

# Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 18015

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US President Donald Trump addresses his impeachment during a Merry Christmas Rally at the Kellogg Arena on Wednesday in Battle Creek, Michigan. (Inset) US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi presides over the articles of impeachment against Trump at the US Capitol in Washington on Wednesday. — AFP

## What comes next? Trump impeachment divides US

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## Local

## Anger and promises



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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This week, Kuwait was occupied with the new government formation and rain that caused the closure of some roads and flooded streets and houses, which angered the people. It was truly a week of anger, as rumors and bad news abounded. We are on the threshold of a new week and the rain has ended, but the repercussions of the new government formation and the people's reactions are indicators that must be taken into consideration.

Well, a government has gone and has been replaced by a new government with some new and controversial names, while others have been given more powers. But I believe that the general public wants to see a change in approach and not only faces.

I think many governments are failing to win the people's approval because they believe that they are more understanding of people's needs than the people themselves, and this is the biggest mistake many governments make worldwide these days. Changing the governmental approach in dealing with the needs of citizens and expats is the solution.

Words and good wishes should turn into practical implementation of applicable work plans in a fair manner for everyone. Promises unfortunately are no longer sufficient to address the Kuwaiti situation now.

What do people want? I believe a person in Kuwait wants to live comfortably, whether citizen or expat, and I do not mean financially only, but morally and humanly. We also have to be aware that there is an oppressed segment, which is the category of retirees and expats who have not received their salaries for months. Then there are those who receive "fictional" salaries, and bedoons who are suffering a lot in silence. So there are mistakes and imbalances that need immediate treatment.

That is why governments do not usually succeed in facing public anger because people do not know what is going on behind closed doors, but they see a reflection of what is happening on the ground. So, dissatisfaction with the new government formation is not surprising, but expected. After the new ministers took the oath of office, the level of popular approval was very low, and this can be measured from discussions, tweets and statements by various people and their attitudes. Some parliamentary statements were even objectionable.

I guess the challenge soon will be between the new government and the Kuwaiti street, simply because the government's performance will be under the microscope 24/7, and people will use social media platforms to express their dissatisfaction with any bad performance or statement or even a tweet by a minister.

I do not want to be drowned early in pessimism, but the indicators are difficult. The government wants to succeed, but it does not have many options or a guarantee of success. Therefore, the government must prepare to act immediately to correct the mistakes of the past and explicitly fight corruption.



Trash left on a beach in Kuwait. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

## Clean up after yourself!

IN MY VIEW

By Faten Omar

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In Kuwait, places to hang out are malls, restaurants, and cafes. As a lover of open spaces, these options are not okay for me. My expectations for a good weekend include open areas, green spaces and gatherings of friends. For years, I packed my barbecue tools in my car and gathered some friends to enjoy the pleasant winter weather. But after Kuwait strictly announced a fine of KD 1,000 and deportation if people barbecue in public places, we started to go to private places to barbecue legally.

But this has become harder and harder, as these places took advantage and raised the entrance fees from 500 fils (KD 1 on weekends) to KD 1.500. Paying for the meat, tools, snacks, drinks and entrance fees makes it harder to gather a large number of friends or family to enjoy a simple meal. I do not blame Kuwait for taking such an action. A bad attitude is also to be blamed. Some people throw trash including food and plastic wastes in public spaces which made the situation worse.

Every weekend, in malls, parks, restaurants, and beaches, people will enjoy their time with their family leaving a massive amount of trash behind. It's disheartening. It takes hours and maybe days to clean up after them.

It seems every holiday, weekend or public day off results in a rush to dump garbage in Kuwait's public spaces. Last February on the national and liberation days, 1,310 cleaners with hundreds of cleaning machines and equipment, cleaned up more than 1350 cubic meters of waste. In spite of the pre-awareness campaigns of the municipality for the public to celebrate in a good way. A similar trashing of the beaches and corniche happened last December during the winter break.

To counter the widespread disregard for our community and public spaces, hundreds of people in Kuwait began to participate in clean-up campaigns, picking litter from trash-strewn parks and streets, but despite all those efforts, some individuals keep on doing it. But sadly their noble efforts are drowned in the oceanic levels of trash still left behind by people in Kuwait every single weekend.

I call on all people to start cleaning up their neighborhoods and pick up their trash - it is not hard. Let us enjoy cleaning open spaces for you and your children to enjoy and to protect threatened areas. We must advise people to clean up and be responsible for taking care of things after barbecuing, picnicking, eating or drinking.

# Ready for the Beach ??



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## Local



Welcome to  
*Little Manila*  
 (in Kuwait!)



By Ben Garcia

A Filipino enclave has emerged in the heart of Salmiya after the opening of the revamped Souq Salmiya a year ago. The souq has become a favorite shopping destination and gathering place for Filipinos living and working in Kuwait. Old Souq Salmiya is located opposite the fire station at the end of the Fourth Ring Road. It is an extension of the popular Salem Al-Mubarak Street that is lined with shops and malls.

Known to Filipinos as Little Manila or Manila Town, the



area is flush with Filipino restaurants, cafes, bakeries, exchange houses, salons, shops and groceries catering to the Filipino community. The enclave offers OFWs a few minutes of 'home' in the form of local food, culture and camaraderie. Graffiti in Tagalog is seen on the walls and on weekends, Tagalog can be heard up and down the street as kabayans mix in large numbers to meet their friends, relatives and others from their homeland.

From the corner of Salem Al-Mubarak St at the tip of the Fourth Ring Road is Seafood Island Restaurant, right in front of McDonalds. It serves the freshest grilled seafood



dishes named after famous mountains and destinations in the Philippines, either al a carte or boodle fight style. The food items are named after native places like Taal Volcano, Boracay Seafood and Davao's Best.

Next stop is burger joint Sark's, also originally from the Philippines. Behind McDonalds are other Filipino-inspired restaurants like iTEA, Tia Maria Restaurant and Nature's

by Filipinos, with a couple of Pinoy restaurants and some exchange companies.

Another building houses the House Bucks Restaurant and various shops selling Filipino products. The Kabayan Grocery Hypermarket is next to it, where you can buy frozen meat and fish products, all imported from the Philippines. They also display and sell native tropical fruits from

South East Asian favorite. In the middle of the souq are rows of Filipino restaurants and iced teahouses spread like a bazaar. Several shops and restaurants have names in Tagalog, like Manok na Pula (Red Chicken) and Tahong na Pula (Red Muscles).

Just a few meters away from the main Salem Al-Mubarak St is a small street with a large concentration of Filipinos - the street is dubbed Makulay Street, short for Malikhaing Kulturang Layag (artists' guild). The graffiti on this street was collaboratively done by Filipino artists, who have made this street very colorful and attractive. It has become a selfie spot, not just for Filipinos, but those of other nationalities as well.

Makulay Street is dedicated to towns and cities in the Philippines - representing the major islands of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao - scrawled using colorful paint. In front of the graffiti wall is Bahay Kubo, a 150-seater Filipino restaurant that hosts a live band and parties on a weekly basis.

Next to it is a building known as the Jollibee and Chowking Building. Jollibee and Chowking are the most famous fast food chains in the Philippines. Jollibee has seven stores in Kuwait and caters to Filipinos in general. In the same building, you can visit a Filipino grooming

salon called Kuwentong Barbero, which takes pride in having the best Filipino hairdressers who are experts in various hairstyles for men. In the same building are two Manila juice shops and the original Bubble Tea by KuwaiTEA. If you go further, Al-Salam Mall has several Filipino restaurants inside its food court, as does Marina Mall. Welcome to Little Manila!

## Filipino enclave booming in Salmiya



Taste Bakery, all serving specialty Filipino cuisine. In the building next to the seafood restaurant, you can try the best Filipino dishes, including at a place reminiscent of the Aristocrat Restaurant in the Philippines.

On the ground floor of the building are some Filipino shops, in addition to Pinoy Street Food. The next building has Boodle Restaurant and Da Gucci, also specializing in Filipino cuisine. Qusinna ni Yorme (Mayor's Kitchen) is also in the same building, which sells Pampanga delicacies. The next building is a relatively small one also frequented

the Philippines like durian, young coconut and a selection of green vegetables. At Kabayan, you can find walis tambo (a broom made from rattan in Baguio City). There are other supermarkets here as well catering to Filipinos, with Ambassador Supermarket and Greenland Hypermarket next to each other selling Filipino food products and consumable and household items.

Manila street food is also sold in the area, including kikiyam, kwek-kwek, gizzards, porridge and light foods including the famous balut (14-day-old egg), which is a

# Kuwait Theater Festival concludes, honors winners



The organizers with the actors. — KUNA photos

The 20th edition of the Kuwait Theater Festival concluded and awarded the winners on Wednesday. Among the winners were Haya Al-Said and Yusuf Bonashi who won the best female and male actor awards respectively. Also, Hesa Al-Sayyad won the prize for best cos-

tumes, while the award for the best sound effects was given to Dr Abdel Hamid Saqr and Yaqoub Al-Kandari. Sami Belal obtained the best author award, while Mohammad Al-Khoder got the prize for stage direction.

Judging committee chief Dr Ali Al-Enzi said in a speech during a

ceremony that the festival succeeded in achieving its goals through promoting competition amongst the contestants. The event discussed some theater issues during symposiums held to focus on supporting dialogue and other relevant topics, he noted. — KUNA



Judging committee chief Dr Ali Al-Enzi.



Iman Faisal



Fahad Al-Methen



Samah

# Kuwait Times

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## Local

# MPs warn PM as Aseeri stresses deep bonds with 'Gulf brethren'

By B Izzak

**KUWAIT:** A number of opposition lawmakers yesterday issued a strong warning to HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah over the inclusion of Ghadeer Aseeri as Minister for Social Affairs and Labor, describing her as "controversial". The warning to the premier to take a clear political position came following a coordination meeting attended by about six MPs. Islamist MP Mohammad Hayef, who hosted the meeting, said five other MPs were expected to join but couldn't because of other appointments.

The lawmaker said the appointment of Aseeri is not acceptable and that she should not continue in the Cabinet, otherwise the lawmakers will take action. MP Mohammad Al-Mutair has already threatened to grill the prime minister over the appointment of Aseeri and gave the premier until Dec 24 to dismiss her or face a grilling. Opposition MPs claim that Aseeri, a liberal academic, had supported Shiite-led protests in Bahrain in 2011 and clearly opposed sending Gulf troops to back the government. They insist that this is against the policy of the government and want Aseeri to be dismissed. Aseeri yesterday issued a

statement in which she denied adopting any policy or position that contravenes Kuwaiti government policies, and reiterated that she firmly commits to her oath of office taken before HH the Amir. She also insisted that she is totally committed to national policies in the domestic and Gulf aspects, and reiterated strong bonds with "Gulf brethren".

Shiite MPs have rushed to Aseeri defense, saying that she should not be judged by statements and positions she made before becoming a minister. MP Khalil Al-Saleh said yesterday that launching a campaign against Aseeri just hours after her appoint-

ment and pressuring the premier to dismiss her constitutes violating the constitution and misusing the parliamentary supervision tool.

Meanwhile, five lawmakers yesterday sent a letter to the Assembly speaker demanding that the legal and legislative committee should quickly make a decision on a bill calling for a public pardon in order to allow the Assembly to vote on it. MPs Abdullah Al-Kandari and Bader Al-Mulla demanded yesterday that the Audit Bureau should be asked to conduct a detailed report on the areas where the future generations fund assets are invested.



Ghadeer Aseeri

## Kuwait deplores Brazil's 'illegal' Jerusalem move

**CAIRO:** Kuwait yesterday regretted a recent decision by the Brazilian government to open a trade office in Jerusalem in a move that harbingers the moving of its embassy to Israel. The remark was made by Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the Arab League Ahmad Al-Baker during an extraordinary meeting of the Cairo-based bloc's permanent delegates to look into the Brazilian move.

"It is an illegal decision that breaks relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions and UN Security Council resolutions, particularly Resolution 478 that calls on UN member states to pull out their missions in Jerusalem," he said. He voiced emphatic opposition to any measure or attempt that could undermine the legal status of the city of

Jerusalem, adding that "the moving of diplomatic missions or technical offices is an obvious and clear-cut breach of the aforementioned resolutions."

The Kuwaiti diplomat called on the Brazilian government to rethink its decision and to seek, instead, to exert efforts to find a final solution for the Middle East crisis in line with relevant international legitimacy resolutions, the Arab peace initiative and the two-state solution. He pointed out that his country had tried its best to persuade the government of Brazil to change its mind, underlining that the Palestinian cause is a central issue to Kuwait. Brazil on Sunday officially opened a trade office in Jerusalem, prompting wide Palestinian and Arab wrath. — KUNA

## Kuwait says Israeli settlements violating law, hindering peace

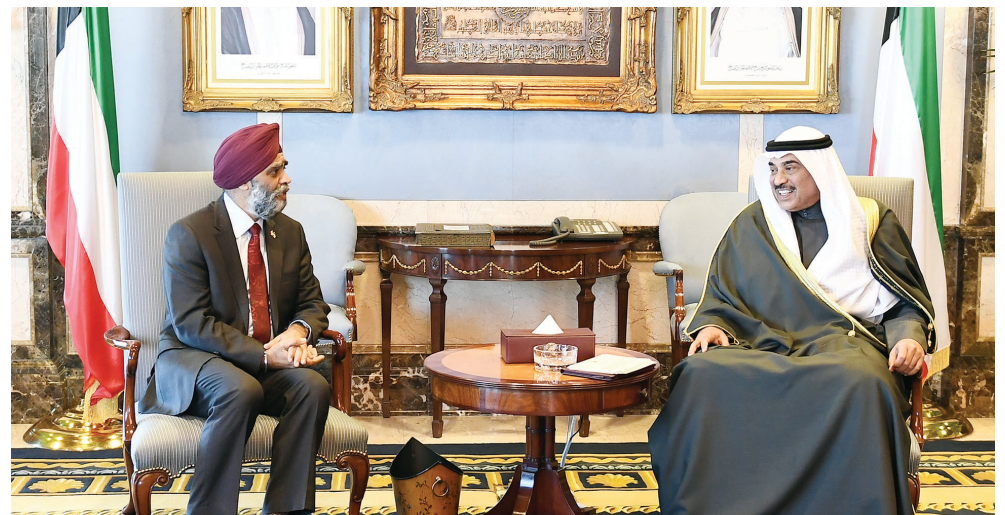
**NEW YORK:** Kuwait affirmed late Wednesday that Israeli settlements are in stark violation of international law and were hindering any vision for peace in the Middle East. Speaking at a UN Security Council session on the prospects for a two-state resolution between Israelis and Palestinians, Kuwait's Permanent Delegate to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi called for more frequent written reports on the implementation of the 2016 Council resolution 2334 concerning Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem.

He also urged other countries to remain neutral and not take unilateral measures to support Israel's illegal measures and the continuation of the occupation.

Otaibi said the latest report shows that Israel, the occupying power, pays no heed to the Security Council by continuing to expand settlements and allowing violence against Palestinians. He condemned such activity in the strongest terms and reaffirmed that such settlements have no legitimacy.

Peace would not be achieved if the parties did not abide by previous agreements. Other countries must remain neutral to encourage such peace and not take unilateral measures to support Israel's illegal measures and the continuation of the occupation. He reaffirmed the Arab position, which stipulated that peace was contingent on establishing a Palestinian state based on pre-1967 borders. — KUNA

## PM meets Canada defense minister



**KUWAIT:** HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met visiting Canadian Minister of National Defense Harjit Singh Sajja at Seif Palace yesterday, with Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attending. During the meeting, they discussed close relations between the friendly countries, ways of promoting them and a host of regional and international issues. Chief of the Kuwaiti Army General Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khuder attended the meeting. — KUNA

## UN: Kuwait's support crucial for UNRWA

**GENEVA:** A senior United Nations official has lauded Kuwait's vital support for the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), namely its backing of the Palestinians. Kuwait has been a significant partner for the international agency since decades, said UNRWA Acting Deputy Commissioner-General Christian Saunders in a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) yesterday.

UNRWA largely depends on Kuwait for donations, particularly those allocated for Palestinian refugees, affirmed Saunders as he emerged from a meeting with Jamal Al-Ghu-

naim, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and International Organizations in Geneva at the latter's office. Saunders hoped Kuwait would increase its assistance for UNRWA to help it grapple with its worst financial crisis, indicating that it had to borrow money from the UN to meet some financial obligations.

There is dire need for \$90 million by the end of the year "so we may be able to continue our services for the Palestinians," he said. Saunders assured the Palestinians that the UN would not ignore their need for help, hinting at the UN General Assembly support in this respect. Meanwhile, Ghunaim affirmed Kuwait's concern for aiding UNRWA, warning that total or partial stoppage of its activities would lead to instability in the Middle East. Kuwait eyes the UNRWA as a main and credible partner, he reaffirmed, indicating that he discussed with Saunders prospects of holding a conference grouping states that desire to aid the Palestinians. — KUNA



# Boursa Kuwait achieves historic milestone with MSCI upgrade

By Nawara Fattahova

**KUWAIT:** Boursa Kuwait achieved another historic landmark yesterday when MSCI announced it will be upgrading the exchange to emerging market status as part of its May 2020 Semi-Annual Index Review in one step, as the Kuwaiti equity market now meets all the necessary requirements.

MSCI Inc is one of the world's largest index providers, and its plan to upgrade follows upgrades of Boursa Kuwait by FTSE in two phases in 2017 and S&P Dow Jones in 2018. The reclassification is expected to generate billions of dollars in inflows to the market, primarily from large institutional investors following the index.

Kuwait's bourse will be included in the MSCI Emerging Markets Index with an estimated weight of 0.69 percent, according to Sebastien Lieblich, Global Head of Index Solutions and Chairman of the MSCI equity index committee. Inclusion may also generate up to \$7 billion in interest from ac-

tive investors, according to the Kuwait and Middle East Financial Investment Company (KMEFIC), an asset management firm.

Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan praised the great efforts of all those who made this reclassification possible. "This reclassifying will bring over KD 1 billion to the Kuwaiti market. Although the Capital Markets Authority is very young - it's the youngest in the region - yet they succeeded in upgrading the market to the top three indexes. In 2017, we started with the FTSE index, followed by S&P Dow Jones Indices last year, and today, after just one year, we upgraded to MSCI. This was a great challenge but the CMA achieved it," added Roudhan.

Ahmad Al-Melhem, CMA Chairman and Managing Director, said this is the third upgrade for Kuwait and is the most important, as MSCI is the world's top equity index provider. "The value of the capital that will enter the stock exchange is huge compared to the previous upgrades. The passive investment of MSCI is \$1.8 trillion, and for

emerging markets it's \$500 billion according to Kuwait's weight of 0.69 percent. In May 2020, the Kuwaiti market will receive as one tranche a capital of \$3.5 billion, and the market is ready for this money flow," he explained.

"This upgrade is not an upgrade of the Kuwaiti stock exchange, but it is an upgrade for Kuwait in general. This means if another stock exchange is established in the future, it will be classified as an emerging and not a frontier market. It's important that this upgrade was due to regulations prepared by CMA along with its strategic partners. Also, stricter rules were applied in Kuwait compared to neighboring countries by setting two unexpected conditions - this made Kuwait closer to an evolving emerging market according to the FTSE index. This is the next step that CMA is working on with its partners," Melhem added.

"I would like to mention another important achievement of CMA this year, which is first total and complete privatization of a public institution (Boursa Kuwait). The shares were transferred to



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan speaks during a press conference at the Capital Markets Authority yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

the underwriters, who received the surplus funds as well. This was an unprecedented event in Kuwait's history," he added.

## Fire drills held to boost readiness

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** The firefighting sector carried out several exercises yesterday according to plans to enhance firemen's efficiency. The first exercise was carried by Doha, Sulaibkhat and Mubarak Al-Kabeer hazardous materials center at East Doha station. The exercise was about implementing strategies of fighting fire and evacuation with the speed required.

Meanwhile, Fahaheel center carried out a practical exercise in cooperation with Al-Kout Mall in its cinema hall. Finally, Sulaibkhat and Ardiya centers carried out an exercise at the physiotherapy hospital in Andalus. The hospital was evacuated, while the firefighting and rescue operations were successful.

### Fake goods seized

Acting on a tipoff, customs detectives and Shuaiba port inspectors foiled an attempt to smuggle in nearly 40,000 counterfeit products into the country. The confiscated items will be destroyed. The source of the products is an Asian country and includes watches, bags, phones, clothes, women's accessories and other items.

### 'Upskirter' arrested

Police arrested an Egyptian at a supermarket for videoing a girl up her skirt, reported Al-Rai. The suspect said he is psychologically ill and satisfies his lust with the photos he takes. A police source said the suspect was arrested after a girl told the supermarket manager that a person was upskirting her sister. The suspect said he targets girls wearing short skirts and acts as if he wants to get something from the bottom shelf, then starts videoing. He was sent to concerned authorities.

### Policeman beaten

A traffic officer responded to calls about a reckless driver in a Farwaniya governorate area. When the officer arrived at the scene, the suspect came out of the vehicle, beat the officer and escaped, but he left his wallet behind. Charges of beating and insulting a police officer on duty were filed against the suspect as orders for his arrest were issued.



The seized counterfeit items are displayed.



A man is "rescued" during a fire drill.

## 500 stores closed in Jleeb crackdown

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi said it is too early to speak about reclaiming Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, adding that the municipality has closed more than 500 violating stores in the area, adding that there are 1,000 more stores with stickers sealing them as a prelude to permanent closure.

Manfouhi, during a field tour held by the government team commissioned to resolve the Jleeb problem in the presence of State Minister for Municipality Affairs Waleed Al-Jassim, said the difference is clear after only one month since the launch of the campaign. He said the municipality is now looking at alternatives to submit to the Council of Ministers. He said three areas will be handed to the manpower authority temporarily until bachelor cities are built.

### Insurance offices closed

The commerce and industry ministry closed two insurance offices in co-ops for operating without a license. The commercial supervision department said the two agencies were closed administratively based on article 26 of the insurance organization law 125/2019.

### Small blaze in kids' club

The social affairs ministry said a blaze at a children's club in Shamiya was limited and did not result in any injuries. Ministry Undersecretary Abdelaziz Shuaib said faulty wiring in decorative lights caused the fire, which was put out by a voluntary team member participating in a celebration. Fire operations were called and the wires were removed.

# International

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2019



Progress of non-Muslims 'left us in lurch', Malaysia tells Islamic summit

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## Delhi cuts mobiles as India protests rage nationwide



**BATTLE CREEK, MICHIGAN:** President Donald Trump leaves his Merry Christmas Rally at the Kellogg Arena on Wednesday in Battle Creek, Michigan. While Trump spoke at the rally the House of Representatives voted, mostly along party lines, to impeach the president for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, making him just the third president in US history to be impeached. — AFP

# US House votes to impeach Trump

## Alternate realities on display as Americans get a striking split-screen view

**WASHINGTON:** Americans got a striking split-screen view on Wednesday of just how divided their politics have become. As the US House of Representatives voted to impeach President Donald Trump on a charge of abusing his power over his dealings with Ukraine, the president strode fist-pumping onto the stage of a campaign rally in Michigan and declared he had done nothing wrong. "It doesn't really feel like we're being impeached," he said.

Fifteen minutes later, he was. It was a remarkable side-by-side illustration of a political split in the United States so wide and deep that it appears many Americans embrace not merely two competing views of a controversial president, but two alternate realities. On Wednesday, they played out in real time on television and social media.

In one, Trump's conduct toward Ukraine was an abuse of his office so grave he should be expelled from the White House. In the other, he was himself the innocent victim of political abuse.

Wednesday's vote made Trump the third US president to be impeached by the House, a historic rebuke of his administration's efforts to pressure officials in Ukraine to announce investigations of Democratic presidential contender Joe Biden and

his son Hunter Biden that would benefit Trump politically as he seeks re-election in 2020. Members of the Democratic-controlled House, divided almost entirely along party lines, voted to impeach Trump on charges that he had abused the power of his office and obstructed Congress. The Senate, controlled by Trump's fellow Republicans, is likely to acquit him in a trial next month. The tumultuous journey to Trump's impeachment has riven Americans for months. Slightly less than half of Americans supported impeaching Trump, the first step in removing him from office. A roughly equal number opposed it, according to polling by Reuters/Ipsos on Monday and Tuesday.

Behind that split is a deeper political schism. More than eight in 10 Democratic voters said they thought Trump deserved to be impeached, and about the same number of Republicans said he should not be. Few Americans have yet to make up their minds. The depth of that disagreement was on display all day - first as lawmakers from both parties used the House floor to deliver alternating, and irreconcilable, views of the president and later as he delivered a defiant speech to his cheering supporters. Trump took the stage at an arena in Battle Creek in western Michigan,

waving and smiling, at the same moment Democratic leaders finished delivering their case against him. "The country is doing better than ever before," he said. "We did nothing wrong."

As the final votes came in on the first charge - abuse of power - Trump talked about new ships and planes for the US military. As lawmakers voted to approve a second article of impeachment, Trump delivered an extended discussion about how hard it was to pronounce the last name of one of his potential Democratic challengers in the 2020 election, Pete Buttigieg.

Trump did not break stride. "They've been trying to impeach me from day one," he said. "They think the Washington swamp should be able to veto the results of an election."

### Little common ground

News networks displayed the events side by side - the House chamber tallying its votes and the president's rally. Vice President Mike Pence told reporters that Trump timed his remarks to coincide with the votes. Since House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced an impeachment investigation into Trump on Sept. 24, warring US political factions have seen little common ground on

the president's actions regarding Ukraine. Democrats have nearly unanimously blasted what they call an illegal effort to induce foreign interference in the next election. Republicans have said that Trump's demand for investigations in Ukraine amounted to little more than an effort to target foreign corruption and that Democrats had not come up with evidence showing any wrongdoing. In rapid-fire speeches lasting no more than a minute or two in the House on Wednesday, Democratic lawmakers said Trump had obviously abused his office, while Republicans accused their counterparts of a "coup" and an effort to overturn the 2016 election that put Trump in office.

As lawmakers debated, Trump weighed in on Twitter, quoting Fox News commentators and saying: "THIS IS AN ASSAULT ON AMERICA, AND AN ASSAULT ON THE REPUBLICAN PARTY!!!!"

The latest Reuters/Ipsos poll found that fewer than a quarter of Republicans believed Trump "pressured Ukraine to investigate" the Bidens, and even fewer thought Congress should launch an impeachment inquiry against a president who uses the powers of his office for an unfair political advantage. — Reuters

## International

# US, Russian military leaders meet in Switzerland on Syria

## UN calls for 'de-escalation' in Syria's northwest

**WASHINGTON:** The top US and Russian military chiefs met Wednesday in Switzerland for talks on Syria, where both countries are militarily engaged and maintain regular contact to avoid accidental confrontations. General Mark Milley, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, and his Russian counterpart, General Valery Gerasimov, met in Bern, a spokeswoman for Milley said.

They discussed "Syria, strategic stability and a variety of other operational and strategic issues to enhance deconfliction, improve understanding and reduce risk," Colonel DeDe Halfhill said. "Both leaders recognize the importance of maintaining regular communication to avoid miscalculation and to promote transparency," she said.

The Russian defense ministry issued a virtually identical statement, adding: "The meeting was constructive." It was Gerasimov's first meeting with Milley, who became chairman in September. The two men have spoken by phone but never before in person. Milley's predecessor, General Joe Dunford, met several times with Gerasimov, who is chief of the Russian general staff, most recently in March in Vienna. Despite the conflict in Syria and tensions between their two countries, the US and Russian military have kept open a permanent channel of communication between their leaders.

The United Nations on Wednesday con-

demned a deadly uptick in violence in Syria's last opposition bastion. Najat Rochdi, senior humanitarian adviser to the UN's Syria envoy, called for "immediate de-escalation" a day after a war monitor reported that regime air strikes and artillery fire had killed 23 civilians.

Rochdi condemned "the recent intensification of hostilities in northwest Syria, in particular aerial bombardments and the reported use of barrel bombs, killing tens of civilians including women and children," her office said in a statement. The jihadist-dominated region of Idlib is supposed to be protected by a months-old ceasefire deal to prevent a broad regime offensive, but bombardment has continued. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Tuesday about 30 were wounded, including some seriously.

An AFP correspondent said strikes continued in the area on Wednesday, and the Observatory reported that four civilians had been killed by bombardment on the area by the regime and its Russian ally.

"Despite repeated assurances that warring parties only strike legitimate military targets, attacks on health and education facilities continue," Rochdi's statement said. The Idlib region, which is home to some three million people including many displaced by Syria's civil war, is controlled by the country's former Al-Qaeda affiliate. The Damascus regime has repeatedly vowed to take back control of it.



Members of the Syrian Civil Defence, also known as the White Helmets, rescue an injured girl from the rubble of a building following a reported Russian air strike in the village of Tal Mardikh in Syria's northwestern Idlib province yesterday. — AFP

Pro-government forces launched a blistering offensive against the region in April, killing about 1,000 civilians and displacing more than 400,000 people from their homes.

Moscow announced a ceasefire in late Au-

gust, but strikes and skirmishes have persisted.

Syria's war has killed over 370,000 people and displaced millions from their homes since beginning in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests. — AFP

## Christians seek seasonal solace in war-torn Libya

**TRIPOLI:** In the Libyan capital Tripoli, where war casts a long shadow over everyday life, a church offers something of a sanctuary for Christian migrants like Nigerian engineer Jonathan Joshua. "I find life very difficult but here at the church... I forget I am in Libya, if only for a few hours", he told AFP in the run-up to Christmas at Saint Francis Catholic Church in Tripoli. Arriving in the country four years ago, the 30-year-old lives and works in the capital's eastern suburbs.

"If the situation allows", he makes the trip to the church in the city centre to attend mass, making himself useful as an usher. During Advent, the church is a place of comfort and hope—this year, more than ever.

In early April, strongman Khalifa Haftar—who has long held sway in eastern Libya—launched a military offensive against the capital, seat of the UN recognized Government of National Accord. Deadly fighting in Tripoli's southern reaches has hit civilians, and left migrants more vulnerable than ever. A July 3 air strike killed 53 people at a detention center for migrants in the eastern suburb of Tajoura.

### Laughter and tears

On Friday afternoons—a weekend in Libya—the calm pervading outside the church doors contrasts against incessant comings and goings inside. Christians, all foreigners, take the opportunity to flock to their place of worship. Sporting a white jacket and black trousers, Jonathan confers with fellow ushers for a candlelight mass as Christmas approaches.

Various languages mingle in the festive air, along with the laughter and tears of children impatient for the start of the ceremony. Six young girls flap the wings of their costumes while slipping between



TRIPOLI: Catholic Christians attend Christmas celebrations at the Saint Francis Catholic Church in the Dahra district of the Libyan capital Tripoli. — AFP

the church pews, but are quickly brought back in line by Jonathan, anxious to ensure a degree of order. "Attendance is in line with normal, at least so far", said Bishop George Bugeja, 57.

"We have kept the celebrations the same as usual," he said. The biggest Christian communities in Tripoli by nationality are from the Philippines, India and Pakistan, working in the health and construction sectors in particular. Many others are from sub-Saharan Africa and particularly vulnerable due to a lack of immigration paperwork. There has been a steady stream of Filipinos going home because of the deteriorating security situation, along with Nigerians, said Bugeja. There was once a very large Filipino community "but now we are far fewer", said 62-year-old Erlinda, a nurse who has lived in Libya for 37 years. She arrived at the age of 25, married a Libyan and bore four children, all of whom are now themselves married. "Our life is here. My husband, my children and their families live and work in Libya". — AFP

## Erdogan says 50,000 Syrians fleeing Idlib to Turkey

**ANKARA:** Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday that 50,000 people were fleeing Syria's northwestern region of Idlib to Turkey, and slammed Muslim nations for not supporting his plans to resettle refugees in other parts of north Syria. Turkey currently hosts some 3.7 million Syrian refugees, the largest refugee population in the world, and fears another influx from the Idlib region, where up to 3 million Syrians live in the last significant insurgent-held swathe of territory. Syrian and Russian forces carry out regular air strikes against targets in Idlib, which President Bashar al-Assad has vowed to recapture, pushing more people towards the Turkish border.

"Look, 50,000 people are once again coming from Idlib to our lands," Erdogan told a meeting of Muslim leaders in Malaysia. "We already have 4 million people, and now another 50,000 are coming and this may increase." He gave no details and did not say whether the Syrians had actually crossed into Turkey, which has built a wall along its 911 km (570 mile) southern border since the outbreak of Syria's eight-year conflict. Erdogan is seeking international support for plans to settle 1 million Syrians in part of northeast Syria which Turkish forces and their Syrian rebel allies seized from the Kurdish YPG militia in a cross-border incursion in October. Ankara has received little public backing for its plans and Erdogan said that world powers, including Muslim nations, were more concerned about sending arms to Syria than supporting a Turkish "safe zone". — Reuters

## International

# Iraq deadline to appoint PM looms, protesters unyielding

## President Saleh to pick premier if parliament fails to reach a consensus

**BAGHDAD:** Iraqi political leaders faced a midnight deadline yesterday to choose a new prime minister to run a country shaken by months of unprecedented street protests that have left hundreds dead.

If parliament fails to propose a candidate from inter-party negotiations to replace outgoing Adel Abdel Mahdi, then President Barham Saleh has the right to appoint a premier himself. But if lawmakers do not approve his choice and the post remains vacant at midnight, then the constitution will place Saleh himself in the role, though for just 15 days.

The current parliament is the most divided in Iraq's recent history. On Wednesday, deputies failed to agree on amending the electoral law—the only significant reform proposed by authorities to appease protester demands—rescheduling it to its next meeting on Monday. Following elections last year, no bloc was able to establish the majority necessary to put its nomination for premier to a vote. Instead, the parties agreed on an independent candidate with no base of his own—Abdel Mahdi.

A consensus choice, Abdel Mahdi lasted a year in the role before resigning in November after two months of unprecedented anti-government protests in the capital Baghdad and Shiite-majority south, marked by 460 killed and 25,000 injured. Despite his resignation, protests have continued in the face of brutal repression, killings and abductions, and a chilly winter.

### Unyielding protesters

Several names for the premiership are still circulating hours before the expiration of the constitutional deadline. But all are insiders in a political system rejected in its entirety by protesters, who also oppose the growing influence of Iran, a powerbroker in Iraqi politics.

Outgoing higher education minister Qusay Al-Suhail has for several weeks been presented by officials as the candidate of Iran. A former key member of Shiite cleric Moqtada Sadr's movement, Suhail rejoined the State of Law Alliance of former prime minister Nouri Al-Maliki—close to Iran and enemy of Sadr—and seems to become the favorite for the premiership. But nothing is sure after weeks where each day a leading candidate ends up being dismissed. In Baghdad's Tahrir Square, posters display the rejected candidates with their faces crossed out in red.

On Wednesday, Mohammed Al-Soudani, a former minister and ex-governor, presented himself in Najaf to be endorsed by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani—longtime kingmaker in Iraqi politics. But he was rejected, according to sources in the Shiite shrine city. Wary of the anger on the street, the 89-year-old cleric, the highest religious authority for the majority of Iraqi Shiites, had already said he did not want to be involved in the formation of the new government.

### 11th hour asset

Several politicians told AFP that Saleh held a



**NAJAF:** An Iraqi protester poses in front of a graffiti amid ongoing anti-government demonstrations in the central city of Najaf on Wednesday. — AFP

card for the 11th hour: intelligence chief Moustafa Al-Kazemi, a shadowy figure seen as backed by the United States. On Wednesday, Fayeeg Al-Sheikh Ali—an outspoken liberal lawmaker who defends the right to drink alcohol and is critical of Iraq's endemic corruption—presented his own nomination to the president. Far from the party summits, the day before he had asked in a Twitter survey, “Should I submit my own candidacy?” to

which 73 percent of nearly 100,000 voters replied, “yes”. The security situation meanwhile has worsened, with recent rocket attacks on American bases. Ten security incidents in under two months have prompted the United States to send military reinforcements to the heavily fortified Green Zone in Baghdad, home to its embassy. US diplomatic staff have been reduced, with the consulate in Basra closed. — AFP

## Sudanese celebrate, demand justice on uprising anniversary

**KHARTOUM:** Exuberant crowds took to the streets of Sudan yesterday to celebrate the first anniversary of the uprising that toppled veteran autocrat Omar al-Bashir and to demand justice for slain protesters. Thousands turned out in different districts of the capital Khartoum chanting slogans such as “we're revolutionaries, we'll finish our mission,” while motorists hung Sudanese flags from their cars. “We're proud of the revolution,” said Hani Hamed, surrounded by a sea of jubilant people. “Our celebration will not finish until we get justice for our martyrs,” echoed Nahla Mohamed. Many carried pictures of friends and relatives among the dozens of protesters killed during the uprising. In the town of Atbara, the cradle of the revolt, hundreds of people were expected to arrive by train from Khartoum to stay for a week of festivities.

Organized by the transitional government and the protest movement, it is a tribute to the thousands of demonstrators who travelled in the opposite direction to the capital at key moments during the uprising.

Hundreds of singing, dancing people crammed into two trains for the 350 kilometer (220 mile) journey from Khartoum to Atbara. “The revolution shall continue,” declared one banner carried by the protesters.

“Either we bring them justice or die like them,” read another alongside pictures of demonstrators who died. Limia Osman, 23, wearing a Sudanese flag over her shoulders like many of her fellow passengers, said she wanted to “say thank you” to the original protesters in Atbara. In Khartoum, celebrations are planned in several

districts, particularly at the city's Freedom Square, which was renamed in honor of the protesters. “I'll remember the first day of our protest under tear gas and live ammunition, which didn't stop us,” said Hana Hussein, 21. The army blocked roads leading to its Khartoum headquarters, where the protesters had staged a weeks-long sit-in outside to demand the end of military rule.

### 'Horrific crimes'

It was in the dusty streets of Atbara on the banks of the River Nile that Sudanese held their first rallies in December 2018 against a government decision to triple the price of bread. The protests swept across the African nation and by April, they had toppled Bashir, who had been in power for three decades. According to doctors linked to the protest movement, more than 250 people were killed in violence related to the demonstrations against Bashir and the military rulers who initially replaced him.

Amnesty International, which says at least 177 people were killed, yesterday called on Sudan's transitional authorities to honour their commitments to restore the rule of law and protect human rights. “The new Sudan authorities must ensure that members of the security forces who committed horrific crimes or used excessive force against protesters are held accountable in fair trials without recourse to the death penalty,” said Amnesty's Seif Magango. In August, after protracted talks with the military, protesters and activists won a deal to set up a transitional government and pave the way for civilian rule.

Former senior UN official Abdalla Hamdok, a veteran economist, was appointed transitional prime minister. Bashir, in prison since his overthrow, was sentenced on Saturday to two years' detention in a correctional centre for the elderly for corruption — the first of several cases against him. The charges stemmed from millions of dollars received by the toppled strongman from Saudi Arabia. In May, Sudan's attorney general said Bashir had been charged with the deaths of those killed during the uprising, without specifying when he would face trial. — AFP

## Istanbul oppn mayor faces financial squeeze

**ISTANBUL:** At a half-built metro stop on the outskirts of Istanbul, the diggers have been idle for months, dozens of workers waiting day after day with nothing to do. The new 550-million-euro (\$610 million) metro line, started in 2016, was due to connect outlying suburbs on the Asian side of the city to the ferries and seaports in the center, but has been stalled as the municipality struggles to raise funding. There were already problems last year, when a currency crash and brief recession hit lenders.

But now the problem appears to be political. In March, Istanbul fell to the opposition—the first time that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's religious conservatives had lost power in the city in a quarter-century.

The new administration under Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu, of the secular Republican People's Party (CHP), claims Turkish state banks are refusing to finance major investment projects—and blame pressure from Erdogan's government in Ankara. “We have seen loans are not given even to fund our daily needs,” Imamoglu told reporters last month.

“I believe this is a result of the psychological impact of (the ruling party) losing its 25-year rule. I still have the faith that this stance and behavior will change.” Erdogan does not want Imamoglu to emulate the success he himself enjoyed as mayor of Istanbul in the 1990s, which propelled him to the leadership of the country, said Anthony Skinner of risk assessment firm Verisk Maplecroft. “By refusing to extend loans to the municipality, state banks—which provide approximately 40 percent of all loans and deposits in Turkey—are seeking to handicap Imamoglu and his team,” he told AFP. — AFP

## International

# For women refugees, finding work is doubly hard: 'You have to fight'

## UN initiative seeks to make over 25 million refugees self-sufficient

**GENEVA:** In the 25 years since she was forced to leave her homeland, Congolese refugee Jacqueline Zandamela has built up her own fashion business and raised four children alone after she was widowed in 2001. It has not been easy.

A housewife until she fled conflict in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo for Mozambique, Zandamela first had to learn Portuguese, then go through the long, bureaucratic process of applying for permission to work. "It was just another reality. Hard. Far from my family," the 52-year-old told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on Wednesday on the sidelines of a United Nations conference on refugees. "When I started to support my family through sewing, I hadn't really thought of setting up a fashion studio. "But because of the demand there was for my clothes, I took on some Mozambicans, and now we have 10 industrial sewing machines and four domestic ones and I work with 11 people."

Finding work is not easy for any refugee, but women say they face particular challenges in accessing jobs, from sexism to the burden of caring for children and elderly relatives. Many come from cultures in which women traditionally have not gone out to work, a problem compounded by issues such as domestic violence and child marriage, which disproportionately affect

refugees as they grapple with poverty and trauma. This week the International Rescue Committee (IRC), a US aid agency, published a study that found women refugees also face significantly higher legal barriers to employment than men. These range from laws that stop women entering certain industries to a failure to mandate equal pay for equal work in many countries that host high numbers of refugees. Some also restrict women's right to work after marriage or childbirth.

Even in Germany, often cited as a model system, just 6 percent of refugee women work, compared to 53 percent of local women, according to the IRC. Anila Noor, a Pakistani refugee in the Netherlands who campaigns for the rights of refugee women, said that for many, even the idea of going out to work was difficult. "My mother thought I'd be married and that's it. And then in Europe they suddenly ask, 'what do you want to do?'. This is a new question for me," she said. "Every time, someone else is deciding for me, and now you're asking what I want to do?"

### Gig economy

IRC President David Miliband said the significant social and economic gains to be had from bringing more refugee women into the workforce meant it was essential to overcome those barriers.



BERLIN: Two women visit the second job fair for migrants and refugees in Berlin, Germany. — Reuters

"It's not good enough just to say there are cultural barriers to refugees working," he said while in Geneva for the Global Refugee Forum, a two-day conference of political, business and humanitarian leaders. "It's really important that we

take advantage both of the traditional jobs, where you've got an employer, but also self-employment, home working, flexible working, and offer real opportunities to turn the gig economy into a lifeline for refugees." — Reuters

## UN hails 'decisive shift' in refugee assistance at global meet

**GENEVA:** The UN hailed Wednesday a "decisive shift" in the approach to helping surging numbers of displaced people, after a summit ended with billions in donations and concrete promises to simplify refugee integration. The Global Refugee Forum, which opened in Geneva on Tuesday, saw high-level speakers like Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan lambast the current lack of international solidarity in caring for the world's some 26 million refugees.

But as the meeting concluded late Wednesday, the UN refugee agency hailed that it had "secured wide-ranging and substantial commitments" to turn the tide.

In all, it said more than 770 pledges were made for financial support but also for things like improving refugee access to employment, education, electricity, infrastructure and promises of more resettlement spots for the most vulnerable. "Refugee situations are crises only when we let them become so, by thinking short term, by failing to plan or work together across sectors, and by neglecting the communities they arrive in," UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi said in the statement.

"At this forum, we have seen a decisive shift towards the longer-term view," he said.

The meeting was the first of its kind, pooling together heads of state, government ministers but also business leaders, humanitarians and refugees themselves. It was convened exactly a year after the UN General Assembly in New York adopted the Global Compact on Refugees—a framework aimed at creating a more predictable and equitable approach to providing assis-

tance to refugees and host communities. At the end of 2018, nearly 71 million people were living in forced displacement due to war, violence and persecution, including nearly 26 million people who had fled across borders as refugees.

### 'Making of success'

With a full 80 percent of the world's refugees living in poor and developing countries, which often feel left to shoulder the heavy economic and societal costs alone, burden-sharing was high on the agenda at the meeting. Erdogan, whose country is the world's biggest refugee host, on Tuesday criticised wealthy nations for setting "tiny" refugee quotas and for not providing enough financial support to Ankara and others accommodating large numbers of displaced people.

Grandi voiced hope Wednesday that the forum had laid the foundation for "better responses to refugee crises", pointing to a broad range of commitments made by governments around the globe.

"The forum has the making of success," he told journalists, stressing though that "to make it a success... is the responsibility of all of us".

UNHCR said it had received a number of major financial pledges, including more than \$4.7 billion by the World Bank Group, and \$1.0 billion from the Inter-American Development Bank.

In addition, a broad range of states and other entities had jointly pledged more than \$2.0 billion to support refugees and host communities. The private sector meanwhile made a wide range of pledges, including funding and initiatives making at least 15,000 jobs available to refugees, as well as some 125,000 hours per year of pro bono legal counselling.

The UN also welcomed that more resettlement spots had been offered in third countries for the most vulnerable people already living as refugees. The European Commission said 30,000 resettlement places had been offered throughout Europe for 2020. UNHCR meanwhile estimates there is a need for 1.44 million resettlement spots worldwide next year. — Reuters

## Trump impeachment based on 'made-up grounds': Putin

**MOSCOW:** Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday said that the impeachment of Donald Trump was based on "made-up" grounds, adding he did not believe it marked the end of the US president.

"It still needs to go through the Senate, where the Republicans have a majority," Putin said after the House of Representatives voted to impeach Trump for abuse of power. "And it is hardly likely that they are going to push out of office a representative of their own party, on grounds that are absolutely made-up," he added.

Speaking at his marathon end-of-year news conference, Putin described the events in the US legislature as "simply the continuation of a internal political fight" between Democrats and Republicans.

He reproached the journalist who asked the question for "speaking about Trump as if he is finished". Trump was impeached Wednesday over a telephone conversation where he pressured Ukraine's president to investigate his potential White House challenger in 2020, the veteran Democrat Joe Biden. Putin indicated he believed this was only a pretext used by the Democrats to impeach Trump after failing to corner him over claims that Moscow interfered in the presidential elections that brought him to power. "The Democrats accused Trump of a plot with Russia, and then it emerged that there was no kind of plot. It could not be the basis of an impeachment," said Putin. "Then they thought up some kind of pressure on Ukraine." — AFP

## International

# British PM Johnson puts Brexit on top of government's agenda

## Queen Elizabeth II reads out PM's plans in a parliamentary ceremony

**LONDON:** Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Thursday put Britain's departure from the EU at the top of the agenda, as Queen Elizabeth II read out his plans for government in a parliamentary ceremony following a sweeping election win. The monarch formally opened parliament with plenty of traditional pomp and pageantry before ermine and red-robed members of the upper House of Lords, and MPs from the lower House of Commons.

But before the monarch's set-piece speech, Scotland's first minister called for a new vote on independence, signalling a looming constitutional battle between London and Edinburgh.

Nicola Sturgeon said Brexit and election results north of the border made a clear "constitutional and democratic case" for a fresh look about whether Scotland should end its more than 300-year-old union with England and Wales. Top of Johnson's to-do list is a bill to ratify the terms of Britain's exit from the European Union, which he negotiated in October but could not get through a deadlocked parliament.

Now with a comfortable majority in the 650-seat House of Commons, he hopes to push through the deal in time to fulfil his election campaign pledge to "Get Brexit Done" on the next EU deadline. "My government's priority is to deliver the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union on 31st January," the queen confirmed from a gilded throne.

She added: "Thereafter, my ministers will seek a future relationship with the EU based on a free-trade agreement that benefits the whole of the

United Kingdom." In a sign of the government's vow to keep to the Brexit timetable, a spokesman said the Department for Exiting the European Union "will be wound up once the UK leaves the EU on 31 January".

### Brexit cliff-edge?

The Queen's Speech normally takes place about once a year but there was one in October after Johnson became Conservative leader in July following an internal party vote.

Rebellions over Brexit left him without the Commons support he needed to govern so he called a snap election—and won a landslide. As a result, yesterday's speech was scaled down, with the 93-year-old monarch eschewing her horse-drawn carriage for a car and her regalia for a matching coral green hat and coat. The highlight of the proposed legislation was the Withdrawal Agreement Bill (WAB) to ratify the terms of Brexit, which will be put to a first vote among MPs today.

It covers Britain's financial obligations to the EU, the rights of European expatriates and new arrangements for Northern Ireland. The bill will also enshrine the dates of a transition period, which will keep EU-UK ties largely unchanged until December 31, 2020, to allow both sides to sign a new trade deal. The period can be extended for up to two years but London insists this will not be necessary.

Johnson, a leading figure in the 2016 referendum vote for Brexit, says it is time to end years of political wrangling over the result.



**LONDON:** Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and her son Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales arrive in the House of Lords chamber during the State Opening of Parliament in the Houses of Parliament in London yesterday. — AFP

But the EU has warned the timetable is extremely tight to agree a new relationship after Britain leaves the bloc's single market and customs union. The WAB also includes plans to allow courts other than the Supreme Court to overturn European Court of Justice rulings, to ensure Britain can more swiftly extricate itself from European case law.

### Scots away?

Johnson's Tories may have won a majority

countrywide in the December 12 poll but lost more than half their seats in Scotland on a campaign opposing a fresh independence vote. First Minister Sturgeon said sweeping victories by her Scottish National Party in the three general elections since 2015 made the case for a new referendum "unarguable". "Scotland made it very clear last week it does not want a Tory government led by Boris Johnson, taking us out of the European Union," Sturgeon told a news conference. — AFP

## South Africa still hobbled by abusive legacy of domestic work

**JOHANNESBURG:** For three years, Siyamthanda Dube lived in a shed outside the house where she cleaned, cooked and babysat for a South African family. Her employers asked her to move to "be with the kids" after their mum started a new job in 2014.

Dube complied, bringing her two daughters and reluctant husband from their home in a Johannesburg township. "We put the bed up on top of buckets so that we could put the kids' mattresses underneath," she said.

"The house was under trees and all the jojos (bugs) would come inside." Domestic workers in South Africa often live on the premises of their employers, in subpar conditions, without job security and on low wages. "Living in" is a legacy of the apartheid era when non-white South Africans were banned from residing in cities.

To avoid treacherous commutes from far-away townships, black women employed by

white households would live at work. Today, despite apartheid having ended 25 years ago, most domestic workers' homes are still a long way from their workplace.

The distance and a lack of reliable transport keeps the live-in set-up going. And, say advocacy groups, that makes it easier for employers to ignore post-apartheid labor laws.

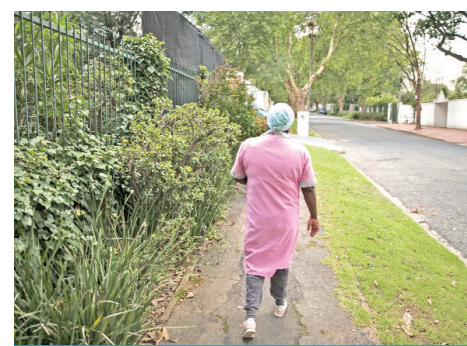
### 'We don't want her anymore'

"Employers often feel that if someone is living on their property, they have free rein to use them whenever they need," said Amy Tekie, who co-heads the domestic workers' network, Izwi. It has helped more than 200 women speak up against poor treatment, low pay and unfair dismissals over the past year.

"People don't realise that you can't just fire your domestic worker at will," said Tekie. Dube, 31, says she was beaten and then dismissed in 2017 after taking her feverish daughter to the chemist one morning, making her late for work. "(My boss) started fighting at me, shouting at me, swearing," she recalled.

She was knocked unconscious, she said, and taken to hospital. Her employer offered her 200 rand (less than \$14) to "keep quiet", she said. When she returned, the house keys had been removed from her key chain. "I knew I was fired," Dube said.

"They called my husband and said... we don't want to see her anymore."



**JOHANNESBURG:** A domestic worker walks through the Parkwood Suburb of Johannesburg. — AFP

### Lack of awareness

Labor rights in South Africa are enshrined in the constitution and domestic workers by law should receive a work contract stipulating their hours. It is also one of three African countries to have ratified the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, which places a duty on governments to ensure fundamental rights and prevent abuse. But enforcement still poses a challenge. "You can have a good law on paper," said ILO country office director Joni Musabayana.

"But how do you ensure that domestic workers and employers are fully up to date?"

he said. There are still too few labor inspectors despite a recent hike in their numbers and access to private homes and farms depends on the owner's willingness, he added. Tekie said that today most employers were "decent people" who had just grown up in a culture where domestic workers had no rights.

For Fazlyn Toeffie, it took years to realize that her family's relationship with live-in staff was "not normal". "I grew up in a household... where domestic workers were not respected," said Toeffie, 39, who lives in Johannesburg. "The helper had to eat out of the maid's plate in her servant quarters... and then was called back to wash the dishes." Toeffie told AFP that when she decided to hire a housekeeper under "better conditions", she had "no idea" where to start.

South Africa has about 1.3 million domestic workers, the ILO says. Government figures are slightly lower, at one million. The sector is mostly made up of black women from neighboring Zimbabwe and Lesotho, according to Musabayana.

But many work without permits, leaving them even more vulnerable. "It is not a group of people who are going to speak up and say 'no'," said lawyer Chrissy Blouws, who helps women take legal action. Itumeleng says she was sexually assaulted by her employer this year. — AFP

## International

# Bolivia Attorney General orders arrest of ex-president Morales

## Morales charged with sedition and terrorism

**LA PAZ:** Bolivia's attorney general on Wednesday ordered the arrest of exiled former president Evo Morales after the interim government accused him of sedition and terrorism. Public prosecutors in La Paz signed a warrant for police to detain the 60-year-old—who is in Argentina—and take him to the attorney general's office.

Morales fled Bolivia last month after civil unrest broke out following his re-election in an October 20 poll widely dismissed as rigged. The former trade union leader denounced the arrest order as “illegal, unfair and unconstitutional” on Twitter. “I’m not worried. As long as I’m alive I’ll continue with greater strength in the political and ideological struggle for a free and sovereign Bolivia,” he said.

Morales ruled the South American country for almost 14 years before resigning last month and leaving Bolivia. He initially received asylum in Mexico and then arrived in Argentina last week.

The allegations against him stem from an audio recording released by Arturo Murillo, the interim government's interior minister. In the recording, Morales allegedly tells one of his supporters to block trucks and interrupt the food supply to several cities. Morales was in Mexico at the time, the complaint alleges.

### Food, fuel shortages

Murillo began legal action against Morales

in November, after weeks of road blocks caused food and fuel shortages in the capital La Paz following his resignation. The ex-president countered by accusing the interim government of manufacturing the audio to damage him politically.

The controversial October poll in which Morales was re-elected was annulled following an Organization of American States (OAS) audit that found clear evidence of vote rigging.

Right-wing deputy senate leader Jeanine Anez took over as interim president and has vowed to call new elections early next year, although no date has been set. The interim government has barred Morales from standing in the ballot. Bolivia's constitution limits a president to two consecutive terms but Morales stood for a potential fourth term in October. Ahead of the last two elections, the constitutional court—filled with Morales loyalists—made controversial decisions authorizing him to run again.

His detractors accused him of corruption and authoritarianism. Speaking from Buenos Aires on Tuesday, Morales pledged to back another candidate from his Movement for Socialism party this time around. “I’m convinced that we’ll win the next elections. I won’t be a candidate but I have a right to be in politics,” Morales told reporters.

“My obligation now that I’m not a candidate, now that I’m not president, is to accompany can-

didates so that they can win the elections,” added Morales, who was Bolivia's first ever indigenous president.

Previously he insisted he'd been the victim of a coup and has launched near-daily Twitter attacks against Anez and her allies. Earlier on Wednesday he claimed US President Donald Trump—who hit out against Morales on Tuesday for provoking violence in Bolivia from afar—was behind the “coup.” — AFP

ment was being associated with him. In Michigan, a state that helped carry him to victory in 2016 and will be critical next November, Trump expressed pride that Republicans in the House were united in opposition to impeachment and that three Democrats had also voted against it.

He said House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Democrats had given themselves an “eternal mark of shame” and that tens of millions of people will show up next year to overturn Democratic control of the House and “vote Pelosi the hell out of office.” “They’re the ones who should be impeached, every one of them,” he said of Democrats.

The rally was a convenient venue for Trump to address the matter at hand and let the rhetoric fly. Scheduled weeks ago, it just happened to take place on the day of the House vote.

There was no sign from supporters in the crowd that their enthusiasm for him had waned. “Four more years!” they chanted. Trump waited for the House to begin voting before coming on stage to address thousands of cheering supporters, setting up a dramatic split-screen image for television viewers.

His case now goes to the Senate, where McConnell has vowed impeachment will die. McConnell, a close Trump ally, plans a trial in early January and has assured the White House that the necessary 67 votes from the 100-senator chamber will not be there to convict him and remove him from office.

White House press secretary Stephanie Grisham released a statement after the House vote expressing confidence that Trump would be “fully exonerated.” — Reuters



**LA PAZ:** Legislators take part in an ordinary session of the Bolivian Legislative Assembly to elect members of the Supreme Electoral Court (TSE) in La Paz on Wednesday. — AFP

## At campaign rally, embattled Trump gives withering review of vote

**BATTLE CREEK, Mich./WASHINGTON:** An embattled President Donald Trump condemned the Democratic-led impeachment vote against him on Wednesday, irked that he made US history in a bad way but assured that Republicans in the Senate will save him from being ousted. “This lawless, partisan impeachment is a political suicide march for the Democrat Party,” Trump told a rollicking rally for his re-election campaign in Michigan just as the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives voted to impeach him.

The vote, while along party lines, cast a cloud over the image-conscious Trump, putting him in a category as one of only four presidents out of 45 who have faced possible ouster through impeachment. Only one, Richard Nixon, actually left office and did so before a House impeachment vote occurred. Assurances from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell that the Republican-controlled Senate will not convict him in a trial early next year were something of a cold comfort for Trump, who has frequently complained that the “nasty” word of impeach-

## Hard currency elusive in Havana as reform looms

**HAVANA:** “I’m buying dollars, I’m buying euros,” Roly, 28, whispers furtively to tourists outside a hotel in Havana. Roly, who declined to disclose his last name for fear of reprisals, works as a “mule”, traveling abroad to buy goods to sell back in Communist-run Cuba where the black market booms due to shortages and high prices in the state-run economy.

But like many Cubans, he says that he is struggling to acquire the hard currency he needs as it has become near impossible in recent weeks to obtain it legally at the country's banks and exchange houses. Analysts say the recent elusiveness of hard currency is likely due to a deteriorating economic situation and increased demand as the government steps up moves to end Cuba's labyrinthine dual currency system.

Among those affected are Cubans who want to protect themselves from any kind of possible depreciation this complex process could entail by parking their savings in hard currency and those, like Roly, wanting to travel abroad. Neither of Cuba's two currencies - the peso or the dollar-equivalent convertible peso

(CUC) - are legal tender outside the island, where all financial institutions are state-run.

“There's been no money available at the banks or exchange houses for weeks, you have to look elsewhere,” said Roly. “I've spent half a day on the streets under the sun and I haven't managed to buy a single dollar.” Cuba's foreign exchange earnings have declined in recent years in tandem with the economic woes of its ally Venezuela and a tightening of the decades-old US trade embargo under President Donald Trump, including increased restrictions on US travel.

Several countries such as Brazil, Bolivia and Ecuador have also ended over the past year contracts under which they hired thousands of Cuban doctors from the state. Such service exports make up most of Cuba's hard currency earnings. In October, Cuba opened around a dozen stores selling appliances, car parts and other items for dollars, with a bank card. Economists said this should help authorities rake in some hard currency and stem capital flight through the activity of mules such as Roly.

Some say establishing the “dollar stores” could also be a sign the government is bringing back the greenback to stabilize the economy during elimination of the dual currency system, at least during a transition phase. “The economy is already being dollarized, even if no-one says it” said Cuban economist Omar Everleny. — Reuters

## International

# Progress of non-Muslims 'left us in lurch', Malaysia tells Islamic summit

## Iran seeks Muslim deals to cut reliance on US financial system

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Muslim nations need to do more business among themselves, trade in each other's currencies and keep up with non-Islamic countries to stop being left at their mercy, their leaders said yesterday at a summit boycotted by Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi-based Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) said on Wednesday it was against the interests of the Muslim world to hold meetings outside the organization, which has for decades acted as the collective Islamic voice.

Both Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad and Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan have been frustrated by the OIC's hand-wringing and failure to take action in support of Muslim causes.

Mahathir said the Kuala Lumpur summit, which ends on Saturday, was aimed at understanding why Islam, Muslims and their countries were "in a state of crisis, helpless and unworthy of this great religion". "While we may not have been able to fully dissect all that had caused our pain and anguish, we are mostly in agreement that it is our inability to keep up with the progress and development of the non-Muslims that has left us in the lurch," he said.

"Due to that, Muslims the world over suffer and as many are dependent on the mercy and charity of the non-Muslims. To my mind, we have no choice but to develop and progress as fast as possible."

It was unclear to what extent the leaders would broach the major crises afflicting Muslims, ranging from the age-old disputes in the Middle

East and Kashmir to conflicts in Syria and Yemen, through to the plight of persecuted Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and millions of Uighur Muslims held in camps in China's Xinjiang region.

A question from the audience on the treatment of Uighurs, put to the dais that included Mahathir, Erdogan and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, was ignored.

### Differences with OIC

Without mentioning the OIC by name, Erdogan said the biggest problem that platforms bringing the Islamic world together faced was a lack of implementation. "If we still haven't made any progress regarding the Palestinian cause, if we still can't stop the exploitation of our resources, if we still can't say 'stop' to the fragmentation of the Muslim world over sectarianism, that's why." Some analysts also suspected that Saudi Arabia's reluctance to attend stemmed from fear of being diplomatically isolated by regional rivals Iran, Qatar and Turkey. Though Saudi-ally Pakistan also opted to stay away, it was agreed that Malaysia, Turkey and Pakistan would jointly establish a communication center to combat Islamophobia.

Malaysia and Turkey formalized separate agreements to pursue research and development in aerospace and defense. Malaysia also struck a deal with Qatar to double the Southeast Asian country's milk production to 50 million liters annually.

Erdogan also called for a reconstitution of the UN Security Council to represent the 1.7



**KUALA LUMPUR:** This handout from Malaysia's Department of Information taken and released yesterday shows Iran's President Hassan Rouhani (3rd left), Amir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani (4th left), Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (5th left), Malaysia's King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah (6th left), Malaysia's Queen Tunku Azizah Aminah Maimunah Iskandariah (6th right), Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali (5th right), wife of Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, Emine Erdogan (4th right), wife of Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (3rd right) and Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister Wan Azizah Wan Ismail posing for a photo before the opening ceremony of the Kuala Lumpur Summit 2019 in Kuala Lumpur. —AFP

billion people of the Islamic world. China, the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Russia make up the permanent members of the council. "The world is bigger than those five," he said, adding there was also a need for Muslim countries to trade in their

own currencies.

Iranian President Rouhani also called for Muslim countries to enter preferential trade agreements using each other's currencies and to create a special mechanism for banking and financial cooperation. —Reuters

## From Instagram to TikTok: Indians wage online battle against citizenship law

**NEW DELHI/BENGALURU:** As protests rage across Indian universities against a new citizenship law, students have taken to social media to wage battle online and teach people how to organize demonstrations. Instagram is popular with some because it can be used to share pictures and video, while its settings allow protection against the online harassment that users can suffer on other platforms. "I don't like Twitter because each time I open it I see so much hate," said Abdul Rehman, 22, an engineering student at New Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia University. "There is no way to control who is viewing or sharing my pictures or videos on WhatsApp and most of my audience is not on Facebook."

Tens of thousands of Indians have protested against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), with students at the forefront. Approved by India's president last week, the law paves the way for minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan to get Indian citizenship, but critics say it is biased against

Muslims. One protest on Sunday culminated in police storming the Jamia Millia Islamia University, leaving some 200 injured. Current and former students have taken to Instagram, a photo and video sharing platform known for lifestyle content, to express their disapproval. "We millennials are always active on Instagram," said Islam Mirza, who completed a masters in business administration at Jamia earlier this year. "Whether it is to call off the protest, whether it is to organise the protests, whether it is to instruct students what to do or what not to do to help keep the protests peaceful, we use Instagram as a messenger." Many also use the platform to educate others about what they see as potential concerns with the new legislation. While Facebook and its messenger WhatsApp are also being used to drive conversations about the CAA and protests, over half a dozen students from Jamia said Instagram was their preferred choice of social media.

Privacy settings on Instagram offer an escape from trolling or online harassment on platforms such as Twitter, said Torsha Sarkar, a policy officer at the Centre for Internet and Society in Bengaluru. The active presence of film, music and fashion celebrities on Instagram also makes it an appealing platform for young users to post pictures and videos for all to see, unlike Facebook or WhatsApp where conversations are largely private or among a user's close social circle. It's not all one-way traffic though. —Reuters

## Small blasts hit Rakhine town as Myanmar's Suu Kyi visits

**YANGON:** Three small explosions went off in a southern Rakhine town in Myanmar yesterday just before civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi landed there in a rare visit to the conflict-ridden state, a local official said. The blasts happened in the normally quiet town of Manaung on an island off Myanmar's western coast where Suu Kyi was due to open a solar power plant.

"There were three explosions, but no casualties," Win Myint, spokesperson for Rakhine's regional government, said. He said it happened before Suu Kyi arrived, but since they were on the other side of town the event went ahead as planned and she had since left safely on a flight to Yangon.

"This has never happened in Manaung before." No group has yet claimed responsibility for planting the small bombs, which detonated at the side of a road, photos from local media showed. The area has remained largely unscathed by unrest further north, where Myanmar's military is locked in an increasingly vicious conflict with the Arakan Army (AA). The rebel group claims to be

fighting for more autonomy and rights for the ethnic Rakhine Buddhists and garners sympathy from many local people who have long felt marginalized in the Bamar-majority country.

But tens of thousands have fled their homes over the past year and dozens of civilians have been killed. There have been allegations of abuse against both sides. Rights groups say Myanmar's military has abducted, tortured and killed civilian detainees. Nearly 70 local administrators in northern Rakhine tried to resign en masse this week after one of their peers was killed by the military. The army admitted responsibility but said he had been caught in the crossfire, which locals deny.

"We're worried for our lives," said village head Myo Kyaw Aung, one of the administrators of Minbya township who had his resignation refused. The army, meanwhile, points to targeted shootings, roadside bombings and kidnappings by the insurgents. One Indian construction worker died while being held hostage and an MP from Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) has now been held for over six weeks.

A number of hostages seized by the rebels in a raid on a ferry packed with scores of police and soldiers were killed in October, with each side blaming the other. Rakhine state's north was also the epicentre of a bloody military crackdown two years ago that forced some 740,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee over the border into Bangladesh. —AFP



# Delhi cuts mobiles as India protests rage nationwide

## Thousands defy bans, historian Guha arrested

**NEW DELHI:** Indian authorities cut cellphone access in parts of Delhi yesterday and fresh violence erupted elsewhere, as thousands of protesters nationwide defied bans on assembly in growing anger at a new citizenship law seen as anti-Muslim.

Police and demonstrators clashed in Uttar Pradesh state as security forces bundled demonstrators including an internationally famous historian onto buses in Delhi and Bangalore, as 19 metro stations were shut in the capital and major roads blocked.

The new law eases citizenship rules for people fleeing persecution from three neighboring countries, but excludes Muslims, stoking accusations that Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to reshape India as a Hindu nation and creating unease abroad. Seven months after Modi swept to a second term, India has seen a week of protests in which four people were shot dead, dozens injured and hundreds arrested, while authorities have banned gatherings in areas that together are home to hundreds of millions of people.

They included all of Uttar Pradesh and Bangalore, areas of the northeast and parts of Bihar, New Delhi, Hyderabad and Chennai. All of them have seen protests in recent days, and in the case of the capital, riots and police storming a university. Delhi police spokesman M S Randhawa told AFP that "people should seek permission to assemble at places" where the ban is not in place.

Indian police yesterday detained one of the

country's most respected historians and intellectuals, Ramachandra Guha, yesterday during a demonstration in the southern city of Bengaluru against a new citizenship law based on religion. Indian news channels showed footage of Guha being dragged by three policemen near barricades erected to hold back protesters challenging the law, which critics say is prejudicial to Muslims and undermines the country's secular constitution.

"I am protesting non-violently, but look they are stopping us," said Guha before being surrounded by police at the demonstration, one of four held in Bengaluru yesterday.

### Demonstrators dragged

Fresh violence erupted in the Sambhal district of Uttar Pradesh as hundreds of protesters set fire to vehicles and threw stones at security forces who responded with tear gas, local police chief Yamuna Prasad told AFP. "We are trying to control the situation. People have been asked to return to their homes," Prasad said.

Police fired tear gas in state capital Lucknow while in Modi's home state of Gujarat police said they baton-charged demonstrators and arrested 50 people. As others ignored the assembly ban in Delhi and elsewhere, authorities ordered telecom firms to cut calls, text messages and data in parts of the city.

India is already the world leader in cutting the internet, activists say, and online access was also restricted in parts of the northeast and in Uttar

Khalilzad is leading, will eventually bring a "significant reduction in violence" that will let the United States "reduce its footprint." India is a sworn enemy of the Taliban, whose hardline 1996-2001 regime was allied with rival Pakistan and welcomed virulently anti-Indian Islamist extremists. India has been one of the top backers of Afghanistan's internationally recognized government, pouring in \$3 billion since the US-led invasion toppled the Taliban regime after the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States.

"Of course we have concerns about the future of Afghanistan," Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar said. "We believe that the reconciliation process in Afghanistan should be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned," he said. Esper declined to comment on a report that President Donald Trump, who believes the war is not worth the cost, could announce a pullout of around 4,000 troops, bringing the US contingent down to around 8,600.

### Muted criticism on rights

India is one of only three countries to hold such "2+2" talks with the United States between foreign policy and defense chiefs, a sign of Washington's commitment to boost ties with a largely like-minded nation from which it was estranged during the Cold War. But the talks came as India faces growing criticism over a sharp turn into Hindu nationalism by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, bolstered by a convincing re-election win. —AFP



**BENGALURU:** A protester shouts to a policeman at the Town Hall during a demonstration held against India's new citizenship law in spite of a curfew in Bangalore yesterday. Indians defied bans on assembly yesterday in cities nationwide as anger swells against a citizenship law seen as discriminatory against Muslims, following days of protests, clashes and riots that have left six dead. —AFP

Pradesh, home to a large Muslim minority.

Kawalpreet Kaur, Delhi President of the All India Students' Association, tweeted that police had filled 14 buses with detainees at the Red Fort landmark in Delhi. "But more and more people are pouring in, too many to be detained," she added. In Bangalore one of those dragged onto a police bus was globally renowned historian Ramachandra Guha just as he was giving an interview.

In the northeast, where the protests began last week—albeit for different reasons—around 20,000 people took to the streets in different locations. No violence was reported however after last week's deadly clashes. But the day's biggest demonstration so far took place in Malegaon in Maharashtra state—no assembly ban was in place—with as many as 60,000 people, police said. "It was all peaceful," spokesperson ASI Pathan said. —AFP

## US promises to consider India in Afghan pullout

**WASHINGTON:** The United States promised Wednesday to take into account India's concerns as it looks to pull out of Afghanistan, in high-level talks that agreed on several ways to boost the democracies' emerging alliance. The talks in Washington came against the backdrop of major protests in India over a citizenship law that critics say targets Muslims, but Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was careful not to annoy his guests by speaking forcefully on the issue.

Pompeo and Defense Secretary Mark Esper, meeting for a day of talks with their Indian counterparts, said they spoke in depth on the renewed US talks with the Taliban aimed at ending America's longest war. "We understand the concerns that India has, too-rightful concerns that they have—about terrorism emanating from Pakistan," Pompeo told a joint news conference. "We assured them that we would take that into account," he said.

Pompeo voiced hope that talks with the Taliban, which veteran US negotiator Zalmay

## Musharraf slams death sentence 'vendetta'

**ISLAMABAD:** Exiled former Pakistan military leader Pervez Musharraf dismissed the unprecedented treason conviction and death sentence handed to him earlier this week, saying the ruling was the result of a "personal vendetta". The special court's decision announced Tuesday marked the first time a former leader of the armed forces has been convicted of treason and sentenced to death in Pakistan, where the military wields enormous power and has ruled the country for roughly half its 72-year history.

"This case was taken up and proceeded due to a personal vendetta by some people against me," said Musharraf in a video statement released by his assistant late Wednesday night.

Musharraf—who is reportedly in Dubai and in poor health—appeared in a hospital bed in the video looking frail and was straining to speak. The former general however said he remained undecided on his next move or whether his legal team was planning to appeal the conviction.

The treason case — 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. The ruling has infuriated Pakistan's security establishment, with the military's spokesman swiftly condemning the verdict and saying 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 country can surely never be a traitor," the military said Tuesday. Prime Minister Imran Khan—a former rival of Musharraf—has stayed largely quiet since the ruling.

Khan is broadly considered to be pro-military and several ministers in his administration had previously served in Musharraf's military government. Musharraf first took power after ousting prime minister Nawaz Sharif in a bloodless coup in 1999. A cigar-smoking, whisky-drinking moderate, the general became a vital American 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. —AFP

## International

# Masterminds of Philippines' worst political massacre jailed

## Relatives of victims, rights groups give mixed response to verdicts

**MANILA:** The masterminds of the Philippines' worst political massacre were found guilty yesterday of murder a decade after they led the killings of 58 people, rare convictions of powerful figures in a country notorious for its culture of impunity. However with dozens of other accused gunmen acquitted, and 80 suspects never having been caught, relatives of the victims as well as rights groups gave a mixed response to the verdicts.

Leaders of the powerful Ampatuan family dynasty orchestrated the November 23, 2009, killings in a remote part of the conflict-plagued south of the Philippines in a bid to quash an election challenge from a rival clan. Thirty-two journalists, travelling in a convoy to report on the filing of an Ampatuan rival's election candidacy, were among those murdered, making the killings one of the worst ever globally of media workers. A Manila court yesterday found 43 people guilty as principals or accessories to 57 of the murders.

They were found not guilty of the 58th murder because the body of the final victim was never recovered. Andal Ampatuan Jnr, who had been planning to succeed his namesake father by running for governor of Maguindanao province, was among those found guilty of murder. As principal suspects, Ampatuan Jnr and 27 others—including seven of his relatives—were each sentenced to at least 30 years in jail without parole. “Their acts were deliberate and obviously in pursuance of their plan to kill,” the court ruling read.

Fourteen members of the local police and a member of the Ampatuan family's armed militia

force were sentenced to between eight and 10 years in prison as accessories. However two clan leaders and more than 50 other police officers and alleged members of the Ampatuan militia were acquitted. The cases against them had not been proved beyond a reasonable doubt, according to the court ruling.

Eighty suspects also remain at large. “This makes us sad and happy at the same time, because (only) some of the major suspects were convicted,” Esmael Mangudadatu, the Ampatuans' rival, told reporters outside the courtroom.

The massacre unfolded when Mangudadatu sent his wife and two sisters to file his candidacy for governor of Maguindanao province in an open challenge to the Ampatuans.

Gunmen blocked the convoy, which included the journalists, and herded them to a nearby hill where they were killed in a hail of gunfire and buried in mass graves, along with their vehicles, prosecutors said. The Ampatuans had until then ruled Maguindanao and were allowed to build a heavily armed militia by then-president Gloria Arroyo to serve as a buffer against a long-running Muslim insurgency in the region.

The murders had cast a spotlight on the Philippines' notorious culture of impunity, in which powerful and wealthy politicians and businessmen often operate above the law. Human Rights Watch Philippines researcher Carlos Conde described yesterday's events as “partial justice”, citing the acquittal of more than 50 suspects and others remaining at large as the main concerns.

“The broader significance, however, of the



**MANILA:** Relatives and supporters of victims of the 2009 Maguindanao massacre hold pictures of the victims during a press conference after the verdict in the case in Taguig, Manila yesterday. — AFP

guilty verdict of the principal Ampatuan suspects clearly indicate a victory for justice. This signifies to Filipino politicians that they will pay a price for abusing the rights of constituents.” The Philippines' main media union offered a similar response.

“These people have won a great victory today, but they remain in danger,” National Union of Journalists of the Philippines chairman Jose Espina told reporters in Manila. Amnesty International regional director Nicholas Bequelin called the verdict “a critical step towards

justice for victims of one of the worst killings of journalists in history,” but called on Manila to find and prosecute the other suspects. During the case's years of delays, patriarch Andal Ampatuan Snr and seven other defendants died, while some witnesses were murdered. The Ampatuans remain a political force in the south. Ampatuan family members won 25 local seats in May elections including Sajid Ampatuan, who was among those acquitted yesterday but did not show up in court. Sajid is one of Ampatuan Jnr's brothers. — AFP

## Homeward bound? Deadline looms for North Korea's overseas workers

**SEOUL:** The waitress at the North Korean restaurant in Beijing has no concerns about a deadline this weekend for Pyongyang's overseas workers to be returned. “I'll go home for the holidays,” she says. “But I'll come back.”

Nuclear-armed North Korea has long made a fortune from the army of citizens it sends abroad to work, mostly in neighboring China and Russia but also as far afield as Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Two years ago, the UN Security Council ordered the countries where they work to send them back as part of the efforts to press Pyongyang over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, with complete compliance required by this Sunday. But analysts say Beijing and Moscow are circumventing the measure by issuing North Korean workers with alternative visas to ensure a continued supply of cheap labor. Longstanding

allies of Pyongyang, the two called this week for several sanctions—including the ban—to be eased, with nuclear negotiations between the United States and North Korea at a deadlock.

China was estimated to have 50,000 North Korean workers when the resolution was passed, and witnesses and reports say North Koreans continue to enter the country to work in border-region factories.

At Unban, a North Korean restaurant near Pyongyang's sprawling embassy in Beijing, a waitress told AFP she had worked there for four years and expected to continue.

“No one has told us that the restaurant will close,” she added. “We had two new colleagues who came last month.” Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said last week that China “earnestly” implements all UN resolutions, but declined to say how many North Koreans were working in the country. Moscow's ambassador to Pyongyang Alexander Matsegora said in September that the number working in Russia had already been cut from more than 30,000 to less than 10,000.

“After December 22, there will not be a single North Korean in Russia with a work visa,” he told the RIA Novosti news agency. But the key sanctions text—paragraph 8 of resolution 2397 — does not specify visa types, referring more broadly to “all DPRK nationals earning income”.

And Kang Dong-wan, a professor at South Korea's Donga University, told AFP: “Since Russia can't issue new work visas due to sanctions, the North Korean workers are going there on tourist visas.” Figures from Russia's interior ministry show that in the January-September period, Moscow issued six times as many tourist visas to North Koreans as it did in the whole of 2018, and three times as many student visas. Across the two categories, Russia granted nearly 20,000 visas in nine months of 2019. For all of last year, it was below 5,000.

The workers deadline comes with tensions rising again: it will soon be followed by a year-end limit Pyongyang has set Washington to offer it fresh concessions.

### ‘Free money’

According to estimates by the US mission to the UN, the overseas workers—many employed in construction, factories and forestry—are worth more than \$500 million a year to Pyongyang. Former North Korean workers say they received only a fraction of the sums charged for their services.

Ro Hui-chang, a defector who supervised workers in the Middle East and Russia for nearly a decade before fleeing to South Korea, said firms paid \$1,500 per month per person on average — 90 percent of which went straight to the Pyongyang government. “It was free money that



**SEOUL:** This picture taken on December 4, 2019 shows Ro Hui-chang, a North Korean defector who supervised workers in the Middle East and Russia for nearly a decade before fleeing to South Korea in 2014, sitting at his desk during an interview with AFP at his office in Seoul. — AFP

came in without fail when they sent their people overseas,” Ro told AFP. Living and working conditions were dismal, he added, with the shortest shifts lasting around 12 hours. “There was a fixed hour for waking up, but no set time for the day's end,” he said. Even so, overseas work has long been sought-after in the impoverished North, where incomes are a fraction of those in the democratic and capitalist South.—AFP

# Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2019

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Latest 'Star Wars'  
film gets worst  
reviews in decades

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8-year-old highest  
paid YouTuber,  
earns \$26m

Page 27

A man dressed as Santa Claus is riding a camel in Jerusalem. The camel is decorated with colorful tassels. The scene is set in a public square with buildings and a clear blue sky in the background. A person with a camera is visible on the right side of the frame.

Santa on a camel delivers  
Xmas trees in Jerusalem

See Page 21



A picture taken on Dec 10, 2019 from the east Jerusalem Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan shows a partial view of Jerusalem's Old City (left), which houses the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and the Western Wall (unseen). — AFP photos

Ramparts of ochre stone stand out against the sky, framed by hilltop buildings and olive trees - but the view of Jerusalem's Old City could soon include cable cars and pylons. Israel has approved a project to ferry visitors from western Jerusalem to near the Western Wall, the holiest place Jews are allowed to pray but part of one of the world's most contentious sacred sites. Supporters of the 200 million shekel (\$57 million) plan say it will ease the congestion and pollution caused by millions of visitors a year.

But archeologists, architects and city planners say the scheme, if completed, will be a blight on Jerusalem's ancient heritage. The Western Wall is directly adjacent to the Al-Aqsa mosque, one of the holiest sites in Islam, but also located on the Temple Mount, the most sacred place in Judaism. Lying in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, the site is at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The number of visitors to the Holy City has doubled in less than five years to around four million in 2019, according to the Israeli tourism ministry, which initiated the cable car project. The 1.4-km line "will change the face of Jerusalem, offering tourists and visitors easy and comfortable access to the Western Wall", minister

Yariv Levin said when it was approved last year.

But the project, set to open by 2021, faces a backlash. "Jerusalem is not Disneyland, its landscape and heritage are not for sale," 70 Israeli architects, archaeologists and academics wrote in an open letter to the government before it was adopted. Israel occupied the West Bank and Jerusalem's predominantly Palestinian east, including the flashpoint holy sites of the Old City, during the 1967 Six Day War. It later annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognized by the international community. The Palestinians see east Jerusalem as the capital of their future state, but Israel has declared the whole city its undivided capital.

#### 'Over our heads'

The cable car is to start at the preserved, but no longer functioning, Ottoman-era railway station in west Jerusalem, where a two-storey glass terminal will host 3,000 passengers per hour. A first stop will be on Mount Zion, a hill where Christians believe Jesus and his disciples met for the Last Supper and also revered by Jews as the burial place of biblical King David. From there, the cable cars will pass above the east Jerusalem neighborhood of

Silwan, a frequent flashpoint between Palestinian residents and Jewish settlers.

"Usually you build this kind of cable car over empty spaces, not over people's heads," said Abu Brahim from his dusty grocery store on the main street of Silwan, a short walk from the Old City walls. In Silwan, the cable cars will pass over about 60 homes, at some points just 14 m above the rooftops, said Fakhri Abu Diab, director of the local residents' association.

After Silwan, passengers will disembark near the Western Wall, at a multi-storey tourist complex financed by the Ir David Foundation, which aims to increase the Jewish presence in east Jerusalem. Israeli tour guide Michel Seban enthuses about the cable car, which he says will ease access to the densely packed Old City with its narrow cobbled lanes. "It has become impossible for individual guides to park, only buses can approach and unload their tourists before leaving," he said. But for opponents of the project, the 15 steel pylons and the 72 cabins, each carrying 10 people, will scar a major historical site.

#### 'Obscene violation'

Jerusalem's Old City and its ramparts are listed as World Heritage sites by UN cultural agency UNESCO, while its outskirts are part of an Israeli national park. "Up to now this area, which provides the perspective to the Old City and its walls, was a sacred place strictly protected by the National Park Authority," said architect Gavriel Kertesz, who has directed several projects around the Old City's walls. Another 30 leading international architects and academics have also asked the Israeli government to abandon the plan.

In a petition, they wrote that "a cable car is not appropriate for ancient cities with a skyline preserved for hundreds or thousands of years". The Palestinian Authority has denounced the project as another attempt to increase Israeli presence in east Jerusalem. Senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi labelled it an "obscene violation of the cultural, historical, spiritual, geographic and demographic character of Jerusalem".

The Palestinian point of view has found allies among Israeli NGOs like Emek Shaveh, which opposes the use of archeology for political ends and is part of a group taking the case to the Supreme Court. "Decision makers have become so obsessed with the Judaization of the city, they forget to protect the Jerusalem they love so much," said archaeologist Yonatan Mizrahi, its director. "Those who can still recall what is so special and unique about Jerusalem are opposed" to the cable car, he said. — AFP



A picture taken on Dec 10, 2019 shows the Dormition Abbey (center) on Mount Zion, a Benedictine basilica in Jerusalem's Old City.



The "Jerusalem Santa", a Palestinian dressed up as Father Christmas (Saint Nicholas or Santa Claus), greets Eastern Orthodox nuns as he rides a camel in Jerusalem's Old City yesterday. — AFP photos



The "Jerusalem Santa" holds a potted plant as he rides the camel.



The "Jerusalem Santa" uses a phone to take a selfie.

## Santa on a camel delivers Christmas trees in Jerusalem

Along the ancient walls of Jerusalem's Old City, a man dressed as Santa Claus tries to raise holiday cheer from atop a camel by offering free Christmas trees to residents. The man behind the beard is Issa Kassissieh, a Palestinian Christian who has in recent years distributed both Christmas spirit and trees, provided by the municipality, in a city sacred to Jews, Muslims and Christians alike. His mission, he says, is "to bring joy and love and peace to the Holy Land".

This year, as ever, those qualities are badly needed. Five miles (eight km) down the road in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on the other side of a towering Israeli concrete military barrier, is the center of the biblical story of Jesus's birth, the Palestinian town of Bethlehem. The town is enjoying its busiest tourist year in two decades, with foreign pilgrims coming in large numbers, taking advantage of a relative lull in Israeli-Palestinian tension. But this Christmas, Israeli authorities have barred the 1,000 or so Christians living in the Palestinian Gaza Strip from visiting either Bethlehem or Jerusalem, citing security reasons. — Reuters



The "Jerusalem Santa" walks atop Jerusalem's Old City walls.





A woman walks past a walled store reading “No more repression. State terrorism!” in Valparaiso, Chile, on Dec 11, 2019. — AFP photos



A man looks at rubble after a fire caused by protesters in Valparaiso.



Men work on the security of a bank's shutter.

## ONCE PICTURE-PERFECT, VALPARAISO BEARS SCARS OF CHILE PROTESTS

Torched and looted shops, smashed windows, boarded up storefronts — months of social unrest still rattling Chile has taken its toll on one of the country's most colorful tourist attractions, the port city of Valparaiso. The often violent protests have inflicted heavy damage on the UNESCO World Heritage site, particularly along the city's iconic Carlos Condell street, a once-thriving street dominated by restaurants, shops and banks.

“This place had life. It's sad and depressing now,” said 72-year-old Fresia Valdez, as she walked along a thoroughfare pockmarked with burned-out stores. More than 100 shops and businesses were looted and burned out on this one street alone. Some were torched by rioters and left abandoned. Others were quickly renovated, and are now hidden behind ugly metal security screens for guard against repeat attacks.

Shop owners have pasted grim “Merry Christmas — Shop Open” signs on some screens, the only reminder that a shop exists at all inside the metal barriers. Customers have to duck through small openings to get inside. Some of the metal gates carry graffiti with insults directed at the police and right-wing President Sebastian Pinera. “At my age, I will not see my Valparaiso alive again,” said Valdez.

Around her, the smell of molten metal hung in the air as welders erected shutters outside a bank. “We are protecting the bank from disturbances and looting. This bank was vandalized too — they went inside and smashed things up,” says Andres Varas, a 39-year-old welder. Varas said he had recently done similar work on about 20 other banks across the Valparaiso region.

### ‘Pearl of the Pacific’

With its stairways, sinuous streets and church spires, the city's historic quarter was recognized 16 years ago by UNESCO as a site of outstanding universal value for its rich tapestry of history, architecture and urban development. The port city — once known as the “Pearl of the Pacific” — has long been one of the

Congress, a key target of demonstrators but which remains heavily guarded.

Locals says that the damage from the social protests, which began on Oct 18, is more noticeable in the center of the city, where the building housing the country's oldest newspaper, El Mercurio, was set on fire. In the hills around the city, where the attractions include the home of Chilean

afraid. They all go home super early,” said Hugo Morales, 72, who owned a kiosk that was looted and burned during the unrest. “At four or five in the afternoon, you have nowhere to go to buy anything,” said Valdez.

A few meters from the remnants of Morales' 50-year-old business stands the charred ruins of a car showroom, now a mass of twisted ironwork,



A woman exits a walled store with a sign reading “Merry Christmas. Store open”.

country's main attractions, with its multicolored cliff-top buildings, its maze of hills and funicular trams.

But the protests have taken their toll on the city's tourism industry, the engine of the local economy. During October, hotel occupancy fell by half, while trade in the city plummeted by more than 17 percent, according to the local chamber of commerce. Situated 120 km from the capital Santiago, Valparaiso houses the

poet Pablo Neruda, the destruction is less evident.

### Fearful residents

Business owners say the violence has altered the mood in the city. As soon as dusk falls, the streets begin to empty out. Until recently, the city remained animated and lively well into the night — especially in the summer months, when the city attracts around two million visitors. “Before, in the streets, you could walk calmly and now people are

fallen masonry, and burnt-out vehicles. Local business owners complain the ruin has become a hang-out for delinquents. Valparaiso is one of three cities most affected by the violence with Santiago and Concepcion in the south — they suffered a combined \$2.5 billion in damage, according to the Chilean builders' association. — AFP



A man walks past a walled shoe store reading “Keep fighting!”

## Lifestyle | Features



South African drug mule Nduduzo Siba poses for a photograph during an interview with AFP on Nov 29, 2018 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP photos



Portia Dliwayo

## On parole, foreign ex-convicts battle to survive in Brazil

When South African drug mule Thandi was freed from a Rio de Janeiro jail in June, she had no money and nowhere to go - until a Brazilian policeman agreed to help her, for a price. "The police officer offered me... his phone and some money to catch a bus if I could perform a sexual favor for him," the 33-year-old, who did not want to use her real name, told AFP. "He took me to a hotel and thereafter gave me 30 reais." That's about seven dollars.

Thandi is one of hundreds of foreign ex-convicts who served time in Brazil - mostly for drug trafficking - and are now struggling to survive while serving out their parole. With little support from authorities in Brazil or in their home countries, they battle to find housing and obtain identity documents. Without official papers, they cannot find jobs or open bank accounts. Many speak little or no Portuguese.

"A lot of my sisters end up prostituting themselves and contract diseases and die and get buried here," said Thandi, a mother of two. She has to stay in Brazil until the end of 2020. For Artur Gueiros, a professor in criminal law at Rio de Janeiro State University, the state bears responsibility for supporting foreigners like Thandi who are trying to bounce back after prison. "It's a humanitarian issue that's not being respected," Gueiros, who is also a regional state prosecutor, told AFP in a telephone interview. Many foreigners in Brazil, notably Filipinos, "also go through this sad situation. Abandoned, relegated, they are in a limbo," he said.

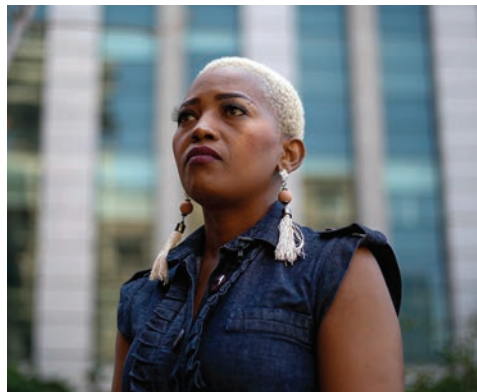
### 'Trying to survive'

Brazil's jails held 2,161 foreign prisoners in 2017, according to the most recent official figure. Most of them are from other Latin American countries. A quarter hail from Africa. Foreign inmates were given the right to parole in 2014. But they have to remain in Brazil for the duration of their sentences before being expelled. Their countries can apply for early deportation, but Gueiros said few do because the embassies have to pay the airfare.

Nduduzo Siba, 31, spent nearly four years in a Sao Paulo prison after cocaine was discovered in boxes of perfume she was carrying. Siba, who is also from South Africa, says she was released in 2017 without even a last dinner. "They said 'Go!' - eight o'clock at night. I was like 'But I don't have money, I don't have anything, I don't have a phone, I don't know anyone, I don't know where to go!'" she said. Many ex-inmates sup-

port each other through informal networks. But some fall back into drug trafficking, according to AFP interviews with former prisoners.

"There was no way I could survive," said 36-year-old Precious Ndubuisi, explaining her decision to return to the narcotics trade. More than half of Brazil's foreign inmates are held in Sao Paulo state. They are jailed separately from Brazilian prisoners and offered workshops such as Portuguese lessons. This support crumbles, however, once they are freed.



Precious Ndubuisi

The Institute for Land, Work and Citizenship - a human rights group known by the Portuguese acronym ITTC - started a support program for female foreign ex-inmates two years ago. Since then, it has helped more than 300 get their documents as well as find jobs and a place to stay. ITTC president Sister Michael Mary Nolan said government departments dodge responsibility for the foreigners. Many end up living on the street.

"They're not doing anything," she told AFP. "There's a difference among the city and state governments over who should receive them." Brazil's overcrowded and deadly prison system is already struggling to deal with its own nationals. Foreigners make up only a fraction of the country's more than 726,000 inmates, the world's third-largest prison population after those of the United States and China, according to the online database World Prison Brief. "The situation of prisoners, both Brazilian and foreign, has always been left aside," said Gueiros.—AFP

## NY rents in the Sahara? Living in Africa's most expensive city

Chad is one of the world's poorest countries, but in its capital, N'Djamena, rents rival those of New York or London at upwards of \$2,000 a month for a two-bedroom flat in the city center. The dusty city on the edge of the Sahara was ranked the most expensive in Africa and 11th in the world this year by global consulting firm Mercer, which bases its annual index on the average cost of living for employees working abroad. The ranking is aimed at expatriates, whose modern flats are a far cry from the tin-roofed shacks where many locals live.

But Chadians said that for them too the city is prohibitively expensive, with the price of housing and utilities in particular pushing many people out to neighborhoods on the periphery with no roads, electricity or running water. "Everything is expensive here," said taxi driver Mahamat Tahir, who spends his days in a cloud of hot fumes on the city's potholed streets, where roadsides are crammed with people selling peanuts and mosquito nets.

The minimum monthly wage is 60,000 CFA francs (\$100) but Tahir estimated daily expenses to buy food and get around the city at about 5,000 CFA. A typical roadside lunch is 2,000 CFA, and bringing home a small chicken for dinner costs twice that. The numbers don't add up, said Tahir, and it causes constant financial stress. Chad's landlocked location, oil-dependent economy and lack of infrastructure all contribute to the high prices, according to researchers. Nearly everything from food to clothing to furniture is imported and often by plane.

Although N'Djamena is at the far end of the spectrum on cost of living, it also exemplifies a problem across the continent, said Shohei Nakamura, an economist at the World Bank focusing on poverty and equity. In a study published this year, Nakamura and colleagues found that African cities are on average at least 20 percent more expensive than cities in other parts of the world with similar income levels. Goods and services such as transport, communications and housing are especially pricey, he said - mainly because the supply of decent housing and infrastructure falls far behind demand. Chad's government spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

### Luxury products

Like many Chadians of his generation, Williams Deonodji Ngargoto has a good job but, in his thirties, still lives with his parents, siblings and cousins in the family home. It is tradition to live with your family until you are married, he said, but also a necessity due to the rising cost of rent. Frustrated with their situation after university, Ngargoto and a group of friends in 2014 created the Association Against the High Cost of Living, for which he is now the spokesman.

They hold protests and press conferences, and try to pressure the government to introduce reforms. The group has had some successes, Ngargoto said, such as a reduction in the price of cooking fuel earlier this year and in 2017 the elimination of a tax on trucks entering N'Djamena market. In May the government launched a "fair prices" initiative to reduce consumer prices for food products throughout the country, but Ngargoto said it has made little difference.

The Central African nation has been weighed down by drought, a refugee crisis and a costly military campaign to combat militant group Boko Haram, which is based in neighboring Nigeria but wages attacks across the region. The number of Chadians living in poverty is projected to reach 6.3 million in 2019 up from 4.7 million in 2011, according to the World Bank. The population is about 16 million. On the UN Human Development Index, which measures health, education and quality of life, Chad ranks third to last in the world.

In N'Djamena's "European quarter", as some locals call it, guards sit outside modern apartment buildings and restaurants favored by expatriates. In neighborhoods further from the center, the streets are unpaved and people pump water in dirt courtyards. This is where Ngargoto lives with his family, just within city limits where he said a room costs about 40,000 CFA francs (\$68) a month to rent.

But even that is unaffordable for many, who instead live across a bridge where the landscape becomes rural, with small houses scattered through scrubland. This neighborhood, called Toukra, is home to many middle-class commuters, said Ngargoto. Alongside the one paved road, students and professionals walked in the sun hoping to hitch a ride into town. There is no water or electricity network here, so houses are powered with generators if residents can afford it. If not, they go without. "Water and electricity have become luxury products in Chad," said Ngargoto, who plans to build a house in this neighborhood when he can afford it.

### Getting worse

Chad's expat population has grown in the last decade with the development of the oil sector, the military operation against Boko Haram and the humanitarian crisis that came with it, said Paul Melly, a consulting fellow at London-based think tank Chatham House. These changes "put much more pressure on the available space that expatriate people would consider acceptable or secure," he said, raising prices and pushing poor people further out.

Private developers are generally keener to build luxury apartments than affordable housing if there is someone to pay for it, which expats are, said Nakamura. "The formal housing supply is very limited in many African cities, so for ordinary people there is no chance to live in decent, non-slum housing," he said. Transport can also become expensive because it is limited and inefficient in fast-growing cities, he added. "Without developing more adequate infrastructure, there's no way cost of living can be reduced in the future," said Nakamura.—Reuters



Darth Vader and stormtroopers appear on the red carpet for the European film premiere of Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker in London on Wednesday. — AFP photos

## Christmas turkey: Latest 'Star Wars' film gets worst reviews in decades



Kelly Marie Tran

**T**he Rise of Skywalker" was meant to provide a satisfying conclusion to nine "Star Wars" films but for many critics, its aim was as wide of the mark as a stormtrooper in a blaster battle. Director J J Abrams's return to the space saga has been slammed as unoriginal and slavishly pandering to the franchise's rabid core fanbase. It has a score of 59 percent from around 200 critics on movies website Rotten Tomatoes - the worst of any live-action "Star Wars" episode since the panned prequel "The Phantom Menace" two decades ago.

The Los Angeles Times called it "an epic failure of nerve" with a "succession of cheap 'gotcha!' twists". "In its anxiety not to offend, it comes off more like fan fiction than the creation of actual professional filmmakers," said Time magazine. For The Hollywood Reporter, the movie's "more-is-more approach ultimately leaves one both bloated from too many courses and uncertain about some of the ingredients". Many reviewers have compared it unfavorably to the previous installment, "The Last Jedi" (2017), now widely seen as a more experimental "Star Wars" film which critics enjoyed but which enraged a vocal minority of hardcore fans.

### 'Too cumbersome'

A few reviewers, honoring the balance that is a central tenet of the Jedi Order, pushed back with their own glowing appreciations, however. Variety called it the "most elegant, emotionally rounded, and gratifying 'Star Wars' adventure" since 1980's "The Empire Strikes Back", while the Daily Telegraph in London said the film "gives our heroes the swashbuckling, heart-



US film director J J Abrams poses on the red carpet.



Fans dressed as Star Wars characters attend the European film premiere of Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker in London.



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rending ending they deserve”.

A three-star write-up in British newspaper The Guardian noted that the “vast, hulking Star Destroyer of a franchise has become too cumbersome to pull off any genuinely nimble maneuvers, but at the same time, it never falls out of the sky”. IndieWire declared it “spectacular and uninspired at once.”

The much-hyped film has been tipped by analysts to take \$200-\$225 million at domestic box offices this weekend, which would place it among the biggest openings in movie history. “A massive opening weekend is in the cards irrespective of reviews or audience sentiment,” said Comscore senior media analyst Paul Dergarabedian. Positive reviews are a “bonus” but the “true test” will come when the first fans get to see the film and form their own opinions, he said. “The long term prospects will depend on solid word of mouth propelling the film to greater and greater heights worldwide week after week,” he added.

**‘Through the roof’**

Hollywood’s iconic El Capitan theater, which is hosting a sold-out, back-to-back “Star Wars” marathon of all nine films culminating in the new release Thursday, said the reviews were not expected to dampen sky-high demand. “Not really... it really is a love letter to the fans and the people who have stuck in there for these 40-some odd years to be able to see this film,” said James Wood, the Disney-owned theater’s director of special events and production.

“The Rise of Skywalker” had the longest list of people requesting to be notified when tickets went on sale of any movie in a blockbuster-filled year, added Wood. The film opened in several markets Wednesday including France, Germany and China, ahead of its arrival in US theaters on general release today.

French fan club Planete Star Wars leapt to the film’s defense following its release there Wednesday. “The task was far from easy and satisfying every fan would be impossible anyway,” it said. “In any case, J J Abrams worked hard to give us the best possible conclusion to the saga and who knows... reunite the community?” The New York Times had a less charitable view, declaring director Abrams “the most consistent B student in modern popular culture”. The film “is one of the best (in the franchise)... Also one of the worst,” it concluded. “Perfectly middling. It all amounts to the same thing.” —AFP



British actress Daisy Ridley poses with Sith stormtroopers on the red carpet upon arrival for the European film premiere of Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker.



BB8, D-O, C-3PO and R2-D2 appear on the red carpet.



British actor Warwick Davis and family pose on the red carpet.



Naomi Ackie



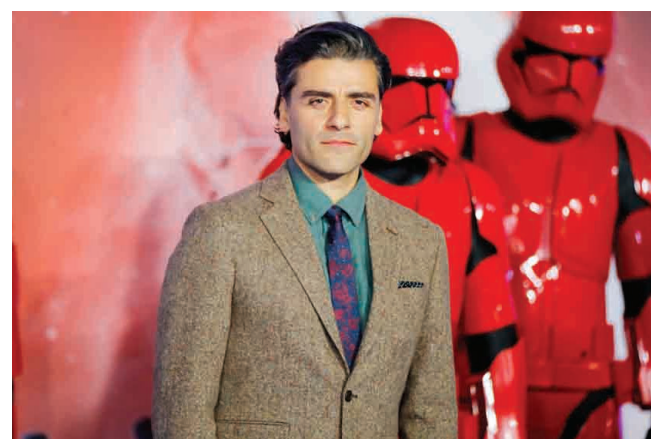
Disney CEO Bob Iger



John Boyega



Anthony Daniels



Oscar Isaac

## Lifestyle | Features

Lengthy takes and mile-long trenches:  
Making of Mendes' war drama '1917'

Presenting his World War One battlefield movie "1917" as a single shot had pros and cons for Oscar winning director Sam Mendes. Mistakes meant lengthy retakes but "accidents" also gave an authenticity of life in the trenches. From start to finish, fluid camera work follows two young British soldiers tasked with crossing enemy lines to stop another battalion from launching an imminent attack on what appear to be retreating German troops but is really a trap.

Made to look as if it is one continuous shot, the drama, set during a single day in April 1917, aims to tell the story in real time, immersing the audience in the mission of protagonists Blake and Schofield. That meant lengthy rehearsals and super-long takes for the cast, led by Dean-Charles Chapman and George MacKay and including Colin Firth, Andrew Scott and Benedict Cumberbatch.

"When things went wrong we started again and sometimes that was very frus-

trating ... There were a few moments when I thought why have I done this to myself," Mendes told Reuters. "A little bit of accidents is a good thing. You had your weather and light changes all the time ... animals, babies ... mud ... The men kept slipping over. But sometimes you want that in there. You want the reality of the physical exhaustion of what they're going through."

Last month, Mendes told a movie theatre audience in Los Angeles he chose this unusual storytelling technique because he wanted viewers "to feel like they were being pulled forward rather than being presented with information". "We had over a mile of trenches that we dug because we couldn't repeat anything, we could never go back," he said.

Chapman (Blake) and MacKay (Schofield) rehearsed every scene on location for months, he added. "The time we did start filming we unconsciously knew the steps and really the whole filmmaking process was about choreographing almost like a dance between the actors, the camera, the set," Chapman told Reuters in London. "Walking at a crouch trying to hold the tension of the scene emotionally, the focus, and also just slipping all over the place - what we were doing was a drop in the ocean compared to what the men went through," MacKay added. — Reuters



English director/writer/producer Sam Mendes (right) and Irish actor Andrew Scott arrive for the premiere of "1917" at the TCL Chinese theatre in Hollywood on Wednesday. — AFP



In this file photo taken on Sept 21, 2018, US rapper Tekashi 6ix9ine performs during the Philipp Plein fashion show as part of the Women's Spring/Summer 2019 fashion week in Milan. — AFP

## Rapper Tekashi69 gets two-year sentence after helping feds

He used the street cred of being in a gang to rocket to rap stardom, but then cooperated with federal prosecutors and testified against his former associates. American rapper Tekashi69, or Tekashi 6ix9ine - real name, Daniel Hernandez - was sentenced Wednesday to two years in federal prison on racketeering, firearms and drug trafficking charges. Hernandez, 23, got a relatively lenient sentence after agreeing to a plea deal that required him to take the stand against other members of the Nine Trey Gangsta Bloods.

It is nevertheless a stark reversal of fortune after he soared to fame following the release of his debut single "Gunmo" in late 2017. In the video, he raps and dances in front of a building in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood with members of the Nine Trey Gangsta Bloods, wearing trademark red bandanas. Ever since West Coast rappers started using gang imagery in their videos in the 1990s, any association with street gangs has often boosted the credibility of a rising artist.

According to his attorney Lance Lazzaro, Hernandez - who was born in Brooklyn, and left school at age 15 - wanted to develop a "gangster persona in an effort to sell more music". "Gunmo" quickly surpassed 100 million views on YouTube, and the single landed in the top 15 on the Billboard Hot 100. Tekashi69 was a bona fide star, and his popularity was fueled by his unique look - long, multicolored hair sometimes in braids, colored grills in his mouth, and hundreds of tattoos, including on his face.

But prosecutors said he did far more than cultivate a gangster image, and Hernandez was convicted on multiple counts of racketeering, weapons violations and drug trafficking. "You were a central figure in a vicious and brutal gang," federal judge Paul Engelmayer said to the rapper during the sentencing hearing. Hernandez used the gang - its name is inspired by its founding in 1993 at New York's infamous Rikers Island prison complex - to attack or rob those he perceived as rivals in the rap world.

But the gang also used him, tapping its new member for hundreds of thousands of dollars. Hernandez was indicted in November 2018 along with other gang members. Feeling he had been manipulated by the Nine Treys, the rapper decided to cooperate with federal prosecutors - a collaboration that helped him avoid what could have been a life sentence.

Having already spent a year in prison, during which his videos have racked up several billion views on YouTube, Hernandez will likely be free sometime in 2020, and then serve out his probation. "He's a target," Lazzaro told the court, expressing concerns that the young rapper could face reprisal attacks from the Nine Treys or another gang. Tekashi69 doesn't seem all that worried - he just signed a new record deal with the music label 10K Projects. — AFP

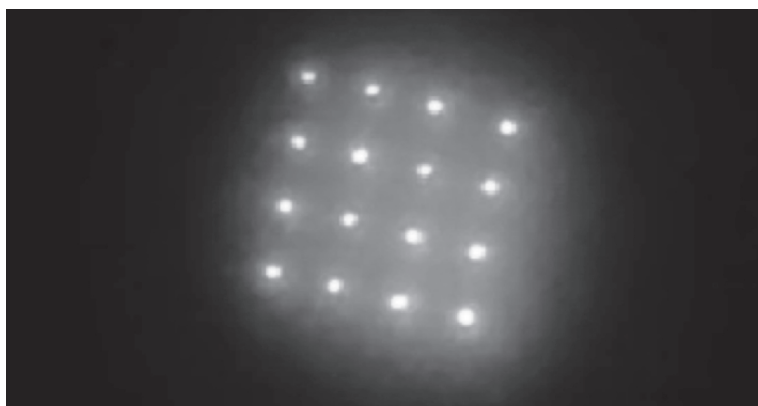
## Moscow's snowless December warmest in 133 years

Moscow registered the warmest December weather in over a century on Wednesday, as an unusually snowless month put winter activities on hold and confused plants into blooming. One weather station in northern Moscow registered a temperature of 5.4 degrees Celsius, said the Fobos weather center. "This is a new record of maximum air temperature for 18 December," surpassing a previous record of 5.3 degrees set in 1886, it said.

The Russian capital, normally covered with a blanket of snow by mid-December, thus far has had a snowless and cloudy winter, and the Russian weather service warned Wednesday that it may get even warmer. A botanical garden in Moscow this week announced that its snowdrop flowers, which normally indicate the first signs of spring, were blooming because they "confused winter and spring." "Gardeners are worried that the sakura will start blooming soon," the Apothecary Garden said on its website.

In Sokolniki park, popular with skiers and figure skaters in the winter, even the skiing track using artificial snow closed due to weather conditions. One resident of Siberian city of Omsk even posted a joke online "Snow for Sale" item, offering "natural snow" for R1,000 per cubic metre (\$16). "Moscow residents can use a seven percent discount when ordering more than 15 cubes," the notice on the Avito.ru popular online market said. —AFP

## MIT develops dye storing medical records under skin



This undated handout image shows quantum dots after being administered to the skin of rodents. — AFP

MIT engineers have devised a novel way to record a patient's immunization history: Storing the information in a patterned dye that is invisible to the naked eye and delivered under the skin at the same time as the vaccine. It is designed to bridge the gap that exists in medical records, particularly in developing countries, and emits a near-infrared light that can be detected by a specially equipped smartphone.

The new dye consists of nanocrystals called quantum dots and was described in the journal Science Translational Medicine on Wednesday. It has so far been tested only on cadavers and rats but its researchers, who were financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, hope to begin human testing in Africa in the next two years. Ana Jaklenec, a biomedical engineer at MIT and the paper's co-author told AFP. Engineers spent a long time finding components that are safe for the body, stable and capable of lasting for several years. The quantum dots are 3.7 nanometers in diameter, and are encapsulated in microparticles that form spheres 16 microns in diameter (a micron is a millionth of a meter while a nanometer is a billionth of a meter). This is then applied to the skin via a microneedle patch rather than a traditional syringe and needle. — AFP

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## Jane Fonda tried to meet Trump with 'beautiful' climate activists

Hollywood legend Jane Fonda revealed she attempted to meet President Donald Trump shortly after his election with a group of "beautiful, voluptuous, brilliant" climate activists including Pamela Anderson in order to convince him to tackle global warming. But after discussing her idea with the president's son-in-law Jared Kushner and daughter Ivanka Trump, Fonda did not hear back, which eventually helped convince her to move for several months to Washington and use the power of her celebrity to help drive mass mobilizations.

Speaking at the National Press Club on Tuesday, Fonda, who turns 82 on Saturday, said she hatched the plan the day after the New York real estate tycoon was elected in 2016. "I kind of know men like Trump, not as bad, but you know, I sort of know those inclinations," she said. "And I thought, I'm going to get three or four of the most beautiful, voluptuous, brilliant climate activists - Pamela Anderson is one of them - and a few scientists, and I'm going to make an appointment, and we're all going to see Trump and we're going to get on our knees," she added, to laughter.

"And we're going to say to him, President Trump, you can be the hero of the entire world, you can be the most important human being ever to be born, the most better, perfect, wonderful, big, huge, wonderful, if you protect the planet." She said she then called Kushner, who referred her to his wife Ivanka - the "environmentalist in the family" - to call her back. Fonda said Ivanka laughed when told the plan but did not take it further.

### Pity for Trump

The Oscar-winning actress, who made a name for herself as a pacifist and feminist since the 1970s, has been taking part in non-sanctioned protests outside the US Capitol since October and getting arrested alongside other activists, hoping to spark a mass movement of millions to force the government to act. Asked what she thought of Trump's repeated mockery of Swedish activist Greta Thunberg and its impact on other teens fighting for climate action, Fonda said the president deserved pity, not scorn, because he sounded "traumatized". "A man who could do that to a girl like Greta is so empty, so lacking in empathy and



Actress and activist Jane Fonda speaks about her movement to push for political action on climate change during a luncheon at the National Press Club on Dec 17, 2019 in Washington. — AFP

compassion, that we need to be compassionate," she said. "We may hate the behavior! But we have to understand that the behavior is the language of the traumatized, so we don't hate the traumatized." "I do have empathy, but I'm afraid that there's no change in him," she added.

Fonda concluded that whether Trump won re-

election next year or a Democrat took the White House, activists "still have to be in the streets holding their feet to the fire". "There's a big advantage of being old, because you can look back and you can see presidents. I've seen presidents, and when we don't force the people in office to do what they need to do, terrible things happen." — AFP

## 8-year-old highest paid YouTuber, earns \$26m in year



Eight-year-old Ryan Kaji earned \$26 million in 2019 on his YouTube channel, making him the highest-paid creator on the platform, according to a list published Wednesday by Forbes magazine. Kaji, whose real name is Ryan Guan, was already the video platform's highest earner in 2018, with \$22 million, according to Forbes. His channel "Ryan's World", launched in 2015 by Ryan's parents, is only three years old but already has 22.9 million subscribers.

Initially called "Ryan ToysReview," the channel mostly consisted of "unboxing" videos - videos of the young star opening boxes of toys and playing with them. Several of the videos have racked up more than one billion views, and the channel has received almost 35 billion views since its creation, according to data from the analytics website Social Blade.

Recently, the channel was renamed after a consumer advocacy organization, Truth in Advertising, filed a complaint with the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC) about it. Truth in Advertising accused the channel of not clearly denoting which videos had been sponsored, meaning brands paid for the video to feature their products. The channel has also evolved as Ryan ages, now offering more educational videos in addition to the toys.

In Forbes's ranking, Ryan Kaji surpassed the channel "Dude Perfect", run by a group of friends from Texas who attempt seemingly impossible feats, such as launching basketballs into hoops from the tops of buildings or out of helicopters. Dude Perfect came in second, up from third the year before, having earned \$20 million between June 1, 2018 and June 1, 2019.

In third place was another child star's channel, that of Russia's Anastasia Radzinskaya. At only five years old, she earned \$18 million. Her channels "Like Nastya Vlog" and "Funny Stacy" boast nearly 70 million subscribers in total, with videos in Russian, English and Spanish. — AFP

## Florida Man: A year in eccentricity, gators and crime

There is a Florida Man Twitter account, and for good reason - the Sunshine State seems to be the scene of some of the wackiest news of any given year. Thanks to the marvels of the internet, the exploits of "Florida Man" - a wayward regular Joe, or a clumsy criminal - are the stuff of social media legend. Their tales go viral in a hot second. Of course, the abundance of wild animals - we are looking at you, alligators - help a lot. Here are a handful of zany stories that came out of Florida in 2019, compiled from police and local news reports:

### Beware fast food outlets

Many of us like to grab food or a drink on the run - cars have drink holders for a reason, right? But in Florida, caveat emptor. In January, a man found a World War II era grenade and put it in his truck. But then he decided he needed to run for the border - to make a stop at Taco Bell, that is. When he finally decided the grenade might be more pressing than his tacos, he called the 911 emergency line. Cue the bomb squad - and a lot of questions about the guy's priorities.

In April, Starbucks was the scene of some more serious drama. Police arrested a man who loudly proclaimed himself "The Saint" and told patrons sipping their lattes that a "turtle army" would destroy them. He then marched into a police department in the town of Indialantic, near Melbourne, and yelled at an employee. He was charged with disturbing the peace.

### Crime stranger than fiction

In January, a man was arrested on suspicion of drug possession. When police found three syringes in his rectum, he claimed ignorance, saying he had no idea how they got there. Ummm.....Also that month, a man threatened to kill his neighbor with "kindness". Sounded innocent enough, until the man pulled out a machete with the word "kindness" written on it. He was charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. His neighbor survived, with only a minor cut on his hand.

In August, a man was arrested for castrating another man - badly. The pair met on a fetish website,

eu-nuch.com. A camera was set up to record the procedure. But the victim ended up bleeding heavily, and the suspect said he had learned his craft... growing up on a farm. The suspect was charged with a felony for illegally practicing medicine resulting in bodily injury.

And in September, a couple arrested for riding bicycles while under the influence of alcohol... undressed and began having sex in the back of the police car that was taking them to the station. They were charged with the DUI - and exposing "sexual organs".

### Animal kingdom

Florida makes people do crazy things, especially when there is an animal involved. In May, during an early-morning traffic stop, a female passenger pulled a baby alligator out of her yoga pants when the officer asked her what she had. As it turns out, she also had dozens of baby turtles in a backpack. That same month, a python ended up in a Florida man's toilet - the true stuff of nightmares. The man ended up with a bite on his arm.

In July, a 75-year-old man battled with an eight-foot (2.5-m) alligator to save his daughter's golden retriever. The man kicked the reptile in the snout and ran to safety. The following month, a similar drama: a man hears a ruckus outside his home and rushes out to see an alligator with his chocolate Labrador retriever in its mouth. The man pried the gator's mouth open and saved the dog. Moral of the story: Beware roving alligators.

### Super meta

In March, the interwebs got in on the Florida Man fun. You've heard of the Ice Bucket Challenge -this was the Florida Man Challenge. Type "Florida Man" and your birthday into a search engine and see what comes up as the craziest news from that day.

### POTUS joins the ranks

The state earned one more Florida Man this year: None other than President Donald Trump, who ditched his residency in New York to make Mar-a-Lago his new home. — AFP

## Lifestyle | Gossip



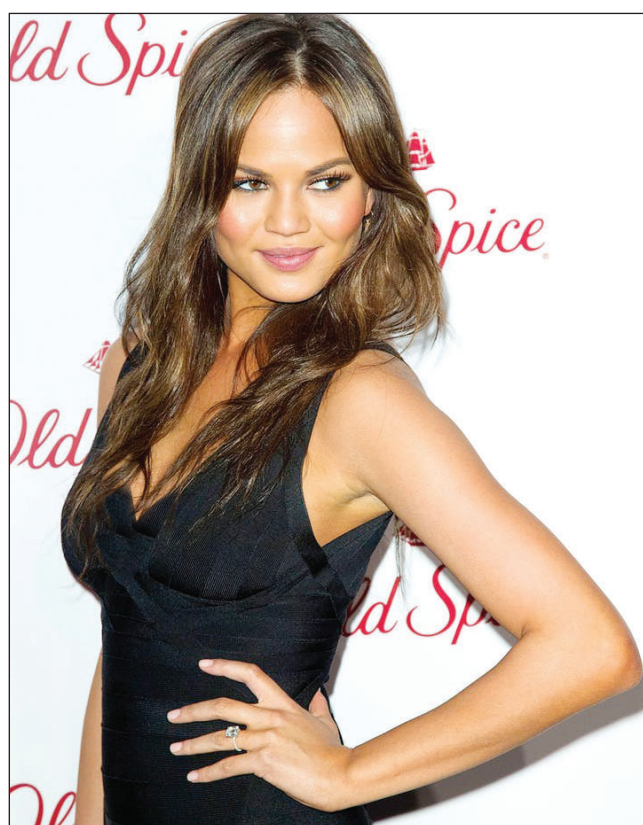
## Ronnie Wood thinks the Rolling Stones are 'invincible'

The 72-year-old rocker beat lung cancer in 2017, while frontman Sir Mick Jagger, 76, underwent heart surgery earlier this year, Keith Richards, also 76, suffered a brain hemorrhage after falling out of a tree in 2006, and Charlie Watts, 78, has also battled cancer. After they all came out of their major medical situations healthy again, Ronnie is convinced nothing can destroy the band. He told The Sun newspaper's Bizarre column: "After 50 years of chain smoking, my life was hanging by a thread, but I survived. "The doctors were able to remove the tumour from my left lung, thank God the cancer had not spread. "Not to forget Charlie, who had laryngeal cancer a few years ago, and Keith, with his heavy bleeding after falling from a palm tree. Everything went well, a big miracle. The Stones are simply indestructible." And the veteran guitarist claims

his lungs are now healthier than they've been in decades. He said: "Now my lungs are working like a young man who never smoked. I finally quit smoking four years ago. The Seventies were by far my wildest time." These days, Ronnie leads a much quieter life with his wife Sally, 41, and their three-year-old twin daughters, Alice and Gracie, and he's still taking sobriety one day at a time. He said recently: "Sally was never bossy, and like, 'You've got to stop'. She appreciated me both ways, but much more now I don't smoke, drink and drug. "It's a daily process staying sober. I have my meditation books, and start the day with a plan. One day at a time is fine." And Ronnie - who has four adult children from his two previous marriages - is determined to make the most of every minute. He said: "Every day, every hour, now, is like, 'Yes! You've got live life to the full."

## Noah Cyrus had 'one of the hardest years of her life in 2018'

The 19-year-old star has spoken candidly about the difficult period in her life that led to her writing her song 'Lonely' and called for people to speak openly about their mental health issues. In a new PSA video for 'Seize the Awkward', she said: "I felt stuck in this place that I could not get out of.. I just needed to get it out; I needed the conversation because I couldn't take it in my body anymore, I couldn't take the feeling of anxiety circling in my chest. I couldn't take that anymore, or I was gonna explode." Noah's turning point came when she received a kind phone call from her manager. She recalled: "One day my manager called me, and he said 'I just talked to a friend for a really long time, and I now understand what you're going through, and I'm here for you if you need me.' "And that shifted everything for me, just knowing that one person on my team understood." The 'July' singer encouraged people who are not experiencing such problems to open up to those who need to talk and wants to be able to help others as much as she can. She said: "Sometimes I don't know how to solve the problem — I'm only 19, I don't know how to solve a problem, I'm a baby. "But if somebody's struggling emotionally, I can come and help. I feel like that's my strength. I'm not gonna be able to ace a math test, but I can help someone out who's hurting or feeling the same emotions as me."



## Chrissy Teigen is making documentary about French fries

The 'Cravings' cookbook writer will produce and appear in 'Fries! The Movie', a film which will explore the reasoning why fried potatoes are so popular and will also include appearances from the likes of author and podcast host Malcolm Gladwell, chef Eric Ripert and founder and president of the Museum of Food and Drink Dave Arnold. Chrissy said in a statement: "I always knew my love of fries and years of experience in the field were meant to serve a higher purpose. Thrilled to work alongside this incredible team and share our findings." And, sharing a photo of the announcement on Instagram, Chrissy hailed the film as "the most important documentary of our time". She wrote: "Very excited to finally announce the most important documentary of our time!!" The documentary will be produced by the 'Lip Sync Battle' star's Suit & Thai Productions and will follow chefs, celebrities, food scientists and farmers as they delve into the stories and flavours behind French fries. Zero Point Zero Productions' co-founders Christopher Collins and Lydia Tenaglia while also produce the documentary with Unilever Entertainment's Kelly Mullen, while Unilever's Giles Morrison will serve an executive producer.

## Extinction Rebellion protesters did not want to shut down the 'Star Wars' premiere

The European debut screening of the highly-anticipated movie was disrupted when eight members of the climate change activist group - dressed as characters from the franchise, including C-3PO, Han Solo, and members of the Rebel Alliance - walked out onto the blue carpet and laid down on the floor. Security at the event did not forcibly remove the protesters from the carpet and instead formed a guard around them so the stars and guests could continue to walk into the cinema at London's Leicester Square, and the protesters could peacefully make their point about the dangers to the environment. And a spokesperson for the group confirmed they "did not intend to shut down the premiere, but to make sure their message was heard". The activists held up signs that called on film industry bosses to "tell the truth on climate change". An eye witness from BANG Showbiz heard one protester dressed as a Rebellion X-wing fighter pilot shout: "Hollywood tell the truth on climate change. Help us create a new world. Hollywood you have a unique opportunity to change the world. Help us act now." And in a reference to Princess Leia's message to Obi-Wan Kenobi in first film, 'Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope', he said: "Help us Hollywood you're our only hope."





## Sofia Richie took 'years to find' a mascara which worked for her

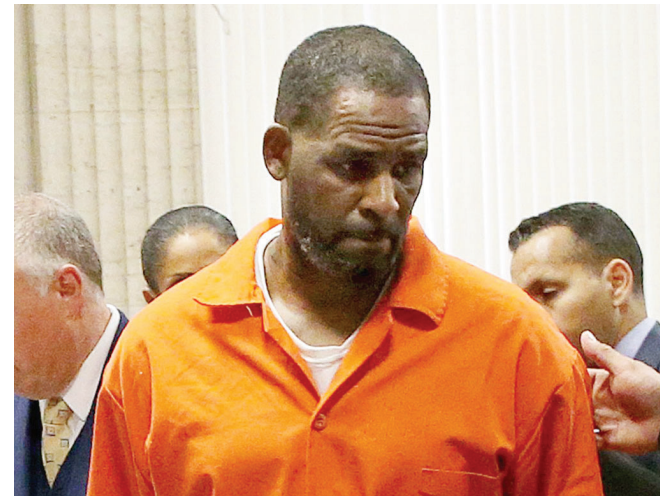
The 21-year-old model has revealed her beauty secrets and tips, and she admitted her go-to product isn't the luxury purchase you might expect after she spent a long time figuring out the right one. She explained: "I never understood why mascara didn't work on me. I'd wear it and go home mortified because I spent all day with mascara down my face, I looked crazy. So it took me years to find a mascara that worked for me."

Sofia sought advice from an expert who revealed her "eyes produce a lot of oil", and she eventually settled on Maybelline's Lash Sensational, which costs just £8.99. Opening up about her choice in a beauty video for Vogue, she said: "A dermatologist told me it was because my eyes produce a lot of oil and then I found Maybelline. I have been using this for years and will never use another mascara ever. It's the only one that works for me." Meanwhile, Sofia's famous father Lionel Richie joined her during the tutorial and revealed his own secret to looking youthful.

The 70-year-old singer added: "My beauty regime is sleep and water and I guess that's all I need to do." Meanwhile, Lionel previously insisted he isn't worried about his daughter having a career in the fashion industry because she's a "smart mountain goat".

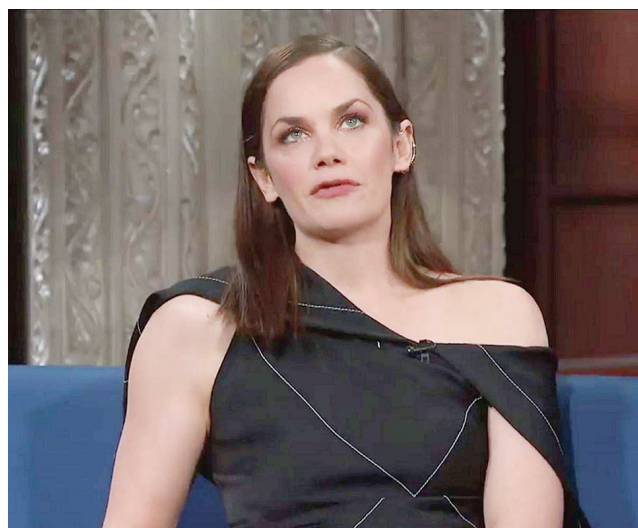
## R Kelly pleaded not guilty to allegations of bribery

The disgraced 'I Believe I Can Fly' singer - who is currently awaiting trial on sexual abuse charges - was hit by the new claims earlier this month, which alleged he had bribed an unnamed government official in 1994 so he could obtain a fake ID for singer Aaliyah, who was 15 at the time, so they could get married. However, when Kelly appeared via a video link from a Chicago courtroom on Wednesday, he denied the allegation. And Douglas Anton, an attorney who represented the singer in court, argued the 'Ignition' hitmaker - who struggles with reading and writing - would not know how to get a fake ID, even if given \$1 million and a month to complete the task. He said: "He'd come back and say, 'I have no idea how to do that.'" According to the lawyer, Kelly has been working on new music, which he has been humming and singing to his visitors in prison, but despite his situation, the tunes aren't just "sour notes". He told the New York Post newspaper: "It's completely uplifting stuff about not just his journey through the system, but man and woman's journey through life." Kelly was accused of bribing an official to obtain the "creation of a fraudulent identification document Jane Doe #1" and the date cited is one day before he wed the singer, who was just 15 at the time, on 31 August, 1994. The couple's marriage was later annulled after her parents discovered what had happened and Aaliyah - who died in a plane crash aged 22 - eventually left Kelly's record label, Jive Records, to sign with Atlantic.



He said in 2016: "I will never have that conversation with anyone. Out of respect for Aaliyah, and her mother and father who has asked me not to personally. But I can tell you I loved her, I can tell you she loved me, we was very close. We were, you know, best best best best friends."

## Ruth Wilson quit 'The Affair' because of nude scenes



The 37-year-old actress claimed in August 2018 she was "not really allowed to talk about" her decisions for departing the drama series and it's now been claimed one of Ruth's biggest issues was being asked to take her clothes off on camera even at times when it didn't seem necessary for the story. A source told the Hollywood Reporter they had heard Ruth discussing a male co-star and asking: "Why do you need to see me and not more of him?" The insider said: "There was a culture problem at the show from the very beginning and a tone-deafness from [showrunner] Sarah Treem about recognising the position she was putting actors in. "Over and over again, I witnessed Sarah Treem try to cajole actors to get naked even if they were uncomfortable or not contractually obligated to." They claimed Sarah would pressure actresses to go nude with compliments or statements such as "everyone is waiting for you." The source added: "It's the things you would think would be coming out of a man's mouth from the 1950s. "The environment was very toxic." Sarah has denied ever pressuring actresses on the show and insisted she would "never say those things to an actor." She added: "That's not who I am. I am not a manipulative person, and I've always been a feminist. "I did everything I could think of to make [Wilson] feel comfortable with these scenes." The showrunner stressed she had "devoted [her] entire professional life to writing about and speaking to women's issues" and wanted to make 'The Affair' "to illuminate how the female experience of moving through the world is so different from the male one."

## Wayne Brady crowned winner of season two of 'The Masked Singer'

The 'Whose Line Is It Anyway' host was unmasked as the Fox when he beat Flamingo and Rottweiler, who were revealed as 'The Cheetah Girls' star Adrienne Bailon and musician Chris Daughtry respectively, to claim the coveted Golden Mask on Wednesday night's final. Wayne said: "This has been life-changing. "I never thought that I'd love performing again but this has just been so crazy and I can't thank you enough. It's been the best thing I've ever done." Out of the four judges, Robin Thicke and Nicole Scherzinger guessed correctly that it was Wayne under the mask, whilst Ken Jeong and Jenny McCarthy incorrectly chose Jamie Foxx. The most surprising reveal of the night came in the form of 'American Idol' runner-up and Daughtry singer, Chris Daughtry, who none of the panel had guessed throughout the show. The 'Waiting For Superman' singer admitted he wanted to do something "fun" and "challenging" - but he didn't realise just how demanding it would be. He said: "I wanted to do something fun, to challenge myself. "So last year, when T-Pain won, I thought, 'Aw, I want to do this! It looks so much fun. "I had no idea how challenging it was gonna be, but I'm glad I did it." The 'Home' singer also revealed that he didn't tell his children - twins Adalynn and Noah, nine, and stepkids Hannah, 23, and Griffin, 21 - he was doing the competition and he can't wait to watch it with them.



## Lifestyle | Gossip

## John Boyega 'appreciates' the support of his fans

The 27-year-old actor is set to make his final appearance as Finn in the 'Star Wars' franchise when the final main line movie, 'The Rise of Skywalker', hits cinemas this week, and he has sent his gratitude to the fans who have been "supportive" over the years, as he prepares to say goodbye to the role. Asked what he'd like his 'Star Wars' legacy to be whilst at the European premiere of the movie in London on Wednesday, he said: "I don't know man, I just feel like the audience has their role to play, and whatever you feel ... just feel it. What I appreciate is any support I've received - especially from Londoners and people from the UK - I couldn't do anything I'm doing without the fans and people who have been supportive of me and the movies I do. So I appreciate it." John is "very emotional" to see the series come to an end, but praised director J.J. Abrams for doing an "extremely incredible job" with the ninth instalment. When asked how he feels ahead of the movie's release, he explained: "Very emotional, overwhelmed, numb ... I mean for us, watching this movie is a whole different experience. It embodies years of our actual real lives, so watching it I was so taken aback. But you know, I have to say J.J. has done an extremely incredible job, and I really really enjoyed watching the movie." And the actor also teased fans with what's in store for Finn in the final movie.



## Denise Richards undergoes emergency surgery for hernias



The 'Real Housewives of Beverly Hills' star has revealed that just a few weeks ago she went through an emergency procedure to repair two femoral hernias and two inguinal hernias, after she "waited way too long" to go to the doctor. Femoral hernias occur when fatty tissue or a part of the bowel pokes through into the groin at the top of the inner thigh, whilst inguinal ones are caused by tissue or a part of the intestine protruding through a weak spot in the abdominal muscles. In a post on social media, she wrote: "My hubby posted this & I need to actually thank him for taking such great care of me. This was a couple months ago & turned out to be a good lesson for me to always listen to my body. "Being a mom, wife, & having a career sometimes it's easier to just be strong and power through, I thought the pain & my other symptoms would just go away. They did not and got a lot worse. I'm so grateful to @herniadoc & her fabulous team. I thought I had one femoral hernia, I actually had 2 femoral & 2 inguinal. And I waited way too long & didn't even tell my husband how bad I was feeling (I know it was stupid) ... gotta always listen to our bodies & take care of ourselves." Denise also shared the original message posted by her husband Aaron Phypers, who broke the news of the actress' condition on his own Instagram page.



## DUA LIPA DOESN'T WANT TO SHY AWAY FROM BEING A VOICE FOR GOOD

The 'New Rules' hitmaker has used her platform to speak about a range of topics including women's rights and abortion laws, and has said that whilst it "does wind people up" sometimes, she won't stop using her voice as a force for change. She said: "I spoke about like women in Saudi Arabia and the rights and the things that happen or like if I'm supporting different charities and talking about certain things, especially women protesting about women's rights ... It does wind people up. I think that the whole abortion rights as well, that definitely kicked up a fuss ... I'm never going to shy away from that and I feel like I have to be a voice for my audience as well because they gave me that platform for that reason." Dua set up the Sunny Hill Foundation in 2016 alongside her family to help young children in her family's native Kosovo, and has said the charity's work is something she "believes" in. She explained: "It's basically a foundation I started with my family to kind of help young kids in Kosovo in creative arts. And when I did my first show in Kosovo, I decided to put all the ticket proceedings into the foundation and then we kind of gave it to, because we realised that a lot more things were needed in Kosovo, especially after the war that weren't just in the creative arts field. So we decided to give the money out to lots of different NGOs and people that we believed in." The 'Be The One' singer, 24, also set up the Sunny Hill Festival as part of the charity, which takes place in Kosovo and raises money for the foundation.

## Teri Hatcher is happy being single

The 'Desperate Housewives' star has been single for "a very long time" following her divorce from actor Jon Tenney in 2003, and has insisted there's "nothing lonely" about her life. She said: "There is a difference between being lonely and being alone. I have been single for a very long time but there is nothing lonely about my life. I want to remove the stigma of that. "Many women who get divorced will not get remarried. That kind of sounds depressing but it doesn't have to be. Many women are not just surviving alone, they're thriving. They're empowered, they're making money, they're being healthy, they're traveling. You are allowed to be proud of your life when you're not part of a couple." The beauty recently turned 55, and finds ageing "liberating" because it has given her a chance to "think about things differently". She added: "I feel good, and I feel strong. It's liberating to care about the things that are important to you and not about the things that aren't important to you. When you're younger, you can get really hung up on things. I have the opportunity to think about things differently." And her time spent reflecting on her life means she's also well-equipped to hit back at online trolls when they comment on her appearance. The 'Tomorrow Never Dies' actress said: "Somebody commented the other day how badly I've aged and how ugly I am. I actually commented back and said something like, 'I'm sure you're as attractive on the outside as you are on the inside.' It's just nice to be in a place where you can let it roll off your back."



## Comic

### Word Search

#### Songs From the Year 2000

Find and circle all of the songs from the year 2000 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 29 letters spell an additional song title from 2000.

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

- |               |                 |                 |              |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| AMAZED        | CALIFORNICATION | INCOMPLETE      | PINCH ME     |
| AMERICAN PIE  | DESERT ROSE     | JUMPIN' JUMPIN' | SAY MY NAME  |
| BACK AT ONE   | FADED           | KRYPTONITE      | SEPARATED    |
| BACK HERE     | GIRL ON TV      | LUCKY           | SHE BANGS    |
| BAG LADY      | HIGHER          | MARIA MARIA     | SMOOTH       |
| BE WITH YOU   | HOT BOYZ        | MEET VIRGINIA   | STAN         |
| BEAUTIFUL DAY | I LIKE IT       | MINORITY        | STRONGER     |
| BENT          | I NEED YOU      | MOST GIRLS      | THERE YOU GO |
| BREATHE       | I TRY           | MUSIC           | TRY AGAIN    |
| BROADWAY      | I WANNA KNOW    | NO MORE         | WIFEY        |
| BYE BYE BYE   | I WISH          | OTHERSIDE       | WONDERFUL    |

### Yesterday's Solution

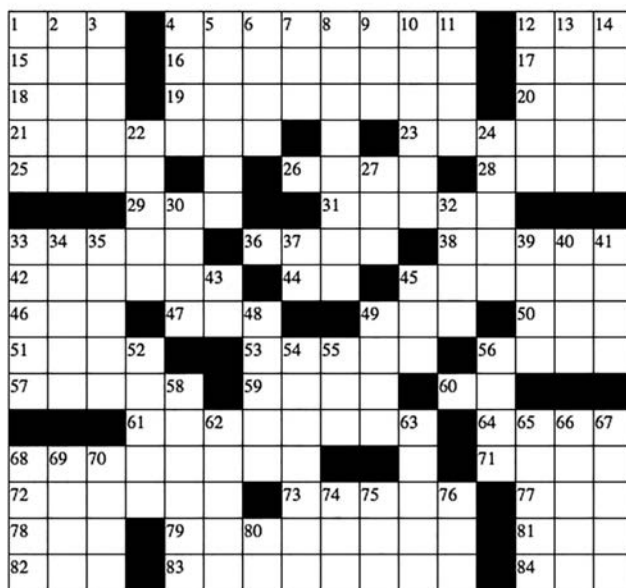
#### Soccer

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

- |             |           |              |               |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| ASSIST      | FORMATION | MATCH        | SLIDE TACKLE  |
| BALL        | FORWARD   | OFFENSE      | SOCKS         |
| CAPTAIN     | FOUL      | OFFSIDE      | SPORT         |
| CHEERING    | GAME      | PENALTY KICK | STOPPAGE TIME |
| CLEATS      | GOALIE    | POSITION     | STRIKERS      |
| CLUB        | GOALS     | PRACTICE     | SUBSTITUTE    |
| COACH       | GRASS     | RED CARD     | SWEeper       |
| COIN TOSS   | HALVES    | REFEREE      | THROW-IN      |
| CORNER KICK | HAT TRICK | SCORE        | TOUCHLINE     |
| DEFENSE     | HEADING   | SHIN GUARD   | WALL          |
| FANS        | JERSEY    | SHOOT-OUT    | WORLD CUP     |
| FIELD       | JUGGLING  | SHORTS       | YELLOW CARD   |
| FIFA        | KICK-OFF  | SHOT         |               |

The hidden message is: IN MANY COUNTRIES SOCCER IS CALLED FOOTBALL

### Crossword 2390



- ACROSS**
- The sound made by a gentle blow.
  - A short pithy instructive saying.
  - An honorary degree in science.
  - A nucleic acid that transmits genetic information from DNA to the cytoplasm.
  - The battle in which Alexander won his first major victory against the Persians (334 BC).
  - 4-wheeled motor vehicle.
  - (Babylonian) The sky god.
  - Approximately the last 10,000 years.
  - Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
  - Examine by palpation for medical purposes.
  - (Greek mythology) A sea nymph transformed into a sea monster who lived on one side of a narrow strait.
  - Type genus of the Amiidae.
  - Small European freshwater fish with a slender bluish-green body.
  - (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
  - The cry made by sheep.
  - A switch made from the stems of the rattan palms.
  - Of or relating to a seizure or convulsion.
  - Scottish sea captain who was hired to protect British shipping in the Indian Ocean and then was accused of piracy and hanged (1645-1701).
  - English monk and scholar (672-735).
  - Trousers that end at or above the knee.
  - A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
  - A resource.
  - Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
  - A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
  - A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
  - The capital and largest city of Yemen.
  - Infestation of the pubic hair by crab lice.
  - Sew up the eyelids of hawks and falcons.
  - A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
  - The character flaw or error of a tragic hero that leads to his downfall.
  - A town and port in northwestern Israel in the eastern Mediterranean.
  - Port city on southeastern Honshu in central Japan.
  - United States physiologist (born in Germany) who did research on parthenogenesis (1859-1924).
  - Away from the mouth or oral region.
  - A sloping mass of rocks at the base of a cliff.
  - A run that is the result of the batter's performance.
  - A pass between mountain peaks.
  - Giant treelike plant having edible nuts and leafstalks that yield a refreshing drink of clear watery sap.
  - A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
  - Range of what one can know or understand.
  - Red Asian weaverbirds often kept as cage birds.
  - A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

### DOWN

- Small genus of Eurasian aquatic perennial herbs.
- A communist state in Indochina on the South China Sea.
- United States physicist (born in Austria) who proposed the exclusion principle (thus providing a theoretical basis for the periodic table) (1900-1958).
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Any tropical African shrub of the genus Protea having alternate rigid leaves and dense colorful flower heads resembling cones.
- Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
- United States musician (born in Japan) who married John Lennon and collaborated with him on recordings (born in 1933).
- English literary critic who collaborated with C. K. Ogden and contributed to the development of Basic English (1893-1979).
- Water frozen in the solid state.
- Of a declining industry or technology.
- One thousandth of a second.
- A burn cause by hot liquid or steam.
- South African plant widely cultivated for its showy pure white spathe and yellow spadix.
- Causing fear or dread or terror.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- A language group of the Hakan family.
- Someone who is morally reprehensible.
- A book of the New Testament.
- In bed.
- Make a vibrant noise, of grasshoppers or cicadas.
- A genus of delicate ferns belonging to the family Osmundaceae.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- Tropical starchy tuberous root.
- (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
- By bad luck.
- A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
- Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
- State in northeastern India.
- An island in Indonesia east of Java.
- Find repugnant.
- (of a liquid) Treated by having air passed or bubbled through it for purification.
- Remaining after all deductions.
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- The world's largest desert (3,500,000 square miles) in North Africa.
- A woman of refinement.
- Scale-like structure between the base of the wing and the halter of a two-winged fly.
- British filmmaker (born in Hungary) (1893-1956).
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
- A slender double-reed instrument.
- A commercial center and river port in western Germany on the Rhine River.
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- A room equipped with toilet facilities.
- The seventh and last day of the week.
- A state in the eastern United States.

### Yesterday's Solution

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

### Daily SuDoku

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

### Yesterday's Solution

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

## TV Listings



01:50 Security  
03:25 Crimson Tide  
05:20 Men In Black  
07:00 WarGames  
08:55 Fahrenheit 451  
10:35 Crimson Tide  
12:40 Detective Dee Mystery Of The Phantom  
14:55 Independence Day  
17:30 47 Ronin  
19:40 Black Panther  
22:00 Platoon



00:00 The First 48  
01:00 Homicide Hunter  
02:00 PD Cam  
02:25 PD Cam  
02:50 Homicide Hunter  
03:40 It Takes A Killer  
04:05 It Takes A Killer  
04:25 Live PD: Police Patrol  
04:50 Live PD: Police Patrol  
05:10 The First 48  
05:50 Homicide Hunter  
06:35 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
07:25 It Takes A Killer  
08:00 Live PD: Police Patrol  
08:25 Homicide Hunter  
09:10 Homicide Hunter  
09:55 The First 48  
10:45 The First 48  
11:40 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
12:35 The First 48  
13:30 Crimes That Shook Australia  
14:25 Live PD: Police Patrol  
14:55 Live PD: Police Patrol  
15:25 It Takes A Killer  
15:55 It Takes A Killer  
16:20 Homicide Hunter  
17:15 The First 48  
18:10 Homicide: Hours To Kill  
19:10 Live PD: Police Patrol  
19:40 Live PD: Police Patrol  
20:05 It Takes A Killer  
20:35 It Takes A Killer  
21:05 The First 48  
22:00 Homicide Hunter  
23:00 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol  
23:30 Live PD Presents: Women On Patrol



00:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
00:30 Real Husbands Of Hollywood  
00:55 Impractical Jokers  
01:20 Ridiculousness Arabia  
01:45 Inside Amy Schumer  
02:05 Friends  
02:30 Friends  
02:55 Lip Sync Battle  
03:20 Ridiculousness Arabia  
03:45 Inside Amy Schumer  
04:05 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
04:35 Lip Sync Battle  
05:00 Friends  
05:25 Friends  
05:50 Friends  
06:20 Friends  
06:45 Friends  
07:10 Impractical Jokers  
07:35 Impractical Jokers  
08:00 Impractical Jokers  
08:30 Impractical Jokers  
08:55 Takeshis Castle Indonesia  
09:20 Takeshis Castle Indonesia  
09:50 Takeshis Castle Indonesia  
10:15 Takeshis Castle Indonesia  
10:40 Takeshis Castle Indonesia  
11:05 Friends  
11:30 Friends  
11:55 Friends  
12:20 Friends  
12:45 Friends  
13:10 Workaholics  
13:35 Workaholics  
14:00 Workaholics  
14:30 Workaholics  
14:55 Workaholics  
15:20 Ridiculousness Arabia  
15:45 Ridiculousness Arabia  
16:15 Ridiculousness Arabia  
16:45 Ridiculousness Arabia  
17:10 Friends

17:35 Friends  
18:00 Friends  
18:30 Friends  
19:00 Friends  
19:30 Real Husbands Of Hollywood  
20:00 Real Husbands Of Hollywood  
20:30 Real Husbands Of Hollywood  
21:00 Real Husbands Of Hollywood  
21:30 Comedy Central Presents: Menna W FINA  
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah  
22:30 Demetri Martin: Person  
23:30 Alternatino



00:10 Evermoor Chronicles  
00:35 Binny And The Ghost  
01:00 Alex & Co.  
01:25 Alex & Co.  
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles  
02:15 Evermoor Chronicles  
02:40 Alex & Co.  
03:05 Binny And The Ghost  
03:30 Binny And The Ghost  
03:55 Evermoor Chronicles  
04:20 Evermoor Chronicles  
04:45 Alex & Co.  
05:10 Alex & Co.  
05:35 Violetta  
06:25 Binny And The Ghost  
06:45 Rolling With The Ronks  
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks  
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
07:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
07:50 Jessie  
08:15 Jessie  
08:40 Freaky Friday  
10:10 101 Dalmatian Street  
10:20 Bunk'd  
10:45 Bunk'd  
11:10 Bunk'd  
11:35 A.N.T. Farm  
12:00 A.N.T. Farm  
12:25 That's So Raven  
12:50 That's So Raven  
13:15 Raven's Home  
13:40 Raven's Home  
14:05 Stuck In The Middle  
14:30 Stuck In The Middle  
14:55 K.C. Undercover  
15:20 K.C. Undercover  
15:45 Bizaardvark  
16:10 Bizaardvark  
16:35 Sydney To The Max  
17:00 Sydney To The Max  
17:25 Coop And Cami Ask The World  
17:50 Coop And Cami Ask The World  
18:15 Penny On M.A.R.S  
18:40 Penny On M.A.R.S  
19:05 Shake It Up  
19:30 Shake It Up  
19:55 Amphibia  
20:20 Descendants Wicked World  
20:25 Amphibia  
20:50 Liv And Maddie  
21:15 Liv And Maddie  
21:40 Fast Layne  
22:05 Disney Mickey Mouse  
22:10 Wizards Of Waverly Place  
22:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place  
23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir  
23:50 Lolirock



00:00 PJ Masks  
00:30 The Lion Guard  
01:00 Sofia The First  
01:30 Gigantosaurus  
02:00 PJ Masks  
02:25 PJ Masks  
02:50 Paprika  
03:00 Zou  
03:15 Zou  
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster  
03:55 Henry Hugglemonster  
04:20 Paprika  
04:30 Paprika  
04:40 Zou  
04:55 Zou  
05:10 Zou  
05:25 Paprika  
05:35 Paprika

05:45 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:00 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:15 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:30 Henry Hugglemonster  
06:45 PJ Masks  
07:00 PJ Masks  
07:15 PJ Masks  
07:30 Gigantosaurus  
07:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons  
08:00 The Lion Guard  
08:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers  
09:00 PJ Masks  
09:30 Bluey  
09:40 Bluey  
09:50 Bluey  
10:00 Bluey  
10:10 Bluey  
10:20 Bluey  
10:30 Elena Of Avalor  
11:00 Elena Of Avalor  
11:30 Elena Of Avalor  
12:00 Sofia The First  
12:30 Sofia The First  
13:00 PJ Masks  
13:30 PJ Masks  
14:00 The Floating Palace  
15:00 Vampirina  
15:30 Vampirina  
16:00 Bluey  
16:10 Bluey  
16:20 Bluey  
16:30 T.O.T.S.  
17:00 Elena Of Avalor  
17:30 The Lion Guard  
18:00 T.O.T.S.  
18:30 Bluey  
18:40 Bluey  
18:50 Bluey  
19:00 Puppy Dog Pals  
19:30 Vampirina  
20:00 PJ Masks  
20:30 The Lion Guard  
21:00 Sofia The First  
21:30 Elena Of Avalor  
22:00 Fancy Nancy Clancy  
22:30 Bluey  
22:40 Bluey  
22:50 Bluey  
23:00 Puppy Dog Pals  
23:30 Vampirina



00:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja  
00:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja  
01:00 Boyster  
01:20 Boyster  
01:45 Counterfeit Cat  
02:10 Counterfeit Cat  
02:30 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja  
02:55 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja  
03:20 Boyster  
03:40 Boyster  
04:05 Counterfeit Cat  
04:30 Counterfeit Cat  
04:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja  
05:15 Furiki Wheels  
05:35 Furiki Wheels  
06:00 Lab Rats  
06:25 Lab Rats  
06:50 Phineas And Ferb  
07:15 Phineas And Ferb  
07:40 Gravity Falls  
08:05 Gravity Falls  
08:30 Phineas And Ferb  
08:55 Phineas And Ferb  
09:20 Lab Rats: You Posted What?  
10:10 Big City Greens  
10:35 Big City Greens  
10:55 Big City Greens  
11:20 Big City Greens  
11:40 Big City Greens  
12:05 Big City Greens  
12:25 Gravity Falls  
12:50 Gravity Falls  
13:10 DuckTales Shorts  
13:15 Phineas And Ferb  
13:40 Phineas And Ferb  
14:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil  
14:30 Phineas And Ferb  
14:55 Phineas And Ferb  
15:20 Big City Greens  
15:45 Big City Greens  
16:10 Supa Strikas  
16:35 Supa Strikas  
17:00 Lab Rats  
17:25 DuckTales

17:50 Phineas And Ferb  
18:15 Phineas And Ferb  
18:40 Supa Strikas  
19:05 Milo Murphy's Law: The Phineas & Ferb Effect  
19:55 DuckTales Shorts  
20:00 Lab Rats  
20:25 Furiki Wheels  
20:50 Phineas And Ferb  
21:15 Phineas And Ferb  
21:40 DuckTales  
22:05 Star vs The Forces Of Evil  
22:30 Star vs The Forces Of Evil  
22:55 DuckTales Shorts  
23:00 Furiki Wheels  
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost  
23:50 Dude That's My Ghost



00:00 2019: What E! Year  
01:00 Flip It Like Disick  
02:00 Nightly Pop  
02:30 Nightly Pop  
03:00 WAGs Miami  
04:00 Botched  
05:00 Botched  
06:00 Botched  
07:00 Botched  
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop  
08:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
09:50 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
10:45 Keeping Up With The Kardashians  
11:40 E! News: Daily Pop  
12:35 Flip It Like Disick  
13:30 Flip It Like Disick  
14:25 Flip It Like Disick  
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop  
16:15 2019: What E! Year  
17:10 Botched  
18:05 Botched  
19:00 E! News: Daily Pop  
20:00 Flip It Like Disick  
21:00 Flip It Like Disick  
22:00 Flip It Like Disick  
23:00 2019: What E! Year



00:30 The Colour Of War  
01:15 Patton 360  
02:00 UFO Hunters  
02:45 America's Book Of Secrets  
03:30 Serial Killer Earth  
04:15 Ancient Impossible  
05:00 Ancient Aliens  
05:45 Deep Sea Salvage  
06:30 MysteryQuest  
07:15 The Colour Of War  
08:00 America's Book Of Secrets  
08:45 Serial Killer Earth  
09:30 Ancient Impossible  
10:15 Ancient Aliens  
11:00 Deep Sea Salvage  
11:45 MysteryQuest  
12:30 The Colour Of War  
13:15 UFO Hunters  
14:00 America's Book Of Secrets  
14:45 Serial Killer Earth  
15:30 Ancient Impossible  
16:15 Ancient Aliens  
17:00 Deep Sea Salvage  
17:45 MysteryQuest  
18:30 The Colour Of War  
19:15 UFO Hunters  
20:00 America's Book Of Secrets  
20:45 Serial Killer Earth  
21:30 Clash Of The Gods  
22:15 Ancient Aliens  
23:00 Hangar 1: The UFO Files  
23:45 MysteryQuest



00:20 The Curse Of Civil War Gold  
01:05 Storage Wars  
01:25 Storage Wars  
01:50 American Pickers  
02:35 Pawn Stars  
02:55 Pawn Stars  
03:20 Why Does Everyone Hate The English? With Al Murray  
04:10 Project Impossible  
05:05 Forged In Fire  
06:00 Counting Cars  
06:20 Counting Cars

06:45 The Curse Of Civil War Gold  
07:30 Storage Wars  
07:50 Storage Wars  
08:15 American Pickers  
09:00 Pawn Stars  
09:20 Pawn Stars  
09:45 Why Does Everyone Hate The English? With Al Murray  
10:30 Project Impossible  
11:15 Forged In Fire  
12:00 American Pickers  
12:45 American Pickers  
13:30 American Pickers  
14:15 Football: A Brief History By Alfie Allen  
15:00 Presidents At War  
16:30 Presidents At War  
18:00 WW2 Treasure Hunters  
18:45 WW2 Treasure Hunters  
19:30 WW2 Treasure Hunters  
20:15 Custer: The Final Mystery  
21:00 Navy Seals: America's Secret Warriors  
22:40 Ancient Aliens  
23:30 American Pickers



00:10 Fish Of The Day  
00:35 Fish Of The Day  
01:00 48 Hrs Destination  
01:25 48 Hrs Destination  
01:50 Late Nite Eats  
02:15 Late Nite Eats  
02:40 What's For Sale With A View  
03:05 What's For Sale With A View  
03:30 Climbing The Property Ladder  
04:20 Get Lost In Korea  
05:10 Ultimate Airport Dubai  
06:00 David Rocco's Dolce Africa  
06:25 David Rocco's Dolce Africa  
06:50 Miguel's Feasts  
07:15 Miguel's Feasts  
07:40 Gok's Chinese Takeaway  
08:30 Late Nite Eats  
08:55 United Plates Of America  
09:20 Log Cabin Fever  
10:10 Pizza In Parma  
10:35 Delicacy Hunter: On The Silk Road  
11:00 Ultimate Airport Dubai  
11:50 David Rocco's Dolce Africa  
12:15 David Rocco's Dolce Africa  
12:40 Miguel's Feasts  
13:05 Miguel's Feasts  
13:30 Gok's Chinese Takeaway  
14:20 Late Nite Eats  
14:45 United Plates Of America  
15:10 Log Cabin Fever  
16:00 Pizza In Parma  
16:25 Delicacy Hunter: On The Silk Road  
16:50 Ultimate Airport Dubai  
17:45 David Rocco's Dolce Africa  
18:10 Miguel's Feasts  
18:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces  
19:35 Gok's Chinese Takeaway  
20:30 Late Nite Eats  
20:55 United Plates Of America  
21:25 Log Cabin Fever  
22:20 Pizza In Parma  
22:45 Cruise Ship Diaries  
23:15 Ultimate Airport Dubai



00:00 Nazi Megastructures  
00:55 Ultimate Survival WWII  
01:45 Locked Up Abroad  
02:35 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey  
03:25 Somewhere In China  
04:15 Nazi Megastructures  
05:05 Ultimate Survival WWII  
06:00 Locked Up Abroad  
06:55 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey  
07:50 Nazi Megastructures  
08:45 Ultimate Survival WWII  
09:40 My Fighting Season  
10:35 Car SOS  
11:30 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey  
12:25 Access 360 World Heritage  
13:20 My Fighting Season  
14:15 Airport Security: First Class  
15:10 America Inside Out With Katie Couric  
16:05 Egypt From Above

17:00 Car SOS  
18:00 Access 360 World Heritage  
19:00 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey  
20:00 Explorer XL  
21:00 Live Free Or Die  
22:00 Airport Security: First Class  
23:00 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey



00:30 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER  
01:30 Unlikely Animal Friends  
02:30 Wild Alaska: Arctic Summer  
03:30 The Hidden Kingdoms Of China  
04:30 Pond Stars  
05:30 World's Deadliest Killer  
06:30 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER  
07:30 Shocking Sharks  
08:30 Africa's Deadliest: Botswana Compilations  
09:30 World's Deadliest Animals  
10:30 Snakes In The City  
11:30 Shocking Sharks  
12:30 Africa's Deadliest: Botswana Compilations  
13:30 World's Deadliest Animals  
14:30 Snakes In The City  
15:30 Monster Snakes  
16:30 World's Deadliest  
17:30 Pond Stars  
18:30 Lion Kingdom  
19:30 Europe's Wild West  
20:30 Snakes In The City  
21:30 Madagascar's Fantastic Creatures  
22:30 World's Deadliest  
23:30 Lion Kingdom



00:12 Breadwinners  
00:36 Rabbids Invasion  
01:00 Rabbids Invasion  
01:24 Sanjay And Craig  
01:48 Sanjay And Craig  
02:12 Winx Club  
02:36 Winx Club  
03:00 Regal Academy  
03:24 Regal Academy  
03:48 Rabbids Invasion  
04:12 Rabbids Invasion  
04:36 Breadwinners  
05:00 Welcome To The Wayne  
05:24 SpongeBob SquarePants  
05:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
06:12 The Loud House  
06:36 Motu Patlu  
07:00 Rise Of The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
07:24 Chop Chop Ninja  
07:36 Chop Chop Ninja  
07:48 Winx Club  
08:12 Regal Academy  
08:36 I Am Frankie  
09:00 Henry Danger  
09:24 The Bureau Of Magical Things  
09:48 Game Shakers  
10:12 School Of Rock  
10:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky And Dawn  
11:00 Henry Danger  
11:24 The Loud House  
11:36 The Loud House  
11:48 Hunter Street  
12:12 Lego City Adventures  
12:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
13:00 Motu Patlu  
13:24 The Bureau Of Magical Things  
13:48 Noobees  
14:36 Knight Squad  
15:00 Tiny Christmas  
16:12 Albert: The Little Tree With Big Dreams  
17:00 Motu Patlu  
17:24 Knight Squad  
17:48 Hunter Street  
18:12 Hunter Street  
18:36 Hunter Street  
19:00 Hunter Street  
19:24 Hunter Street  
19:48 Henry Danger  
20:12 Noobees  
21:00 SpongeBob SquarePants  
21:24 Chop Chop Ninja  
21:36 Chop Chop Ninja  
21:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles  
22:12 Welcome To The Wayne  
22:36 Sanjay And Craig  
23:00 Regal Academy  
23:24 Winx Club



## Stars



### Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find harmony and beauty to be deeply satisfying to you today. You have a deep desire to get along with everyone that crosses your path. You may also find yourself playing mediator to friends that seem to not be able to see eye to eye today. You may find yourself paying much closer attention to your more intimate relationships. You work to find a balance between home and work life. You may be recognized in the work place for the management skills you are exhibiting and find yourself being offered a position in leadership. Aries. Good luck with your career today.



### Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are focused and very goal oriented today. It is as if you are on a mission and will let nothing stand in your way. You are motivated and determined to fix all that is around you this not just as you think it should be. You want things your way and refuse to settle for less. This day reveals itself to be a perfect time to spend with a lover or someone close to you as you are feeling a desire to be needed and admired. You will find this will fulfill your needs and leave you with a sense of completion. Your most productive time today will be spent at home.



### Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Relationships are the key to your emotional satisfaction now. You find it very satisfying to surround yourself with all things beautiful. Harmony is what you desire in your life. You have zero tolerance for drama and crave peace. You found yourself only wanting to spend your time with those closest to you. This is a great time to pour your attention into your marriage or partnership. You will find your relationship may prosper from the attention.



### Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may have a strong desire to get out and about. The social scene seems to be calling your name. A live band, a dance floor, and laughter seem to be what you are longing for. Choose your company wisely because the wrong choice could find you involved in confrontation and your night ruined. You are defiantly marching to the beat of your own drum. Not everyone will appreciate this different side of you.



### Leo (July 23-August 22)

You hate to admit you may be obsessing over a problem, but... You may feel as if your head is in the clouds. Foggy thoughts and scrambled ideas make everything seem as if you are living in a dream world. Do not get carried away focusing on a single problem. You can rest assured you have more than one to focus on. You are under a tremendous amount of mental pressure. Problems will not be solved today and to continue to dwell on this is nothing short of mental torture. Leo. Let it go.



### Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may find yourself booking a flight. You have a strong desire to spend time with someone special who seems to live far away. You may find spending time with this person will greatly benefit you. This may financially beneficial as well as satisfying an emotional need. It seems you have friends from all walks of life. This is the time to surround yourself with the philosophical or religious contacts. The advice and guidance you could receive from them is much needed now. This is a person who could play a big part in making great things happen in your life now.



### Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may feel as if you are being backed against a wall. You may feel pressured as you are thinking more liberally than those who you have surrounded yourself with. This may be a time you find yourself in conflict and bucking others views on major issues. Stand your ground. You may have to agree to disagree on these issues. Listening and understanding why others feel the way they do is always a healthy approach. Be sure to listen to understand rather than to respond. You will find this leaves others more open to hear what you have to say.



### Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You have set your focus on providing a strong foundation for your family life. You crave security and the one that will be by your side for a lifetime. You find yourself in a serious mood where deep conversation and planning will help to insure the stability you crave. You are serious about your future and who you want to spend it with. The seeds you plant today will develop the roots of the reward you seek. You are focused and determined to lead a healthy, happy life. You make your health a priority now, a gym membership, meal planning, or making plans to exercise as team, is where your focus is. This is great start to making your plans a reality. You know exactly what you want, and you will make it happen.



### Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You will make mistakes today. Fortunately, you learn from your mistakes. A small setback will not diminish what you accomplish. You will dwell on the slip-ups just long enough to make sure they don't happen again. Then you will focus on the good you have done. You will be applauded for your work.



### Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are a dreamer. Currently the set of dreams that have had your focus are far from your norm. This is a strange feeling as these dreams are far from what normally motivates you. Do not let outside influences lead you in the wrong direction. If it does not feel right, do not to it. You could find yourself pouring energy and effort into something that has a negative effect on your life in the long run. Gather your thoughts, avoid acting in haste, and discuss this situation with someone whose opinion you value. You had much rather be safe than sorry.



### Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

This is a time you are basing your happiness on the success of your relationships. Harmony and beauty are deeply satisfying to you. The lack of these things in your life will leave you extremely unsatisfied and tense. You may be so focused on your marriage or lack there of you find yourself letting your work life suffer. A one-track mind seems to be where you are at. You may seem to need to work on finding a balance between work and home. You need one to have the other. A time of reflection may help you come to realize you need to put more focus on being at peace with yourself.



### Pisces (February 19-March 20)

It seems you have a greater appreciation for things of value. You could find this to be a time of great material gain for you. Being more materialistic than usual may be your minds way of rewarding you for all the hard work you do. As someone who always seems to put others first, there comes a time you have to remember to spoil and reward yourself. Even if you only spend small amounts, or take time for short trips, you need to remember to take care of yourself first. You don't want to find yourself resenting others and feeling a sense of being used up.

## Country Codes

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

# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

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Friday, December 20, 2019

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ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

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- o Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

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

Specialized in:

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- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
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- ◆ Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society

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- ◆ Vocal cord augmentation.
- ◆ Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- ◆ Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- ◆ Thyroid surgery.
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- ◆ Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- ◆ Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- ◆ Treatment of snoring.
- ◆ Treatment of vertigo.

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

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- ◆ Treatment of Colo- Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
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- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Initable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ 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. Ahmad Alaeddine**  
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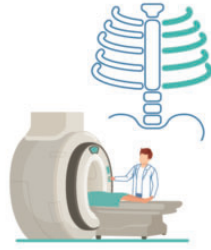
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- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

**Scope of clinical Practice.**

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- Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
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- Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
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# Classifieds

Friday, December 20, 2019

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**CHANGE OF NAME**

**I Abdul** Jabbar father of Aasiyah Zareen holder of Indian Passport No. S9728352, issued at Kuwait on 16/08/2018, permanent resident of 116/38C Sabeena street New Ellis Nagar, Madurai - 625010, India and presently residing at Kuwait, Building no. 35 Salmiya block 10, Dohak bin Quais street do hereby change my daughter name from Aasiyah Zareen To Aasiyah Zareen Abdul Jabbar with immediate effect. **(C 5481) 20-12-2019**

**I KURUVILLA** KOSHY holder of Indian Passport No. M1040099 issued in Kuwait on 09.09.2014. Do hereby declare that my given name is KURUVILLA and surname is KOSHY.

**I NEVIN** KOSHY KURUVILLA holder of Indian Passport No. N9726736 issued in Kuwait on 30.05.2016. Do hereby declare that my given name is NEVIN KOSHY and surname is KURUVILLA.

**I NICY** VARGHESE holder of Indian

Passport No. K7924090 issued in Kuwait on 7.11.2012. Do hereby declare that my given name is NICY and surname is VARGHESE. **(C 5480) 19-12-2019**

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

**LOST**

It is notified for the information that my Original Examination Certificate of Senior Secondary Examination of Year 2016 and Roll No. 9104559 issued by CBSE has been actually lost. Name of the candidate: Micah Michael Azavedo. Address/Phone Number: Block 9, Street 22, Building 22, Abraha Khaitan, Kuwait / +965-60423355. **(C 5479)c (C 5479) 18-12-2019**

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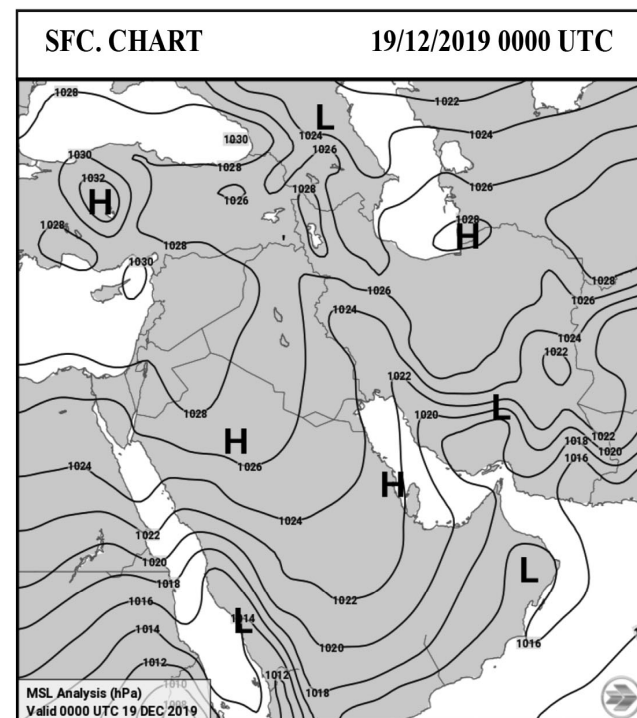
**Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours**

**BY DAY:** Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 35 km/h .

**BY NIGHT:** Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 38 km/h .

**WEATHER WARNING** No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	14 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	10 °C
ABDALY	20 °C	10 °C
BUBYAN	19 °C	11 °C
JAHRA	20 °C	11 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	19 °C	14 °C
AHMADI	20 °C	13 °C
NUWAISIB	21 °C	11 °C
WAFRA	21 °C	10 °C
SALMY	18 °C	07 °C



**4 DAYS FORECAST**

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	12/20	Fair	19 °C	10 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	12/21	Fair with a chance for fog forming at night	19 °C	10 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Sunday	12/22	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	18 °C	11 °C	VRB	06 - 22 km/h
Monday	12/23	Fair	19 °C	11 °C	VRB	06 - 22 km/h

**PRAYER TIMES**

Fajr	05:12
Sunrise	06:37
Zuhr	11:45
Asr	14:35
Sunset	16:53
Isha	18:16

**RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT**

MAX. Temp.	19 °C
MIN. Temp.	09 °C
MAX. RH	98 %
MIN. RH	54 %
MAX. Wind	NW 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

**Airlines**

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Turkish Airlines	1884918
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
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2019

# Business

## Zain Kuwait platinum sponsor of Thirteen Zones in Green Island

Company keen on supporting national economy and Kuwaiti tourism



KUWAIT: Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti (third left), accompanied by other officials, addresses a press conference.

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of Thirteen Zones, the biggest recreational event of its kind in the Green Island. The event, to be held from 26 December 2019 - 1 March 2020, features some of the world's top entertainment brands like Warner Brothers from the US and Covent Garden from London.

Zain's sponsorship of the event comes in line with its keenness to support and encourage the various efforts and initiatives that offer a unique entertainment and social experience for families and the youth, society's most vibrant segment. The company is also committed to supporting and empowering young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs' small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), who will be participating in the event.

During the press conference, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti said: "as you know well, Zain is always keen on being present in the biggest events hosted in Kuwait



Waleed Al-Khashti

year after year. We take part in such events to add our own touch and reflect the values of our brand 'Zain A Wonderful World' by bringing joy and happiness to the community".

Al-Khashti added: "today, we are proud to announce Zain's platinum sponsorship of Thirteen Zones, the huge event that will be

taking place in the Green Island, a beautiful Kuwaiti icon that we all carry unforgettable memories from".

Al-Khashti explained: "since the Kuwaiti private sector has an essential role in further pushing national economy and the country's touristic scene, it was our responsibility to be a main supporter of this huge event. This is especially true because the event aims at reviving the Green Island, which is considered the first artificial island in the GCC, and one of Kuwait's biggest icons and an important part of its touristic history".

Al-Khashti continued: "As our customers expect from us, Zain will be present in the event in its own unique way throughout the three months. We have prepared a great number of surprises and special activities for the crowds, and we will be present next to the world's top entertainment brands like Warner Brothers from the US and Covent Garden from London".

Al-Khashti concluded: "During February of every year, Zain uniquely celebrates

national holidays with the Kuwaiti people. Next year, we will have a special national celebration prepared at Thirteen Zones to commemorate this much cherished occasion, so stay tuned".

Zain is aware of the important role private sector companies play in encouraging such initiatives that enrich the country's touristic scene as well as support Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), especially that it is one of the leading national companies in the private sector. Zain's participation at this event further reflected its keenness in developing the Kuwaiti entrepreneurial community, which bursts with young talents who have vibrant ideas that offer viable solutions for the market needs.

Zain's support to this event comes in line with its core objectives that aim at shouldering the advancement of the community as a whole on all levels, where the company reaffirms the principal of partnership through similar efforts with the aim of contributing to the further progress of national economy.

## Business

# French pensions standoff hardens as transport strike enters 3rd week

## Little relief in sight as talks between unions and government fail

**PARIS:** A gruelling French transport strike over a planned pension reform entered its third week yesterday, with little relief in sight after talks between unions and the government failed to bring the two sides any closer to a compromise. “We’re still very, very far from any agreement,” Laurent Berger of the CFDT, France’s biggest union, said after a marathon day of union meetings with Prime Minister Edouard Philippe on Wednesday.

More talks were scheduled for yesterday, and President Emmanuel Macron has indicated he is “willing to improve” his plan to eliminate dozens of separate pension schemes by creating a single points-based system. But unions balk in particular at a new “pivot age” of 64 that workers would have to reach in order to receive a full pension, beyond the official retirement age of 62. Berger, whose moderate union supports a single system, said that Philippe “again said he would insist on this pivot age, and we told him that was not an option for us.”

Other unions have demanded the reform be abandoned completely, and are banking on public support for a strike that has wreaked havoc on daily commutes, and now looks set to jeopardise holiday travel plans. An Elabe poll released Wednesday found that six in 10 respondents (57 percent) opposed the project, an increase of eight points from a week earlier,

with just 43 percent approving.

### ‘Basically nothing’

Six of the 16 Paris metro lines were shut completely yesterday and suburban rail lines remained severely disrupted, as were services on national lines. Valerie Pecresse, president of the Ile-de-France region encompassing Paris, called on transport operator RATP to fully reimburse users for the commuting mayhem since the strike was launched on December 5.

“And don’t try telling me that some lines still have some trains, because the truth is that for everyone, this minimal service is basically nothing,” she told RTL radio. Grid operator Enedis said striking workers had cut power to some 3,500 homes near Perpignan in southern France, following cuts in Paris, Lyon, Bordeaux and other cities this week, claimed by the hard-line CGT union.

Officials have said they are ready to compromise on the pensions overhaul, which they say will be fairer and more transparent, in particular for women and low earners.

France currently has 42 different legacy systems which offer early retirement and other benefits mainly to public-sector employees, including train drivers, dockers and even Paris Opera employees.

But unions claim the overhaul would effec-



**PARIS:** Commuters walk along a platform after disembarking from a train at Gare de l’Est train station in Paris yesterday on the 15th day of a nationwide multi-sector strike against the government’s pensions overhaul. — AFP

tively force millions of people in both the public and private sectors to retire later or face curtailed payouts. Along with the strike they have

staged three days of mass protests across France, with new demonstrations set for yesterday in Paris and other cities. — AFP

## Automakers to pay \$3 billion in new US tariffs

**WASHINGTON:** US President Donald Trump’s rewrite of North American trade rules will cost automakers nearly \$3 billion more in tariffs over the next decade for cars and parts that will not meet higher regional content requirements over the next decade, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates. The projection was contained in the non-partisan budget referee agency’s cost estimate of implementing legislation for the new US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which will be considered by the US House of Representatives. USMCA, the replacement for the 26-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is expected to pass the House with broad support from Republicans and Democrats.

For autos to receive tariff-free access between the three countries, the USMCA imposes a 75 percent regional content requirement, up from 62.5 percent in NAFTA, along with new mandates to use North American steel and aluminum.

In addition, 40 percent to 45 percent of vehicle content must come from high-wage areas paying more than \$16 an hour, namely the United States and Canada. Some vehicles produced in Mexico mainly with components from Mexico and outside the region may not qualify for US tariff-free access. CBO said its estimate assumes that some vehicles and parts would not be eligible for USMCA’s tariff-free access.

“Because of that change in eligibility, CBO projects that duty-free imports of vehicles and parts into the United States from the USMCA partner countries would decline,” the agency said. — Reuters

## Oil patch woes: Amid downturn, Alberta rages at Canada’s Trudeau

**WINNIPEG, Manitoba/OTTAWA:** In 35 years of working in Alberta’s oil patch, home to the world’s third-largest crude reserves, Ray Mildenerger endured a volatile industry’s ups and downs without being laid off. That changed in October, when Mildenerger, 60, and five co-workers of an oil service company in Grande Prairie, Alberta, lost their jobs. Mildenerger turned to selling truck parts to pay the mortgage - the first job of his career outside the oil industry. “I took the first thing I could secure,” he said. “There have been a lot more lay-offs here lately. I consider myself lucky.”

Alongside the lay-offs, local food banks report strains from rising demand, while across the province oil wells have shut down. But although global oil and crop prices have slumped since the boom years of 2008-2014, the root causes of Alberta’s problems are uniquely Canadian. Canola exports, another mainstay of the western economy, have been hit by a diplomatic dispute with major buyer China, and the federal government’s frayed relations with indigenous peoples have stymied attempts to boost oil transport capacity.

Albertans, known for an independent streak to rival Texans, blame Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. He was re-elected in October, but lost his parliamentary majority and failed to win a single seat in Alberta. A Western separatist movement - #Wexit - has sprung up. “It has been a long five years of an economic downturn and people blame the Trudeau government. Everybody knows somebody who’s lost their job,” said Duane Bratt, a political

science professor at Mount Royal University. Trudeau named former Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, an Alberta native, to spearhead his efforts in the West. This week, the government is hearing Alberta’s case for an increase in economic aid, though it has yet to promise it. Alberta’s economic growth slowed to 0.6 percent in 2019, from 2.2 percent in 2018, intensifying pressure on Trudeau to complete a pipeline needed to move the province’s crude to international markets, and to resolve the fight with China that has hurt canola sales.

### ‘Window dressing’

Bank of Canada Governor Stephen Poloz said last month that Alberta was still adjusting to weaker oil prices. Benchmark US crude prices have stabilized around \$60 a barrel after recovering from multi-year lows in 2016. But the current price is still down 43 percent from 2014. Moody’s credit rating agency downgraded Alberta this month, citing in part its dependence on oil.

The bigger problem for the oil patch, though, is not lower prices but the struggle to expand pipelines that would allow producers to ship more crude. The capacity to transport crude has lagged the ability to produce it - leading to an inland glut in Alberta. So wide was the discrepancy, the Alberta government forced producers this year to cut output, a rarity for any oil-producing country outside of OPEC. Trudeau’s government bought the Trans Mountain pipeline in 2018, only for courts to twice rule against its approval due to inadequate consultation with aboriginal people. “If Justin Trudeau wants to quell Western separatist sentiment he needs to declare the Trans Mountain expansion in the national interest,” said Peter Downing, co-founder of #Wexit. “Everything else is window dressing.”

Downing’s movement remains small for now, but Alberta’s conservative Premier Jason Kenney endorses its complaint that the west is hamstrung by federal rules. “Ottawa needs to unleash us to be able to develop our resources, get to global markets, get a fair price from them and not tie us down with an endless number of new laws and regulations,” the province’s top elected official told reporters this month. — Reuters

## Business

# British Airways loses height in latest UK customer survey

## Consumers find Ryanair the worst short-haul airline

**LONDON:** British Airways has sunk in the view of UK customers over the last year, with the former flag carrier now ranked third bottom short-haul airline, two places above budget carrier Ryanair.

Since being named the best short-haul airline in 2015, BA has been on a downwards trajectory according to the survey by consumer group Which, and it dropped another two places this year. In long-haul BA fared even worse, coming second to last and only beating American Airlines, in a category that was topped by Singapore Airlines. On an overall customer score basis, Which said BA scored 55 percent on short-haul, only 1 percentage point behind last year, and 55 percent on long-haul, not far behind the 58 percent it scored last year. Ryanair's score actually rose to 44 percent from 40 percent.

A spokeswoman for British Airways said the survey did not reflect its own findings.

"Our own data shows customer satisfaction scores have increased, and continue to increase," she said.

Ryanair was the worst short-haul airline the consumers found, a repeat of its 2018 performance, while Ryanair's rival budget carrier easyJet came mid-table. Jet2, another low-cost carrier, was one of the best performers in the short-haul category. Which said that holiday-makers complained about Ryanair requiring them to pay extra for add-ons and luggage, while they gave BA low scores for the quality of its food and drink, the comfort of its seats and value for money.

Some high-profile problems have dragged on BA's reputation lately. A 48-hour pilot strike in September cancelled thousands of flights, while in both 2018 and 2017 I.T. and computer failures disrupted flights and stranded customers.

Additionally in 2017, BA, which is owned by IAG, stopped offering customers free food and drink in economy class on short-haul flights. Which said 6,535 members completed the survey in September 2019 answering questions about their experiences of flying with an airline from the UK. — Reuters



British Airways Airbus A319-131 makes its final approach for landing at Toulouse-Blagnac airport, France. —Reuters

## BoE launches probe into eavesdropping

**LONDON:** The Bank of England launched a probe yesterday after discovering some investors eavesdropped on press briefings moments before they were broadcast, reportedly to hand a split-second advantage to high-speed traders.

The Times newspaper reported that one of the BoE's suppliers had been sending a market-sensitive audio feed of the bank's press conferences to hedge funds moments before the rest of the world. The BoE, which will announce its latest interest rate decision at 1200 GMT, responded in a brief statement that it has identified the feed that had been misused by a third-party supplier—and whose access had now been revoked. "Following concerns raised with the bank, we have recently identified that an audio feed of certain of the bank press conferences—installed only to act as a back-up in case the video feed failed—has been misused by a third party supplier to the bank since earlier this year to supply services to other external clients," the bank said overnight.

The video feed of the bank's press conferences has a slight delay, while the audio feed was live.

At press conferences following monetary policy decisions the BoE's governor makes comments on policy, some of which can produce considerable swings in the value of the pound. Even several seconds advantage could give traders the possibility to earn considerable returns. "This wholly unacceptable use of the audio feed was without the bank's knowledge or consent, and is being investigated further," added the BoE.

"On identifying this, the bank immediately disabled the third party supplier's access. "As a result, the third party supplier did not have any access to the most recent press



**LONDON:** In this file photo taken on December 16, 2019 Mark Carney, Governor of the Bank of England speaks during a Financial Stability Report press conference. —AFP

conference and will no longer play any part in any of the bank's future press conferences."

A spokesman for Britain's Financial Conduct Authority regulator meanwhile told AFP that it was "looking at the issue" but declined to make further comment. The BoE will meanwhile reveal its first interest rate call since Prime Minister Boris Johnson's landslide election victory one week ago, and ahead of Brexit next month.

The bank is expected to keep its key lending rate at 0.75 percent, as speculation also swirls over an imminent appointment of the successor to departing Governor Mark Carney.

Johnson will seek to push through Britain's exit from the European Union on January 31 — when Carney is also due to step down. The prime minister, whose ruling Conservative Party won the biggest majority since the 1980s heyday of Margaret Thatcher, wants to embrace Brexit and kick-start growth in Britain's stalling economy. Yet markets remain fearful of a no-deal Brexit after Johnson signalled he will outlaw any extension to a Brexit transition beyond the end of 2020. —AFP

## Nigeria needs to 'be ready' for oil decline, says minister

**MADRID:** Nigeria, Africa's largest oil-producing country, understands it will have little choice but to wean its economy off a reliance on fossil fuels as the world inches onto a low-carbon path, its environment minister said. Mohammad Mahmood Abubakar said he did not see a long-term future for Nigeria's oil industry if governments follow through on their promise under the 2015 Paris Agreement to cut planet-warming emissions to net-zero by the second half of the century. "These days, anything to do with fossil fuel... may have its days numbered, or years numbered," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation at this month's UN climate talks in Madrid.

Abubakar said Nigeria should use the royalties and export earnings it receives from oil - which account for about half of its revenues - to invest in alternative sources of energy, in order to "be ready" for a global transition to cleaner energy. "If the world is truly willing... to quit fossil fuel, then if you are not ready and finally the world comes to terms with that and there are alternatives and no one is buying enough oil from you, at that point you are in trouble," he said. Africa's most populous nation has started to diversify into renewable power generated from solar, wind and waste and is moving its universities onto solar power systems, he added.

It is also making efforts to end gas flaring from oil-industry operations on its soil by 2030, as part of its national climate action plan submitted to the United Nations. Burning off the gas is a waste of energy and a major source of planet-warming emissions, and Nigeria is procuring technology to capture the gas instead to produce power or heat water, said the minister, a biologist and environmental protection expert. The West African nation's climate action plan also pledges to improve its energy grid and expand the use of efficient gas power plants, in an effort to cut widespread use of polluting diesel generators. —Reuters

## Business

# Swedish CB ends five years of negative rates with hike to zero

## Bank sees benchmark rate on hold at 0.0% through 2021

**STOCKHOLM:** Sweden's central bank raised its benchmark repo rate by a quarter point to zero yesterday, as expected, defying a slow-down in the economy and global uncertainty to draw a line under five years with negative interest rates.

The increase from -0.25 percent makes the Riksbank the first central bank to inch its way back up to what was long considered the floor for interest rates. Rates are still negative in the euro zone, Japan, Denmark, Switzerland and Hungary. "The Riksbank assesses that conditions are good for inflation to remain close to the target going forward," the central bank said in a statement.

"Therefore, in line with the assessment in October, the Executive Board has decided to raise the repo rate from -0.25 percent to zero percent." Deputy governors Per Jansson and Anna Breman - the latter in her first rate-setting meeting - entered reservations against the decision. Both wanted the central bank to wait before hiking. The central bank repeated that it expected the repo rate would remain un-

changed through 2021. All but one analyst in a Reuters poll had forecast a rate increase. The Swedish crown gained against the euro after the decision. The world's oldest central bank cut rates to -0.10 percent in 2015, worried that the euro zone crisis would hit already weak prices and lead to a Japanese-style deflationary spiral. It was forced to go further, with rates dipping as low as -0.50 percent in 2016, before ultra-loose policy weakened the crown, pushed up import prices and boosted the export-reliant economy.

Few would argue that policy has been too tight. But many question the timing of the hike - only the second since mid-2011 - as the economy is slowing.

After years of strong growth, the economy has slowed this year. Inflation is below target and not expected to be stable around 2 percent for years. Activity in the industrial sector at its lowest level since 2012 and business confidence is falling. However, the Riksbank is worried that negative rates are damaging the economy in other ways.

In the topsy-turvy negative world, savers have suffered at the expense of borrowers. Real estate prices have soared and households and corporations have taken on more and more debt, threatening a financial meltdown if there is an unexpected shock. Cheap loans have also kept alive "zombie" firms, which otherwise would have gone to the wall, reducing overall productivity in the economy.

With government debt yields around zero or below, pension funds and insurers have to take greater risks to meet their liabilities. The move also puts the Riksbank at odds with other major central banks. The European Central Bank and the Federal Reserve in the United States have both eased policy recently and others are on hold as they await clarity on developments in the global economy.

Norway's central bank left its benchmark rate unchanged at 1.50 percent on Thursday.

While the Riksbank has been keen to exit negative policy, it could be forced into a U-turn if Brexit or the ongoing trade conflict between the United States and China turns nasty and in-



**STOCKHOLM:** Governor of Sveriges Riksbank, the central bank of Sweden, Stefan Ingves speaks during a press conference at the Riksbank headquarters in Stockholm yesterday. — AFP

flation dives again. "They raised the rates mainly because they said they would—they backed themselves into a corner," said David Oxley, Senior Europe Economist at Capital Economics. "All paths, for me, lead back to a rate cut." — Reuters

## Sweden grapples with housing market reform as risks mount

**STOCKHOLM:** When bailiffs came knocking earlier this year, it was the first time Kaddi Bah realized the four-room Stockholm apartment she shared with her sister and another friend was being illegally sub-let. Now Bah, a 27-year-old hotel receptionist, has been evicted after authorities confiscated the property from the owner as part of a crackdown on black market rentals.

Since late November, she has shared a one-room apartment with a friend. The only other choice would be to move back in with her father and several other relatives who share an apartment, and where she had to sleep on the floor. "It's very stressful. The room is full of stuff and it's about as far from my work as you can get. But there's nothing I can do," she said. Bah's predicament is just one symptom of Sweden's dysfunctional housing market. Controls on private sector renting and a shortage of publicly allocated housing—you can wait 30 years for an apartment in attractive parts of Stockholm—have nurtured the perfect conditions for a lucrative market in illegal sub-lets where the final tenant must pay way over the odds.

At the same time, a toxic cocktail of negative interest rates and a shortage of housing has seen property prices double over the last 15 years. Mortgage lending has soared and now accounts for around three-quarters of all lending in Sweden at some \$450 billion—close to the



**STOCKHOLM:** A building under construction is seen in Stockholm. — Reuters

country's annual GDP. That is fuelling fears that banks are massively exposed should the real estate bubble burst. Sweden has been here before. A property crash in the 1990s saw two banks fail and forced a devaluation of the currency. Interest rates briefly hit 500% while unemployment surged amid a deep recession. "The whole system relies on nothing going wrong, ever, anywhere," central bank chief Stefan Ingves said in October.

### Biggest risk

There are new signs of strain. After a recent building boom, many properties now stand empty. Developers who had sought to cash in on high prices have been forced to offer deep discounts and other incentives—if they can sell

at all. Tighter credit rules have squeezed out potential borrowers even though near-zero interest rates mean the monthly cost of repaying a mortgage is often less than renting. "The market has changed from a few years ago," Linda Leppanen, the head of property development for the North of Stockholm at IKANO Bostad said. "The apartments we are selling now ... on average, prices are down by 20 percent."

IKANO, owned by the family of IKEA founder Ingvar Kamprad, is offering all the apartments in one of two new buildings in Stockholm for rent after the other block failed to sell out. Interest has been huge, with around 900 applications for the first 27 rented homes.

Another developer, Einar Mattsson, tempted buyers with an offer of up to 6,000 Swedish

crowns (\$625) a month of free food delivered to their door and packed away in their fridge by the delivery driver, who sends a video as a receipt. Some property firms are in trouble. Financial problems at Oscar Properties, a developer in Stockholm, have seen its shares fall more than 90 percent since the start of 2017. It lost nearly 500 million crowns in 2018, after apartment sales fell by more than half to just 79 units.

In November, the financial watchdog warned that banks are underestimating the risks in the commercial property market and proposed they build bigger financial buffers.

### Action plan

Politicians are beginning to take action. A deal between the Social Democrat and Green coalition government and two smaller center-right parties has broken decades of inertia. The government has introduced subsidies for builders and is tweaking capital gains tax for house sellers to encourage more turnover.

The so-called January Agreement between the four parties promises wider changes, not least to a system that barely taxes real estate and offers tax breaks to borrowers with mortgages that can extend for a lifetime. "All the parties which signed the January Agreement have been clear that we will deliver what the agreement states and that includes an overview of the tax system," Markets and Housing Minister Per Bolund told Reuters.

Bolund would only say measures would likely be neutral for taxpayers, with hikes in one area offset by cuts in others. But even with the current broad political consensus, sweeping measures will take time to implement and the financial system will remain vulnerable for years. Meanwhile, Brexit or the trade war between the United States and China could tip the world into a new economic crisis. — Reuters



## Business

# Mid-Atlantic factory activity almost stalls; US weekly jobless claims fall

## Four-week average of claims increases 1,500 to 225,500

**WASHINGTON:** The number of Americans filing applications for unemployment benefits dropped from more than a two-year high last week, pointing to sustained labor market strength. While other data yesterday showed factory activity in the mid-Atlantic region almost stalling this month, manufacturers received more orders, increased shipments and working hours for employees. Their outlook for capital expenditure over the next six months was also upbeat, offering some tentative signs of a turnaround in manufacturing amid an easing in tensions in the 17-month trade war between the United States and China. The trade tensions bruised business confidence and weighed on capital expenditure, leading to a downturn in national manufacturing activity. But dark clouds continue to loom over manufacturing, which accounts for 11 percent of the economy. Boeing announced on Monday it would suspend production of its best-selling 737 MAX jetliner in January as fallout from two fatal crashes of the now-grounded aircraft drags into 2020.

Economists estimated that Boeing's biggest assembly-line halt in more than 20 years, which is expected to wreak havoc on supply chains, could cut first-quarter 2020 gross domestic product growth by at least half a percentage point. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits decreased 18,000 to a seasonally adjusted 234,000 for the week ended Dec. 14, the Labor Department said. Though the drop did not unwind the prior week's jump of 49,000, it likely does not indicate a material shift in labor market conditions as claims data tend to be volatile in the period following the Thanksgiving Day holiday.

## Brazil's debt under control, tax reform next: Economy minister

**BRASILIA:** Brazil's Economy Minister Paulo Guedes said on Wednesday he had reached agreement with Congressional leaders on modernizing the country's complex tax system next year and one option could be taxing online transactions. Brazil has brought its snowballing public debt under control with reform of the costly pension system and spending cuts, he said, while interest rates are at record lows after the central bank cut its benchmark Selic rate to 4.50 percent on Dec. 11.

Speaking to reporters on GloboNews channel, Guedes said foreign financial capital outflows are not a concern and quite normal now that Brazilian interest rates are less attractive.

Servicing Brazil's public debt will cost 100 billion reais (\$24.5 billion) less each year due to lower interest payments, the minister said. The government will speed up the privatization of state companies and boost investment in infrastructure, be it roads, port, railways and

The prior week's surge, which boosted claims to 252,000 - the highest reading since September 2017 - probably reflected a late Thanksgiving Day this year compared to 2018. That could have thrown off the model used by the government to strip out seasonal fluctuations from the data. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast claims would fall to 225,000 in the latest week. They expect claims to remain elevated relative to October's low reading given volatility in the data around the holiday season and end of the year. US stock index futures were trading largely flat after the release of the data. Prices of US Treasuries were mixed while the dollar was flat against a basket of currencies.

### Mixed factory data

The Labor Department said no claims for states were estimated last week. The four-week moving average of initial claims, considered a better measure of labor market trends as it irons out week-to-week volatility, rose 1,500 to 225,500 last week. The underlying trend in claims remains consistent with a strong labor market. Last week's claims data covered the period during which the government surveyed business establishments for the nonfarm payrolls component of December's employment report. The four-week moving average of claims rose 4,250 between the November and December survey periods, suggesting some cooling in job growth. The economy added 266,000 jobs in November, the most in 10 months. The unemployment rate fell back to 3.5 percent, the lowest in nearly half a century. Labor market strength is underpin-

airports, he added, forecasting GDP growth of 2.5 percent next year.

Guedes said Brazil's Congress was backing his reform program and overhaul of the burdensome tax system will advance next with agreement to merge two bills already being debated by lawmakers with the government's proposals. He met earlier with the leaders of both chambers of Congress, Speaker Rodrigo Maia and Senate head Davi Alcolumbre, and they agreed to set up a committee on Thursday that will work to reconcile the different proposals within 90 days.

The government wants to introduce a federal value added tax that would eventually be adopted by states and town councils.

Guedes said resurrection of the unpopular tax on financial transactions known as CPMF was out of the question and strongly opposed by President Jair Bolsonaro. Instead, a tax on digital transactions is being studied, Guedes said, but he gave no details. Treasury Secretary Mansueto Almeida, speaking alongside Guedes at a news conference, said he expects Brazil to be upgraded by credit rating agencies next year due to the improving debt situation. With low interest rates, early repayment to the Treasury of transfers to development bank BNDES and the proceeds from the sale of state companies, Brazil's gross public debt will end this year at about 77.2 percent of gross domestic product, he said. —Reuters



**WASHINGTON:** After months of pumping out new jobs at a steady clip, the US added only 98,000 net new positions, the Labor Department reported — a figure far below analyst expectations. —AFP

ning consumer spending, keeping the economy on a moderate growth path despite headwinds from the trade tensions and slowing global growth.

In a separate report yesterday, the Philadelphia Federal Reserve said its business conditions index dropped to a reading of 0.3 in December from 10.4 in November. But there were increases in

measures of new orders, unfilled orders, factory hours and shipments. The Philadelphia Fed survey's six-month business conditions index slipped to a reading of 35.2 this month from 35.8 in November. Its six-month capital expenditures index jumped to 27.6 from a reading of 19.4 in the prior month. —Reuters

## Sri Lanka's Q3 GDP grows 2.7% as Easter attacks weigh

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka's economy grew 2.7 percent in the third quarter of 2019, showing signs of recovery from the Easter Sunday attacks earlier this year on the island nation that killed over 250 people and crippled the country's fastest-growing tourism sector.

The country's services sector, accounting for about 60 percent of the economy, grew at 2.8 percent, compared with 4.3 percent last year, data issued by the statistics department showed on Wednesday.

Accommodation, food and beverage service activities fell 7.5 percent in the September quarter, compared with the same period a year ago. Separately, Fitch Ratings said it had revised the outlook

on Sri Lanka's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating (IDR) to "negative" from "stable", while maintaining the IDR at 'B'.

"Revision of the Outlook to Negative from Stable reflects rising risks to debt sustainability from a significant shift in fiscal policy and the potential for roll-back of fiscal and economic reforms in the aftermath of November's Presidential elections," the ratings agency said.

Last month, Sri Lanka's former civil wartime defence chief Gotabaya Rajapaksa won the presidential election, after promising to secure the country against militant threats following Easter bombings.

The Easter attacks on luxury hotels and churches on April 21, for which Islamist militants claimed responsibility, killed over 250 people. Fitch said it expects growth to pick up to 3.5 percent in 2020 and 3.7 percent in 2021, from 2.8 percent in 2019.

"These forecasts reflect our expectation of a boost to growth in the short-term from the tax cuts, higher agricultural output and an ongoing recovery in tourism following last April's terrorist bombings," it added. —Reuters

## Sports

# Pakistan fight back after S Lanka bowlers shine in second Test

## SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard on the opening day of the second Test between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at National stadium yesterday:

**Pakistan 1st innings**

Shan Masood b Fernando	5
Abid Ali lbw b Kumara	38
Azhar Ali b Fernando	0
Babar Azam st Dickwella b Embuldeniya	60
Asad Shafiq c Fernando b Kumara	63
Haris Sohail lbw b Embuldeniya	9
Mohammad Rizwan b Kumara	4
Yasir Shah lbw b Kumara	0
Mohammad Abbas c de Silva b Embuldeniya	0
Shaheen Shah Afridi c Mathews b Embuldeniya	5
Naseem Shah not out	1
Extras: (b 4, lb 2)	6
Total: (all out; 59.3 overs)	191
Fall of wickets: 1-10 (Masood), 2-10 (Azhar), 3-65 (Abid), 4-127 (Azam), 5-167 (Sohail), 6-172 (Rizwan), 7-172 (Yasir), 8-179 (Abbas), 9-185 (Shafiq)	
Bowling: Fernando 13-3-31-2, Kumara 18-5-49-4, Karunaratne 1-0-11-0, Embuldeniya 20.3-3-71-4, Perera 7-0-23-0.	

**Sri Lanka**

O. Fernando c Rizwan b Shaheen	4
D. Karunaratne b Abbas	25
K. Mendis c Haris b Abbas	13
A. Mathews not out	8
L. Embuldeniya not out	3
Extras: (lb 6, w5)	11
Total: (for three wickets; 19 overs)	64
Still to bat: D. Chandimal, D. de Silva, N. Dickwella, D. Perera, V. Fernando, L. Kumara	
Fall of wickets: 1-28 (Oshada), 2-39 (Karunaratne), 3-61 (Mendis)	
Bowling: Shaheen 6-2-18-1, Abbas 8-3-21-2, Naseem 5-0-19-0 (w5).	

**KARACHI:** Pakistan fought back after being dismissed relatively cheaply yesterday as bowlers dominated the opening day of the second Test against Sri Lanka in Karachi. Lahiru Kumara and Lasith Embuldeniya grabbed four wickets each to dismiss Pakistan for just 191 before the home team had the visitors at 64-3 at stumps at the National Stadium.

Pacer Kumara took 4-49 while left-arm spinner Embuldeniya finished with 4-71 after Pakistan won the toss. But Pakistan staged a fightback with the wickets of Oshada Fernando (four), Dimuth Karunaratne (25) and Kusal Mendis (13) leaving Sri Lanka still 127 runs behind on the first innings.

Lanky pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi had Fernando caught behind before Mohammad Abbas removed Karunaratne and Mendis. At stumps, Angelo Mathews was eight not out and nightwatchman Embuldeniya unbeaten on three. Pakistan were well set at 127-3 with Babar Azam (60) and Asad Shafiq (63) involved in a 62-run stand for the fourth wicket, but once Azam fell the home side lost their last six wickets for just 24 runs.

Azam was shaping well after scoring his 13th half-century before Embuldeniya had him stumped off a well-disguised delivery. Shafiq hooked Kumara tentatively to deep square-leg, ending Pakistan's hopes of a big total in their bid to win the series after the first Test ended in a draw due to poor weather in Rawalpindi.

Kumara dismissed Mohammad Rizwan for four and Yasir Shah (nought) off successive deliveries in the first over after tea before Embuldeniya removed the tail. Earlier, Sri Lanka left-arm pacer Vishwa Fernando dismissed opener Shan Masood for five and skipper Azhar Ali for a duck to rattle Pakistan at 10-2 in the morning.

Fernando's new-ball partner Kumara dismissed first Test centurion Abid Ali for 38 to end a third-



**KARACHI:** Sri Lanka's wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella (R) makes a successful leg before wicket appeal against Pakistan's Haris Sohail (L) during the first day of the second Test cricket match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at the National Cricket Stadium in Karachi yesterday. —AFP

wicket partnership of 55, which had lifted Pakistan from a precarious 10 for two. Fernando thought he had Azam leg-before on four, but TV referalls showed the ball hit the bat first.

Azam reached his fourth half-century in the last five innings with a crisp boundary to cover off-spinner Dilruwan Perera, but could not match his hundred in the first Test. Azam's 96-ball knock contained eight boundaries and a six while Shafiq's 126-ball stay had six boundaries.

It was Fernando who provided Sri Lanka with early breakthroughs. He angled one in to Masood to

hit his off stump before clean bowling skipper Azhar with a full-length delivery.

That left Azhar without a fifty in 13 innings, including nine scores of under 10. Pakistan brought in leg-spinner Yasir Shah for ailing pacer Usman Shinwari, while Embuldeniya came in for unfit Kasun Rajitha.

The two-match series is the first in Pakistan since a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus killed eight people in March 2009, leading to the suspension of international cricket in the country over security fears. —AFP

## Europe dominates FINA Water Polo Championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Competitions in FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championship, Kuwait 2019 being held in Kuwait at HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Swimming Pools Complex under the Patronage of National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem will come to an end tonight with the final match at 6 pm. This match will be preceded with third and fourth places match at 4:30 pm and fifth and sixth place at 3 pm while seventh and eighth match will be played at 1:30 pm.

Europe guaranteed its continued monopoly on all championships since its start in 1981 as four teams reached the semifinals: Serbia, Croatia, Italy and Greece.

Kuwait took 20th place after losing to Iran 4-12. Hungary took 9th place by beating Canada 15-6, Australia took 11th by beating New Zealand 9-8, Russia 13th by beating South Africa 20-10, Egypt 15th by beating China 14-9. Brazil took 17th after beating Uzbekistan 22-7.

Meanwhile the quarterfinals which was held Tuesday resulted in Serbia beating Montenegro 10-9, Croatia beat Spain 7-6, Italy beat Japan 17-5, title holders Greece beat USA 4-1 in penalty shots after



drawing 11-11 in regulations.

Meanwhile, FINA President Dr Julio Maglione said the championship saw the birth of more than a star that will have good future for many years to come. He added that the best 20 teams in the world, from various continents participated and competed in high standard games, and we saw the Europeans dominate and will continue their monopoly on the title, and all what we have to do is wait to know who is champion.

Maglione lauded the efforts of President of Asian and Kuwait Swimming Federations Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader, and first FINA Vice-president Hussein Al-Musallam as well as all committees involved, as everything went in a vital and dynamic way, and the

atmosphere was highly positive, and this is due to good work and experienced administrative staff, and this qualifies Kuwait to host the best world championships in the future, "everything was great including the opening ceremony."

Qatar's Swimming Federation Executive Director Mohammad Al-Sheeb said his federation's participation in the organizational side was to support the organizing committee due to the vast experience of Qatar Federation in organizing world championships.

Al-Sheeb commended the outstanding work of Kuwait Federation in Organizing the Championship which confirms that Kuwaitis can ensure the success of the most major championships.

On his part Italy's Coach Carlo Silibio found strange for Spain to exit from the quarterfinals and described it as a big surprise. He said his team prepared well for the championship starting in September.

Brazil's Coach Thiago Nascimento lauded HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Olympic Swimming Pools Complex, adding that it is an integrated sports facility.

He said his team gave good levels in the world championship specially against the reigning champions Greece as well Australia and New Zealand to whom losses were of small margins. He said Brazil aims at prepare a team that is able to qualify for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics to represent South America.

## Sports

# Djokovic says he was moved by 'amazing warrior' Murray

**ABU DHABI:** Novak Djokovic has described his longtime rival Andy Murray as a "warrior" and says he is "inspired" by the former world No.1's journey back from a career-threatening injury. Djokovic watched Murray's recently-released documentary that chronicled the Brit's two-year battle with a hip issue that required multiple surgeries and was moved by what he saw.

Just 11 months ago, a tearful Murray told reporters at the Australian Open that he might never be able to play tennis again but the 32-year-old has since undergone a hip resurfacing operation that saved his career. He returned to singles action in Cincinnati in August, and remarkably lifted his first trophy in two and a half years in Antwerp in October.

While his preseason preparations have been hampered by a groin injury sustained late in the year, Murray is planning on contesting next month's Australian Open - something that seemed highly unlikely when he bid farewell to the tournament in Melbourne last January.

"I've seen his documentary about four, five days and it was tough to watch to be honest, as a tennis player, and as someone that knows him for a long time," said Djokovic, who is exactly one week younger than Murray, and has competed against him since they were 12 years old.

"To see what he has been through, I think it was a great insight into his last couple of years and the struggles he had, mental, emotional, physical. "Just amazing warrior that he is in life

really, to be able not to give up after everything that has happened and all the recovery and preparations and trying to heal and play a couple of matches in the whole season and still after everything he's been through in his career and having family at home, not give up on that and have support of the close ones, it's really impressive and inspiring."

Addressing the press in Abu Dhabi, where he is contesting the Mubadala World Tennis Championship exhibition this weekend, Djokovic will face the winner of the clash between Stefanos Tsitsipas and Andrey Rublev in his opener on Friday.

The 21-year-old Tsitsipas, who owns two wins in four meetings with Djokovic, is coming off of a huge finish to his 2019 season, having clinched the ATP Finals title in London last month. Tsitsipas told reporters in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday that he hopes to break the stranglehold of the 'Big Three' (Djokovic, Rafael Nadal and Roger Federer) on the Grand Slams and the top positions of the rankings, and Djokovic feels the Greek youngster, and his contemporaries, are getting dangerously close to achieving that.

"I think it's a logical and a natural cycle. Roger, Rafa and I were saying that it's going to happen that we're going to be replaced in the top three spots and the new guys are going to start winning Slams," said the Serbian 16-time major champion.

"We're trying to prolong that kind of



**ANTWERP:** File photograph taken on October 20, 2019, Britain's Andy Murray reacts as he plays against Switzerland's Stanislas Wawrinka during their men's singles tennis final match for The European Open ATP Antwerp, in Antwerp. —AFP

change in men's tennis, but it's inevitable that it's going to happen and each year they are coming closer and closer. Dominic Thiem played finals of Roland Garros back-to-back. Tsitsipas now won the year-end championships, Alexander Zverev won London the year before. They're definitely out there chal-

lenging the best players in the world and they want to be the best players in the world and they will be, they will become eventually.

"They are already established top-five, top-10 players and our task is that doesn't happen very soon but it seems like it's coming closer and closer." —AFP

## Nadal not focused on Federer's Grand Slam record

**ABU DHABI:** Rafael Nadal insists he is not focused on chasing Roger Federer's record Grand Slam haul, but admits it would be "amazing" if he manages to eclipse the Swiss star's tally of 20 majors won.

Nadal's heroics in 2019 saw him capture a 12th Roland Garros and fourth US Open and the Spaniard is now just one Slam shy of Federer's men's all-time record. At 33, Nadal became the oldest year-end No.1 when he secured that position last month, following a tremendous season that saw him scoop four titles on tour, along with the Davis Cup crown for Spain.

"Happy to achieve these things, but I would love to have five years less," Nadal joked with reporters in Abu Dhabi yesterday ahead of his 10th appearance at the Mubadala World Tennis Championship exhibition.

"It has been a little bit of a magic year because it had been a good start, but then I went through a couple of very hard months in terms of injuries. "Then I came back and I came back well. I started to play at a very high level again. I enjoyed a lot of great moments on court, very emotional ones, Roland Garros, Rome, then New York, that final was amazing, and then of course ending the season with that Davis Cup title on home soil, so an unforgettable experience to finish that way."

Nadal's Davis Cup participation meant he had to finish his 2019 season later than usual - on November 24 - and the Mallorcan says he just started hitting again a week and a half ago in preparation for 2020.

He will get a taste of where his level is at when he takes



**Rafael Nadal**

on either Karen Khachanov or Chung Hyeon in the Emirati capital today, before resuming his pre-season training back home ahead of the Australian summer.

Asked if usurping Federer is a main target for him moving forward, the top-ranked Nadal said: "I can't say yes because honestly I just work on my diary basis. I have to do my things the best way possible and then to just give myself chances to keep being competitive at the highest level possible.

"So if that happens, great, if not, I just gave my best all my career to be in the position that I am today. And obviously of course, increase the number of 20, or tying 20 would be something amazing, but I cannot complain at all.

"I'm super happy the way I am having my tennis career, I gave my best all the time and I'm proud about the way I worked and the way I enjoyed the tennis during all these years. "So I just really believe and hope that I can keep having the chance to keep going and keep having fun and keep giving myself chances to compete at the highest level." —AFP

## ITF cuts live scoring data at low-level events

**LONDON:** The International Tennis Federation (ITF) has said it will phase out the collection of live scoring data at all World Tennis Tour (WTT) events offering prize money of up to \$15,000 as part of its fight against corruption in the sport's lower levels.

The governing body has also announced an investment of \$8 million "to create a comprehensive integrity infrastructure". The move follows a recommendation in December last year by an International Review Panel (IRP) commissioned to address betting-related and other integrity issues.

"Our commitment to protecting the integrity of the World Tennis Tour is paramount," ITF President David Haggerty said in a statement on the governing body's website <https://www.itftennis.com/en/news-and-media/articles/itf-and-tennis-integrity-supervisory-board-agree-integrity-investment> on Wednesday.

"The scale of this project is unprecedented. We are confident that it will deliver real benefits for all participants and will contribute to the trend of reducing corruption risk seen in 2019." The ITF also announced several other measures, including the introduction of accreditation for WTT events, video recording, increased security and better channels for the reporting of integrity concerns.

Jenny Price, Chair of the Tennis Integrity Supervisory Board, said the IRP's recommendation to remove live scoring data had been a priority over the past year. "Detailed work on implementation of the recommendation has made it clear how important it will be to ensure that official data is not simply replaced by unofficial data," she added. —Reuters

## Sports

# Blues' goaltender Allen earns rare home-ice win over Oilers

**ST LOUIS:** St Louis Blues goaltender Jake Allen enjoyed rare home-ice success in a 2-1 victory over the visiting Edmonton Oilers on Wednesday. Allen made 35 saves to earn his first victory at Enterprise Center since Jan. 3, and the Blues completed a sweep of their four-game homestand. Brayden Schenn and Mackenzie MacEachern scored goals to support him. James Neal scored and Mikko Koskinen stopped 42 of 44 shots for the Oilers, who have just three victories in their past 11 games (3-7-1). Allen made 20 of his previous 21 starts on the road, dating to last season, when he lost the starting job to Jordan Binnington. In the 2018-19 season, he posted an .878 save percentage and 3.65 goals-against average at home and produced vastly better ratios (.924, 2.26) on the road. He had lost his only previous home start this season before Wednesday.

## DEVILS 3, DUCKS 1

Kyle Palmieri scored the tiebreaking goal in the second period for New Jersey, who began the post-Taylor Hall era by beating Anaheim

in Newark, N.J. Nico Hischier scored earlier in the second and Sami Vatanen scored early in the third for the Devils, who have won back-to-back games for just the fourth time this season. They have yet to win three in a row. Former Devils center Adam Henrique scored in the first period for the Ducks, who have lost the first two games of a four-game East Coast road trip.

## AVALANCHE 4, BLACKHAWKS 1

Mikko Rantanen and Ian Cole had a goal and an assist apiece, and Pavel Francouz made 31 saves to lead visiting Colorado to a victory over Chicago. Nathan MacKinnon and Andre Burakovsky also scored goals while Gabriel Landeskog had two assists for Colorado, which improved to 9-1-1 over its last 11 games. The Avalanche have won all three meetings with the Blackhawks this season, outscoring them 16-6 in the process. Ryan Carpenter scored for Chicago, which lost for the fifth time in six games (1-4-1). Corey Crawford stopped 32 of the 35 shots he faced. —Reuters



NEWARK: Nikita Gusev #97 of the New Jersey Devils and Adam Henrique #14 of the Anaheim Ducks battle for the puck during the first period at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. —AFP

## Rookies on display again as Giants visit Redskins

**LANDOVER:** Intriguing storylines are scarce in the basement battle between the New York Giants and Washington Redskins on Sunday afternoon in Landover, Md. However, the game could feature another duel between rookie quarterbacks to determine which team likely will finish last in the NFC East. The Giants and Redskins enter play with matching 3-11 records. The Giants are 1-6 on the road and the Redskins 1-6 at home, the latter's only win on Nov. 24 against the visiting Detroit Lions.

While Redskins rookie quarterback Dwayne Haskins will get the start for Washington, it's undecided if his rookie counterpart with the Giants, Daniel Jones, will get the nod. Jones (ankle) was a full participant in Wednesday's practice, but Giants coach Pat Shurmur wants to see a full week before making a decision, according to reports.

Eli Manning got the win in his stead Sunday against the Miami Dolphins, snapping a nine-game Giants losing skid. Manning choked back tears afterward in what was likely his final start at home wearing Giants blue. Jones had already supplanted Manning as the starter when these two teams met in Week 4, a 24-3 victory by the Giants. The win made Jones 2-0 in his first two starts, ginning up excitement with Big Blue Nation. However, it would prove to be the Giants' last win until the victory over Miami.

Jones threw for 225 yards, a touchdown and two interceptions in Week 4. Haskins didn't start that day but was inserted into the game in the second quarter by then-head coach Jay Gruden. The rookie didn't fare much

better than starting QB Case Keenum, however, going just 9-for-17 for 107 yards and three picks in his pro debut.

This time, Haskins comes off his best game by far in Sunday's 37-27 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles. Haskins completed 19 of 28 passes for 261 yards and two touchdowns, good for a passer rating of 121.3. The rookie did not throw an interception. Haskins has 1,232 passing yards on the season with five touchdown passes and seven interceptions. Jones, by comparison, has thrown for 2,374 yards with 18 touchdowns against 11 picks. His bugaboo has been fumbles; Jones has lost 10, most by any quarterback in the league.

The Jones-Haskins duel isn't the only rookie showdown. Wide receivers Darius Slayton of the Giants and Washington's Terry McLaurin have put together nice rookie campaigns. While Slayton has the edge in touchdowns, 8-7, McLaurin has more catches (51-44) and receiving yards (833-690).

The Giants put tight end Evan Engram on injured reserve Tuesday. He had missed the past five games with a foot injury. The Giants signed wide receiver David Sills from their practice squad to take Engram's spot on the roster.

Guard Kevin Zeitler (ankle) was limited in Wednesday's practice and tight end Rhett Ellison (concussion) was a full participant. Both are listed as questionable. The Redskins put three players on injured reserve Tuesday — Pro Bowl guard Brandon Scherff (elbow/shoulder), receiver Trey Quinn (concussion) and cornerback Jimmy Moreland (foot). Scherff played in 11 games.

Washington signed defensive backs Coty Sensabaugh and Kayvon Webster to the active roster. The Redskins have a slew of players questionable for Sunday: offensive tackle Donald Penn, safeties Montae Nicholson and Landon Collins, DE Jonathan Allen and cornerback Quinton Dunbar. —Reuters

## Russia to decide on appeal against doping ban

**MOSCOW:** Russia's anti-doping agency will decide whether to launch an appeal against a four-year ban from major sporting events over systematic violations, a prohibition denounced by the country's leadership as politically motivated.

The supervisory board of RUSADA will hold a meeting and is widely expected to announce its formal rejection of the December 9 decision by WADA to ban Russia for non-compliance.

This formal disagreement with WADA would trigger the process of appeal against the ban at the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport. RUSADA supervisory board chairman Alexander Ivlev is due to announce the decision at 1000 GMT.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) on December 10 banned Russia for four years from major global sporting events, including the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, over manipulated doping data.

Under the sanctions, Russians will still be allowed to compete at the Olympics next year and the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics, but only as neutrals and if they can demonstrate that they were not part of what WADA believes was a state-sponsored system of doping.

Russian President Vladimir Putin slammed the ban as a "politically motivated" ruling that "contradicted" the Olympic Charter. Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev lamented it was "the continua-

tion of this anti-Russian hysteria that has already become chronic."

### 'INEFFICIENT AND USELESS'

The expected confirmation of an appeal will coincide with the annual marathon press conference of Putin, also on Thursday afternoon, where the president is set to again take a position on the issue.

The director general of RUSADA, Yuri Ganus, who has long argued for a major crackdown by Russia against doping cheats, said he expected the supervisory board to appeal but strongly opposed the move.

"The board will decide to appeal," he told AFP. "I believe this to be inefficient and useless." Ganus, whose rigorous stance puts him at odds with his own government and supervisory board, argues that Moscow needs to accept the sanctions and own up to its faults in order to be able to reform.

The suspension was handed to Russia over falsifying data from a doping testing laboratory that was handed to WADA earlier this year as part of the compliance reinstatement process. The significant extent of state-sponsored doping in Russia, notably between 2011 and 2015, was revealed in the independent report by sports lawyer Richard McLaren, released in 2016.

The issue has dealt a colossal blow to the status of post-Soviet Russia as a major sports power after hosting events such as the 2013 World Athletics Championships, the 2018 World Cup and the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi. The Sochi Games later became notorious for the number of doping violations by prominent Russian athletes. The situation has also divided Russian sports stars, with three-time world champion high jumper Mariya Lasitskene calling on sports officials to be held to account over the ban. —AFP

## Sports

# Heat snap Philadelphia 76ers' home winning streak at 14

**PHILADELPHIA:** Kendrick Nunn scored 26 points, Bam Adebayo added 23, and the visiting Miami Heat defeated the 76ers 108-104 on Wednesday, snapping Philadelphia's season-long home winning streak. At 14-0, the 76ers had been the last unbeaten home team in the league. They trailed by 16 points with nearly seven minutes remaining in the game before rallying to within two, but Al Horford's potential go-ahead 3-point try missed with five seconds left. Duncan Robinson contributed 15 points and Jimmy Butler had 14 points, seven rebounds and five assists for the Heat, who had been blown out 113-86 in their first meeting with the 76ers this season in Philadelphia on Nov. 23. Joel Embiid led the Sixers with 22 points and 19 rebounds while Tobias Harris added 20 points. Ben Simmons and Josh Richardson had 17 apiece.

## NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 107 - MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 99

Brandon Ingram scored 34 points, and New Orleans ended its franchise-worst, 13-game losing streak with a victory over Minnesota in Minneapolis. Jrue Holiday added 18 points, JJ Redick had 12, Josh Hart added 11 and Lonzo Ball 10 as the Pelicans earned their first victory since Nov. 21. New Orleans was playing the opener of a four-game road trip. Andrew Wiggins scored 27 points to lead the Timberwolves, who lost their eighth consecutive game. Minnesota center Karl-Anthony Towns didn't play because of a sprained left knee sustained in a loss to the Los Angeles Clippers on Friday.

## OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 126 - MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 122

Dennis Schroder matched his season-high with 31 points and Oklahoma City pulled off a second consecutive improbable comeback, beating visiting Memphis. Schroder scored 22 of his points in the second half, when the Thunder started chipping away at a 24-point deficit. It was the third-biggest comeback in Oklahoma City history and came just two days after the Thunder won after trailing the Chicago Bulls by 26 points. Oklahoma City is just the second team in the last 25 seasons to win back-to-back games after trailing by 20 or more points, along with the Indiana Pacers in

## Celtic open up five-point lead with win at Hearts

**GLASGOW:** Celtic opened up a five-point lead at the top of the Scottish Premiership as first half goals from Ryan Christie and Olivier Ntcham secured a 2-0 win at struggling Hearts on Wednesday.

The Scottish champions should have ran out more comfortable winners with Odsonne Edouard guilty of missing a host of chances, but did enough to win a ninth straight league game.

January 2010, according to Elias Sports.

## BOSTON CELTICS 109 - DALLAS MAVERICKS 103

Kemba Walker scored 32 points and Jaylen Brown added 26 as visiting Boston ended a two-game losing streak by beating Dallas. Jayson Tatum scored 24 points while Enes Kanter grabbed 13 rebounds as the Celtics rallied from a 10-point second-quarter deficit to avoid dropping to .500 on the road. While the Celtics are 10-1 in home games, they are just 8-6 away from Boston. Kristaps Porzingis had 23 points and 13 rebounds before he fouled out while Seth Curry added 20 off the bench as the Mavericks lost a game for the first time without Luka Doncic, who is out for two weeks with a sprained ankle.

## CHICAGO BULLS 110 - WASHINGTON WIZARDS 109 (OT)

Wendell Carter Jr. hit a go-ahead reverse layup with 9.1 seconds remaining in overtime and Lauri Markkanen scored a game-high 31 points to spark visiting Chicago to a come-from-behind victory against Washington. Washington led by as many as 18 in the fourth quarter, but scuffled down the stretch as the Bulls closed regulation on a 23-5 run. Bradley Beal missed a short jumper in the paint as time expired, as the Wizards lost for the fifth time in six games. Beal swished a jumper from the free throw line with 0.5 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter to put the Wizards ahead 98-96. The shot looked like an apparent game-winner, but Washington's Isaac Bonga fouled Zach LaVine (24 points) under the basket on the ensuing inbounds play, and LaVine hit both free throws to send the game to overtime.

## TORONTO RAPTORS 112 - DETROIT PISTONS 99

Pascal Siakam had 26 points, Serge Ibaka supplied a season-high 25 points with 13 rebounds, and Toronto downed host Detroit. Toronto's Kyle Lowry notched a triple-double with 20 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists, while OG Anunoby had 19 points and eight rebounds in the victory. Detroit center Andre Drummond, the league's leading rebounder, returned to action after missing two games due to left eye inflammation related to an allergic

"It's an outstanding run of form we are in and it was another outstanding performance," said Celtic manager Neil Lennon.

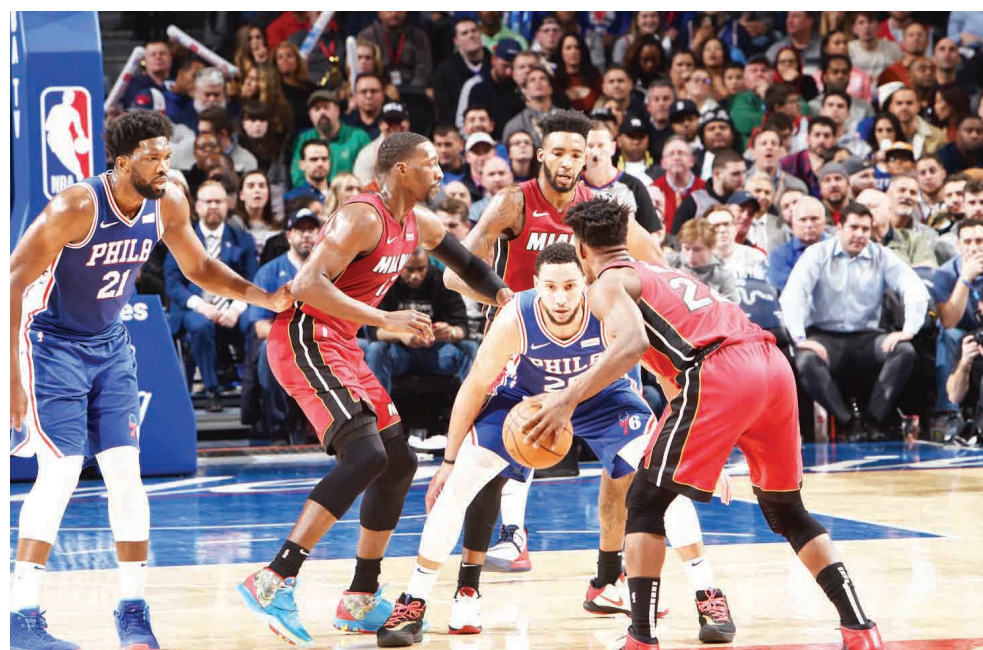
"We should've won the game by more. The quality of chances and football was breathtaking."

Rangers have a game in hand on their Glasgow rivals and can cut the gap back to two points when they also travel to Edinburgh to face Hibernian on Friday.

At the other end of the table, only Celtic's profligate finishing prevented Hearts going bottom as they slipped to just one goal better off than Hamilton.

Hearts boss Daniel Stendel was taking charge of just his second game and the hosts looked keen to impress the German with an energetic start.

"We need this mentality in every game, not just against Celtic," said Stendel. However, the Jambos rarely troubled Fraser Forster in the Celtic goal and were undone by one mo-



**PHILADELPHIA:** Ben Simmons #25 of the Philadelphia 76ers plays defense against Jimmy Butler #22 of the Miami Heat at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP

reaction. He had 22 points and 18 rebounds.

## DENVER NUGGETS 113 - ORLANDO MAGIC 104

Jamal Murray scored 33 points, Nikola Jokic had 18 points, 12 assists and nine rebounds, and host Denver erased a 19-point, third-quarter deficit to beat Orlando. Paul Millsap had 15 points and 12 rebounds in his return to the lineup for the Nuggets, who beat the Magic for the eighth straight time. Millsap missed the previous two games due to a right quadriceps strain. Nikola Vucevic had 20 points and D.J. Augustin scored 18 off the bench for the Magic, who were outscored 68-44 in the second half.

## CLEVELAND CAVALIERS 100 - CHARLOTTE HORNETS 98

Collin Sexton scored 23 points and Cedi Osman added 18 as host Cleveland held on to beat Charlotte. Cleveland saw a 24-point lead trimmed to two, highlighted by Charlotte's Terry Rozier draining four 3-pointers in a 65-

second span late in the fourth quarter. Sexton dribbled the ball off his foot to give Charlotte one more chance, but Rozier's final 3-point attempt drew iron. Kevin Love collected 16 points and 14 rebounds and Tristan Thompson added 14 and 13, respectively, as Cleveland posted just its third win in 19 games.

## PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 122 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 112

Damian Lillard recorded 31 points and a season-high-tying 13 assists, and CJ McCollum scored 30 points to help Portland notch a victory over visiting Golden State. Hassan Whiteside collected a season-best 23 rebounds to go along with 16 points as Portland won for the third time in its past four contests. Carmelo Anthony also contributed 17 points and eight rebounds. D'Angelo Russell registered 26 points and seven assists for the Warriors, who lost their fifth straight game and ninth in the past 10. Glenn Robinson III scored 17 points and Alec Burks added 16 for Golden State. —Reuters

ment of magic from Christie on 28 minutes.

James Forrest played a one-two with Edouard to put Hearts on the back foot before Christie took over and drilled a 20-yard strike just inside the post. Forrest then missed the target after a one-two with Ntcham left him one-on-one with Joel Pereira.

Hearts were exposed again moments later when Scott Brown won the ball and released Forrest, whose low cross from the left was swept home first time by Ntcham.

Callum McGregor was flagged offside after netting from close range and Edouard headed against a post before forcing a good save from Pereira after being left unmarked from a free-kick.

But Celtic were happy to settle for two at a venue where they are normally made to work much harder for all three points. —AFP

## Sports

# Ronaldo fires Juve top as Buffon equals Maldini's Serie A record

**GENOA:** Cristiano Ronaldo continued his hot streak as his towering header gave Juventus a 2-1 win at Parma to put Juventus top of the table as Gianluigi Buffon equalled Paolo Maldini's Serie A appearance record.

Ronaldo met Alex Sandro's looping cross with an incredible leap and header just before half-time to put Juve on 42 points, three ahead of Inter ahead of their match with struggling Genoa on Saturday.

"I'm really happy with the result... It was a really good goal also because it was the one that won the three points," said Ronaldo, who earlier in the season was off-form amid injury concerns.

"Like I said before I'd had pain in my knee for around a month, but now I'm OK and now I want to help Juventus win trophies." His 10th league goal of the season came after Samp's Gianluca Caprari had levelled Paulo Dybala's superb volleyed opener.

The Argentine met Alex Sandro's raking cross in the 19th minute with the most delicate of volleys, caressing the ball past Emil Audero from the edge of the box. Maurizio Sarri's side had so much of the ball they already looked home and dry but they failed to capitalise on their possession and were punished by Gianluca Caprari 10 minutes before the break, the Italian pouncing after Sandro was caught on the ball to crash his finish past Buffon.

However Ronaldo soon sparked into action,

first fizzing in a cross that both Gonzalo Higuain and Dybala just only just failed to get contact on. The Portugal forward then put the away side back in front in the final minute of the half with his sixth goal in five matches in all competitions, a hanging header from another pinpoint Sandro cross. The 34-year-old twice came close to a second in the dying seconds, first when he was ruled to be in an offside position after latching on to Aaron Ramsey's through ball and tapping past an onrushing Audero.

He then flashed a curling shot just wide in added time as Juve closed out what was a tight match against Claudio Ranieri's side, who sit just two points above the relegation zone.

The win, gained early in the week ahead of Sunday's Italian Super Cup clash with Lazio in Riyadh, was a further source of happiness for Buffon, who made his 647th Serie A appearance in place of the injured Wojciech Szczesny. The 41-year-old also became Juve's all-time record appearance maker on 479 matches, one ahead of Alessandro Del Piero.

Buffon began his professional career as a teenager in 1995 at Parma, where he won the UEFA Cup and Coppa Italia in 1999 before moving to Juve two years later. He has won nine Serie A titles and the Coppa Italia four times in Turin but has failed to conquer Europe despite reaching two Champions League finals under previous coach Massimiliano Allegri.



**GENOA:** This combination of pictures created yesterday shows (Chronologically From L) Juventus' Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (Top) jumping above Sampdoria's Italian defender Nicola Murru to score a header during the Italian Serie A football match Sampdoria vs Juventus on December 18, 2019 at the Luigi-Ferraris stadium in Genoa. —AFP

However he will have another chance at winning Europe's top club competition after returning to Juve in the summer following a disappointing season at Paris Saint-Germain.

His team cruised into the last 16 after qualifying from Group D unbeaten, six points ahead of second-placed Atletico Madrid. The former Italy captain also holds the appearance record

for his national team, with 176 caps between 1997-2018, winning the 2006 World Cup.

Later on Wednesday, Brescia missed out on a chance to escape the relegation zone when they lost 2-0 at home to Sassuolo. The game was a rescheduled week seven fixture that was postponed following the death of Sassuolo president Giorgio Squinzi. —AFP

## PSG cruise into League Cup quarters

**PARIS:** A Paris Saint-Germain without a rested Neymar cruised into the last eight of the French League Cup with a 4-1 victory at second-tier Le Mans on Wednesday. Pablo Sarabia, Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting, Kylian Mbappe and Angel Di-Maria scored for the record eight-time tournament winners inside the opening 48 minutes as Harisson Manzala responded for the hosts in the final edition of the competition.

PSG coach Thomas Tuchel chose to leave the world's most expensive player, who has suffered with injuries since the start of the season, in Paris as the German made eight changes from the side which hammered Saint-Etienne on Sunday.

"I think it was a game that we had to win," said Tuchel. "We played with players who lacked rhythm. I didn't expect too much from my team. We could have scored more goals. "But we are happy — no injuries and now is the time to prepare to play Amiens

at the weekend."

Le Mans coach Richard Dezire handed the club's record goal-scorer Vincent Crehin a start after the striker came off the bench to grab the winner against Ligue 2's bottom side Orleans on Friday.

Last year's quarter-finalists began the brightest at the MMArena as Spain attacker Sarabia, starting just his third game of the season, opened the scoring after 21 minutes. Choupo-Moting added a second on the 41-minute mark and Mbappe side-footed home a third less than 90 seconds later.

Di Maria hit a fourth three minutes into the second half as Le Mans' goalkeeper Pierre Patron fumbled the Argentina attacker's effort into his own goal. DR Congo youth international Harisson Manzala claimed a consolation effort with 35 minutes to play by scoring for the first time this term.

Mbappe was substituted for Mauro Icardi on the 68-minute mark with Tuchel turning his focus to Saturday's Ligue 1 fixture against Amiens, a final game before a two-week winter break. Elsewhere, Lyon, who are yet to win the trophy, hammered Toulouse 4-1 without Memphis Depay who has been ruled out for six months with a knee injury. — AFP

## English clubs triumph in Europe's year of comeback shocks

**LONDON:** This was a year of unprecedented English domination of European club competition, as the Premier League finally turned its financial power into results on the field, but 2019 will be best remembered for a series of stunning comebacks.

For the first time ever, all four finalists in Europe's two club competitions came from the same country with Liverpool beating Tottenham Hotspur in the Champions League final and Chelsea defeating Arsenal for the Europa League title.

In women's football, the World Cup, held in France, brought unprecedented interest for the tournament with the United States defending their title by beating the Netherlands 2-0 in the final in Lyon.

Interest in the women's game has arguably never been higher, with broadcast records broken all over the globe in the June-July showpiece. Olympique Lyonnais continued their domination of the the women's European club game — a 4-1 win over Barcelona in Budapest ensuring a fourth straight Champions League title. The men's Champions League is often criticised for the predictability of the group stage, which usually sees the established wealthy clubs deal with their less well-off challengers.

Yet while that remains a fundamental weakness of the competition, this year the knockout stage certainly delivered plenty of drama. Manchester United produced one of the great comebacks, when under new manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer they went into their round-of-16, second-leg at Paris St Germain, having suffered a seemingly deadly 2-0 reverse at Old Trafford. Yet a stoppage-time penalty from Marcus Rashford gave them a 3-1 win at the Parc de Princes and a

remarkable aggregate victory on away goals. Never in 106 attempts in Europe's top club competition had a team progressed in a knockout tie after a 2-0 home defeat and the game will go down as one of United's great nights despite them being eliminated by Barcelona in the quarter-final.

The quarter-finals produced more late drama, this time with the added ingredient of Video Assistant Referee (VAR) controversy, as Manchester City were eliminated by Tottenham, on away goals, after the tie ended 4-4.

A late goal from Raheem Sterling looked to have sealed City's progress and sent their manager Pep Guardiola racing up and down the touchline, leaping into the air, punching the sky in wild jubilation.

City's wildly celebrating fans thought their outlandish dream of a quadruple of titles was still very much alive. Then — as Turkish referee Cuneyt Cakir signalled the goal had been disallowed for an offside following video review — Guardiola fell to his knees, head in hands, in utter despair. Yet even that night of drama was overshadowed by what followed in the last four. Liverpool were presumed dead and buried after losing 3-0 to Barcelona but then, at a fervent Anfield, they were simply unstoppable as they swept aside the Spaniards 4-0 with two goals each for Divock Origi and Georginio Wijnaldum.

Then, incredibly, 24 hours later, came another astonishing comeback. In Amsterdam, Ajax skipper Matthijs de Ligt's fifth-minute header and a superb 35th-minute effort by Hakim Ziyech put Ajax 3-0 up on aggregate against Spurs at halftime, seemingly securing their first final for 23 years. —Reuters

# Barcelona, Real draw as Clasico marred by violence

**BARCELONA:** Barcelona and Real Madrid could not be separated on Wednesday in a Clasico that was overshadowed by violent clashes between Catalan independence protestors and police outside Camp Nou.

After being postponed in October, there were renewed fears of unrest around Spain's most famous fixture and while the match was only briefly interrupted by yellow beach balls thrown onto the pitch, outside the stadium, chaos ensued. Masked protestors had set bins on fire and thrown rocks and glass bottles at police, who responded by firing foam bullets. Forty-six people were lightly injured in the clashes, including eight who needed to be taken to a medical centre for extra care, local emergency services said.

Five people were arrested, according to a police spokesman. The protestors, many of them carrying Catalan separatist flags, began setting up barricades in the middle of the street which they then burned, after police arrived in dozens of police vans. Inside the stadium, the match passed largely undisturbed, save for a brief pause early in the second half as dozens of yellow beach balls had to be removed by stewards. "There was tension in the game and I noticed when some yellow balls fell down," said Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde.

"But nothing more. We tried to give a sense of normality." "Everyone wanted to see a good football match," said Real coach Zinedine Zidane. "In that sense I think we can be happy." The game was less eventful than expected, with nei-

ther Barcelona nor Real ever really at their best and both, perhaps in the end, happier not to win than to lose.

A goalless draw means Barcelona stay top of La Liga, ahead of Real on goal difference while the historic score in league meetings between the two rivals remains 72 victories apiece. "More than a Clasico", read the frontpage of Barcelona daily Mundo Deportivo on Wednesday morning ahead of a fixture that while always politically charged, had assumed even greater significance than usual.

The game was originally due to be played on October 26 but was postponed due to violent protests breaking out across Catalonia, following the sentencing of nine independence leaders to prison. In the 53 days since, expectations swelled around what Democratic Tsunami, the Catalan independence protest group, might do to disrupt the most watched club football match in the world. But in truth, there was less than expected during the 90 minutes. Early in the second half, yellow beachballs were thrown onto the field while blue banners bearing the slogan of Democratic Tsunami: 'Spain, sit and talk', were also held up.

Four hours before kick-off, thousands had gathered at all four corners of the stadium to hold the same blue banners and wave Catalan flags, while some blocked traffic too. But the demonstrations were peaceful, in stark contrast to the ugly scenes that would come a few hours later. Both teams had departed from the same



**BARCELONA:** Real Madrid's Spanish defender Sergio Ramos (R) challenges Barcelona's Argentine forward Lionel Messi (C) next to Real Madrid's Belgian goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois during the "El Clasico" Spanish League football match between Barcelona FC and Real Madrid CF. —AFP

hotel and aside from whistles and insults directed at the Madrid team bus, each arrived without incident. Club president Florentino Perez gave a thumbs up as he walked in.

Gareth Bale was last to get off, by which time he might have known he was starting for the first

time in four matches. Ramos played in his 43rd Clasico, a record for any player in history. For Barcelona, Sergio Busquets was included in the line-up first announced before he was swapped out for Ivan Rakitic. Barca claimed it had been a communication error. —AFP

## Firmino takes Reds into Club World Cup final

**DOHA:** Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp is looking forward to a "really tough game" in the Club World Cup final against Flamengo after Roberto Firmino's injury-time goal gave the Anfield side a hard-fought 2-1 win over Monterrey of Mexico on Wednesday.

Firmino came off the bench to turn in a cross from fellow substitute Trent Alexander-Arnold in the 91st minute at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha after Naby Keita's early opener for a weakened Liverpool side had swiftly been cancelled out by Argentine striker Rogelio Funes Mori. Having taken time out from their seemingly relentless march towards the Premier League title to travel to Qatar, Liverpool will be relieved at coming through this test, and they remain on course to win this competition for the first time. However, they must now beat a Flamengo side who have won the Copa Libertadores and the Brazilian title in the last month under Portuguese coach Jorge Jesus, and who will have had an extra day to prepare for the final after defeating Saudi club Al-Hilal 3-1 on Tuesday.

"Tough game, really tough game," said Klopp when asked about the prospect of facing Flamengo in what will be a repeat of the 1981 Intercontinental Cup final, when a Brazilian team captained by Zico beat Bob Paisley's European Cup holders 3-0 in Tokyo. "Flamengo's season is over, they are here with a full squad, but we just have to recover as

quickly as possible and then make ourselves ready." He will hope to have Virgil van Dijk back fit for the final after the inspirational Dutch centre-back sat out the Monterrey game due to illness, leaving skipper Jordan Henderson to partner Joe Gomez in defence.

"It was an easy decision because he couldn't train yesterday — he was on the pitch for a couple of minutes until the media left, and then unfortunately he had to leave as well," Klopp said about Van Dijk, who has played in every Premier League and Champions League game this season. "We will see how quick he can recover."

In addition, Klopp chose to leave Sadio Mane on the bench at kick-off along with Firmino and Alexander-Arnold, instead handing starts to the likes of Adam Lallana, Xherdan Shaqiri and Divock Origi.

"It was only possible the hard way," said Klopp of the way in which his side won, with Firmino's late goal coming after goalkeeper Alisson made a string of key saves to stop Monterrey from going in front.

"We had problems before the game, we knew we would have some problems in the game, but I really think the boys did exceptionally well."

At such a busy stage in the season, Klopp also admitted his relief when the winning goal went in, saying: "I was actually afraid of extra time to be honest so I was more than happy when Bobby scored that goal." —AFP

## Teenage Zirkzee sparks Bayern's winning late show

**BERLIN:** Bayern Munich's Joshua Zirkzee scored on his Bundesliga debut, just two minutes after coming onto the pitch in his team's last-gasp 3-1 win away at SC Freiburg on Wednesday.

The 18-year-old Dutchman came on in the 90th minute before breaking a 1-1 deadlock, becoming the youngest player to score a goal this Bundesliga season. Bayern's Serge Gnabry added another in the final minute of injury time to put the result beyond doubt, crushing the hopes of a dogged and determined home side.

"When you score two goals with just minutes remaining to win the game, of course the bus ride home will have a different feel than if it had gone otherwise," said Bayern caretaker boss Hansi Flick.

It was business as usual early for Bayern, with Philippe Coutinho's chip over goalkeeper Mark Flekken cleared off the line after just two minutes.

In the 16th minute, 19-year-old Canadian Alphonso Davies put in a superb cross from the left wing, with Robert Lewandowski on the spot to open the scoring. It was Lewandowski's 19th league goal of the season — and the sixth time he opened the scoring for Munich this campaign.

The goal seemed to calm Bayern, with the Bavarians content to dominate possession without making too many incursions into the Freiburg end. After the half-time break, Freiburg showed the form that has taken them to sixth in the table, catching Bayern on the counter to create several half chances.

Vincenzo Grifo equalised in the 59th minute, nailing Janik Haberer's cross to give Bayern keeper Manuel Neuer no chance. Freiburg had several chances to take the lead as the clock ran down, with Bayern's players visibly shaken by the home team's relentless pressing.

The win sees Bayern go into third place, four points behind Leipzig and Borussia Mönchengladbach. Flick said he had faith in Zirkzee after some impressive showings on the training pitch.

"I simply thought that when another winger came on he could score — he is a striker and he shoots well, also in training. He's been with us (the main team) for three weeks and the development has been noteworthy," Flick said.

"There were two completely different halves. The first half we could've lead two or three to nil, but I must say that Freiburg in the second half played well." —AFP

# Sport Times

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2019

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PHILADELPHIA: Joel Embiid #21 of the Philadelphia 76ers shoots the ball against the Miami Heat at the Wells Fargo Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP

## Heat snap Philadelphia 76ers' home winning streak at 14

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