pressure on salaries in the formal economy, a dynamic called a "lighthouse effect" that is difficult to calculate but usually drives up inflation.

"There's no consensus on what effects this will have on other wages or how it will affect core inflation," said Benito Berber, chief economist for Latin America at Natixis. — Reuters

Help others or go bust, migrant billionaire tells big business

GENEVA: Businesses that fail to look beyond the bottom line will not survive as consumer pressure also to do good mounts, said the billionaire behind top-selling US yoghurt brand Chobani. Hamdi Ulukaya, who grew up in a family of semi-nomadic Kurdish shepherds in Turkey before emigrating to the United States in his 20s, said the days of companies being run solely to maximize profit for shareholders were over.

His company, Chobani, has a policy of including refugees in its workforce and he has pledged much of his personal fortune to helping those forcibly displaced through his Tent Refugee Partnership, a charity that mobilizes companies to do more.

"I think businesses that do not get involved with this type of humanitarian issues are not going to exist in the next generation," Ulukaya told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview ahead of the Global Forum on Refugees in Geneva. "I think the business community knows this better than ever before, even three years ago. You see it more and more. The sole purpose of business is making money - that's garbage, it's old, it's done, it's finished."

The Global Forum on Refugees is a two-day meeting of political, business and humanitarian leaders designed to secure commitments of help after a decade in which the number of refugees worldwide has doubled to more than 25 million. Ulukaya said refugees were not only among his hardest working staff, they were also innovative and entrepreneurial - qualities bred by the need to survive in the toughest of circumstances.

One in five workers at Chobani, the Turkish word for shepherd in a nod to Ulukaya's own background, is a refugee or migrant. Hiring refugees "is good business", said the 47-year-old, who was last week awarded the prestigious Global Citizen Business Leader Award in London.

His comments come amid growing pressure on businesses to extend their priorities beyond profit and consider what they can contribute on pressing issues, from climate change to fostering greater economic equality. Earlier this year the Business Roundtable, which represents some of the United States' biggest companies, made headlines when it changed its definition of the purpose of a corporation from looking after shareholders to "improving our society".

Challenges

On Monday, companies including furniture giant Ikea, Vodafone and Danish toymaker Lego jointly pledged about \$250 million to programs to help refugees access jobs, training and education.

And fashion retailer H&M has just signed up to Ulukaya's Tent Refugee Partnership, which seeks to foster a larger role for the private sector in helping refugees become more self-sufficient. H&M already has about 500 refugees in its supply chain in Turkey, which hosts the largest number of refugees worldwide, and has said it will increase that to at least 2,000 by 2025.

Ulukaya said employing refugees was not without its challenges, from language problems and lack of training to simple things like workers not owning a car.

But he said the additional work paid off in the end. "It just requires a little bit of extra effort. Not a lot," he said, urging more companies in countries hosting high numbers of refugees to do more.

Investors and company boards have already accepted the need to do good, said Ulukaya - the challenge for many is figuring out how. "The investor knows that, the board knows that, the CEO knows that. The problem is, how do I change the way I was doing things to a new way of doing things? "But it will happen. I don't think tomorrow's consumers are going to value goods and services from the companies who do not do the right thing." — Reuters

US, UK approve Roche's \$4.3bn purchase of Spark

ZURICH: Swiss pharmaceuticals giant Roche said it had received the necessary approval from competition authorities to acquire US gene-therapy group Spark, after the two companies reached a multibillion-dollar deal earlier this year. Founded in 2013, Spark Therapeutics specializes in a new and growing segment of medicine for genetic diseases such as blindness, haemophilia, and neurodegenerative conditions.

The US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) "unconditionally cleared Roche's pending acquisition of Spark", the Swiss company said in a statement on Monday. "All antitrust approvals required to complete the offer have now been received," it said, after confirming earlier Monday that Britain's Competition and Markets Authority had also cleared the pending acquisition.

Roche and Spark sealed the deal worth \$4.3 billion (3.7 billion euros) in February. In a separate statement, the FTC said it had made its decision "following an exhaustive, 10-month investigation" into potential competitive harm that could result from the move. Spark's biggest treatment under study is a therapy for haemophilia, a disorder where blood does not clot properly to stop bleeding.

"A key question in the investigation was whether Roche would have the incentive to delay or discontinue Spark's developmental gene therapy for hemophilia A," the FTC said. "The evidence... did not indicate that Roche would have the incentive to delay or terminate" Spark's therapy development, or affect Roche's haemophilia drug Hemlibra, it concluded. Roche stocks rose 1.18 percent to 304.10 Swiss Francs Monday on the Swiss stock exchange. — AFP



How rare earth shocks lifted an upstart Australian mining company

MOUNT WELD: Sprawled across a spent volcano on the remote edge of the Great Victoria Desert in Western Australia, the Mount Weld mine seems a world away from the US-China trade war. But the dispute has been a lucrative one for Lynas Corp, Mount Weld's Australian owner. The mine boasts one of the world's richest deposits of rare earths, crucial components of everything from iPhones to weapons systems. Hints this year by China that it could cut off rare earths exports to the United States as a trade war raged between the two countries sparked a US scramble for new supplies - and sent Lynas shares soaring. As the only non-Chinese company thriving in the rare earths sector, Lynas shares have gained 53% this year. The shares jumped 19 percent last week on news that the company may submit a tender for a US plan to build rare earths processing facilities in the United States.

China did US a favor

Rare earths are crucial for producing electric vehicles, and are found in the magnets that run motors for wind turbines, as well as in computers and other consumer products. Some are essential in military equipment such as jet engines, missile guidance systems, satellites and lasers.

Lynas' rare earths bonanza this year has been driven by US fears over Chinese control over the sector. But the foundations for that boom were established almost a decade ago, when another country - Japan - experienced its own rare-earths shock. In 2010, China restricted export quotas of rare earths to Japan following a territorial dispute between the two countries, although Beijing said the curbs were based on environmental concerns.

Fearing that its high-tech industries were vulnerable, Japan decided to invest in Mount Weld - which Lynas acquired from Rio Tinto in 2001 - in order to secure supplies. Backed by funding from Japan's government, a Japanese trading company, Sojitz, signed a \$250 million supply deal for rare earths mined at the site. "The Chinese government did us a favour," said Nick Curtis, who was executive chairman at Lynas at the time.

The deal also helped fund the building of a processing plant that Lynas was planning in Kuantan, Malaysia. Those investments helped Japan cut its rare earths reliance on China by a third, according to Michio Daito, who oversees rare earths and other mineral resources at Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.

The deals also set the foundations for Lynas' business. The investments allowed Lynas to develop its mine and get a processing facility in Malaysia with water and power supplies that were in short supply at Mount Weld. The

arrangement has been lucrative for Lynas. At Mount Weld, ore is concentrated into a rare earth oxide that is sent to Malaysia for separating into various rare earths. The remainder then goes to China, for further processing. Mount Weld's deposits have "underpinned the company's ability to raise both equity and debt funding," Amanda Lacaze, the company's chief executive, said in an email to Reuters. "Lynas' business model is to add value to the Mount Weld resource at its processing plant in Malaysia." Andrew White, an analyst at Curran & Co in Sydney, cited "the strategic nature of Lynas being the only producer of rare earths outside of China" with refining capacity for his 'buy' rating on the company. "It's the refining capacity that makes the big difference."

Targeting the US.

Lynas in May signed an agreement with privately held Blue Line Corp in Texas to develop a processing plant which would extract rare earths from material sent from Malaysia. Blue Line and Lynas executives declined to give details about cost and capacity. Lynas on Friday said it would submit a tender in response to a US Department of Defense call for proposals to build a processing plant in the United States. Winning the bid would give Lynas a boost to develop the existing plant at the Texas site into a separating facility for heavy rare earths.

James Stewart, a resources analyst with Ausbil Investment Management Ltd in Sydney, said he anticipated that the Texas processing plant could add 10-15 percent to earnings annually. Lynas was in pole position for the tender, he said, given that it could easily send material processed in Malaysia to the United States, and convert the Texas plant relatively cheaply, something that other companies would struggle to replicate. "If the US was thinking about where best to allocate capital," he said, "Lynas is well and truly ahead."

Price pressures

Challenges remain, however. China, by far the leading producer of rare earths, has stepped up production in recent months, while declining global demand from electric vehicle makers has also driven prices down. That will put pressure on Lynas' bottom line and test the US resolve to spend to develop alternative sources. The Malaysia plant has also been the site of frequent protests by environmental groups concerned about the disposal of low level-radioactive debris. Lynas, backed by the International Atomic Energy Agency, says the plant and its waste disposal are environmentally sound. The company is also tied to an operating license that expires on March 2, although it is widely expected to be extended. But the possibility that more stringent licence conditions could be enacted by Malaysia has deterred many institutional investors. Highlighting those concerns, yesterday, Lynas shares fell 3.2 percent after the company said an application to increase production at the plant failed to get approval from Malaysia. Still, Lynas says it sees great long-term potential for the niche it has carved out. "We will continue to be the supplier of choice to non-Chinese customers," Lacaze told the company's annual general meeting last month. — Reuters

Japan to tighten screws on tech giants to ensure transparency

TOKYO: Japan will tighten regulations to prevent technology giants including Facebook Inc and Google from abusing their market power and having unfair advantage over small businesses, officials said yesterday.

The new law would oblige tech giants, including Google LLC, Apple Inc, Facebook Inc and Amazon.com Inc to disclose the terms of contracts with customers and to report to the government about their operations, they said. Japan's move followed the global trend - from the United States to Europe and Australia - of tightening the regulatory screws on the online platforms, which have policy makers scrambling to address concerns ranging from anti-trust issues to the spread of "fake news" and hate speech.

Google and Facebook have opposed tighter regulation, while traditional media owners, including Rupert Murdoch's News Corp, have backed reform. "We want to put the new law into effect in the way that would make business transactions become transparent without imposing excessive burdens or hampering innovation," Economy Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura told reporters.

"The new law constitutes a framework for 'platformers' to make autonomous efforts to maintain transparency and fairness." For protection of personal data, the government will revise the personal information protection law to allow individuals to request digital firms to suspend the use of their data. — AFP

Business

Lexus presents its vision of future electrification with LF-30 Concept

'Lexus Electrified' vision targets a fundamental leap in vehicle performance

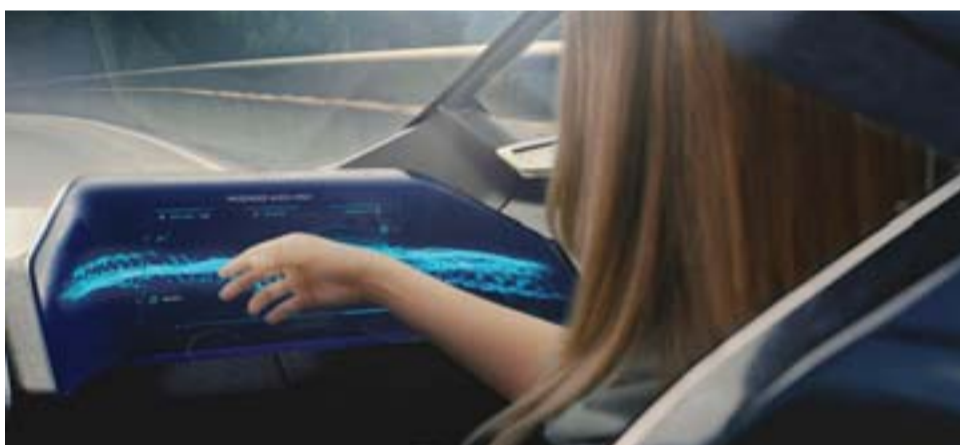


KUWAIT: In its continued efforts to deliver innovative and amazing experiences, Lexus unveiled its "Lexus Electrified" vision for an upcoming generation of electrified vehicles. Headlining this moment was the debut of the Lexus LF-30 Electrified Concept.

Since the brand's creation in 1989, Lexus has endeavored to deliver to its customers innovative and amazing product and brand experiences that stimulate the five senses. Since the launch of the RX 400h in 2005, Lexus has led the world as a pioneer in electrification technologies such as the two-stage reduction gear and the multi-stage hybrid system which leverage technology to offer excellent performance and the direct driving sensation characteristic of Lexus Hybrid vehicles.

The "Lexus Electrified" vision targets a fundamental leap in vehicle performance, handling, control and driver enjoyment even as mobility within our society continues to change with autonomous driving and vehicle electrification. Evoking the original fun of driving, Lexus is developing new advanced posture control and other electrification technologies to further evolve driving pleasure, and to fundamentally transform the essence of luxury vehicles of the future. Towards this end, Lexus is drawing on the lessons learned developing the core technologies found in Lexus' popular range of gasoline-electric hybrids, including battery management, power control modules, and electric motors. In particular, the technology of Lexus Electrified enables integrated control of powertrain, steering, suspension, and brakes, realizing the ultimate potential of the motor control technology cultivated in HV. With this technology, we can control the driving force to provide ideal vehicle posture according to each driving situation. Lexus endeavors to continue providing enjoyable and safer driving vehicles.

By 2025, Lexus will have available electrified versions of all Lexus vehicle



models and are aiming for the sales of electrified vehicle models to outpace those of conventional internal combustion engine vehicle models.

'LF-30 Electrified' new concept embodies the vision of Lexus' electrification

A glass roof above the rear seats features voice control and a gesture controlled "SkyGate" display window that

uses AR to display various types of information, such as a realistic star-filled sky, user-favorite videos, and even navigation.

With in-wheel electric motors, steering by wire, and Lexus Advanced Posture Control, the LF-30 can offer a dynamic experience unlike any currently available Lexus Advanced Posture Control technology regulates the drive-power output from high-torque electric motors to adjust vehicle posture in tune with human

sensibilities. Completely independent control of front and rear drive wheels allows appropriate provision of front-wheel drive, rear-wheel drive, and all-wheel drive, depending on the driving situation. Compact and lightweight drive-power units expand freedom in vehicle packaging and are used to enable the driver to enjoy ideal driving, regardless of the road surface or driving conditions.

The steer-by-wire system eliminates a mechanical connection to allow more flexible turning control depending on driving conditions, and a more precise steering feel aligned with the driver's intention. It also contributes to a greater sense of openness by allowing the steering controller can be shifted forward and out of the way during autonomous driving.

Onboard AI distinguishes the voices of vehicle occupants, and uses personalized information stored on the driver's control key to serve as a partner. It facilitates the adjustment of elements of the interior environment, such as air temperature and audio, and the setting of navigation routes

and destinations, while also making proposals for activities after arrival. It also understands driver's preferences and helps them control the suspension and powertrain settings in real-time according to the driving scene.

The LF-30 Electrified also carries the 'Lexus Airporter' drone-technology support vehicle. Using autonomous control, the Lexus Airporter is capable of such tasks as independently transporting baggage from a household doorstep to the vehicle's luggage area. Based on the latest autonomous driving technology concept of 'Lexus Teammate', the LF-30 Electrified features advanced driving support functions in the form of a Chauffeur mode and a Guardian mode. Occupants can enjoy both comfort and peace of mind during autonomous driving with advanced posture control technology being employed. Furthermore, a self-parking function and a front-door pickup function in which the LF-30 Electrified autonomously moves from driveway to doorstep provide an especially high level of convenience.

Gulf Bank adds Luxuria Concierge service to 'Easy Pay' program

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the addition of the Luxuria Concierge Services as part of a growing list of over 100 shopping partners in its Easy Pay program. The program, which is the first of its kind in Kuwait, allows Gulf Bank credit cardholders to shop from a variety of different vendors and pay for their purchases in installments over the course of 12 months, with zero interest.

With the addition of Luxuria as an Easy Pay partner, customers can now access exclusive benefits as part of a high-quality concierge service enjoyed by elite clients, chief executives and prominent businessmen and women in the region. Luxuria, winners of "Best Luxury & Lifestyle Concierge Company" in the Middle East by "European CEO Awards" for 2019, and Best Luxury Concierge Services in Kuwait by

"Luxury Lifestyle Awards for 2019" aims to enrich their clients' lifestyles with experiences tailored around various interests and passions, all while maintaining unprecedented global standards. Luxuria's services include travel arrangements, private jet bookings, yacht chartering, hotel & resort reservations, spa reservations, restaurant bookings, cruise bookings, rail bookings, airport priority handling bookings, chauffeured services & car rentals, emergency travel assistance, private shopping, flower arrangement services, theatre & concert tickets reservations, sports tickets reservations, summer camps arrangements, worldwide shipping, visa assistance, and the management of frequent miles programs for airlines & hotels.

Commenting on the announcement, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "At Gulf Bank, we are always looking for innovative ways to treat our customers, and are constantly working to launch creative solutions that make our customers' lives that much easier. We are excited to introduce Luxuria Concierge

Membership program to the Easy Pay program which will allow all Gulf Bank credit cardholders access to a concierge service that is tailored to their lifestyles, whether in Kuwait or abroad. As part of the Easy Pay program, our clients can pay for these services according to a more flexible schedule and without the hassle of additional processing fees or interest."

With Easy Pay, Gulf Bank credit cardholders can pay for purchases over the course of 12 months and with 0 percent interest when they shop at more than 100 participating outlets. The process of enrolling any transaction at participating shopping outlets into Easy Pay is seamless. Customers can simply request Easy Pay at the merchant outlet prior to making their purchase, and do not need to submit any additional documents or call the bank. The cashier at the merchant outlet will then process the credit card transaction on the dedicated Easy Pay terminal, and the transaction will be automatically converted into Easy Pay. Customers can also avail multiple Easy Pay facilities on their credit cards at the same time.



Ahmad Al-Amir

Unilever lowers sales forecast on S Asia slowdown

THE HAGUE: Anglo-Dutch consumer giant Unilever, the maker of Magnum ice cream and Dove soap, warned yesterday that sales will grow below expectations for 2019, due largely to a slowdown in South Asia.

The firm, whose products also include Ben

and Jerry's ice cream and divisive yeast spread Marmite, said growth would be "slightly below its guidance of the lower half of its 3-5 percent multi-year range".

"Due to challenges in certain markets, we expect a slight miss to our full year underlying sales growth delivery," chief executive Alan Jope said in a statement. Growth in the first half of 2020 was also expected to come in below three percent for the firm whose 400 brands further include Knorr and Lipton tea, he added. Unilever said the miss was "a result of challenges in the quarter in some markets, including the economic slowdown in South Asia, one of Unilever's largest markets, and trading condi-

tions in West Africa remaining difficult."

A full recovery in North America was expected to take time despite 'early signs' of improvement, while trading in developed markets generally also remained 'challenging', Unilever said.

"Growth remains our top priority and we are confident we have the right strategy and investment in place to step up our performance," added Jope, who took the helm in January. Previous CEO Paul Polman announced his retirement last year shortly after Unilever was forced to ditch a controversial post-Brexit plan to move its headquarters from London to the Netherlands. —AFP

Sterling slides on revived no-deal Brexit fears

LONDON: The British pound slid yesterday on news Prime Minister Boris Johnson will outlaw any extension to a Brexit transition beyond the end of next year, reviving fears of a no-deal divorce.

In late morning London deals, the pound sank by as much as 1.25 percent against the dollar, while the euro surged almost 1.3 percent. The UK currency had surged late last week after Johnson's governing right-wing Conservative Party clinched a landslide general election victory.

"Concerns about a no-deal Brexit at the end of the transition period are exerting pressure on the pound," said analyst Michael Brown at foreign exchange firm Caxton.

Those fears also sent London's FTSE 100 shares index into negative territory on Tuesday, one day after it had risen sharply. Johnson won a big majority Thursday on a promise to take Britain out of the European Union by the end of January, followed by a transition period when London and Brussels negotiate a trade agreement. European leaders have said that the December 2020 deadline would be too tight to complete a comprehensive deal.

Johnson plans to pass a law guaranteeing Britain's Brexit transition period cannot run beyond the end of 2020, a source in his office said yesterday. "The move to pass a bill to legislate it was unexpected by some and has raised concerns about a no-deal Brexit once more," added XTB analyst David Cheetham.

The pound won only limited support from official data showing that Britain's unemployment rate remains at a 45-year low at 3.8 percent.

Trade euphoria fades

Eurozone stock markets pulled lower as euphoria faded somewhat over the China-US trade deal. Most Asian bourses however rose following another record-breaking lead from Wall Street, after Friday's agreement between the world's top two economies ended months of wrangling and removed immediate uncertainty. The deal, which will see Washington wind back some tariffs and China ramp up purchases of US goods as well as change its trade practices, sparked an equities surge that continued Monday in New York, with all three main indices ending at all-time highs.

But while the news has been met with broad relief, observers point out that the deal is only the first and easiest-part of a wider agreement many think could take years to complete. — AFP

What's On

Celebrate festive season at Sheraton Kuwait & Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait



Welcome the holidays with a cheerful mood. The most festive and memorable season awaits you at the Sheraton Kuwait and the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait. A medley of dining offers and stay options are prepared to showcase the season's best with holiday themed lunches and celebratory dinner for the guests to enjoy. Soak in the lively atmosphere and look forward to an abundant spread of international and local favorites, primed to bring a touch of warmth to the year-end celebrations. Enjoy a variety of international holiday dishes specially prepared at the Al-Hambra. Delight in the traditional English tea in a classic ambience with original flavors at the English Tea Lounge. The Riccardo Restaurant welcomes you to experience intimate fine dining of genuine Italian cuisine whilst listening to live music performed by our Italian duo during the holidays. Authentic Lebanese food at the Le Tarbouche, classic Indian cuisine at the Bukhara and Persian

favorites at the Shahrayar restaurant, share the joy with festive goodies and merry feasts at our distinctive restaurants. Exclusive hotel packages are offered on rooms and suites to create the perfect holidays. Pass by and see our "Winter Wonderland" themed decorated hotel lobbies, perfect for memorable photos. And at the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait, offering its guests with a breathtaking view of Kuwait City from the panoramic pool on the 42nd floor, join us as we welcome the New Year with a festive dinner, with an array of unique selection of dishes prepared specifically to suit your tastes accompanied by live music. As for everyone's favorite pizzeria - La Mamma welcomes you with the most delicious types of pizza prepared from fresh ingredients and passionately baked on a wood fired oven, in addition to pasta and fettuccine, which the Chef brings in front of you in a traditional atmosphere with a true flavor of the charming Italian countryside.



CBK takes part in Gulf Oil open day activities

Within its social responsibility activities and the efforts it exerts to introduce its services and products to the public, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently took part in the Open Day activities organized by Kuwait Gulf Oil company for local banks. During the activity, CBK employees introduced the comprehensive services and

different accounts it provides for clients and visitors of the exhibition. The employees explained the use of T-pay and Code-QR for the visitors who admired the new services. The visitors were also briefed about CBK's various types of accounts, credit and debit cards that give holders access to VIP lounges in various airports, the personal assistant and other services.



Al-Jazeera signs contract with TEC to invest in Aqua Park expansion

Al-Jazeera Company for Recreational Projects, a subsidiary of the Aqua Park recently signed a contract with TEC to reinvest in the park site after expanding water area and slopes to match international developments and adding new paddle in tennis courts, which merge tennis and squash. In this regard, Director and Board member of the Aqua Park City, Mohammed Abdul Redha Khorsheed

stressed that winning this contract reflects officials' trust in TEC, the original owner of the Aqua Park. Khorsheed promised to present new activities over the few coming years for all visitors and expressed hopes that various state bodies, such as the state property, Kuwait Municipality and MEW, would support this 'national project' and facilitate all the needed licenses.

Al-Babtain Group's foodservice arm to participate in Horeca Expo

Al-Babtain Group has announced that its Foodservice Division is going to participate in the next Horeca Kuwait Exhibition, offering a variety of distinctive products, goods, and services to all hospitality providers in the country. The Group stressed its interest in the various associated activities and events of this specialized exhibition which helps those involved in the hospitality, food, and hotel and restaurant catering keep up closely with the requirements of the market.

Organized by Leader Group for Consulting and Development in collaboration with the Lebanese Hospitality Services Co, Al-Babtain revealed that it is renewing its golden sponsorship of the Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition to be held during 20-22 January at the International Fairground-Mishref.

Hani Merhi, Chief Executive Officer of Al-Babtain Consumer Goods Division, said that the interest in the hospitality exhibition is a continuation of the Group's role in the establishment of the food industries and services in Kuwait since the foundation of the Group, sixty years ago which started as a small company for promoting vital consumer goods. This business has gradually grown into Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain & Sons Co and become, by virtue of its effective plans and strategies, one of the region's largest trading groups, with added activities in the fields of electronics, electric appliances, real estate, education, entertainment, and others.



Hani Merhi

He added that "Al-Babtain Group has become, through its affiliates, the sole distributor of renowned consumer and food brands in the Middle East, Europe, and the USA, with its products covering all areas in Kuwait and representing international brands and agencies such as: Elle & Vire, CORMAN, Kiri, La Vache Qui Rit, Wexford, Eurial, MAZOLA, Shoprite, LAVAZZA Coffee, Perrier, SOHAT, Holsten, Power Horse, Villa Germania, Frigomerc Meats, Glade, Windex, Mr Muscle, Pledge, Ziploc, Kiwi, Parex, and many others. Merhi pointed out that the advanced status of the Horeca Kuwait exhibition locally and abroad, in terms of reputation and organization, make it a real qualitative addition to the world of specialized exhibitions and conferences in Kuwait. In this context, the exhibition has become vital to the sectors it covers given the vitality and the commercial and financial importance of their markets as well as their continuous new products, services and facilities, while the Kuwait market is enjoying quantitative and consumer growth. The exhibition, therefore, provides an opportunity for the exchange of expertise, knowledge and services between major companies which are actively involved, locally, regionally and internationally, in the food and beverages industry and between hospitality institutions and facilities such as hotels and restaurants and other institutions providing care to guests and patrons. It also contributes to the improvement of these services through the exhibition's associated cooking competitions in which hundreds of employees of these institutions and facilities take part under the supervision of international panels and chefs."

Emphasizing the importance of this event for the Group, he said: "Since our Group prides itself regarding their employees' skills and passion as the cornerstone of the unique success it has achieved and continues to achieve."

For its part, Leaders Group Company appreciated the golden sponsorship provided by Al-Babtain Group. It also stressed its commitment to encourage successful marketing events particularly in hospitality services and products, as well as its longstanding keenness - since its inception - to offer an experience that combines passion, innovation, and renewal.

Gloria in Excelsis Deo by Men's Voice and Choral Society

Heralding the sounds of glory to the people of Kuwait, Men's Voice and Choral Society staged their 19th Annual Christmas Carols at the Indian Central School, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh on 6th December 2019, to mark the beginning of the Christmas season.

The night overflowed with melodies that warmed hearts and filled listeners with a sense of joyfulness as the charismatic chorale progressed through carols that took listeners on a journey around the world to hear wonderful carols and to listen to the beautiful strains of music from Kerala, making it a night to remember.

The evening event opened with prayer by Rev Prasad Thomas, Vicar of the St. Peter's CSI Congregation, Kuwait. Abraham Thomas, the Joint Secretary of the group, welcomed the guests and the audience to the concert. Under the able guidance of their choir master - Ajith Babu the performance of Men's Voice and Choral Society was a real treat to the eyes and ears of those gathered. Adding to the sparkle of the evening were the special performances by the Junior Choir with a few of their special



songs conducted by Sandhya Ann John and Mithun Oommen.

Rev Amanuel B Ghareeb, Pastor of the Arabic Congregation in Kuwait and President of the Common Council, felicitated the choir for their music and service during these past 19 years. Pastor Gerald Golbeck, Senior Pastor of The Lighthouse Church (TLC) in Kuwait also offered a felicitation to the group. A thought provoking and inspiring Christmas message was delivered by Rev Fr Liju K. Ponnachen, Asst

Vicar of the St. Gregorius Indian Orthodox Maha Edavaka. Ninan Joseph Thomas, the President of the Men's Voice and Choral Society rendered the Vote of Thanks. Bobby Kurien, Evan Sunil Abraham and Caren Ann Suresh added essence to the evening by their dynamic compeering for the event.

The Group took the opportunity to kick start their celebration for their 20th Anniversary Music Concert to be held on December 4th 2020. The Inauguration was conducted by a lighting of 4 Candles with

each Candle marking 5 years on our Musical Journey. The Candles were lit by Rev. Amanuel B. Ghareeb, Thomas John, Senior Members of the group and Office Bearers.

One of the highlights of the evening was the rendition of the Program Theme Song: 'Gloria in Excelsis Deo' followed by 'The Journey Begins' marking the start of their 20th Year Celebrations. The evening culminated with the Choir singing 'Silent Night' followed by the closing prayer by Amanuel B. Ghareeb and benediction by Pastor Gerald Golbeck. The organizers of this concert, left no stone-unturned to ensure a memorable day for everyone, Akash John Thomas and Mathew M. Varghese, Thomas Thomas along with the office bearers President- Ninan Joseph, Vice President - Kurien George, Secretary Mathew Varghese and Joint Secretary Abraham Thomas.

Kudos to the Office-bearers, organizers, choir masters and members Of Men's voice and Choral Society & Junior Choir on presenting an enthralling and heartwarming Christmas concert.

KCST at award ceremony with Sheikha Aida Salem Al-Sabah

In the presence of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, KCST honored the winners of the Informatics Award of His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah. The KCST (Kuwait College of Science and Technology) team had the privilege of celebrating their achievements with Sheikha Aida Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

During the closing ceremony, Eng Bassam Al-Shammari, the Chairman of the Higher Organizing Committee of the Sheikh Salem

Al-Ali Al-Sabah Informatics Award announced that the Award had achieved great success in developing human capabilities in the field of information development. KCST had joined with five teams and had incredible inventions. Dr Tareq Al-Zayyat, the head of the teams added that this prize reflected the students in developing their information technology and gave them the right spirit of competing in this field. The Award allowed the students to drive their education in human capabilities.



TIES Center session

The TIES Center cordially invites you to the first session of our repeated course Purification and Prayer today (December 18th, at 11am). In this class, we will learn the difference between cleanliness and purity from the Islamic point of view, review the significance of the six articles of faith and their role in instilling in the believers a positive attitude toward life, and discuss some tangible benefits of implementing the pillars of Islam. We will also ponder the prophetic tradition to do what benefits us, how to turn duties and inclinations into acts of worship and a cause for immense rewards from Allah (SWT), and how to keep away from anti-social behaviors. Finally, we will discuss the implications of believing in destiny (Al-Qadha' wal-Qadar), and the practical methods of achieving both internal and external purity.

Health & Science

In Yemen, 'sin' is blamed for surging climate losses

SAWIA VALLEY, Yemen: The torrential floods and brutal droughts of recent years have left their mark on this valley in southeast Yemen. A road that links Mukalla, the capital of Hadramout province, with its remote rural villages has been almost wiped out by repeated landslides. Giant boulders lie strewn along the road, alongside the trunks of downed trees. "The weather now is between two extremes: heavy drought or destructive brief floods and rains," said Omer Abu Baker a farmer and shepherd from Hara'a, a village overlooking the Sawia Valley floor.

Civil-war-torn Yemen faces vast challenges, from a struggling economy and collapsing health system to some of the world's worst shortages of food, water and jobs. But more severe weather linked to climate change - and a shortage of funding to deal with it - is making life even harder. The families who live in this part of southern Yemen say weather patterns have become particularly severe since 2015, when Cyclone Chapala - the strongest recorded storm to hit the region - triggered heavy rains and severe flooding.

In 2018, Yemen was again hit by Cyclone Luban, which killed 14 people. Abu Baker said the worsening weather has driven herders to relocate both their homes and their animals, to try to avoid more losses. "First Chapala devastated our village and farms, then Luban ruined that which was left behind," Abu Baker said in his quick Bedouin accent. "I am now in

my 80s (and) I can tell you that I have never seen such destructive floods and rains. Rains are now associated with destruction," he said.

For years, ahead of the rainy season, farmers have cleaned water channels, covered their farmland with fertilizer and then waited for the sky to open. That old pattern, however, is being abandoned. Abu Baker said. "Now, we do nothing as we think floods would wash away all our defenses," he said. When Cyclone Luban struck the valley last year, the ensuing floods buried his farms in muddy silt. It also left many villages isolated for 10 days - and disrupted field work for six months, he said.

Abu Baker and his family were plunged into debt in order to pay for the removal of mud blocking the farm's irrigation well and to repair damaged flood-control banks, he said. "We could not irrigate the farm for six months and then we managed to restore crops gradually," Abu Baker said, adding that the family took the risk of borrowing money for repairs as the farm grows high-earning crops including tobacco, lemon and pumpkin.

Like many of the nomadic people in the region, he and other residents say they do not understand why floods and downpours are gaining in strength. The problem, they say, must be an angry God. "The strong rains and floods are due to our sins. People do not pray," Abu Baker said, adding he has never heard about climate changes. Now, when he hears news of a storm on the way, the farmer

and his family stay indoors, praying. Not all those hit by the worsening storms have been able to recover. Like many people who lost the use of their farms to storm damage, farmer Omer Hassan, 55, decided to move permanently to Mukalla. Hassan, a father of six, said his fields and cattle used to earn his family sufficient income, until the second cyclone "wiped out the remaining land". Today he works as a security guard and land broker, and keeps an eye on his remaining sheep and goats to earn a living. "I cannot go back to my village as I cannot afford to repair my land. I wish someone could help," he said at his brother's home on a hilltop in the eastern outskirts of Mukalla.

Barriers to adapting

Mohammed Barashed, a professor of geomorphology at Hadramout University, said adapting to the harsher weather conditions will require radical changes in the way houses and cities are built, to reduce the risks. "People have to change roofs of their houses. There should be a law criminalizing building homes on water courses," said Barashed, who published a paper in 2017 about the impacts of Cyclone Chapala on Hadramout.

If cyclones continue to grow in strength and changes aren't made, the country risks losing roads, bridges and many of its mud-constructed houses, he warned. But Yemeni authorities say finding the money to respond



A woman and child are seen in an enclosure made from fabrics at a makeshift camp for displaced Yemenis in Hajjah province on Monday. — AFP

to the growing threats is difficult. The surge in cyclones coincided with an upswing in violence in the country, which led to the country's oil and gas revenue drying up, said Faraj Salmeen Al-Bahsani, the governor of Hadramout.

He told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that his province has a huge shortfall in funding needed to repair damage from previous

cyclones and get ready for coming threats. "When we hear a cyclone will hit the province, we clean water courses and deploy the army. (But) floods have destroyed agricultural lands (and) electricity towers and washed away land bridges," he said. "Our resources and capabilities are meager. We are in need of an advanced meteorological center that can detect cyclones." — Reuters

CLINIC

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248 33 199

INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGY & PAIN MANAGEMENT

These services include, but are not limited to, the below:

- Treatment of Spine-related pain & sciatica
- Treatment of neck & shoulder pain
- Treatment of Arthritis
- Treatment of Sports injuries
- Treatment of Entrapment neuropathies
- Treatment of Cancer-related pain
- Treatment of post-surgical pain

- Treatment of Cervicogenic migraine headaches
- Nucleoplasty
- Kyphoplasty/vertebroplasty
- Treatment of back & joint pains with radiofrequency waves
- Image guided biopsies
- Treatment of Uterine fibroids via embolization
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- Fellow of American College of Surgery
- Canadian Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
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Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
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- Faculty member of (BEST).
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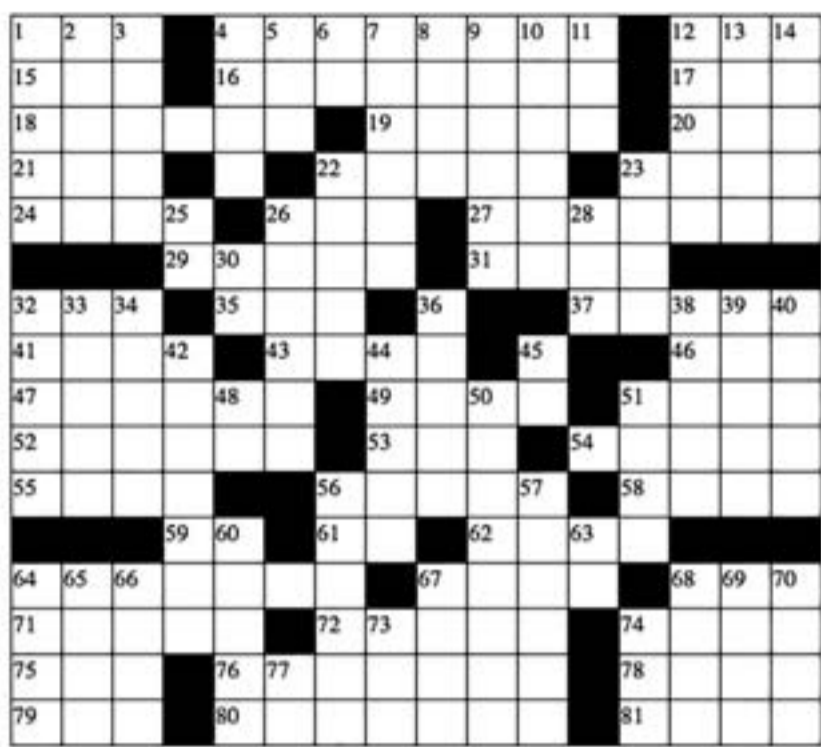
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2388



ACROSS

1. The sound made by a gentle blow.
4. Walk about.
12. The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet.
15. A dark-skinned member of a race of people living in Australia when Europeans arrived.
16. Occurring or existing before birth.
17. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
18. Capital and largest city of Iraq.
19. A smile expressing smugness or scorn instead of pleasure.
20. Nocturnal mouse-like mammal with forelimbs modified to form membranous wings and anatomical adaptations for echolocation by which they navigate.
21. A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
24. A detailed description of design criteria for a piece of work.
27. Expected hopefully.
29. The capacitance of a capacitor that has an equal and opposite charge of 1 coulomb on each plate and a voltage difference of 1 volt between the plates.
31. A quantity of no importance.
32. A federal agency that supervises carriers that transport goods and people between states.
35. Top part of an apron.
37. A religious doctrine that is proclaimed as true without proof.
41. Colloquial British abbreviation.
43. An independent group of closely related Chadic languages spoken in the area between the Bia-Mandara and East Chadic languages.
46. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
47. Expose to fresh air, as of old clothing.
49. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
52. Any of various trees or shrubs of the genus *Cassia* having pinnately compound leaves and usually yellow flowers followed by long seedpods.
53. The basic unit of money in Romania.
54. A desert in southern Israel.
55. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
58. A Chadic language spoken in Chad.
59. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
61. (combining form) Former.
62. A cord that is drawn through eyelets or around hooks in order to draw together two edges (as of a shoe or garment).
64. Of or relating to the language of the Hebrews.
71. Of or relating to or involving an area. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
75. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
76. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
78. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
79. Range of what one can know or understand.
80. Extreme mental retardation.
81. By bad luck.

DOWN

1. Wasting of the body during a chronic disease.
2. A unit of current equal to 10 amperes.
3. North Atlantic sea poacher.
4. South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
5. A machine-readable version of a standard dictionary.
6. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
7. (used of certain religious orders) Barefoot or wearing only sandals.
8. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
9. Tranquilizer (trade name Ativan) used to treat anxiety and tension and insomnia.
10. National capital of Kiribati.
11. Large northern deer with enormous flattened antlers in the male.
12. The capital of Morocco.
13. An upward movement (especially a rhythmic rising and falling).
14. The cardinal number that is the sum of seven and one.
22. Any of numerous low-growing cushion-forming plants of the genus *Draba* having rosette-forming leaves and terminal racemes of small flowers with scapose or leafy stems.
23. 10 jiao equal 1 yuan.
25. A radioactive transuranic element.
26. A Ukrainian peninsula between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.
28. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
30. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
33. Relatively low in price or charging low prices.
34. An island in the Mediterranean.
36. An athlete who plays basketball.
38. A measuring instrument for measuring and indicating a quantity or for testing conformity with a standard.
39. A person who makes things.
40. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
42. Dried bark of the casahuate buckhorn used as a laxative.
44. A large and widespread genus varying in size from small shrubs to large trees.
45. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
48. A light strong gray lustrous corrosion-resistant metallic element used in strong light-weight alloys (as for airplane parts).
50. A member of a North American people formerly living in the Colorado river valley in Arizona.
51. A Chinese breed of small short-legged dogs with a long silky coat and broad flat muzzle.
56. A period of 10 years.
57. West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
60. Minute floating marine tunicate having a transparent body with an opening at each end.
63. Being ten more than one hundred forty.
65. A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
66. Any of various edible seeds of plants of the family Leguminosae.
67. A piece of information about circumstances that exist or events that have occurred.
68. The food served and eaten at one time.
69. A small cake leavened with yeast.
70. A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
73. A loud harsh or strident noise.
74. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
77. The square of a body of any size or type.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

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



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You know who and what are the priorities in your life. Your sense of appreciation is heightened. This is a time you are able to beam with pride when you look at your life situation. You are highly respected and others admire you for what a success you have become. Be sure to appreciate the fact that others seem to always look to you for advice and guidance. Remember to take time for you. You may tend to take the problems of those you love to personally. You can not carry the weight of the world on your shoulders alone. Spend time this evening to unwind. This could prevent you from becoming overwhelmed.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This seems to be a time of great focus on your relationship. You may find yourself searching for and discovery all of the beauty this world has to offer. You find beauty in your surroundings each today, but today you seem to have a greater appreciation for it. This is a very satisfying experience for you. Peace and harmony are great desires in your world and you are entering a phase where you will feel this way often. You may find that your relationships are the key to your emotional success. You may find yourself surrounded with love and support today. Focus on your loved one today and you may find this is where your needs will be fed.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Things really seem to be going your way. It is your time to shine. You may feel as if the world is revolving around you. Enjoy each breath you take. Live life to the fullest and seek the beauty in all that surrounds you. You are beaming with pride and a sense of accomplishment and others will be drawn to you today. Enjoy this feeling and spread joy wherever you go.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

If an emotional argument is what you are seeking today may just in fact be your day. You may feel a lack of support and blocked at every turn. Use your imagination and ability to think outside of the box to find your answers. Others may see you detached or cool on a personal level today. Your tolerance levels may be low and your temper short. You are drawn now to the unique and unusual in this world. Make your ideas count. Now is a great time to try new things and visit new places.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Out with the old and in with the new. Your focus is on ambition, security, and responsibility are areas in your life where you have placed major focus. There are big decisions in your life concerning these areas that need to be made. Knowing you have fallen short of goals in the past has you extremely determined at this point in your life. The easy way is not always the best way. You may reap great reward from your determination. Remember, you can only count on yourself to accomplish your goals. We live in a "what's in it for me" kind of world.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

If an emotional argument is what you are seeking today may just in fact be your day. You may feel a lack of support and blocked at every turn. Use your imagination and ability to think outside of the box to find your answers. Others may see you detached or cool on a personal level today. Your tolerance levels may be low and your temper short. You are drawn now to the unique and unusual in this world. Make your ideas count. Now is a great time to try new things and visit new places. You should find today as one where you are able to make new friends and have great conversations with everyone you cross paths with.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

All eyes are on you today and that is just what you crave. You have a great desire to be the center of attention. You crave appreciation for your gifts and talents. This will be a time you are able to look back on with pride. You are drawn to romance. This is a great time to spend with a special someone. Share your passion, whether it be cooking a meal together or painting a picture. Involve the one you love in a project tonight. This may bring you closer and the results good be amazing.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

If an emotional argument is what you are seeking today may just in fact be your day. You may feel a lack of support and blocked at every turn. Use your imagination and ability to think outside of the box to find your answers. Others may see you detached or cool on a personal level today. Your tolerance levels may be low and your temper short. You are drawn now to the unique and unusual in this world. Make your ideas count. Now is a great time to try new things and visit new places. You should find today as one where you are able to make new friends and have great conversations with everyone you cross paths with.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Details are important today. Be aware of what you say. Be sure anything you put on social media communicates what you intended. Words can be misinterpreted, and you may not have an opportunity to correct a misunderstanding. Written words are a permanent record, and they can come back to haunt you. Relationships can be permanently damaged because the reader did not get the message that was intended. Choose your words wisely today.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You may be feeling a need for change. A deep desire for emotional security takes hold now and you feel your most content when surrounded by family and those closest to you. Relationships are a priority in your world now. You feel as if things in your life are monotonous and you are ready to spice things up. This may mean a shiny new car purchase, a vacation, or simply surrounding yourself with a new group of friends. Any direction you choose, this will be a time of excitement and give you a fresh start and a more focused outlook. We all need a bit of change from time to time. Keep life interesting and exciting.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may feel an emotional distance to your loved ones at this time. You are deeply focused on your ideas at this time. Personal concerns are trivial to you as your level of thinking and focus deepens to that which is new, edgy, and unusual. An abstract way of thinking. You are fascinated by the more eccentric things in life. You may find that you are surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals as you have no tolerance for those who do not appreciate your points of views on matters. Within the company of these individuals you find your communication skills to be on point today and feel as if you are in your element.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Shakespeare: Macbeth

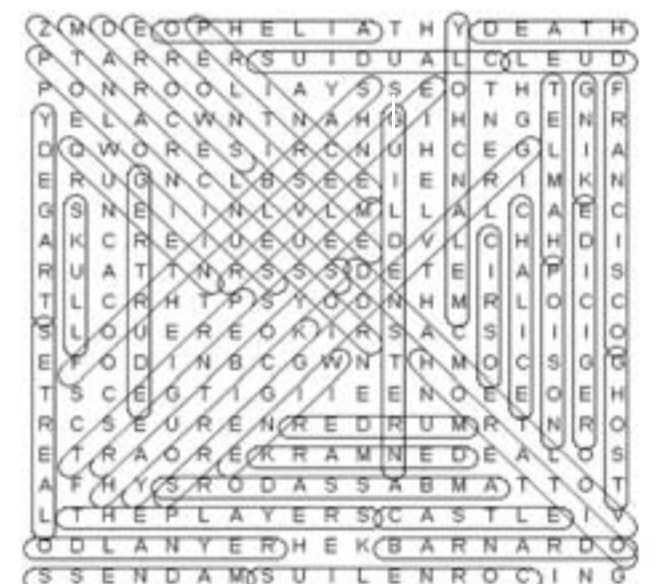
Find and circle all of the words relating to Macbeth that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a quotation from Macbeth.

Note: MACBETH and LADY MACBETH are hidden separately and do not overlap.



- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| ANGUS | DAGGER | IRELAND | REGICIDE |
| APPARITIONS | DOCTOR | LADY MACBETH | ROSS |
| BANQUO | DOONALBAIN | LADY MACDUFF | SCOTLAND |
| BERNARD WOOD | DUNCAN | LENNOX | SEYTON |
| BLOOD | DUNSIANE | MACBETH | SEWARD |
| CATHNESS | ENGLAND | MADNESS | SLEEPWALKING |
| CAPTAIN | FLEANCE | MALCOLM | SOLLOQUY |
| CASTLE | GENTLEWOMAN | MENTETH | THANE |
| CAULDRON | GLAMES | MURDERERS | NORWAY |
| CAWOOD | GUILT | NORWAY | PORTER |
| COLMEKILL | HEATH | PROPHET | PROPHET |
| CONSCIENCE | HECATE | PROPHET | QUEEN |
| CUMBERLAND | INVERNESS | QUEEN | |

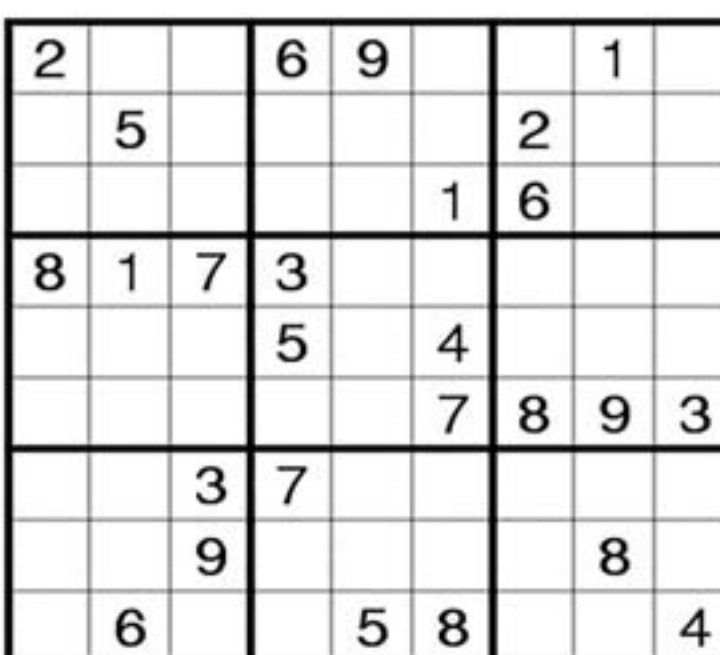
Shakespeare: Hamlet



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|------------|-------------|
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| BARNARDO | GERTRUDE | MELANCHOLY | REVENGE |
| CASTLE | GHOST | MESSSENGER | REYNALDO |
| CHALICE | GRAVEDIGGERS | MURDER | ROSENCRANTZ |
| CLAUDIUS | GUILDENSTERN | OPHELIA | SKULL |
| CORNELIUS | HAMLET | OSRJIC | SWORD |
| DEATH | HAUTBOYS | POISON | THE PLAYERS |
| DENMARK | HIERATTO | POLONIUS | TRAGEDY |
| DUEL | KING | PRIEST | VOLTEMAND |
| ELSNORE | LAERTES | PRINCE | WINE |
| FORTINBRAS | MADNESS | QUEEN | YORICK |

Hidden sentence: THE PLAY'S THE THING WHEREIN I'LL CATCH THE CONSCIENCE OF THE KING

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 18, 2019

Jordan: A blockbuster location for Hollywood

A picture taken on May 25, 2019 shows the sun setting on the southern Jordanian desert of Wadi Rum. — AFP photos

The lunar landscape of Jordan's Wadi Rum valley gets a starring role this week when the next and final episode of the Star Wars saga opens to global audiences. The spectacular desert, with its shimmering red sands, majestic dunes and stunning rock formations was also where Peter O'Toole was filmed riding his horse in the 1962 epic "Lawrence of Arabia". From Matt Damon in "The Martian" to Will Smith in Disney's "Aladdin", Jordanian authorities have worked to ensure the country's diverse landscape features in some of Hollywood's biggest blockbusters.

as "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade". Steven Spielberg's 1989 movie starring Harrison Ford brought to the big screen the magic of the rose-red archaeological city of Petra, famed for its ornate temples cut into rock.

The stunning and well-preserved sandstone facade of Petra's Al-Khazneh (Treasury), which some say dates back to the first century BC, featured as the entrance to a temple housing the Holy Grail. Parts of Disney's Aladdin remake was filmed in Wadi Rum - "the natural choice" for us, director Guy Ritchie told reporters in Amman in May. Naomi Scott, who played Jasmine opposite Smith, said: "it is beautiful". "Like Will said it makes perfect sense... when you are in an environment like this" it helps enforce the character the actor is trying to portray. Co-actor Mena Massoud, who plays Aladdin in the fantasy-romance movie, also praised the wonders of Wadi Rum. "There is such a peace out there in the desert. There is nothing like it," he told the same news conference.

Mars in Jordan

Wadi Rum served as the backdrop for director David Lean's award-winning "Lawrence of Arabia" which critics have described as perhaps the best, or second best, film ever made. "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" was also filmed in the breathtaking desert, which is often known as the Valley of the Moon, before the location was again chosen for the saga's latest and final episode, "The Rise of Skywalker".

Munir Nassar, managing director of Zaman Project Management, a production services company in Jordan, said it took five months to prepare for the filming of the last Star Wars installment. "When the actors came (to Jordan), filming was completed in 12 days and then they left," Nassar, an ex-tourism minister, said. His company was also involved in the filming of four other movies in Jordan, including "Mission to Mars", providing everything from meals to hotel bookings and transport.

"The unique, timeless and diverse landscape of Jordan, along with its highly motivated production crews, makes it an ideal destination for filming," Prince Ali is quoted as saying on the film commission's website. The commission's Bakri pointed to additional Jordanian locations used by filmmakers.

The picturesque town of Madaba south of Amman has been used to replicate old Greek villages while the Azraq westland natural reserve east of the capital has served to



A picture taken on Feb 27, 2010 shows tourists walking through the Siq, a naturally-formed deep split, at the entrance to Petra.



A picture taken on May 13, 2019 shows (from left) Director Guy Ritchie and cast members Will Smith, Naomi Scott and Mena Massoud of Disney's live-action "Aladdin" attending a press conference in Jordan's capital Amman.

"When you travel to locations everything changes inside of you," Smith told a news conference earlier this year in Jordan's capital Amman. "When we landed in Jordan all of a sudden you begin to embody the feelings of the characters like when we were in Wadi Rum... it was absolutely spectacular."

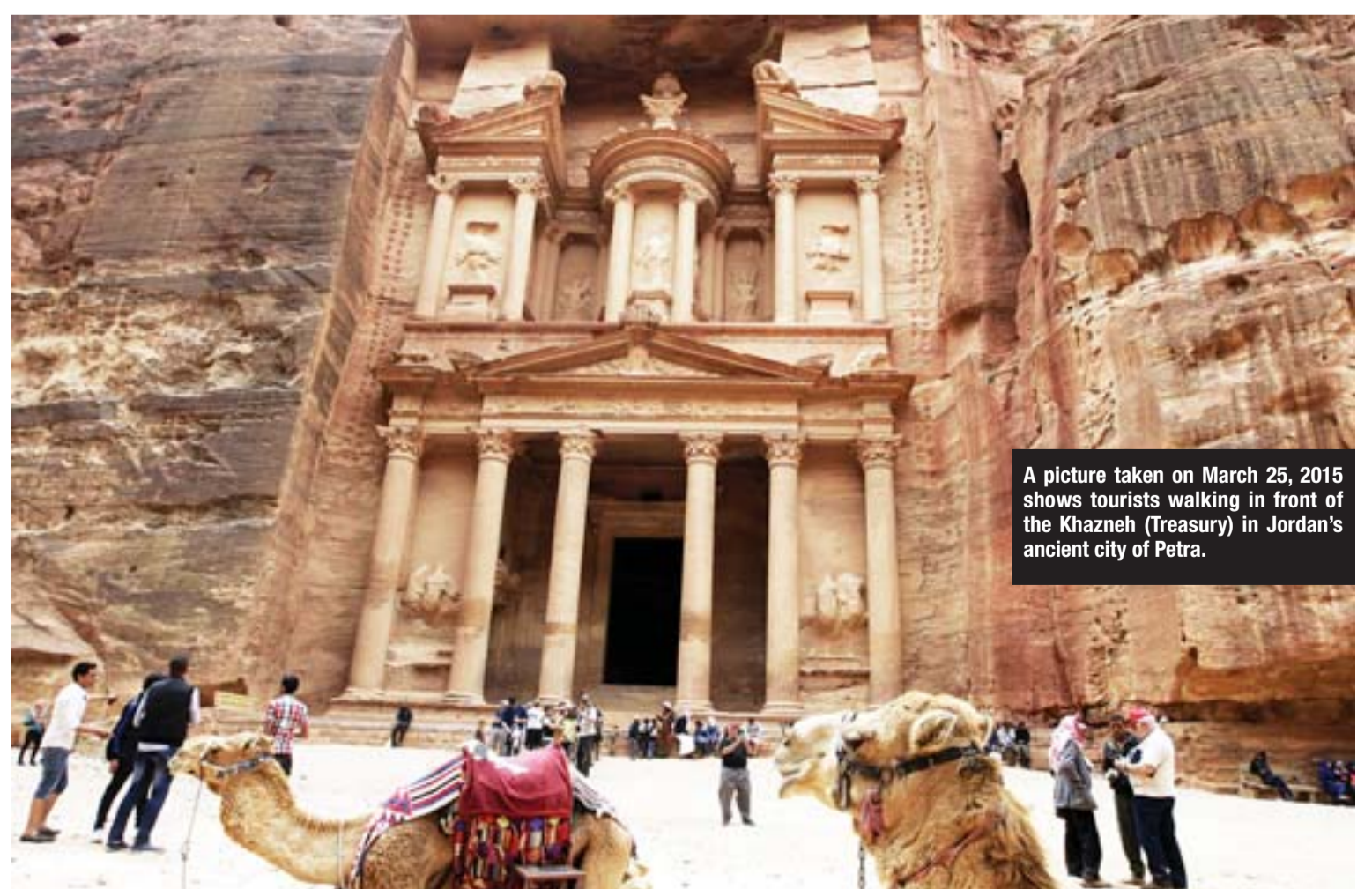
Jordan's Royal Film Commission was set up in 2003 to promote the country as a "huge open air studio", says its managing director Mohannad Al-Bakri. To entice foreign filmmakers, the commission - chaired by Prince Ali, one of King Abdullah II's half brothers - offers financial incentives. Production companies can enjoy a cash rebate of between 10-25 percent for a minimum of \$1 million spent in the kingdom, as well as tax exemptions on equipment imported for filming.

Petra and the holy grail

But filmmakers also come to Jordan to shoot because they are attracted to the diverse and rich landscape they find in the desert kingdom, according to Bakri. Over the years dozens of foreign and Arab movies have been filmed in the country, including Hollywood classics such



In a picture taken on Sept 13, 2002 a carved face of T E Lawrence and the inscription in Arabic, 'Lawrence of Arabia 1917' are seen on a stone in Jordan's southern desert of Wadi Rum.



A picture taken on March 25, 2015 shows tourists walking in front of the Khazneh (Treasury) in Jordan's ancient city of Petra.



R2-D2 (left) and C-3PO arrive for the world premiere of Disney's "Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker" at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood, California on Monday. — AFP photos

Fans in Star Wars costumes attend the world premiere of "Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker".

'STAR WARS' GRIPS HOLLYWOOD WITH 'RISE OF SKYWALKER' PREMIERE



Mark Hamill attends the premiere of "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker".

The final film in the epic "Star Wars" trilogy of trilogies brought Hollywood to a standstill, as a galaxy of VIPs from the space saga that began four decades ago descended on a glittering world premiere. Veterans Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker) and Harrison Ford (Han Solo) arrived Monday to bid farewell to the movies that launched their careers in style at a futuristic hangar filled with life-size X-wing starfighters in Los Angeles.

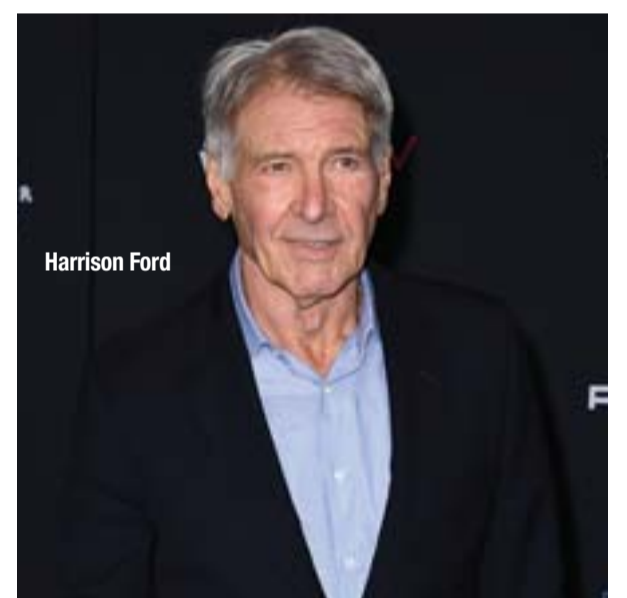
They were joined by a who's who of Hollywood, with special guests from Steven Spielberg to Spike Lee. "Tonight, looking at this whole mise-en-scene is quite bewildering," Anthony Daniels, who has played droid C-3PO in every main "Star Wars" film, told AFP. "In fact, it's such a big experience that I'm not sure I can quite cope with it. But I do feel proud to be here and proud to be part of it."

"The Rise of Skywalker" officially concludes the so-called "Skywalker saga" of films begun by George Lucas in 1977 - a fact Disney's all-conquering publicity machine has used to ramp up hype on an intergalactic scale. Analysts predict a stellar \$200-\$225 million at domestic box offices this weekend, which would put the film among the biggest openings in movie history.

Disney chief Bob Iger told AFP that fans would get "some kind of closure, some sense of satisfaction" for their favorite characters. "Star Wars is probably the most important, most valuable mythology of our time, of the modern time," he said. "If you just consider the global base of fans that have worshipped this storytelling since 1977, over 40 years... tonight being a culmination of nine films is an incredibly important night."

'The final word'

Heading the glitzy premiere were the new film's young stars Daisy Ridley, John Boyega and Oscar Isaac. Plot details have been kept tightly under wraps. But director JJ Abrams has said the trio's characters - Rey, Finn and Poe - will be reunited on-screen, after scattering for 2017's "The Last Jedi", which divided fans. While Disney has embargoed full reviews until Wednesday, social media reaction from those inside the three Hollywood theaters blocked out for Monday night's event was broadly positive.



Harrison Ford



Steven Spielberg



US actress Keri Russell and partner



Daisy Ridley



Kelly Marie Tran



Spike Lee



Richard E Grant attends the World Premiere of "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker".

Lifestyle | Feature



BB-8 (left) and D-O arrive for the world premiere of Disney's "Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker".



Chewbacca



Producer and President of Lucasfilm Kathleen Kennedy and Dave Filoni attend the premiere.

"Epic. All of it," tweeted Erik Davis, managing editor of Fandango movie website, calling the finale a "wonderful way to end the Skywalker story." "It's amazing," wrote The Hollywood Reporter's Ryan Parker. "Last Jedi" haters will be very pleased." The film is set one year after its predecessor, and at 141 minutes will be slightly shorter.

Abrams returns after his first outing, 2015's "The Force Awakens", broke the all-time North American box office record, making him the only person other than Lucas trusted to helm multiple "Star Wars" installments. But his presence has stoked controversy - "Jurassic World" director Colin Trevorrow was initially lined up but was fired for failing to satisfy Lucasfilm bosses with his script.

And Abrams had to cope with the death of Carrie Fisher, whose iconic Princess Leia was set for a central role in the finale. Leia will instead appear using unused, re-cut footage from Abrams' last film. Meanwhile, Disney has whetted fans' appetites further by releasing new clips and trailers at the weekend.

In one, a returning Emperor Palpatine's voice declares, "This will be the final word in the story of Skywalker," while Star Destroyers and red Stormtroopers battle X-wings and Resistance fighters. A second saw the villainous Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) growl, "I know who you are. I know the rest of your story," sending fans abuzz over the long-standing mystery about heroine Rey's parents.



Jaime King



A fan poses for a picture in front of the set design of the world premiere of Disney's "Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker" at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood.



Stormtroopers arrive for the world premiere of Disney's "Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker".

Droid leaks: How C-3PO crossed his legs for 'Star Wars'

Anthony Daniels has been holding something in for 42 years. You may know Daniels better as C-3PO in "Star Wars", the uptight golden robot with the manners of an English butler. He has been a "Star Wars" constant since the opening scene of the original movie, or what is now called "Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope" in the ever-expanding galaxy of sequels, prequels and spin-offs. And for all that time the English actor has been suffering for his art. Really suffering.

Fans may have wondered why C-3PO walked so awkwardly. Now we know. The robot costume was painful to wear and took so long to put on that Daniels wasn't allowed to go to the toilet all day. "The first day it was horrible," he told AFP in Paris in the build up to the release of what looks like his final bow in "The Rise of Skywalker" on Wednesday. "No lunch, no bathroom, nothing," said the actor, who used to take two hours to get into his gilded cage.

Over the years, however, things have got better. Daniel conceded. "It is still heavy but I don't have to wear it all day anymore." And he can put it on in six minutes now. "There are still issues, however," he admitted. "It's like a suit of armor. I'm sure at Agincourt (the medieval battle at which the English massacred thousands of French knights) the soldiers were going, 'Oh, this armor hurts.' But they have done their best," he said.



'Blank canvas'

These are familiar tropes to "Star Wars" aficionados - but it may be the last time they are seen for years. "Rise of Skywalker" is the franchise's fifth film in five years, and Disney has promised to apply the brakes to avoid fatigue. The company's release schedule has untitled "Star Wars" films listed for 2022, 2024 and 2026. "We're in no rush. We know that fans will want another film, or another few films, and we'll make them," said Iger.

Until then, fans can make do with Disney+ television series "The Mandalorian", and two further series featuring Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor) and the stars of hit spin-off movie "Rogue One" (2016). "The beauty of all this is that we stand in front of a blank canvas, and we paint and we paint and we paint," added Iger. "And when the picture looks good we'll show it to the world." — AFP

'I was pretentious'

Daniels, now 73, is not one to slavishly toe the studio line, complaining last month that he felt his character had been reduced to a "table decoration" in some of the new films. And back in 1975 when he was first cast as the panicky polymath droid, he was ready to turn his nose up at the part, having come from serious theatre. "I think I was rather pretentious," Daniels told AFP.

"I thought acting on stage or on television in proper clothes was what I was for. When my agent told me about George Lucas, this American science fiction man, I was not interested. But she made me go," laughed the actor, who has just published his autobiography, "I Am C-3PO: The Inside Story".

Luckily, Lucas won him over. "George was a very attractive personality, very quiet, very timid and intelligent. First thing I liked him, then I liked painting the character, then I liked the script," said Daniels, who has since been immortalized in millions of plastic figurines.

The film went on to change cinema history and Daniels' life. "I was more surprised than anyone on the planet" at the first film's success, he said, thinking that it would be a one-off "curious experience". "The big surprise was that it was a big success," he said. But the glory was bittersweet.

It has to end

"The unfortunate surprise for me was that nobody mentioned I was in the film," even though he was on screen almost exactly as long as Han Solo, played by Harrison Ford. "I had the biggest part (after Luke Skywalker and Solo) and yet nobody ever interviewed me, to say 'Well done!' or whatever. So that was uncomfortable. But the fact that everybody in the world enjoyed what everyone had done was good," he added.

Daniels long ago became resigned to playing the character that everybody knows - yet comparatively few people know who he is. "At the beginning it was difficult. Now a lot of people do know me. But they know me in a very gentle way," he said, sparing him the worst of the curse of celebrity. "When they meet me, they talk about their childhood and when they saw 'Star Wars', which is sweet."

Even for him, the sheer scale of the franchise is mind-boggling. "It's just so enormous and so worldwide that my brain cannot contemplate it really. It would be like looking at a room full of ball bearings and wanting to count them. "I know I've done it, but I don't think about it every day. It's other people that are possibly more excited than I am," he added.

Daniels said he thinks this will be his last "Star Wars" film. "Because the story could go on forever. But here we go 'Stop!'" he said, clicking his fingers. "There are other stories to tell, other films to make. But C-3PO probably will not appear in a big movie again. And I think he's OK with that. And I'm OK with that." That said, "I was a little sad on the last day, because it had been such a good experience. And it came at the end of experiences that have not always been as good. We end on a very high note here. So I feel good about that." — AFP



A photographer takes photos of baby twins during a photo-shoot at a studio in Banda Aceh yesterday. — AFP photos

Mariah Carey's 'All I Want for Christmas Is You' tops US charts

A quarter-century after releasing her holiday classic that's become one of the season's love-to-hate, hate-to-love clichés, Mariah Carey has finally pushed "All I Want for Christmas Is You" to top the charts for the first time. "We did it," the diva said Monday in a tweet that featured several emojis, including a face with happy tears. Many social media users voiced shock that the inescapable pop juggernaut had not already jingled its way to the top.

But when the de-facto Holiday Queen originally released the global hit in 1994 as part of her "Merry Christmas" album, Billboard's rules at the time did not allow it to compete on the Hot 100 chart, because it was not commercially available as a single. That changed in December 1998, when cuts off an album were welcomed to the US top songs list, bumping Carey's song onto the chart for the first time on January 8, 2000. The 2003 holiday film "Love Actually" helped keep Carey's bubbly Christmas wish for love in the collective consciousness, as streaming ensured its place in the holiday canon. The earworm that showcases the pop mainstay's elastic vocal range started appearing the list annually beginning in 2012, when streams were added to Billboard's ranking metrics. For the song's 25th anniversary this year, Carey promoted it even harder than usual, beginning her social media drive the morning after Halloween.

New video

She also dropped a new video for it - which counts towards Hot 100 placement - and released the song as a stand-alone CD single for the first time. This week the song posted 45 million streams, 27,000 digital sales and 34 million radio plays, according to Billboard. Carey's climb to the top marks the first time a Christmas track has claimed number one on the Hot 100 in six decades, when "The Chipmunk Song" reigned for four weeks in 1958-1959.

It's Carey's 19th number-one hit, putting her just one song behind The Beatles' overall record of 20 top songs. "All I Want for Christmas Is You" is currently Spotify's most-streamed song in the United Kingdom, and is gaining ground in France, whose SNEP top songs chart now has it in 31st place. — AFP

GRANNY TURNED LINGERIE MODEL SHINES LIGHT ON OLDER WOMEN

Wearing nothing but a lacy bra and matching panties, Brazilian grandmother Helena Schargel strikes a seductive pose during a photo shoot featuring her latest lingerie designs for women over 60. "Wonderful, marvelous," the photographer gushes as Schargel, 79, stares confidently into the camera in a converted warehouse in Sao Paulo. After decades working for a fabric company, the lithe and energetic Schargel emerged from retirement more than two years ago on a mission to drag older women out of obscurity.

Her tactic? Sexy fashion designed especially for them - and modelled by her. "This project has a clear goal: to make women visible," Schargel told AFP at her elegantly furnished apartment in Brazil's biggest city. Schargel has launched several underwear collections with Brazil's Recco Lingerie. An activewear line with the company Alto Giro was unveiled this year and more are in the works, she says.

Schargel, who helps with the designs, says Brazilian women over 60 have long been overlooked by fashion companies, society - and even themselves. She shares words of encouragement on her Instagram account, where she has nearly 18,000 mainly women followers, of all ages. Messages such as "take a risk" and "you can do anything" pepper her feed, which receive hundreds, sometimes thousands, of likes and comments. "I never thought about how old I was, never - this never worried me," says Schargel, describing the popularity of plastic surgery in Brazil as "madness". "It was only a few years ago that I realized I was no longer 33."

No gym trips

The daughter of Polish immigrants, Schargel began making clothes as a teenager and selling them in her parents' store. It was the beginning of a lifelong career in fashion. Along the way, she got married twice and had two children. She now has five grandchildren, some of whom wear her designs. Retirement did not suit the soon-to-be octogenarian, who moves with the ease of someone decades younger. "I thank God that I don't need to go to the gym," she says, lolling in a lounge chair in black and white leggings and matching loose-fitting top and sneakers. "I do Pilates three times a week, which is good for me and my spirit."



Brazilian fashion designer and model Helena Schargel, 79, looks at a magazine during an interview with AFP in Sao Paulo on Nov 1, 2019. Schargel designs lingerie for senior women.

'Absurdly comfortable'

Schargel's decision to model lingerie was daring in a macho country where older women are treated as if they "are not alive anymore," says Vogue Brazil editor-in-chief Paula Merlo. "She reminds you that there is a life after 60, 70 and it can be sexy, it can be fun and it can also be profitable." After some initial butterflies, Schargel says she feels comfortable stripping to her underwear in public.

Determined to appear as natural as possible, she insists on no Photoshopping. "I always say, 'Please, leave all my little wrinkles just as they are,'" she says. "They are

very important. They show that I have arrived here." At the hours-long photo shoot, a barefoot Schargel drifts between the dressing room and photo studio, showing off lingerie and pieces from her new bed-to-street line.

She moves easily in front of the camera as fashion photographer Pablo Saborido clicks away. "I really like working with people outside... the model profile," says Saborido, 39. Schargel says her lingerie is "absurdly comfortable." Some pieces even "help lift the butt," she adds cheekily. As the global population ages, Schargel says the world needs to get ready for an explosion in elderly women in the coming decades. "Twenty, 30 years from now, there will be many more grannies than young people," she says. "We need to prepare for this - companies need to prepare for this." — AFP



Schargel makes a drawing during the interview.



Schargel gets make-up on before a photo shoot for her new lingerie collection.



Schargel looks at a picture of her youth.



An original Superman cape worn by actor Christopher Reeve in the 1978 "Superman" film is displayed at Julien's Auctions house on Dec 13, 2019. — AFP

Superman cape sells for nearly \$200,000 in Hollywood auction

Superman's very first movie cape was sold for nearly \$200,000 Monday alongside a collection of rare Hollywood memorabilia, the auction house said. The prop from Christopher Reeve's "Superman", which went for \$193,750, headlined Monday's sale of about 400 cinephile items at Julien's Auctions in Los Angeles. Only six capes in total were used while shooting the film, which came out in 1978.

Multiple costumes from "Star Trek" also found buyers. These included the uniform worn by Patrick Stewart for his role as Captain Jean-Luc Picard, which sold for \$28,800. Leonard Nimoy's Romulan costume from "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine" sold for \$20,000. Dan Akroyd's jumpsuit from "Ghostbusters II" also went up for auction and was sold for \$32,000, according to Julien's Auctions, which specializes in Hollywood collections and memorabilia. Although it was originally announced as an auction headline item, the pipe of Bilbo Baggins, played by Ian Holm in the "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, was not sold at the auction. — AFP

'Parasite' to battle 'Les Miserables,' Almodovar for Oscar

South Korean black comedy "Parasite" will battle France's "Les Miserables" and Spanish director Pedro Almodovar's "Pain and Glory" for the best international film Oscar, in a shortlist announced Monday. The films were among 10 revealed by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, from which five nominees will be selected before an eventual winner emerges in February.

Bong Joon-ho's "Parasite", which won the Palme d'Or top prize at Cannes this year, has been generating strong Oscar buzz as awards season heats up. The class warfare movie about a family of clever scammers from South Korea's underbelly has already picked up three Golden Globe nominations, including best director and best screenplay. To take the Oscar, it must get past Ladj Ly's "Les Miserables", which follows the consequences of a violent police blunder in a tense and racially divided suburb of modern Paris.

The movie lays bare deep rifts in French society as violent police officers, drug dealers and Islamists pull the children of Montfermeil's housing projects in

different directions. Montfermeil is famous as the setting of Victor Hugo's 19th-century novel, from which the film takes its name. Another French-language film in contention is "Atlantics" from Senegal, a supernatural tale about African migrants who decide their only future lies in Europe, and those they leave behind.

Mati Diop became the first black women director ever to compete for the top prize at Cannes, eventually taking the festival's second prize Grand Prix. Also in the running is veteran Spanish director Almodovar's "Pain and Glory," a semi-autobiographical story featuring Antonio Banderas and Penelope Cruz. It depicts an ageing Spanish director plagued by physical and psychological frailty who revisits childhood memories.

The remaining contenders come from the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, North Macedonia, Poland and Russia. The five nominations for the category that up until now has been known as the best foreign-language film will be announced on January 13. The 92nd Academy Awards will be held on Feb 9, 2020. — AFP

Classifieds

Wednesday, December 18, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

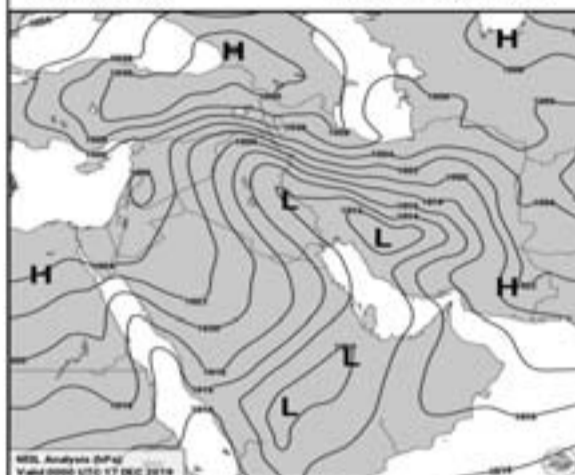
BY DAY: Mostly Sunny with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h with a chance for light fog forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	19 °C	14 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	19 °C	13 °C
ABDALY	19 °C	12 °C
BUBYAN	18 °C	13 °C
JAHRA	19 °C	13 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	20 °C	14 °C
AHMADI	20 °C	14 °C
NUWAISIB	20 °C	14 °C
WAFRA	19 °C	13 °C
SALMY	18 °C	10 °C

SFC. CHART 17/12/2019 0000 UTC



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	12/18	Mostly Sunny	20 °C	07 °C	NW	08 - 28 km/h
Thursday	12/19	Sunny	21 °C	07 °C	NW	15 - 38 km/h
Friday	12/20	Sunny	20 °C	08 °C	NW	10 - 32 km/h
Saturday	12/21	Sunny	21 °C	07 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:11
Sunrise	06:36
Zuhr	11:44
Asr	14:34
Sunset	16:52
Isha	18:15

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	15 °C
MAX. RH	100%
MIN. RH	79 %
MAX. Wind	E 53 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	21.3mm

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

LOST

It is notified for the information that my Original/Duplicate Qualifying Examination Certificate of Main/Compartment, Secondary, Senior Secondary Examination of Year 2016 and Roll No. 9104559 issued by CBSE has been actually lost. Name of the candidate Michah Michael Azavedo full address/Tel. 60423355, block 9, street 20, Abraq Khaithan building 22. (C 5479) 18-12-2019

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Aboobacker Siddhique Abdu Salam, Illathal 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

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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



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

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 18/12/2019				Departure Flights on Wednesday 18/12/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	713	Sohag	00:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	MSC	412	Asyut	00:15
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:40
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	FEG	342	Sohag	01:05
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	JZR	723	Alexandria	01:05
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:35	IGO	409	Delhi	01:10
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	MSR	1758	Kochi	01:10
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
THY	1404	AYT	02:45	JZR	111	Doha	02:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	MSR	619	Alexandria	02:35
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	THY	765	Alexandria	02:50
JZR	502	Lahore	02:55	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:55	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
NIA	1604	Luxor	03:10	OMA	644	Abu Dhabi	04:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	NIA	1404	Sohag	04:10
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:20
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	KAC	JZR	1735	Cairo
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	RBG	1152	Alexandria	05:00
RBG	1153	Asyut	04:10	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
ETH	3424	Bahrain	04:15	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00
KAC	796	Madinah	04:25	MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	05:10
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	KAC	502	Beirut	05:10
JZR	1738	Cairo	04:45	QTR	1072	Doha	05:15
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	SAW	705	Damascus	05:20
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	JZR	116	Doha	05:45
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	OMS	225	Muscat	06:00
IGO	1759	Delhi	05:10	SVA	510	Riyadh	06:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	GFA	214	Bahrain	06:10
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	JZR	214	Jeddah	06:15
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	158	Istanbul	06:50
RBG	215	Sohag	05:35	JZR	104	Bahrain	08:00
UAE	873	Dubai	05:40	QTR	1080	Doha	08:10
KAC	552	Cairo	05:45	MSR	620	Cairo	08:30
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	UAE	875	Dubai	09:05
BAW	157	London	06:10	FDB	063	Dubai	09:05
JZR	708	Luxor	06:15	GFA	217	Bahrain	09:05
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	RJA	640	Amman	09:05
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	JZR	306	Istanbul	09:20
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	ABY	123	Sharjah	09:20
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	KAC	744	Dammam	09:25
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	KAC	674	Dubai	09:45
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KAC	776	Riyadh	09:45
KAC	358	Kochi	07:25	FDB	057	Dubai	09:50
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	104	London	20:00
JZR	724	Alexandria	07:50	KAC	166	Rome	20:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KNE	381	Taif	20:00
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	OMA	647	Muscat	20:05
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	NIA	1503	Asyut	20:10
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:10
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	MEA	402	Beirut	20:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	JZR	126	Dubai	20:20
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	620	Doha	20:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	QTR	1088	Doha	20:40
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:15	RBG	217	Asyut	20:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:00
GOW	061	CNN	09:30	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:10
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	UAE	859	Dubai	21:15
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	ALK	229	Colombo	21:15
SYR	341	Damascus	10:00	KAC	168	Paris	21:20
AKB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	THY	764	Istanbul	21:30
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	616	Bahrain	21:40
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:50
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	564	Bahrain	21:55
KIS	6032	Mashhad	11:00	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05
JZR	1736	Cairo	11:05	JAV	621	Amman	22:15
JZR	114	Doha	11:10	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:20
IGO	1755	CNN	11:30	SVA	514	Riyadh	22:25
NIA	1405	Sohag	11:30	AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	SVA	502	Jeddah	22:45
KIS	6032	Mashhad	11:45	JZR	128	Dubai	22:50
TBZ	6605	Mashhad	11:55	MSC	411	Asyut	23:15
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	MSR	614	Cairo	23:30
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	FDB	071	Dubai	23:35
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30				
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30				
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30				

Egyptians in Qatar ready for Salah-mania despite boycott

DOHA: Qatar's large Egyptian community is clamoring to welcome their country's "icon" Mohamed Salah as Liverpool kick off their Club World Cup campaign. But a regional diplomatic crisis has frustrated travel plans for fans based in Egypt and complicated the desire of expats in Doha to celebrate their country's best-known player. The Egyptian diaspora in Qatar number around 300,000, according to official statistics, out of a total population of 2.75 million.

For many years, Qatari authorities sought out skilled Egyptian migrants to staff a range of sectors from oil and gas to teaching and the health system. But an economic and travel embargo on Qatar by a Saudi-led coalition that includes Cairo has cooled Doha's enthusiasm for mass migration from Egypt. The two-year-long effort to isolate Qatar stems from accusations that Doha backs radical Islamists and has sought closer ties with Saudi Arabia's arch rival Iran. Doha vehemently denies the charges.

Egypt and Saudi, along with Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates, closed their airspace to Qatar Airways and banned travel to the country, putting their citizens in Qatar in a difficult position. Large numbers of Egyptians gathered in the Souq Waqif tourist bazaar to watch Liverpool's 5-2 trouncing of Everton in this month's Merseyside derby. In a market cafe, other Salah fans called the 27-year-old Arab soccer talisman "an icon for many". Tonight they will have a chance to watch Salah in the flesh when the Reds face Mexico's Monterrey in their semi-final at the 40,000-capacity Khalifa International Stadium.

Egyptian Mustafa Abdel Moneim, 42, told AFP he "got four tickets to the semi-finals, because I expect Liverpool to win and I know that there will be a lot of pressure from Arabs and Egyptians on the team's first game. My children put so much pressure on me to book the tickets because they are obsessed with Salah. They will be very happy to

see him on the field." British newspapers have reported that Liverpool have received assurances from Qatar, which will host the 2022 World Cup, that Salah's visit to the Gulf monarchy will not be politicized.

Salah was the at the center of a political storm when he was pictured alongside Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov, who is accused of rights abuses, during Egypt's 2018 World Cup stay in the Russian region. "Frankly I only support Liverpool for him, if they scored 10 goals, I do not rejoice -except when the goal is Salah's," said Mahmoud Mansour, 30. "I would have liked to have seen him on the field, but it is difficult to get a ticket now. There are too many Egyptians and Arab fans. Look at all these people here for Salah."

Salah scored twice at Watford which extended Liverpool's lead at the top of the English Premier League to 10 points. Ahmed Abdel Hamid, a 33-year-old salesman said he had been "eager to see Salah with Liverpool at the stadium". "Unfortunately, all online tickets sold out in just 15 minutes. But we will go see him from the fan zones." Some fans, who declined to be named, told AFP that friends from Egypt faced difficulties obtaining visitor visas.

Egyptians outside of Qatar have been wary of making the trip which must involve a stop in a third country, adding hours to the trip and hundreds of dollars to the cost. "No Egyptian would come here to watch a match, we just come here for work," said one Egyptian football fan. "If we have the money to travel to Qatar to watch Salah, it would be better to see him with Liverpool in England." Gamal Sebaai, an Egyptian who previously worked for the Qatar Football Association, said: "We don't consider him to represent only Egyptians, but also all Arabs and Muslims. We hope sports will be the reason for a reconciliation between brothers." — AFP



DOHA: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah (right) and English midfielder Curtis Jones take part in a training session at Qatar University stadium on Monday. — AFP

Amir urges ministers to unite against...

Continued from Page 1

the prime minister for including Aseeri as minister because of her previous views on Bahrain. Aseeri, a former National Assembly candidate, had strongly opposed the crackdown on the Shiite-led protest in Bahrain and sending of Gulf troops to support the government there against protesters. Mutair gave the prime minister until the Assembly session next week to remove Aseeri from the Cabinet, threatening to grill him

if he fails to do so. Islamist activists also supported this view and considered the inclusion of Aseeri in the Cabinet as a big mistake.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said he will call for the Assembly to resume sessions on Dec 24, as he welcomed the formation of the new Cabinet. MP Thamer Al-Suwait said the Cabinet formation is "normal" and there is nothing in it that calls for optimism, adding that the problem of governments in Kuwait has been a lack of a real program of action for decades. MP Khaled Al-Otaibi said the government should forge ahead with real reforms to rescue the country. Meanwhile, the new Cabinet is expected to approve a decree to pardon former opposition MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and opposition activist Mohammad Al-Dossari.

told a political rally in eastern Jharkhand state.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Modi's right-hand man, yesterday stressed that his government was "firm like a rock" and would implement the citizenship law "come what may", the Press Trust of India reported. Since being re-elected earlier this year Modi and his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party have already stripped Muslim-majority Kashmir of its special semi-autonomous status and carried out a register of citizens in Assam. The BJP has said it wants to conduct the citizenship register nationwide, fuelling fears that Muslims - a 200-million minority in India - were being disenfranchised.

The new round of rallies came as the supreme court yesterday referred petitions calling for a probe into allegations of police brutality at northern universities to the states' high courts. Rioters had torched vehicles while police with batons fired tear gas and charged protesting students before storming Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia university late Sunday. The university's vice-chancellor said Monday 200 people were injured but police put the number at 39 students hurt with 30 officers also injured, one of them critically. Ten people had been arrested for rioting and mob violence but none of them was a student, police told the Hindustan Times yesterday.

Human Rights Watch called for police to show restraint, amid claims authorities were using unnecessary or excessive force to quell the unrest in several cities. Amnesty International also called for police to be investigated over allegations student protesters from Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh state were beaten by officers. "Students have the right to protest. Violence against peacefully protesting students cannot under any circumstance be justified," Amnesty India's executive director Avinash Kumar said in a statement. — AFP

whisky-drinking moderate, the general became a key US ally in the "war on terror" after the September 11 attacks and escaped at least three Al-Qaeda assassination attempts during his nine years in office. His rule faced no serious challenges until he tried to sack the chief justice in March 2007, sparking nationwide protests and months of turmoil that led to the imposition of a state of emergency.

After the Dec 2007 assassination of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto, the national mood soured even further and he was left isolated by the crushing losses suffered by his allies in February 2008 elections. Musharraf finally resigned in Aug 2008 in the face of impeachment proceedings by the new governing coalition and went into exile. He returned in 2013 in an attempt to contest elections, but was barred from taking part in the polls and from leaving the country as a barrage of legal cases mounted.

The treason case was first launched against Musharraf by his old foe Sharif in 2013. The case went on for years amid repeated delays until yesterday's surprise announcement. The treason ruling is the latest case to target Musharraf since he has been in exile. In 2017, a Pakistani court pronounced him a fugitive in the murder trial of Bhutto - the first woman prime minister of a Muslim country. The anti-terrorism court also branded Musharraf an absconder and ordered the confiscation of his property. Musharraf is alleged to have been part of a broad conspiracy to have his rival Bhutto killed before elections. He has denied all charges. Following the court's decision yesterday, Bhutto's son Bilawal Bhutto Zardari tweeted: "Democracy is the best revenge." — AFP

Trump admin says doesn't recognize Armenian genocide

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's administration said yesterday it does not consider the mass killings of Armenians in 1915 to be genocide, seeking to placate Turkey which was angered that the US Congress recognized it as such. "The position of the administration has not changed" after the votes by Congress, State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said in a terse statement. "Our views are reflected in the president's definitive statement on this issue from last April," she said.

In the statement on the mass killings' anniversary, Trump said the United States honored victims of "one of the worst mass atrocities of the 20th century" but did not use the word genocide. He instead encouraged Armenians and Turks to "acknowledge and reckon with their painful history". Armenia says that 1.5 million were killed in an effort to wipe out the Christian ethnic group in the waning days of the Ottoman Empire, the forerunner of modern-day Turkey.

Turkey puts the number far lower and adamantly rejects the term genocide, saying that Turks also died in what it considers fighting as part of First World War. Turkey last week summoned the US ambassador to Ankara, David Satterfield, after the Senate followed the House of Representatives in recognizing the killings as genocide. The Senate and House resolutions, both passed overwhelmingly, said it was the policy of the United States "to commemorate the Armenian genocide through official recognition and remembrance".

But the so-called simple resolutions, unlike laws passed by Congress, do not have the force of law or require the president's signature, meaning that the administration still has significant leeway in how to pro-

ceed. Allies of Trump had initially tried to block the resolutions in Congress in hopes of preserving relations with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

During a meeting in Washington last month, Trump said he was a "big fan" of Erdogan despite wide criticism in Congress over his human rights record and his incursion into Syria to fight Kurdish fighters formerly allied with Washington. Trump has also held off on sanctions urged by Congress over the NATO ally's purchase of Russia's S-400 missile defense system.

Previous presidents have also struggled with how to address the events of 1915, with the Armenian-American community pushing hard for genocide recognition. Barack Obama as a candidate promised to recognize the genocide but after his election did not use the word, instead saying that he stood by his pre-White House views.

On Monday, US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said he wants an explanation from Ankara over threats to close two strategic military bases used by the United States in Turkey. Erdogan on Sunday threatened to close the Incirlik and Kurecik bases while speaking to a pro-government television channel. The two bases sit on Turkey's southwest coast, near the border with Syria.

The US air force uses the air base at Incirlik for raids on positions held by the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria. The Kurecik base houses a major NATO radar station. Esper told reporters he would need to speak to his counterpart, defense minister Hulusi Akar, "to understand what they really mean and how serious they are."

"If the Turks are serious about this, I mean, they are a sovereign nation to begin with... they have the inherent right to house or not to house NATO bases or foreign troops," Esper said on a plane as he flew back from Belgium, where he had attended the 75th anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. "I think this becomes an Alliance's matter, their commitment to the Alliance, if indeed they are serious about what they are saying," he added. — Agencies

India protests rage against citizenship...

Continued from Page 1

In Muslim-populated areas of Delhi yesterday, buses and a police outpost were torched and tear gas filled streets as thousands of protesters hurled stones at police in Seelampur district. Police said 21 people, including 12 policemen, were injured in the clashes, the Press Trust of India reported. Thousands more rallied in Kolkata and Tamil Nadu states. In the country's north, police said 113 people were detained for objectionable social media posts after violent demonstrations there.

In the northeastern state of Assam, the epicenter of the protests where four people died after being shot by police, a curfew imposed in some regions was lifted early yesterday. But the Assam government said late yesterday it would not restore mobile Internet services until Friday at the earliest. It also handed its investigation into the violence to a national agency that usually probes terrorist links. Authorities have imposed Internet blackouts and used force to shut down rallies and sit-ins, but protesters vowed to keep raising their voices until the law is revoked.

Modi was, however, adamant the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) would not affect Indian nationals, including Muslims. He blamed the opposition Congress party for "spreading violence and creating an environment of fear" by lying about the law's intent. "It's as clear as being engraved in stone that the CAA will not affect any citizen - Muslim, Hindu, Christian or anyone else," Modi

Pakistan ex-military leader Musharraf...

Continued from Page 1

country can surely never be a traitor," the military said in a statement, adding the legal process "seems to have been ignored".

The trial - which began in 2013 and is one of several involving Musharraf - centered on his decision to suspend the constitution and impose emergency rule in 2007, according to his lawyer Akhtar Shah. The move sparked widespread protests against Musharraf, ultimately leading to his resignation in the face of impeachment proceedings. Musharraf's lawyer said the former general was currently ill and remained in Dubai. He said no decision had been made on whether to appeal.

The court ruling comes more than a week after Musharraf slammed the ongoing treason case against him in a video message showing the former general in a hospital bed appearing ill, while complaining of dizziness and blackouts. "I think this case is baseless, they are not listening to me and they are not listening to my lawyer... it is a big injustice," said Musharraf. Retired general Talat Masood, now a security analyst, called the court's decision "extraordinary" and "bold".

Musharraf, who was born in India's capital Delhi in 1943 but moved with his family to Pakistan after partition, took power after ousting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a bloodless coup in 1999. A cigar-smoking,

WEF: Gender workplace equality 257 years away

GENEVA: Women may have to wait more than two centuries for equality at work, according to a report yesterday showing gender inequality growing in workplaces worldwide despite increasing demands for equal treatment. While women appear to be gradually closing the gender gap in areas such as politics, health and education, workplace inequality is not expected to be erased until the year 2276, according to a report published by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The organization, which gathers the global elite in the plush Swiss ski resort of Davos each year, said that the worldwide gender gap in the workplace had widened further since last year, when parity appeared to be only 202 years off. The Geneva-based organization's annual report tracks disparities between the sexes in 153 countries across four areas: education, health, economic opportunity and political empowerment.

The overall gender gap across these categories has shrunk, yesterday's report showed, with WEF now forecasting it will take 99.5 years for women to achieve parity on average, down from the 108 years forecast in last year's report. But while some sectors have shown improvements, others lag far behind. General parity "will take more than a lifetime to achieve," WEF acknowledged in a statement.

40 percent wage gap

WEF said the gender gap was more than 96 percent closed in the area of education and could be eliminated altogether within just 12 years. The gap was equally small in the health and survival category, but the WEF report said it remained unclear how long it would take to achieve full parity in this domain due to lingering issues in populous countries like China and India. Politics meanwhile is the domain where the least

progress has been made to date, but it showed the biggest improvement in the past year.

Women in 2019 held 25.2 percent of parliamentary lower-house seats and 22.1 percent of ministerial positions, compared to 24.1 percent and 19 percent in 2018. But when it comes to the workplace, the picture is less rosy. The report, which looked at a variety of factors including opportunity and pay, said it would take 257 years before there was equality in the workplace. It highlighted positive developments, like a general increase in the share of women among skilled workers and senior officials.

But it stressed that this trend was counterbalanced by "stagnating or reversing gaps in labor market participation and monetary rewards". On average, only 55 percent of adult women are in the labor market today, compared to 78 percent for men, while women globally on average still make 40 percent less than men for similar work in similar positions. The wage gap has been steadily shrinking in OECD countries over the past decade, but it has at the same time expanded in emerging and developing economies, the WEF report showed.

Global disparities

Progress across the categories varies greatly in different countries and regions. The report pointed out that while Western European countries could close their overall gender gap in 54.4 years, countries in the Middle East and North Africa will take nearly 140 years to do so. Overall, the Nordic countries once again dominated the top of the table: men and women were most equal in Iceland, followed by Norway, Finland and Sweden. Syria, Pakistan, Iraq and finally Yemen showed the biggest overall gender gaps of the countries surveyed.

Among the world's 20 leading economies, Germany fared the best, taking 10th place, followed by France at 15th, South Africa at 17th, Canada at 19th and Britain at 21st. The United States continued its decline, slipping two places to 53rd, with the report pointing out that "American women still struggle to enter the very top business positions", and are also "under-represented in political leadership roles". — AFP

Sports

Zidane and Valverde to meet in Clasico battle of the survivors

Real Madrid 'only focused on football' amid unrest fears

MADRID: Zinedine Zidane and Ernesto Valverde might have been fearing for their jobs if they had lost a Clasico back in October but its postponement means that today they can face each other feeling more secure. Stalling in the autumn, Real Madrid and Barcelona have rolled through the gears in the lead-up to Christmas, meaning the winner of today's crunch meeting at Camp Nou will move seven points clear of third place.

More importantly, in what increasingly looks like a two-pronged title chase, the winner will pull three ahead of the loser, with one round Liga matches left before the two-week winter break. Yet even for the loser, providing defeat is not a humiliation, the consequences will not be so grave. The gap in the table will be small and considering where both these teams were only a few weeks ago, when every week brought a new name linked with coaching jobs and every goal conceded planted another seed of doubt.

For Real Madrid, Jose Mourinho was out of work and in the public eye, his increasingly frequent media showings even appearing to irk the usually immovable Zidane. "Football forgets what you've done in the past," said Zidane in October. "I'm not going to tell you what they say doesn't bother me because it bothers me, but I can't prevent people giving their opinions."

For Barcelona, Ronald Koeman had surged into view after the Dutch Federation confirmed a clause in his contract that allows him to join Barca after Euro 2020 next summer. But if the rumors were an irritation, form on the pitch was a real concern.

Barcelona's malaise was short-lived. They won only two of their opening five games. Results improved but performances were ponderous and the weaknesses all-too familiar, the kind that had also gone unfixed before, only to prove costly later in the season.

In that sense, Valverde was carrying the weight of previous disappointments and he was blamed for a leaky defense, lack of style and failure to get the best out of Antoine Griezmann. "At the start of the season, it's not about winning one title, it's about winning three or four," said Valverde in November. "So the frustration when you don't win a game is high."

Zidane also shouldered burdens from last season. Even if it was not his team that limped its way through the final months, he was in charge and some wondered

why nothing had changed. Suspicions grew when Madrid drew two of their first four league games and were thrashed away at Paris Saint-Germain.

'More life'

When they lost away at newly-promoted Mallorca, a week before the Clasico was meant to be played, it felt like results might unravel. "We must have consistency," said Zidane. "We have to have more life in our game."

Madrid did that as Zidane found a more settled side including the dynamic midfielder he has long-wanted in Fede Valverde as well as an 18-year-old gem in Rodrygo and arguably the world's most in-form striker in Karim Benzema. Eden Hazard got fit too and sparked in spells before injuring his ankle earlier this month, which will rule him out until the new year. As Madrid hit their stride, Barcelona accelerated to keep up and the uncertainty around Valverde, although not gone, has, for now at least, faded.

Their improvement cannot be entirely credited to the return of Lionel Messi, but his eight goals, including two hat-tricks, and four assists in six games have certainly helped. Griezmann is finding his feet too, with three goals in his last five. "It is true we were struggling but we have also done things well," Valverde said last month. "Leaders in La Liga, first in our Champions League group. We have to follow our path."

Judgement on Zidane's second coming will be guided by Madrid's staying power in the league while for Valverde, success will hinge on Europe, where recapturing the trophy after four barren seasons seems now to be the minimum for Barcelona. Storms may lie ahead but as La Liga approaches its halfway point, Zidane and Valverde are still intact. This Clasico is a battle of leaders, but survivors too.

Focused on football

Zidane has said he is not worried about the Clasico being overshadowed by Catalan independence protests. The fixture was originally scheduled for October 26 but had to be postponed and there are renewed fears of unrest at Camp Nou, where Madrid and Barca will be playing for first place in La Liga.

"I am not worried about anything," said Zidane in a press conference yesterday. "I am happy we are about to play a Clasico. It was the same when I was a player,



MADRID: Real Madrid's French coach Zinedine Zidane looks at his players during a training session at the Real Madrid City sports facilities in Madrid yesterday, on the eve of their Spanish League football match against Barcelona FC. — AFP

these are the matches you live for, and you are focused only on what happens on the field."

Democratic Tsunami, the protest group in favor of Catalan independence, has called publicly for its supporters to gather at the stadium four hours before kick-off at 19:00 GMT. A large-scale safety operation will be deployed around the match involving 3,000 security personnel while both teams have been instructed to travel to the stadium from the same hotel.

"It's something different but the rules are the rules," said Zidane. "They said we have to leave together so we're leaving together." Zidane added: "We never thought this game would not go ahead. What we have to do is put all our energy into the match because the rest, we could spend a week talking about it."

Barcelona and Real Madrid sit first and second in La Liga and level on points, with Barca only ahead on goal difference. Both teams have found form in recent weeks, in part due to the excellent form of their strikers. Madrid's Karim Benzema has nine goals in his last eight games while Lionel Messi has scored 14 in 12.

"We know we are facing a very good team, we know the player they have in Messi, but we also have our weapons," Zidane said. Eden Hazard, Marcelo, James Rodriguez, Lucas Vazquez and Marco Asensio will all miss the match through injury. Gareth Bale is fit again but has not started since Madrid's win over Alaves on November 30. "Bale is with us, he is training well," Zidane said. "He is an important player and tomorrow, he will be prepared like everyone else." — AFP

Liverpool's Klopp laments Club World Cup's timing

DOHA: Jurgen Klopp insists Liverpool are fully focused on winning this week's Club World Cup ahead of their semi-final against Monterrey of Mexico but hit out at the timing of the competition and questioned FIFA's plans to expand the tournament in future.

"We are here now and we are completely focused on it, but if you had asked me beforehand if I think that there should be a Club World Cup in the middle of our season, I would say no, in my honest opinion," Klopp told journalists at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha, where Liverpool face Monterrey tonight.

The Anfield club have had to take time out from their seemingly relentless march towards the Premier League title to travel to Qatar for the tournament, in which they are Europe's representatives thanks to their Champions League triumph last season.

If Liverpool win against the Mexicans, they will

advance to a final on Saturday against either Flamengo of Brazil or Saudi side Al-Hilal, while even if they lose their semi-final they will remain in Qatar for a third-place play-off at the weekend.

Their Premier League trip to West Ham United, scheduled for this weekend, was postponed as a result, and they have been forced to play their League Cup quarter-final at Aston Villa yesterday with a squad of academy players due to the lack of alternatives in a packed schedule.

After the competition concludes, they will rush back home to prepare for a trip to Leicester City—their closest title challengers—next Thursday, on the Boxing Day holiday in the United Kingdom. FIFA recently confirmed plans to expand the current seven-team Club World Cup played in December to a 24-team competition which will start in China in 2021 and will be played in June and July—that means a clash with the next Africa Cup of Nations, to be held at the same time. The existing format is particularly unloved in Europe, even if European clubs have won the last six editions.

Klopp added: "Can it be an even bigger tournament in the future? I don't know. We have to make sure that we have great competitions, but not at the same time, that's all. I like now being here because we have a lot of fans in this part of the world, they usually have to



DOHA: Liverpool FC coach Jurgen Klopp and midfielder James Milner give a press conference on the eve of their 2019 FIFA Club World Cup semi-final match against Monterrey, in Doha yesterday. — AFP

follow us at night time if they want to watch our games so that's nice that we can come closer from time to time. But everybody needs to think about it. If there is time for a tournament which is nice, then you cannot have then another. You cannot just add on tournaments, that doesn't work." — AFP

Euro Roundup

Palace into ninth place

LONDON: Wilfried Zaha's equaliser lifted Crystal Palace up to ninth in the Premier League table as they shared the points in a 1-1 draw at home to Brighton on Monday. Neal Maupay fired the visitors into a 54th-minute lead but Palace star Zaha drew the Eagles level against the Seagulls with a fine solo effort 15 minutes from time at Selhurst Park. Palace have now moved above London rivals Arsenal in the table and Zaha is proud of the way his side stayed in the game against a Brighton team who had much the better of the play. Brighton remained in 13th, five points above the relegation zone, and manager Graham Potter was pleased by the south coast side's latest display. — AFP

Lazio into title race

ROME: Lazio scored twice in added time to win 2-1 in Cagliari in Serie A on Monday for an eighth straight victory. In a battle between the teams that started the weekend third and fourth, Lazio were beaten after 90 minutes. Giovanni Simeone had opened the scoring for Cagliari in the ninth minute with a superb volley from the left. Lazio grew more dangerous as the match progressed but the Sardinians held on until the second minute of added time when Luis Alberto volleyed in from the edge of the box. In the dying seconds of the seventh minute of additional time Felipe Caicedo headed the winner. — AFP

Ancelotti to Everton?

LONDON: Everton insisted Monday they had yet to make a contract offer to a potential new manager after a report that Carlo Ancelotti had agreed "in principle" to take over at Goodison Park. Sky Sports reported talks between the English Premier League club and the veteran Italian boss had "progressed well." But a statement issued by Everton later Monday said: "In the 11 days since Marco Silva left the club, the Everton board has been working to recruit a new permanent manager — and has held meetings with a number of candidates." It added: "We can confirm that thus far no contract offer has been made and no candidate has chosen to withdraw from the process." — AFP

Arteta to coach Arsenal?

LONDON: Manchester City will not stand in Mikel Arteta's way if he wants to become the new manager of Arsenal, several British media outlets reported Monday. Reports added that while Premier League champions City were unhappy at a lack of a formal approach for Arteta, currently an assistant to manager Pep Guardiola, they will stop the Spanish midfielder joining Arsenal. Arteta played for north London side Arsenal and he has also been linked with the managerial vacancy at Premier League rivals Everton, another of his former clubs. But speculation that Arteta could be returning to north London as the successor to sacked Gunners boss Unai Emery intensified when pictures emerged of managing director Vinai Venkatesham outside his house in the early hours of Monday morning. — AFP

Roma criticizes use of monkeys for anti-racism campaign

ROME: An anti-racism campaign by Serie A that used art showing monkeys, drew a bemused response from one of its own clubs on Monday night. "AS Roma was very surprised to see what appears to be an anti-racist campaign from Serie A featuring painted monkeys on social media today," said Roma on their English-language twitter feed. "We understand the league wants to tackle racism but we don't believe this is the right way to do it."

Serie A Managing Director Luigi De Servio had earlier presented an anti-racism plan which included the signing of a charter by a player representing each of the 20 Serie A clubs.

The league also displayed a triptych by Italian artist Simone Fugazzotto at its Milan headquarters which showed three monkeys in close-up but with slightly different colours over the basic brown. According to the League, the work "aims to defend the values of integration, multiculturalism and fraternity".

Later, as criticism began, the league issued a statement saying "true art is provocation." Fugazzotto almost always paints monkeys, in a variety of artistic styles, usually wearing human clothes and representing different cultures and historical periods.

"I only paint monkeys as a metaphor for human beings," he said in interviews with the media ahead of the campaign. "We turn the concept back on the racists, as we are all monkeys originally. So, I painted a Western monkey, an Asian monkey and a black monkey." Italian stadiums are the scene of recurrent racist incidents, including monkey cries aimed at black players. FARE, a racism monitoring organization, called the choice of art a "bad joke." — AFP

DRAW RESULT	
WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERERS FC (ENG)	RCD ESPANYOL (ESP)
SPORTING CP (POR)	ISTANBUL BASAKSEHIR FK (TUR)
GETAFE CF (ESP)	AFC AJAX (NED)
BAYER 04 LEVERKUSEN (GER)	FC PORTO (POR)
F.C. COPENHAGEN (DEN)	CELTIC FC (SCO)
APOEL FC (CYP)	FC BASEL 1893 (SUI)
CFR 1907 CLUJ (ROU)	SEVILLA FC (ESP)
OLYMPIAKOS FC (GRE)	ARSENAL FC (ENG)
AZ ALKMAAR (NED)	LASK (AUT)
CLUB BRUGGE (BEL)	MANCHESTER UNITED FC (ENG)
PFC LUDOGORETS 1945 (BUL)	FC INTERNAZIONALE MILANO (ITA)
EINTRACHT FRANKFURT (GER)	FC SALZBURG (AUT)
FC SHAKHTAR DONETSK (UKR)	SL BENFICA (POR)
VfL WOLFSBURG (GER)	MALMÖ FF (SWE)
AS ROMA (ITA)	KAA GENT (BEL)
RANGERS FC (SCO)	SC BRAGA (POR)

NYON: The results are displayed on a screen after the UEFA Europa League football cup round of 32 draw ceremony on Monday in Nyon. — AFP

Man Utd draw Club Brugge in Europa League

NYON: Manchester United will take on Club Brugge in the last 32 of the Europa League while struggling Arsenal will face Greek side Olympiakos following Monday's draw in Nyon. United, who won the competition under Jose Mourinho in 2017, travel to Bruges for the first leg on February 20 before returning to Old Trafford a week later.

"There is no easy team at this stage but the team is doing well and hopefully we can get a good result," United club ambassador Park Ji-Sung told BT Sport. "A couple of years ago we won the trophy and we know how beneficial it is, particularly with qualification to the Champions League." Arsenal are languishing ninth in the Premier

League after sacking coach Unai Emery but finished top of their group in Europe and are also away in the first leg. "We are not doing so well, unfortunately in the Premier League, so this could be a route into the Champions League next year, so I'm sure it will be one of our priorities," said Arsenal club secretary David Miles.

Ajax were drawn with Spanish outfit Getafe following their surprise exit from the group stage of the Champions League, while Serie A leaders Inter Milan travel to Ludogorets. Antonio Conte's side will be among the favorites for the competition alongside last season's Champions League semi-finalists Ajax after failing to get past Barcelona and Borussia Dortmund in Europe's top competition.

Celtic face FC Copenhagen of Denmark while Steven Gerrard's Rangers come up against Portuguese outfit Braga. Sevilla travel to Romanian side Cluj with the five-time winners riding high in La Liga, while fellow Spaniards Espanyol travel to Wolverhampton Wanderers, who are enjoying their first European campaign in nearly four decades. — AFP

Sports

Tennis in 2019: Nadal on top as new faces make mark in women's game

LONDON: Rafael Nadal finished the season on top of the world to give the men's rankings a familiar look but a new crop of women is showing the old guard can be overthrown. The Spanish world number one and Novak Djokovic won two Grand Slams each in 2019, holding Father Time and their young rivals at bay for another year. But Ashleigh Barty and teenager Bianca Andreescu were two new faces on the list of women's Major winners as familiar names slipped from view. AFP Sport looks at some of the big talking points of the season.

Can Nadal stay on top in 2020?

Rafael Nadal arrived at the Italian Open in May without a title in 2019.

He beat Novak Djokovic in the final and lost just three matches in the rest of the season, winning the French Open and the US Open before inspiring Spain to Davis Cup glory on home soil, finishing as world number one for a fifth time.

With a combined age of 103, Nadal, Djokovic and Roger Federer continue to dominate men's tennis and it takes a brave punter to predict their imminent demise.

But there is at last the sense of a credible challenge from an exciting crop of youngsters including Daniil Medvedev, who pushed Nadal all the way in the US Open final, and ATP Finals winner Stefanos Tsitsipas. "I believe I'm really close to being crowned a Grand Slam champion," said Tsitsipas after beating Dominic Thiem in the final in London.

Women's NextGen show the way

Australia's Ashleigh Barty, 23, rose from the relative anonymity of 15th in the world at the end of 2018 to top the rankings a year later, winning the French Open and the WTA Finals along the way. Teenager Bianca Andreescu of Canada soared even more dramatically, from 178th to fifth in the world, beating Serena Williams

in the final of the US Open to become the first Canadian to win a Grand Slam singles title. "NextGen is here," Andreescu announced during her winning run at Flushing Meadows. "You see many fresh faces and I think we're only going to get better from here."

Federer's Wimbledon pain

Roger Federer had two Wimbledon championship points on his own serve to beat Novak Djokovic and win his 21st Grand Slam title. That would have taken him six clear of the Serbian on the all-time list and three clear of Rafael Nadal at the time.

Instead, he faltered. Djokovic, in a match lasting a shade under five hours, won his 16th Grand Slam and two months later Nadal won his 19th. "It's such an incredible opportunity missed," said the Swiss veteran, now 38 and who must fear his days as the all-time leader on the list are numbered.

Serena's Court problem

Serena Williams is running out of opportunities to win the 24th Grand Slam singles title that would pull her level with Margaret Court's record. The 38-year-old American reached the final at both Wimbledon and the US Open but she won just four games against Simona Halep in London and lost in straight sets to Bianca Andreescu in New York.

It followed defeats in the finals of both events the previous year, suggesting Williams is feeling the pressure. Speaking after her US Open defeat, she downplayed the pursuit of Court's record. "I'm not necessarily chasing a record. I'm just trying to win Grand Slams," she said. "It's definitely frustrating, but for the most part I just am still here. I'm still doing what I can do."

Comeback of the year

In January, British former world number one Andy Murray admitted the 2019 Australian Open could be his



MADRID: In this file photo taken on November 24, 2019 Spain's Pablo Carreno, Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut and Spain's Rafael Nadal pose with the trophy after winning the final tennis match between Canada and Spain at the Davis Cup Madrid Finals 2019 in Madrid. — AFP

last tournament during a tearful press conference. But the Scot, 32, returned to the court after hip resurfacing surgery and beat fellow veteran Stan Wawrinka in the final of the European Open in October. "It means a lot," Murray said after his triumph. "The past few years have been extremely difficult... I didn't expect to be in this position at all, so I'm very happy."

A star is born

Having been the youngest player to come through

Wimbledon qualifying, 15-year-old Coco Gauff stunned five-time champion Venus Williams in the first round in straight sets, belying her ranking of 313. "My dream was to win. That's what happened," said the American whose run at the All England Club was eventually ended by champion Simona Halep in the fourth round. Gauff went on to make the US Open third round before winning a maiden title in Linz in the autumn having lost in qualifying. At the end of 2018, she was ranked 875 but she will head into 2020 at 68. — AFP

Golf in 2019: Tiger roars back into spotlight

PARIS: Tiger Woods completed one of sport's greatest ever comebacks by winning his 15th major title at the Masters in April, before ending the year as a winning Presidents Cup captain. Ireland's Shane Lowry won the first British Open to be held in Northern Ireland since 1951, while a potential rivalry between Brooks Koepka and Rory McIlroy started to emerge. AFP Sport looks at five talking points from 2019 in golf:

Tiger roars again

The most memorable moment of the year came back in April at Augusta National when Woods tapped in to seal his first major championship victory since the 2008 US Open. The now-43-year-old has since had to battle personal problems, injury woes and a shocking loss of form. He surprised the golfing world by returning to the top events in 2018, winning the PGA Tour's season-ending Tour Championship, before capping his comeback this year in incredible fashion by winning a fifth Masters green jacket. Woods went on to lift a record-equaling 82nd PGA Tour title in Japan in October, before leading the United States to victory in the Presidents Cup in Melbourne as a playing captain. Now, the talk of him chasing down Jack Nicklaus' long-standing record of 18 major wins has been reignited.

Lowry delights Portrush

Irishman Lowry provided an enthralling finale

in a party atmosphere as Royal Portrush staged the British Open for the first time in 68 years. The 32-year-old won his maiden major title with a dominant six-shot victory over England's Tommy Fleetwood in difficult conditions on the final day.

"I let myself enjoy it and it was incredible walking down 18, they were singing and going mad. I could not believe it was happening to me," said Lowry after becoming only the second player from the Republic of Ireland, after Padraig Harrington, to lift the Claret Jug.

Reed 'cheating' storm

Patrick Reed was accused of cheating after being given a two-stroke penalty for twice moving sand behind his ball with his club during the Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas. The infraction cost the former Masters winner a place in a play-off as he finished two strokes behind eventual champion Henrik Stenson.

Reed was jeered mercilessly the following week by the home crowd at the Presidents Cup at Royal Melbourne, despite insisting that he was not a "cheat" and that he broke the rules "unintentionally". Spanish star Sergio Garcia also caused uproar over his behavior in a bunker earlier in February, when he was disqualified from the already controversial Saudi International after smashing his clubs into putting greens and bunkers in fits of rage.

'Phenomenal' Ko breaks through

Ko Jin-young produced the biggest breakthrough of the season by winning two women's majors, four LPGA Tour titles in total and finishing the year as world number one — all in only her second LPGA campaign. The 24-year-old South Korean won for the first time in the US with a thrilling victory in the Founders Cup in March, before securing her maiden major two weeks later

at the ANA Inspiration. Another followed at the Evian Championship in France, while she also went 114 holes without a bogey — breaking Woods' record of 110. "It's phenomenal," said Ko's veteran caddie Dave Brooker.

Tiger signs off in style

Tiger Woods' United States produced a stunning turnaround to deny the Internationals a first Presidents Cup in 21 years, dominating the singles on a tense final day that went to the wire at Royal Melbourne. Veteran Matt Kuchar was the hero, with his winning putt on the 17th in the penultimate match enough to ensure victory, sparking wild celebrations from playing-captain Woods, who set the tone by getting the first point on the board. "I trusted all my 11 guys. I trusted them implicitly. I told them from the very get go. They went out there and got the points we needed," said Woods.

What to watch in 2020

Koepka, McIlroy threaten to dominate

Koepka and McIlroy have pulled clear as the best two players in the world according to the rankings, after the American won his fourth major at the USPGA Championship and the Northern Irish star claimed four titles and was named PGA Tour Player of the Year. "He (Koepka) talked about trying to be the dominant player in the game ... and I thought: 'He's going to have to go through me first'," McIlroy said after beating Koepka at the Tour Championship. But the world number one hit back, saying: "I've been out here for, what, five years. Rory hasn't won a major since I've been on the PGA Tour. So I just don't view it as a rivalry." With McIlroy and Koepka the joint-favorites to win April's Masters, the competition between the two appears set to become fiercer in 2020. —AFP

What to watch in 2020

responded superbly with a stunning win over Ireland and then, with the nation in mourning over the deaths of more than 80 people at the hands of Typhoon Hagibis, they turned over Scotland to secure a place in the quarter-finals for the first time. Beating South Africa again was beyond them, but their all-action game reopened the debate about whether Japan should join the southern hemisphere's Rugby Championship or even Europe's Six Nations.

Try of the year: Kenki Fukuoka

Japan's run to the quarter-finals saw wingers Kotaro Matsushima and Kenki Fukuoka become household names, the pair running in a handful of tries. While it was a simple finish for Fukuoka, his catch and grounding from a sweet Timothy Lafaele offload handed Japan a crucial 16-12 lead over Ireland, who had been World Rugby's number-one ranked team just weeks before. The crowd in Shizuoka, chanting "Nippon! Nippon!", went wild as Fukuoka emerged from a mass of Japanese teammates, a try that sealed an invaluable victory for the host nation, just as their upset victory over the Boks in 2015 had caught attention.

What to watch in 2020

Fiji won the inaugural rugby sevens tournament at the Rio Olympics, the image of their kneeling players receiving gold medals from Britain's Princess Anne becoming an iconic image of those Games. The Fijians could only finish ninth in the World Rugby Sevens Series opener in Dubai before a run to the semi-finals in Cape Town last weekend, but will look to build up a head of steam going into what is expected to be a physically draining competition at a hot and humid Tokyo Olympics next year. One thorn in their side could come in the shape of fleet-footed Bok winger Kolbe, whose lightning pace and insane ability to step defenders could flourish in the abbreviated game. —AFP

Cricket in 2019: Stokes, Smith shine in eventful year



LONDON: In this file photo taken on July 14, 2019 England's Ben Stokes dives to make his ground and the ball hits him going for a boundary as New Zealand's Tom Latham looks on during the 2019 Cricket World Cup final between England and New Zealand at Lord's Cricket Ground in London. — AFP

LONDON: Ben Stokes starred as England won the World Cup for the first time before producing one of the most memorable innings in Ashes history as Australia's Steve Smith enjoyed a successful return to the international stage after the 'sandpaper' ball-tampering scandal. But they were not the lone standout performers in 2019. Below AFP Sport looks back at five memorable incidents from the year in cricket.

Perera's 153 not out stuns South Africa

January saw Kusal Perera compile one of the greatest innings in Test history when his stunning 153 not out guided Sri Lanka to a remarkable one-wicket win over South Africa in Durban. Sri Lanka still needed 78 more runs for victory when last man Vishwa Fernando joined Perera in the middle. Perera was then 86 not out and the only realistic hope was that Fernando would hang around long enough for him to get a hundred. He did rather more than that though while Perera, who hit five sixes including two off fast bowling great Dale Steyn, managed the strike superbly to see Sri Lanka to their target of 304.

World Cup final thriller

England finally ended their 45-year wait for a first men's World Cup title with a stunning win over New Zealand in an extraordinary final at Lord's in July that saw them triumph by "the barest of margins" in the words of former Black Caps wicketkeeper turned commentator Ian Smith. Ben Stokes's 84 not out helped England equal but not surpass New Zealand's 241, his innings including a lucky six that came after a throw from the outfield deflected off his bat and went for four bonus runs. For the first time, the final went into a Super Over and here too the scores were level, with the run out of New Zealand's Martin Gupthill off the last ball of the match seeing England win on superior boundary count.

Stokes, whose career was nearly ended by a court case that eventually saw him acquitted on a charge of affray, was a national hero.

Star batsman Smith returns

Doubts over whether Steve Smith was still the same Test batsman following a 12-month ban for his role in the 'sandpaper'

ball-tampering scandal in South Africa that cost him the Australia captaincy were settled in the Ashes opener at Edgbaston where he marked his comeback with a superb innings of 144 and 142 during a 251-run triumph.

It was the start of an extraordinary run spree that saw Smith score 774 runs at an average of 110.57.

Australia retained the Ashes as five-match series ended all square at 2-2, with the blow to the head Smith suffered after being struck by a Jofra Archer bouncer during the drawn second match at Lord's eventually seeing Marcus Labuschagne become Test cricket's first concussion substitute.

Stokes's Headingley heroics

England had already been bowled out for a woeful 67 in their first innings when last man Jack Leach joined Stokes with the hosts still needing 73 more runs to reach a victory target of 359 in the third Test at Headingley.

But Stokes, in an innings that mixed defensive resilience with attacking flair, hit an unbeaten 135 that saw England to a stunning one-wicket win, arguably even more extraordinary than their celebrated 1981 Ashes victory at Yorkshire's head-quarters, although it would have been a different conclusion had not Australia's Nathan Lyon fumbled a clear run out chance with Leach stranded.

Test cricket back in Pakistan

A weather hit draw between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in a Test completed Monday may seem to be a run-of-the-mill result. But this was arguably one of the most significant fixtures this year given the match at Rawalpindi marked Pakistan's first Test on home soil for a decade since a militant attack on Sri Lanka's team bus made the country a no-go zone for leading sides. And the match itself did see Abid Ali score a century as the Pakistani became the first batsman to compile a hundred on both his Test and one-day international debuts.

What to watch in 2020

October and November will see the men's World Twenty20 take place in Australia, with the hosts looking to win the one major global trophy that has so far eluded them as holders West Indies bid for a third title. — AFP

Rugby in 2019: South Africa wins World Cup, Japan shines

PARIS: Faf de Klerk guided South Africa to World Cup glory in Japan, with the hosts setting the tournament alight with an unexpected run to the quarter-finals. AFP Sport looks at some key moments of 2019:

Team of the year: South Africa

The Springboks delighted the 'Rainbow Nation' by overcoming an opening pool defeat by New Zealand to claim a third World Cup title after previous successes in 1995 and 2007. Reinvigorated by coach Rassie Erasmus, a multi-cultural team led by the country's first black skipper, Siya Kolisi, beat Japan and Wales in the knock-out phase to set up a final against England, a game they won easily, 32-12, to claim the Webb Ellis trophy. The Springboks' game-plan was not a tough one to work out: forward power and a crashball midfield alongside a solid kicking game to ensure maximum pressure on opponents. When they cracked, the playmakers set outstanding flying wingers Makazole Mapimpi and Cheslin Kolbe loose.

Player of the year: Faf de Klerk

A triumph for the smaller man in a game increasingly dominated by bigger athletes, De Klerk enjoyed a breakthrough year on the back of a move to English club Sale. Teammate Pieter-Steph du Toit may have won the official World Rugby player-of-the-year award, but De Klerk was the effervescent driver of a Bok team

based around experienced No 8 Duane Vermeulen, fly-half Handre Pollard and prop Tendai Mtawarira.

Instantly recognisable with his flowing blonde locks, De Klerk showcased his fine kicking game and also proved a real nuisance around the ruck area, a handful for any defense. Standing only 5ft 7in (1.72m) tall and weighing 13st 12lb (88kg), he makes up for his lack of physical presence with bravery especially in defence and his confrontation with the massive Welsh lock Jake Ball was one of the images of the tournament. Another was the sight of him in Springbok underpants welcoming Prince Harry to the dressing room after the final.

Game of the year: England-New Zealand

The All Blacks were targeting a third consecutive World Cup title in Japan, but came unstuck against an England side who produced a performance of the ages in the semi-finals for a sensational 19-7 victory.

Manu Tuilagi scored an opening try for England, the recalled George Ford kicking four penalties to nullify an Ardie Savea try for the All Blacks in the team's first World Cup loss since going down to France in the 2007 quarter-finals.

The match in Yokohama had everything, starting by England encroaching into the New Zealand half during the pre-kickoff haka. A startling opening quarter had the crowd on the edge of their seats as Ford marshalled a superb forward effort led by locks Courtney Lawes and Maro Itoje that saw England dominate territory and possession. Sam Underhill's driving tackle on Jordie Barrett, which resulted in a penalty for England, summed up how Eddie Jones' team had won the psychological battle with a misfiring All Blacks side in a classic encounter.

Revelation of the year: Japan

Having beaten the Springboks in Brighton in 2015, much was expected of Japan who also had the mixing blessings of being host nation. They

Sports

Mavericks hold off Bucks to snap 18-game NBA win streak

Curry, Porzingis shine in Luka's absence to overcome Giannis' outburst

NBA results/standings

Washington 133 Detroit 119; Toronto 133 Cleveland 113; Houston 109 San Antonio 107; Memphis 118 Miami 111; Dallas 120 Milwaukee 116; Oklahoma City 109 Chicago 106; Portland 111 Phoenix 110.

Eastern Conference

	W	L	PCT	GB
Milwaukee	24	4	0.857	—
Philadelphia	20	8	0.714	4
Boston	17	7	0.708	5
Miami	19	8	0.704	4.5
Toronto	18	8	0.692	5
Indiana	18	9	0.667	5.5
Brooklyn	14	12	0.538	9
Orlando	12	14	0.462	11
Charlotte	12	17	0.414	12.5
Detroit	11	16	0.407	12.5
Chicago	10	19	0.345	14.5
Washington	8	17	0.320	14.5
Cleveland	6	21	0.222	17.5
Atlanta	6	21	0.222	17.5
New York	6	21	0.222	17.5

Western Conference

	W	L	PCT	GB
LA Lakers	24	3	0.889	—
LA Clippers	20	8	0.714	4.5
Dallas	18	8	0.692	5.5
Denver	17	8	0.680	6
Houston	18	9	0.667	6
Utah	15	11	0.577	8.5
Sacramento	12	14	0.462	11.5
Oklahoma City	12	14	0.462	11.5
Phoenix	11	15	0.423	12.5
Portland	11	16	0.407	13
Minnesota	10	15	0.400	13
San Antonio	10	16	0.385	13.5
Memphis	10	17	0.370	14
New Orleans	6	21	0.222	18
Golden State	5	23	0.179	19.5

WASHINGTON: Seth Curry and Kristaps Porzingis each scored 26 points and the Dallas Mavericks snapped Milwaukee's 18-game NBA win streak Monday 120-116 despite 48 points and 14 rebounds by Bucks star Giannis Antetokounmpo. The Mavericks, lacking Slovenian star big man Luka Doncic due to an ankle sprain, held off the host Bucks, who made a furious rally with a late 17-6 run that fell just short.

Latvia's Porzingis, who scored 11 in the first quarter, shot 9-of-19 from the floor and 4-of-8 from 3-point range as well as grabbing 12 rebounds while Curry, brother of injured Golden State star Stephen Curry, came off the bench to spark the Mavs. Bucks reserve Kyle Korver had 17 points, hitting 5-of-7 3-point shots.

Porzingis said the Mavericks are playing better as they adjust to playing without Doncic for a while. "Without Luka, we got used to him. It threw us off a little bit not having him out there," Porzingis said. "Tonight we looked a little better. We want to keep getting better and we want him to get better and come back as soon as possible."

Milwaukee settled for the second-longest win streak in team history, two shy of the club's record run from the 1970-71 NBA championship campaign. Greek playmaker Antetokounmpo sank his final points with 5.2 seconds remaining to pull Milwaukee within 119-116, then missed a free throw hoping the Bucks could get a rebound.

Milwaukee did get the ball but Porzingis blocked Sterling Brown, and the Mavericks added a free throw for the final margin. The Bucks, who fell to 24-4, lead the NBA in points, rebounds and shooting accuracy but fell behind by as many as 16 points in the first half and could not overcome Dallas (18-8).

Antetokounmpo averaged 32.1 points, 12.1 rebounds and 4.4 assists a game during the streak, in which only two teams came within eight points of Milwaukee. The Bucks will play host to LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers (24-3) tomorrow in a matchup of conference leaders that could be a preview of the NBA Finals.

Meanwhile, Houston's Russell Westbrook scored 31 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, the last on the final play to secure a win, as the Rockets made the greatest rally in club history to beat San Antonio 109-107. The Spurs, ahead 72-53 at half-time, led by as many as 25 points before the Rockets made that the largest point total they had ever trailed by in a victory. Houston outscored the



MILWAUKEE: Kristaps Porzingis #6 of the Dallas Mavericks shoots the ball during the game against the Milwaukee Bucks on Monday at the Fiserv Forum Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

Spurs 56-35 in the second half, aided by 18 San Antonio turnovers. "Just heart," Westbrook said. "Sometimes you have to just take basketball out of it and just play. We put our heart into it and came out with the win."

James Harden had 28 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for the Rockets, who also got 15 points and 15 rebounds from Clint Capela. LaMarcus Aldridge had 19 points and 13 rebounds to lead San Antonio. Cameroon forward Pascal Siakam scored 33 points, Norman Powell added 26 and Kyle Lowry had 20 points and 11 assists to spark defending NBA Champion Toronto over visiting Cleveland 133-113. Chris Paul scored 30 points, grabbed 10 rebounds and added eight assists to lead the Oklahoma City Thunder a 109-106 home victory over Chicago. Zach LaVine scored 39 points in a losing cause for the Bulls.

Lithuanian center Jonas Valanciunas scored 21 points and pulled down 10 rebounds while Ja Morant added 20 points and 10 assists to power host Memphis over Miami 118-111. Jimmy Butler led the Heat with 25 points.

CJ McCollum scored 30 points and Damian Lillard added 27 for Portland as the Trail Blazers edged host Phoenix 111-110. Kelly Oubre Jr led Phoenix with 24 points while Spanish guard Ricky Rubio had 10 points, 11 rebounds and 14 assists for the Suns.

Lillard's free throw on a 3-point play with 26 seconds remaining produced the margin of victory. Rubio missed a last-second 3-point try for Phoenix. Bradley Beal scored 35 points and passed off 10 assists while Isaiah Thomas added 23 points to power Washington over host Detroit 133-119. —AFP



KUWAIT: A photo taken during Kuwait's group-stage match with Italy, which the latter won 17-7.



Russia and Egypt in action in their group-stage match.

Water Polo: Kuwait loses as quarterfinals start today

By Abdellatif Sharra

KUWAIT: Kuwait's national water polo team lost its first match in the ranking stage, which is held to determine teams to be ranked from 13th to 20th place. Kuwait's loss came against Russia which won 17-7 yesterday at the start of the ranking stage, which also saw Egypt beat Iran 11-7, China beat Uzbekistan 18-10 and South Africa beat Brazil 7-6.

Kuwait's goals were scored by Mohammad Ashkanani, Mubarak Dashti, Abdelrahman Al-Wazan, Saud Al-Otaibi and Abdallah Jassim. Kuwait will meet Uzbekistan at 9:20 this morning, competing for places 17 to 20. Russia will play China, while Egypt faces South Africa for places from 13-16.

Meanwhile, the four teams who topped their groups in the first round: Serbia (A), Spain (B), Italy (C) and Greece (D), will start the quarterfinals competition today. Serbia will play the winner of yesterday's match between Hungary and Montenegro, Spain with the win-

ner of the match between Croatia and New Zealand, Italy with the winner of the match between Australia and Japan, and Greece will play the winner of the Canada - US match. The first round finished Monday with Hungary beating Canada 17-7, while Russia beat Egypt 17-7 in the fifth and final round of Group B. Italy defeated Kuwait 17-7 and Montenegro defeated Iran 17-6 in Group C, while Australia defeated Uzbekistan 25-7 and New Zealand defeated Brazil 8-6 in Group D.

Kuwait Swimming Federation Vice-President for Technical Affairs Ali Al-Enezi said the performance shown by Kuwaiti players during the tournament was "outstanding" and "exceeded all expectations bearing in mind the European teams' strength, besides the good performance of other teams such as Japan, New Zealand and China whose levels have risen a lot compared to previous tournaments."

Enezi, who is the championship's manager, said that the Kuwaiti youth gave "everything they could" in their first participation in an international tournament follow-

ing a lengthy suspension, and also playing under difficult circumstances as the event coincided with schools' midterm tests. Furthermore, he said the tournament's organizing was "outstanding as acknowledged by FINA and participating delegations, who thanked Kuwait for the hospitality and a level of organization that matches that seen in major championships."

Japan's Managing Coach Hazuki Shuta was impressed with IHH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Swimming Pools Complex, adding that the construction of the facility is unique and media coverage is excellent. He said this is his first visit to Kuwait, adding that he has a good impression about Kuwait and its ability to organize top-level world events.

Shuta described competition during the tournament as "very strong," saying that he was happy that Japan reached the quarterfinals despite the presence of well-established teams from Europe. He added that water polo is still not a very popular sport in Japan "and are working to develop it to increase its popularity."

Women's 2011 World Cup winners to kick off Olympic torch relay

TOKYO: Japan's 2011 Women's World Cup-winning team will kick off the 2020 Tokyo Olympic torch relay in Fukushima, the area devastated by a tsunami, earthquake and nuclear meltdown eight years ago. Organizers said yesterday that the Olympic flame would begin the Japan leg of its journey on March 26, starting at the J-Village sports training center in Fukushima that housed workers battling to remove radioactive waste after the nuclear crisis.

It will cross through all of Japan's 47 prefectures on its 121-day journey, taking in landmarks such as Mount Fuji and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, dedicated to the victims of the world's first atomic bombing in 1945. The 2011 World Cup win lifted the nation only a few months after the Fukushima disaster that left 18,000 dead or missing and rendered large portions of the country's northeast

uninhabitable. "We were very much encouraged by your victory, and we are grateful that you are the first runners," said Mikio Date, a member of Japanese comedy duo Sandwich Man who announced the runners.

Azusa Iwashimizu, a member of the 2011 squad, said she hoped to bring the country together again — as the Japanese rugby team did during this year's World Cup on home soil. "This year, the words 'One Team' made waves with rugby, but we were 'One Team' in 2011," she told reporters. "I look forward to showing our efforts again as the original 'One Team,'" she added. Organizers hope to use the Tokyo 2020 Games to showcase the Fukushima area's recovery after the "triple disaster" that struck on March 11, 2011.

The flame lighting ceremony is scheduled to take place in Ancient Olympia, home of the ancient Games in Greece, on



TOKYO: Azusa Iwashimizu (center), a member of Japan's 2011 Women's World Cup-winning football team, looks at a torch at a press conference to announce the names of the Olympic torchbearers participating in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Torch Relay, in Tokyo, Japan yesterday. — AFP

March 12 when a high priestess will ignite the Olympic flame using the sun's rays and a parabolic mirror. The Greek leg of the

torch relay will then run for eight days before the flame is handed to Tokyo 2020 in Athens on March 19. —AFP

Iraqi refugee sets sights on Paralympics

ATHENS: On his fifth attempt, Iraqi refugee Wisam Sami finally succeeded in reaching Greece with thousands of others fleeing war in his homeland. Now he is setting his sights on the Paralympics. Four years after reaching Greece on a journey that took him from war-torn Mosul to Athens via Turkey, Sami is hoping to bag a spot to compete in fencing at Tokyo 2020.

Sami, who was left with a permanent limp in his right leg after a medical mistake at an Iraqi hospital when he was three, has spent the past two years training to be a wheelchair fencer. He has competed internationally this year and is now hopeful he could be selected. The Paralympics, as well as the Olympics, have had a refugees team since the Rio Games in 2016. "I am just following my dreams," Sami said.

Sami spent six months living in a tent in a refugee camp on the island of Samos before moving to the mainland with support from the UN refugee agency UNHCR. A project by Greece's Paralympic Committee for refugees caught Sami's eye in 2017 and since then he has been developing his sabre skills at a gym. "It gives me more excitement and I feel more strong," said Sami, who used to work as a photographic designer in Mosul.

Sami's coach Leonidas Koukos, who is also aide to the head coach of the Greek Paralympic team, said that as a player, Sami, 29, was quick and determined. "He was watching the movement the opponent was making and the next exact moment he was making the counter movement," said Koukos. "This is very, very good. This is his best skill."

Sami competed in the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation Wheelchair fencing world cup in Warsaw in July and there are plans for him to compete in Italy and Hungary to give him additional exposure to competitions. The International Paralympic Committee gives wild cards to refugees to compete in a refugee team under the IPC flag. "If I train more this helps me go to Tokyo," Sami said. "This is the best moment for me." — Reuters



25 Zidane and Valverde to meet in
Clasico battle of the survivors

26 Year in review: Tennis,
Cricket, Golf, Rugby

27 Mavericks hold off Bucks to
snap 18-game NBA win streak



Brees sets NFL record for TD passes

Saints thrash Colts 34-7 on Monday Night Football



NEW ORLEANS: Quarterback Drew Brees #9 of the New Orleans Saints delivers a pass over the defense of the Indianapolis Colts at Mercedes Benz Superdome on Monday in New Orleans, Louisiana. — AFP

WASHINGTON: New Orleans quarterback Drew Brees became the NFL's all-time touchdown pass leader on Monday, throwing four scoring tosses in the Saints' 34-7 rout of the visiting Indianapolis Colts.

The 40-year-old signal caller, who guided New Orleans to the 2010 Super Bowl, now has 541 career touchdown throws, two more than the old mark by retired legend Peyton Manning and three better than 42-year-old New England Patriots starter Tom Brady. "Pretty incredible moment," Brees said. "This is a special night and one I will always remember."

Brees set the mark with 7:08 remaining in the third quarter on a five-yard scoring toss to tight end Josh Hill, his third touchdown throw of the game. "I can think of no better guy to catch it than Josh," Brees said. "He does a lot of the dirty work, blocking and catching."

The record came for Brees on his 20th completion in a row, which set a new career consecutive completions high for him and gave the Saints a 27-0 lead. Brees,

already the NFL all-time leader in passing yardage and completion percentage, stretched the new career TD record with his final touchdown pass, a 28-yarder to Taysom Hill late in the third period. Jordan Wilkins scored for the Colts on a 1-yard run late in the fourth quarter to avert a shutout, but a fourth consecutive loss ended any playoff hopes for Indianapolis (6-8).

Brees completed 29-of-30 passes for 307 yards to set another NFL record. His one-game completion percentage mark of 96.7 percent broke the old record of 28-of-29 (96.6 percent) set last season by Philip Rivers. "That one may haunt me for a little while," Brees said.

The Saints (10-3) have already clinched a playoff berth but needed the victory to join fellow National Conference co-leaders Green Bay and Seattle on 11-3 atop the fight for home-field playoff advantage. Brees, who turns 41 next month, would not ponder his place among NFL immortals, his focus on adding another

Super Bowl title in February. "I'm trying to focus on the present, stay in the moment and enjoy every moment as they come," Brees said. "As for me, it's on to the next opportunity, the next challenge. There is still a lot more out there for me to play for."

"But it's a special moment and one I'll remember the rest of my life," Brees reached the mark in 273 games, seven more than Manning played in setting the record. Brees made two touchdown throws in the second quarter to match the old Manning mark of 539.

Thomas sets NFL record

He appeared to have broken the record with seven seconds remaining in the second quarter, but receiver TreQuan Smith was penalized for offensive pass interference for pushing off a defender's back. The Saints settled for a 26-yard Wil Lutz field goal and a 20-0 half-time lead. Brees completed 20-of-21 passes for 230 yards and two touchdowns in the first half.

Brees matched Manning's mark with 6:11 remaining in the second quarter on a 21-yard scoring strike across the middle to Smith just over the goal line for a 17-0 advantage. Brees made his first touchdown pass, a 15-yarder over the middle to Michael Thomas, just 2:23 into the second quarter for a 10-0 lead, New Orleans having scored first on a 33-yard Lutz field goal.

Thomas made a five-yard reception from Brees early in the third quarter to reach 10 or more catches for an eighth game this season, breaking the one-season NFL record he had shared with Andre Johnson and Wes Welker.

Thomas entered with an NFL-best 121 catches this season for a league-high 1,424 yards. He added 12 catches for 128 yards against Indianapolis. He's now 10 shy of matching former Colt Marvin Harrison's one-season mark of 143 receptions from 2002 with two games remaining. — AFP

Former banker Lobov knuckles down to career as combat ace

LONDON: Artem Lobov could have been making money trading in the financial markets. Instead he has opted to seek his fortune in bare-knuckle boxing. The 33-year-old Russian, a close friend and teammate of controversial Irish Mixed Martial Arts star Conor McGregor, began his competitive combat career in MMA but switched disciplines.

Lobov won his first two bouts, including one against former boxing welterweight world champion Paulie Malignaggi. But he lost his third fight last month in a

rematch of his first contest against Jason Knight.

Last year, the Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship (BKFC) held the first sanctioned bare-knuckle event in the United States since 1889. Each fight comprises five two-minute rounds per fight and takes place in a circular, four-rope ring. Only established professionals in boxing, MMA, kickboxing, or Muay Thai are allowed to compete.

Fighters are not allowed to wrap their hands to within one-inch of the knuckle. "Honest to God I just love to fight," the Ireland-based Lobov told a rapt audience at the Betting on Sports Conference in London. "I was a banker, I have a Masters in finance and I was moving towards a successful banking career. My dream was to move to London or New York and take it from there as a trader."

However, he experienced a Damascene conversion aged 21 when he first stepped into a ring. "I did not know combat sports before that and it was love at first sight and the reason I do it," he said. "I do not think about winning or losing, I just want to fight. The fact I can make a living out of it is brilliant."

McGregor heralded Lobov as a "warrior" after his

recent defeat. "What a journey this has been mate," he said in an Instagram post. "What a journey this is! You blow me away bro, from the world tours to the ultimate fighter to this! You deserve the world and more my brother! Congrats on another amazing fight!"

Lobov, who is still allowed to compete in MMA, says bare-knuckle boxing is not more dangerous to a fighter's health than either MMA or boxing. "You need to examine my perspective," he said. "When I look at it, boxing is more dangerous. We fight for 10 minutes, they fight for 36 minutes (12 rounds of three minutes), which provokes greater dehydration and affects the brain. It is a well-documented fact when you are dehydrated your brain is more at risk when you take a head shot. For me it is questionable whether a bare fist will cause as much damage as a bare elbow or knee or shin to the head — and trust me I have taken a few bare shins to the head."

A bloody sport

Lobov is adamant that TV audiences will take to bare-knuckle fighting despite the bloody spectacle. "I certainly

think it does have a future," he said.

"To prove that point, if you are in a park and people are playing basketball or football and then a fight breaks out, what is everyone going to watch? The fight. Another thing as well — there are a lot of spectators who are unhappy as they find the grappling (in MMA) boring and there are a lot of rounds in boxing which can make it drag out. Bare knuckle takes care of all that. There is no grappling, with only five rounds of two minutes. It is go, go, go, all-action, so definitely it has a future."

Lobov admits he has had to adapt to bare-knuckle boxing. "A few drinks every Saturday night and then go to clubs," he joked about his method of making the transition.

"You cannot spar bare knuckle so I learned only in my first bout when your fists are bare and it gets bloody and sweaty in the fight your fist does not close on impact, it opens up. Every shot counts, every jab opens you up and blood gets in your eyes. There are a lot more things to watch out for." He makes no bones about where his future lies. "They pay, I fight," he said. "Whoever pays more, that is where I will be." — AFP