



**4** Russia, China veto resolution by Kuwait on aid delivery to Syrians



**16** Novartis eyes giveaway of costly therapy for babies



**19** Top DJs headline Saudi Arabia's biggest music fest near Riyadh



**28** Ancelotti seals Premier League return as new Everton manager



# Outrage after disabled citizen 'tortured' to death in custody

## Interior minister forms probe panel • Family, MPs, activists demand answers

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The death of Kuwaiti citizen Ahmad Al-Dhafiri in police custody a few days ago has angered his family, MPs and social media activists, even as Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh ordered the formation of an independent committee to launch an investigation. The deceased's family said 31-year-old Dhafiri, who was disabled, died while in custody at the drugs control department as a result of torture.

Saud Al-Dhafiri, a cousin of the dead man, said the family learned about his death on Dec 19 through Ahmad's brother who works at the forensics department, after he saw papers about the body of his brother there, as he was missing for three days. Saud said when police were asked about the cause of death of Dhafiri, who was severely handicapped, they answered that the "file is confidential and the cause of death cannot be revealed".

"We later discovered that they claim his death was due to drugs," he said. Saud published a copy of an

interior ministry report on social media that does not point to drug use, but to injuries suffered during confrontation with the police. He was later taken to hospital. Saud said Ahmad was beaten when he resisted police. He was then sent to the drugs control department without any clear proof that he used any drugs, where he died.

A police source told Al-Anbaa local daily about the contents of the interior ministry report about the incident that was sent to Mubarak Al-Kabeer criminal department. "We received what indicates a death case of a person at the drugs control department in Aswaq Al-Qurain area, so I, the officer in charge of Mubarak Al-Kabeer police station, went and found the deceased (A. M.) is a Kuwaiti citizen born in 1988. According to the claims of narcotics detectives, a person detained with him named (M. H.), an Egyptian, said the dead man told him he ingested substances that may be drugs, so a call was made to the deputy prosecutor, who asked to register the case as a suspected felony. Forensics was called, and the coroner also arrived," the report said.

Information received by Al-Anbaa said a team of

criminal detectives listened to the testimony of two officers and four policemen from the special missions division of public security, who arrested the citizen, to inquire about his case before he was sent to the drugs control department. The sources said criminal detectives also called in officers and non-commissioned officers from the drugs control department, who are still being questioned.

They added CCTV footage will be reviewed to learn about the entire incident, besides questioning the Egyptian who was detained with the deceased citizen, who claimed Dhafiri told him he swallowed a large quantity of what is thought to be drugs.

Saleh on Friday ordered the formation of a panel to investigate Dhafiri's death. Saleh, also Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, ordered establishing the "neutral committee" to look into the circumstances of Dhafiri's death in a building of the criminal security department, the ministry of interior said in a statement. The official statement said the panel will "investigate the incident with competent personnel to determine whether there was any slackness since his detention until his death".

The panel will present a report about its probe within a week. Any personnel suspected of wrongdoing will be suspended from work until end of the probe, according to the minister, who has affirmed that the suspects, if proven guilty, will be penalized. The ministry has notified the public prosecution about the incident, the ministry said, adding that the body of the deceased was examined by coroners upon the prosecution's request. The interior ministry affirmed its adherence to transparency and establishing the facts with regards of the case.

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem tweeted he is closely following developments in the case, urging the interior ministry to be transparent and hold those responsible accountable. MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari said interior minister must open an urgent investigation by an independent committee about the information given by Dhafiri's family. MP Thamer Al-Suwait said he is waiting for an official statement from the interior ministry about what happened. MP Oudah Al-Ruwaiqi said he is in contact with the interior minister.

Continued on Page 24

## India protests rage on as death toll rises to 21

**NEW DELHI:** Thousands of people joined fresh rallies against a contentious citizenship law in India yesterday, with 21 killed so far in this month's unrest. The death toll jumped after demonstrations turned violent on Friday in the most populous state Uttar Pradesh, leaving at least 11 dead including an eight-year-old boy, who was trampled. Another protester died yesterday after clashes in Rampur, also in Uttar Pradesh, as police used tear gas and batons against a stone-pelting crowd, police told AFP.

Disquiet has been growing about the law, which was passed by parliament on Dec 11 and gives people from persecuted minorities from three neighboring countries an easier path to citizenship - but not if they are

Muslim. Critics say the law discriminates against Muslims and is part of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-nationalist agenda, a claim his political party has denied. Authorities have scrambled to contain the situation - imposing emergency laws, blocking Internet access, and shutting down shops in sensitive areas across the country.

Demonstrators have vowed to keep up their fight until the law is revoked. Protests were held yesterday in numerous states, including in the cities of Chennai, Gurgaon and Guwahati. As day broke in the capital New Delhi, demonstrators held up their mobile phones as torches at India's biggest mosque Jama Masjid in a show of dissent. In Patna in the eastern state of Bihar, three demonstrators suffered bullet wounds and six were hurt from stone-pelting after clashing with counter-protesters, police said.

At an all-women protest in Assam state's Guwahati city in the northeast - where the wave of protests started amid fears the immigrants would dilute their local cultures - participants said it was time to speak up. "We

came out to fight for our motherland, we came to fight without any arms and ammunition, we will fight peacefully," Lily Dutta told AFP.

Since being re-elected this year Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party have stripped Muslim-majority Kashmir of its autonomy and carried out a register of citizens in Assam. The BJP has said it wants to conduct the National Register of Citizens (NRC) nationwide, fuelling fears Muslims - a 200-million minority in India - were being disenfranchised. BJP's general secretary Bhupender Yadav told reporters yesterday the party would "launch an awareness campaign" and hold 1,000 rallies to dispel "lies" about the law.

In northern Uttar Pradesh, Muslims make up almost 20 percent of the 200-million population. The state's police spokesman Shirish Chandra told AFP 10 people died Friday after being shot. The boy also died Friday in a "stampede-like situation" when 2,500 people including children joined a rally in the holy city of Varanasi, district police chief Prabhakar Chaudhary told AFP.

Continued on Page 24



CHENNAI: A woman holds a placard during a protest against India's new citizenship law yesterday. — AFP

## Muslim states eye gold, barter trade to beat sanctions

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Iran, Malaysia, Turkey and Qatar are considering trading among themselves in gold and through a barter system as a hedge against any future economic sanctions on them, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday. At the end of an Islamic summit in Malaysia, Mahathir praised Iran and Qatar for withstanding economic embargoes and said it was important for the Muslim world to be self-reliant to face future threats.

"With the world witnessing nations making unilateral decisions to impose such punitive measures, Malaysia and other nations must always bear in mind that it can be imposed on any of us," Mahathir said. US-allied Arab states Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic and trade links with Qatar about 2-1/2-years ago over allegations it backs terrorism, a charge Doha denies. Iran, meanwhile, has been hit badly after the United States reimposed sanctions on it last year.

"I have suggested that we re-visit the idea of trading using the gold dinar and barter trade among us," Mahathir said, referring to the Islamic medieval gold coin. "We are seriously looking into this and we hope that we will be able to find a mechanism to put it into effect." The leaders agreed they needed to do more business among themselves and trade in each other's currencies.

The summit, which was snubbed by Saudi Arabia, was criticized for undermining the Saudi-based Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which represents 57 Muslim-majority nations. Malaysia said all the OIC members had been invited to the Kuala Lumpur summit but only about 20 showed up.

Continued on Page 24

## ICC to probe war crimes in Palestinian areas

**THE HAGUE, Netherlands:** The International Criminal Court's chief prosecutor said Friday she wanted to open a full investigation into alleged war crimes in the Palestinian territories, sparking a furious reaction from Israel and condemnation from the United States. The Palestinians welcomed the move by the ICC as a "long overdue step" following a nearly five-year preliminary probe by the prosecutor into the situation since the 2014 war in Gaza.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the decision made the Hague-based court, which Israel has refused to sign up

to since its creation in 2002, a "political tool" against the Jewish state. "I am satisfied that there is a reasonable basis to proceed with an investigation into the situation in Palestine," ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said in a statement. "In brief, I am satisfied that war crimes have been or are being committed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip," she added, without specifying the perpetrators of the alleged crimes.

She said that before opening a full probe, she would ask the ICC to rule on the territory over which it has jurisdiction because of the "unique and highly contested legal and factual issues attaching to this situation". "Specifically, I have sought confirmation that the 'territory' over which the Court may exercise its jurisdiction, and which I may subject to investigation, comprises the

Continued on Page 24



HEBRON: Israeli soldiers look at a Palestinian boy yesterday as he waits by a wall for Israeli settlers touring the old city and market of this city in the occupied West Bank to pass. — AFP

## Twitter, Facebook target accounts over manipulation

**WASHINGTON:** Facebook and Twitter on Friday said they had blocked multiple government-backed manipulation operations around the world, several of which favored US President Donald Trump, as part of a crack-down on state-sponsored propaganda efforts. Twitter said it had blocked some 88,000 accounts linked to Saudi-backed "information operations", in violation of its manipulation rules. Separately, Facebook said it had blocked a network in Vietnam and the United States which posted pro-Trump messages aimed at US citizens, along with another network targeting domestic audiences in the country of Georgia.

It comes as social media giants have been struggling in the face of state-backed disinformation efforts, often using automated accounts or "bots" to manipulate the platforms, amplifying their own messages while disparaging opponents. Facebook said the effort originated in Vietnam was traced to the multi-language media group Epoch Times, which is linked to the Falun Gong spiritual movement, and a US media outlet called BL, which has been posting pro-Trump messages.

The California-based company added that it removed more than 600 accounts on Facebook and Instagram. "The people behind this activity made widespread use of fake accounts - many of which had been automatically removed by our systems - to manage pages and groups, automate posting at very high frequencies and direct traffic to off-platform sites," Facebook security chief Nathaniel Gleicher said.

"The BL-focused network repeatedly violated a number of our policies, including our policies against coordinated inauthentic behavior, spam and misrepre-



sentation, to name just a few." The accounts posted memes and other content on conservative ideology and hot button US political issues including Trump's impeachment, elections, trade, family values and freedom of religion, Gleicher said.

Continued on Page 24



## Local

# Kuwait's envoy hands in credentials to Palestinian president today

## Kuwait always supported Palestinian cause: Ambassador

**RAMALLAH:** Kuwait has always backed the Palestinian cause at various quarters, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan and Palestine Aziz Al-Dihani affirmed yesterday. Kuwait and Palestine are bonded with historic and old ties, and the Palestinian cause is a top issue in the agenda of the Gulf state, Dihani said in an interview upon his arrival in the West Bank town of Jericho to deliver his credentials to President Mahmoud Abbas as the non-resident Ambassador of Kuwait to Palestine.

Kuwait, a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), has always highlighted the Palestinian cause at all forums, he said. In line with guidelines by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti Government, "I will present my credentials on this Arab territory and in front of the Palestinian legitimate authority in Ramallah to affirm that Palestine continues to exist and its cause is our first-degree concern," said Dihani, who is scheduled to meet Abbas at the latter's headquarters today.

Noting that the Kuwaiti-Palestinian relations date back to 1921, the envoy has also indicated that opening a Kuwaiti embassy in Palestine may "not be late."

also hinting that his appointment as ambassador to Palestine may lead to such an event. "Nevertheless, we want to organize our activities and work and be active on the Palestinian arena through our relations to re-affirm our support for the Palestinian cause," he elaborated.

Meanwhile, Jericho Governor Jihad Abulasal said he was deeply proud of the Kuwaiti support. Abdullah Kamil, member of the Revolutionary Council of Fatah movement, noted that the group held its first conference in Kuwait in 1958 and that the late Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah had joined its ranks. His fellow Jamal Al-Deek recalled that Kuwaitis had fought side by side with Palestinian fighters in 'Al-Karamah' battle against the Israelis and that country had hosted more than half a million Palestinians.

Dihani came to Jericho yesterday in preparation for today's ceremony with the Palestinian president. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad, in late October, issued a decree appointing Dihani as Kuwait's non-resident ambassador to Palestine. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) applauded the Kuwaiti move. President Abbas inaugurated the State of Palestine Embassy in Kuwait in 2013. —KUNA



**RAMALLAH:** Jericho Governor Jihad Abulasal (center right) welcomes Kuwaiti Ambassador to Jordan and Palestine Aziz Al-Dihani (center left). —KUNA

## 'Commemorative coin' highlights Kuwait's humanitarian work

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait continued its humanitarian efforts and activities last week in different parts of the world, met by applause from senior officials and organizations. Kuwait's humanitarian stance stemmed from the directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a figure recognized as a world humanitarian leader by the UN. The Kuwait Central Bank (CBK) issued a gold commemorative coin bearing a portrait of His Highness the Amir for his immense contribution towards humanitarian causes. CBK governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel said in a statement. The front of the coin bears the image of His Highness the Amir, while the back features a picture of Kuwait City, he added.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed with UNICEF to donate KD 850,000 (\$2.8 million) to finance anti-measles vaccines for Lebanese and Syrian children in Lebanon. In same week, KFAED signed with UNICEF another deal to secure clean water for Gaza and cooperation memo for expertise exchange. Yemeni Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-Hadrami praised Kuwait's efforts in creating peace and stability in Yemen and the Arab World as part of its non-permanent membership at the UN

Security Council (UNSC). He pointed out Kuwait's role in hosting Yemeni dialogue, especially in 2016, to resolve the situation in the country, as well as taking part in the Saudi-led coalition for supporting Yemen's legitimacy. Moreover, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) is continuously delivering aid to people in need in Yemen, said Hadrami. Kuwait was also one of the top countries funding the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan for Yemen, with the country providing over \$227 million for 2019 alone.

The Kuwaiti Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaled Al-Jarallah said in the first Global Refugee Forum in Geneva that providing means, enables refugees to find job opportunities and to face various challenges. He pointed out that a united world vision for refugees require solemn effort by all countries to enable refugees to depend on themselves and stand their ground. Between 2010 and 2019, Kuwait had provided a sum of \$434 million to help the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) carry out its mission, Jarallah added.

Jarallah said the State of Kuwait will organize international conference next year to help support education in Somalia, as well as offering \$151 million to Yemen as part of its second batch to help refugees in the fellow Arab country. Kuwait will also continue to fulfill commitments to the Syrian refugees and the Rohingya Muslims in 2020, he said, adding that his country will provide \$6.4 million for humanitarian causes for various UN bodies.

UNRWA Acting Deputy Commissioner-General Christian Saunders lauded Kuwait's vital support for



**KUWAIT:** A gold commemorative coin bearing a portrait of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, released by Kuwait Central Bank last week. —KUNA

the UN Relief and UNRWA on its backing for the Palestinians. UNRWA largely depends on Kuwait for donations, particularly those allocated for Palestinian refugees, affirmed Saunders as he emerged from a meeting with Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and International Organizations in Geneva Jamal Al-Ghunaim. 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. Ambassador Ghunaim affirmed meanwhile that Kuwait sees UNRWA as a main and credible partner, adding that he discussed with Saunders prospects of holding a conference grouping states that desire to aid the Palestinians. —KUNA

## Brexit speech

local spotlight



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Britain's Queen Elizabeth II addressed the nation last week during the opening session of the British Parliament in a speech that I believe was a model in transparency, accuracy and clarity. I listened to the Queen's Speech and it was really a lesson in how leaders should express themselves, their aspirations, and their government's plan truly in an audacious manner, despite the fact that the queen is 93. Her words were clear and audible to all.

The speech came after British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, from the Conservative Party, won snap elections held last week. Here is what I liked about the queen's speech and why. The speech was a specific work agenda and not just wishful thinking or promises or accusations or rhetoric without meaning. The other thing is that the queen, who is a constitutional monarch running the country through an elected government, defined a program to help the United Kingdom cross over to safety at this stage to implement the exit from the European Union and take advantage of the opportunities resulting from the exit. That I trust is the wise thing to do.

The queen also said in her speech that the government wants to negotiate liberal trade agreements after leaving the European Union. I think this attitude is normal to strengthen the British economy and maintain its durability and stability.

Another important observation that was made by Queen Elizabeth in her speech was talk about local reforms. I think it is rare to see a leader today who is interested in achieving reforms for their country for the interest of the people, as the focus is often on government figures and officials, so people usually come last.

It is known that the priorities of any people in the world are often to improve health and the quality of education, so the queen's speech came to determine the importance of strengthening health sector financing through a commitment to an annual increase of £33.9 billion (\$44.4 billion) for the health sector until 2024. That indeed is an excellent direction.

In Dec 2019, His Eminence Sheikh Al-Azhar called on governments around the world to pay attention to the mental health of citizens as a global human and development priority in order to preserve the human being and exploit them in production, work and community participation. There is no doubt that focusing on health is the right option always.

The UK also remains a primary destination for asylum seekers, so it is important to develop a modern and fair immigration system to welcome skilled migrants who are capable to contribute to the economy and public services in the United Kingdom, and this is what I believe will regulate the issue of immigration. No country can be isolated from this issue today, but the immigration process must be regulated and focus on skilled workers that can benefit the country and away from sectarianism, intellectual militancy and terrorism.

Britain's House of Commons has endorsed Johnson's plan to exit the country from the European Union (Brexit) by the end of Jan 2020. I think that the British government faces real challenges, but I hope that most of them will be tackled, and the queen's speech is a lesson to be learned.



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's representative Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah, who serves as the deputy minister of Amiri Diwan affairs, attended on Friday the opening of a new chapel in the southern city of Al-Ahmad. The Kuwaiti official took a tour around the newly renovated chapel and adjacent buildings. —KUNA

## Regional states discuss sustainable development

**AMMAN:** Officials of regional states including Kuwait have grouped in a convention in the Jordanian capital addressing broad issues of joint concern namely challenges facing sustainable economic and social development. Noting significance of the meeting, held within framework of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), a participating Kuwaiti official said the two-day convention would address social protection systems in Arab countries — that covers social cohesion and justice.

Nabil Al-Abduljelil, the assistant undersecretary at the Kuwaiti Ministry of Finance, underscored at the start of ESCWA's two-day extraordinary meeting that kicked off earlier yesterday the need in Arab countries for high-quality social services that should also be in harmony with labor market policies. In ESCWA's references, social protection covers three core components: Social and health insurance, social assistance (cash transfers, child benefits, subsidies) and basic public health care services. Other issues in the meeting agenda, he has added, are endorsing Algeria and Somalia as new members and the 'belt and road initiative' (China-

inspired 'silk road grand project), "which is a multi-dimension venture that affects various domains namely international trade and transport."

Conferees are also looking into what has been implemented among 17 objectives of sustainable development, issued at the third sustainable conference, hosted by Addis Ababa in 2015. Abduljelil added in the remarks to the Kuwaiti news agency. Moreover, they are debating role of the private sector in labor markets and preparations for the UN climate conference due in 2020. The meeting was inaugurated with a speech addressed by Dr Rola Dashti (Kuwait), ESCWA's general secretary undersecretary, who urged the conferees to ensure that the gathering ends with tangible outcome.

Meanwhile, Jordanian Minister of Planning Wissam Al-Rabdi drew the participants' attention to the need to tackle vital regional issues such as water scarcity, climate change, immigration, challenges emanating from the industrial revolution and regional economic problems. ESCWA, established in 1973, is one of five United Nations Regional Commissions. In 2015, its membership reached 18 States in the Arab region. In harmony with the universal ideals of the United Nations, ESCWA aspires to induce positive economic and social change for sustainable development in the Arab region. It conducts research and produces studies and policy advice on all aspects of socioeconomic development. Knowledge is developed and shared with and for policymakers, civil society, experts and practitioners. —KUNA

## Kuwait Scout Society wins Arab fund's three seats

**KUWAIT:** The Kuwait Boy Scouts Society has won three seats of the Financing Fund of Arab Scouts for the first time in its history. The seats went to Abdullah Al-Turejji, Ibrahim Al-Baghlly and Khawla Al-Haswai who is the first woman to invade this field and win a seat in the fund since its inception over 35 years back. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the first meeting of the fund board of directors held in Kuwait, the fund's chairman Abdullah Al-Fahad said the conferees had addressed an array of significant issues aiming at propping up the scout movement. Fahad, who was elected as such during the scout gathering, said he was so delighted to serve the Arab scout movement, applauding Kuwait's unremitting efforts to host Gulf and Arab scout activities. He touted the scout movement as a core source of education since it inculcates in the minds of young generations patriotism, dedication and perseverance. —KUNA



Local

# Kuwait regrets UN failure to pass resolution on aid delivery to Syrians

## Kuwait co-sponsored resolution extending cross-border aid vetoed

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah expressed his country's regret over the UN Security Council's failure to pass a draft resolution presented by Kuwait, Germany and Belgium to renew a mandate for the UN mechanism for cross-border aid delivery to Syrians. In statements to the press after the UN Security Council session on Friday, Jarallah expressed disappointment for the security council's failure to renew the required mechanism to provide aid for four million people in Syria who are in dire need for food and medicine. He unveiled that there were marathon negotiations carried out by the permanent Kuwaiti delegation in the UNSC with other member states to pass the draft resolution, "but unfortunately, we did not reach the desired result."

Russia and China used their vetoes Friday to block a UN Security Council resolution that would have extended for a year cross-border humanitarian aid to four million Syrians. Humanitarian aid currently flows into Syria through UN-designated checkpoints without the formal permission of the regime in Damascus, but that authority is due to expire on January 10. Germany, Belgium and Kuwait presented a resolution extending that authority for a year, winning the support of 13 council members but drawing the vetoes of Russia and China. Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia, said the latest resolution was "obsolete" because the authorities in Damascus have "retaken control of most" of Syria's territory. But the UN humanitarian relief department says the aid remains crucial as the situation on the

ground has deteriorated over the past year and Syria is heading into winter.

### Failure to compromise

The text vetoed Friday called for a one-year extension of the authorization to ship humanitarian relief supplies into Syria — in effect since 2014 — through three checkpoints, two in Turkey and one in Iraq. Hoping to overcome Russian opposition, the resolution's sponsors on Wednesday dropped a request for a fourth point of entry on the Jordanian border, which has hardly been used since 2018.

Earlier in the week, Russia offered a competing draft resolution calling for a six-month extension, but only via the two Turkish checkpoints. Put to a vote Friday, that proposal was rejected, with the United States, France, Britain, Poland, Peru and the Dominican Republic voting against. Germany, Belgium, Kuwait and Indonesia abstained.

"If you are so concerned about Syria, then why didn't you vote in favor of the Russian draft?" said the Chinese ambassador, Zhang Jun. But the British envoy, Karen Pierce, said that the vetoes showed an unwillingness to help Syrians. "There is time to sort it out if everybody is willing to do so," she said.

It was the second time in four months that Russia has vetoed a resolution dealing with the humanitarian situation in Syria. In September, Moscow used its veto against a resolution calling for a ceasefire in Idlib. That resolution also was sponsored by Germany, Belgium and Kuwait. Earlier Friday, the UN special envoy on Syria, Geir Pedersen, pre-

sented to the Security Council a grim picture as well on seeking a political solution in Syria. A long-awaited committee to form a new constitution for Syria met in October in Geneva, but Pedersen acknowledged there was little progress.

### Humanitarian efforts

In his address to the UNSC, Jarallah had called on other council members to revitalize their support to humanitarian efforts in Syria. The crisis in Syria has not only affected the Middle East but has also reached further afield to threaten international peace and stability, he said and added that counterterrorism did not relieve any party of their obligations under international law. The Kuwaiti senior diplomat underscored that four million people rely on the cross-border mechanism for live-saving aid. He pledged to intensify efforts to renew the mechanism, calling on others to support this joint humanitarian responsibility. In addition, Syrians have been subject to flagrant violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, he indicated.

Furthermore, Jarallah said that Kuwait is keen on supporting the political process aimed at bringing upon a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Syria. Describing the glimmer of hope resulting from the launch of the Constitutional Committee in Syria, Jarallah said it was the first step towards the implementation of council resolutions, including free and fair elections. Such efforts could, with the support of the Special Envoy, allow for agreement to be found in all areas,



**SARMADA, SYRIA:** Syrians sit in a vehicle as they drive towards the northern areas of Syria's Idlib province near the Syrian-Turkish border as they flee the bombardments in the southern areas of the country's last major opposition bastion, on Friday. — AFP

leading to a political solution that will retain Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity. He expressed concern, however, over continued military operations. Confidence-building measures are necessary for political progress, including addressing the plight of those who have been detained, in accordance with Council resolution 2254 (2015), he added.

Accountability must also be ensured for serious crimes. He again condemned the tar-

geting of innocent civilians by all parties, stressing that counter-terrorist activities cannot permit dodging obligations under international law. There must be a ceasefire across all of Syria. He also condemned Israeli violations of Syrian territory, stating that the Golan is Syrian Arab territory and its annexation illegal. He pledged Kuwait's continued full support to the Special Envoy's efforts in restoring peace in Syria, a country that is dear to Kuwait. — Agencies

## Kuwait grateful for praise on UN Security Council performance

**NEW YORK:** Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah expressed on Friday his gratitude for praise bestowed by delegates for Kuwaiti efforts during the Security Council non-permanent seat membership. He described the speeches delivered by participated delegates in the session on expanding humanitarian efforts for Syria, as influential and expressive, and confirmed the appreciation of the international community to Kuwait, its role and policy. This came in a statement Jarallah made to Kuwait TV and Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) after his participation in two sessions of the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Syria and another on the non-proliferation of weapons and the Iranian nuclear file.



Khaled Al-Jarallah

latest, to alleviate the suffering of the brotherly Syrian people.

Regarding Iran proliferation of nuclear weapons, it was nuclear and ballistic missile program, Jarallah said. He added that there was consensus on the importance of cooperation between Iran and the International Energy Agency with the international community, aimed at ending the proliferation of nuclear weapons and putting an end to missile programs because of their clear threat to the international security and stability.

In the meantime, Jarallah praised, during his visit to New York, the efforts of the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission to the United Nations, led by Permanent Ambassador at the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi, over the past two years, in highlighting the honorable image of Kuwait during its non-permanent membership of the Security Council. Jarallah affirmed that this distinguished Kuwaiti role appreciated by the world, the permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, and other countries that are members of the United Nations. He noted that "Kuwait is about to finish its non-permanent membership in the UNSC, and we are proud of the positive and constructive role we have provided that meets the concerns of the Arab and Islamic nations, and is in harmony with the role of the United Nations and the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security." — KUNA

## Golan is Syrian territory: Kuwait

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait stressed that the Syrian Golan is an occupied territory by Israel and that the seizure and annexation of it by force is unacceptable and violates the UN Charter and the international law principles and relevant Security Council resolutions. This came during Kuwait's speech delivered by the second secretary to its permanent delegation to the UN, Fahd Hajji, in a session of the Security Council Thursday night, in which resolution 2503 was adopted to extend the mandate of the UN

Disengagement Observer Force in the Golan Heights (UNDOF) for a period of six months. "This matter violates Resolution 497 of 1981, which was adopted unanimously by all members of the Security Council. The decision of Israel, the occupying Power, to impose its laws, authority and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan is void and has no legal effect," said Hajji. "We voted in favor of the decision to renew the mandate of the (UNDOF) Force for a further six months because of our belief in the contribution of this force to the stability of the security of the region," he added. Hajji stressed that the solution to the stability of the region begins with the complete Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, especially resolutions 497, 338 and 242. — KUNA

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Skyline of Kuwait City during sunset. — Photo by Krishnadas Ramanujam (KUNA)

# Kuwait Oil Company marks 85th anniversary of establishment

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**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) celebrates today the 85th anniversary of being granted oil drilling concession right in the country under the agreement signed by the late Amir Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on December 23, 1934. The agreement was the most prominent event in the history of the Kuwait Oil Company, which was then called 'Kuwait Oil Company Limited'. Some believe that the date of signing of the agreement is the same date of the company's establishment; however, the company was established in February 1934. It was expected then that the agreement would have contributed to increase the wealth of Kuwait and its international importance through oil exploration concession, but the outbreak of World War II was one of the reasons for the delay in oil exploitation, and with the end of the war, Kuwait had turned from resource-poor desert country into a modern rich state.

Kuwait Oil Company was established in February 1934 in London, with an initial capital of 50,000 pounds with joint ownership and equal shares among all of the Anglo-Persian oil company, now known as British Petroleum (BP) and Gulf Oil Company, currently known as 'Chevron'. In December 1, 1975, an agreement was signed between the Kuwaiti Government, British Petroleum Ltd (BP Kuwait) and Gulf Oil Company stipulating that as of March 5, 1975, all remaining shares of the two companies including concession rights be transferred to the government Kuwait. The signing ceremony, which was seen as an official reference to shifting KOC to become entirely owned by the government, took place on December 6, 1975 in Kuwait, and then over the past long years, there were many events that constituted milestones in the history of the KOC.

#### Commercial quantities

Among the most prominent of these events was the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in the Burgan well in February 1938; however, Kuwait had not benefited from this wealth until on June 30, 1946 when the first shipment of oil was exported. The year 1946 also saw the establishment of the southern pier at Al-Ahmadi Port, while work began to build the city of Al-Ahmadi in an integrated manner to include the main offices, workshops, residential neighborhoods and facilities to become an integrated city in 1949. In the era of the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, increase in oil production was seen, and in 1955, production began in Raudhatain north of Kuwait, while in 1959, discovery of oil in Managish was discovered in September, and the north pier went into force in September of the same year.

In the era of the late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah in 1969, the artificial island was launched in addition to its facilities. In 1970, four new collection centers started operation, raising to 25 the total number of gathering centers. After that, late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem in November 1976 laid the foundation stone for the gas project in Al-Ahmadi Port, as well as the docking of the largest oil tanker in February 1977 in the artificial island



port of Al-Ahmadi. And one of the important dates to remember in the history of Kuwait Oil Company was the launching of gas project at Ahmadi Port in February 1979 during the reign of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

#### Oil fires

In March 1991, the operation to put out fires at the oil installations and wells got underway. On July 27, Kuwait exported the first cargo of crude since liberation. On September 14, 1991, drilling resumed in Al-Muqawaa field and late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah extinguished the last burning well on November 6, 1991. Later on, Kuwait restored its status as one of the key oil exporting countries. Its experience in the carbohydrates had a record with the discovery of natural gas, of commercial quantities, in Um Naqa in the north in 2006. During era of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, a large number of achievements have been made in the oil sector. The KOC inaugurated the two water injection installations in Al-Muqawa and Burgan in 2007 and 2008. Moreover, the disassociated gas and condensates unit was opened in the north.

Among KOC's major achievements was the project for renovating the installations, covering 16 gathering units and three gas boosting stations. The company tested maximum production on October 14-18, 2010, reaching up 3,052 million barrels of oil per day — the highest level in the KOC history. Between 2017 and 2018, the company opened the new Al-Ahmadi hospital, embarked on an oil excavation project in the Kuwait Bay and nearby areas, and began to export the first light crude oil shipments. In 2019, KOC signed with Halliburton a deal to excavate for oil in the sea, the first deal of its kind in the history of the company. — KUNA

## OAPEC holds 103rd meeting in Kuwait today

**KUWAIT:** Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) is scheduled to hold its 103rd ministerial meeting in Kuwait today. The Oil Ministry said in a statement that the Kuwaiti delegation will be headed by Minister of Oil and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel and will include Kuwaiti representative at OAPEC's Executive Council Sheikh Dr Nemr Al-Sabah and other Ministerial

officials. Bahrain's Oil Minister Shaikh Mohammed Al-Khalifa will chair the upcoming meeting.

The meeting will focus on activities related to the Kuwait-based Organization's work, as well as approve the draft budget for 2020. Established in 1968, OAPEC gathers Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Libya, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Algeria, Egypt, Syria and Iraq. — KUNA



## Local

# Audit Bureau urges Education Ministry to investigate financial violations

## Education Minister vows to abide by religious, ethical values

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The State Audit Bureau urged the Ministry of Education (MoE) to investigate 15 financial violations and report back with the results, said informed sources. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, the sources explained that MoE's educational constructions and planning sector had committed the majority of the violations in the form of tenders and extending contracts for repairing and maintaining air-conditioning and ventilation systems at MoE buildings and various schools, in addition to construction and maintenance of Ahmadi educational area buildings and schools. The sources added that some of the violations had been repeatedly committed for several years, starting with the 1982-1983 school year.

### Religious values

Meanwhile, Minister of Education Saud Al-Harbi said yesterday that his ministry would unremittably stick to religious and ethical values and constants while seeking to revamp curricula and stay abreast of technological advancement. During his maiden press briefing since he took over, Harbi, who doubles as Minister of Higher Education, said that the ministry's approach is part of the state's policy and vision for national development. "The ministry will observe values and principles, chiefly human rights and dignity, which is above all considerations, irrespective of sects, beliefs and races," the ministry said. He pointed out that an education revamp blueprint was in the offing and would be subject to further deliberations and discussions with competent bodies. However, the minister hoped that a national document of educational policy would be created by the entire society mainly involving the National Assembly and the Cabinet. Harbi vowed that he would do his utmost to promote everything that could contribute to beefing and cementing national unity and identity and keeping social and ethical constants and values intact.

### Contracts to be investigated

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Rana Al-Fares authorized a committee from the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) to review the points included in the grilling motion filed against her predecessor Jenan Bushehri before she resigned

from office, well-informed sources said. Fares urged committee members to investigate the contracts of companies that had executed controversial projects in both ministries without being fined for exceeding execution schedules and violating the specifications agreed upon, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The sources added that some companies had been previously referred to the prosecution by a Cabinet investigation committee, which investigated the matter and cleared it. Nine companies and engineering firms will be subjected to investigations, the sources said,



### Public Works Minister probes contracts

adding that the final report is expected within three months, which will then be referred to the parliament for further discussion.

Meanwhile, the sources said MPW's mega projects' sector has no plans to offer any new projects for bidding in the next five years with the exception of seven new contracts within the first phase of Mubarak Port project involving linking the port's first phase with the current road on Boubyan island, a container yard, customs and services area, building the administrative buildings and labor accommodation, supplying and installing handling gear, linking the port with the navigation canal at Khor Abdullah and developing the estuary itself.

### Naturalization

The government is currently preparing a new list of people to be granted Kuwaiti citizenship, said government sources, noting that the list was being prepared before the previous Cabinet resigned, and that the new Cabinet will resume studying it to be issued within the next few months. Notably, the National Assembly had

previously passed a law on granting citizenship to a maximum of 4,000 people in 2019, but the process was delayed due to the Cabinet's resignation.

The sources explained that the first list will only include 700 names of veteran military bedoons and old Kuwait Oil Company staff, in addition to 150 children of Kuwaiti women, widows and divorcees. "This list will be listed on the parliament's agenda in January to be reviewed by a special committee including elements from the supreme citizenship committee, army intelligence, state security and the illegal residents' agency," the sources explained, pointing out that lawmakers plan to propose a new bill to nationalize 4,000 people in 2020.

### Mahboula crackdown

Ahmadi municipality inspectors and Interior Ministry forces raided a street market in Mahboula, where a number of illegal residents were arrested pending deportation. Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi said the campaign resulted in confiscating and destroying nine tons of inedible foodstuff and filing 21 citations to hawkers. "We will not just



KUWAIT: Minister of Education Saud Al-Harbi attends a press conference yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

settle for cleaning Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh - inspection teams will be deployed in all governorates starting with Rai and Shuwaikh by the beginning of the year," Manfouhi underlined.

## Jahra Hospital hosts infertility workshop

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The new Jahra Hospital concluded a workshop on difficult male sterility problems. Head of Gynecology and Obstetrics Department at Jahra Hospital Sami Al-Taher described the workshop as a success, adding that the goal behind it was to help participants diagnose and treat the causes of disease. He further added that the hospital invited British expert Majid Shubair to participate in the workshop for the second time. The workshop was attended by a large number of gynecologists, obstetricians, urologists and doctors from the private sector, he said, adding that expert visits will be repeat-

ed three to four times a year.

Taher said the Gynecology and Obstetrics Department moved to the new hospital where it is 10 times larger than the old one, adding that he expects cases to increase from 400 to 1,200 in 2020, while noting that the hospital receives cases from Ahmadi area.

Meanwhile, in vitro fertilization consultant Dr Hazem Al-Rumaih said the sixth 'reproductive andrology surgery workshop' was held in Jahra Hospital for five days and included five lectures on the latest developments in treatment of men infertility. He said that nine operations on chronic sterility cases in men were conducted, noting sperms were extracted from six cases and were frozen.

Rumaih also announced that the next visit will be made in six months, noting that the new Jahra hospital is keen on hosting international experts to develop skills in treating complicated infertility cases. "The move to the new hospital will help increase the number of cases and improve services given to the largest number of citizens," he added.

## Man dead in Abdullah Al-Mubarak blaze



KUWAIT: Pictures taken from the victim's residence after the fire was extinguished.



The vehicle heavily damaged by the fire.



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A man died from smoke inhalation in a fire reported in Abdullah Al-Mubarak yesterday. Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh and Ardhiya fire stations' men rushed to the scene after receiving an emergency call reporting a blaze in a room adjacent to a house

in the area. Firemen rescued the Asian man who was rushed to the hospital, but was later pronounced dead. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire. In a separate case, Industrial Shuwaikh firemen put out a blaze in a vehicle parked in the Grand Avenues' parking lot. No injuries were reported.

EUROPEAN UNION  
Delegation to the State of Kuwait & Qatar



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**The deadline for applications is: 10 January 2020.**





US 'prepared for whatever' from N Korea: Top Pentagon general

## Lebanon PM-designate vows expert govt but faces protests

Page 7

Page 9



US President Donald Trump watches First Lady Melania Trump speak during a signing ceremony on S.1790, the 'National Defense Authorization Act for FY2020' at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland on Friday. —AFP

# Trump signs \$1.4tn budget to avert shutdown

## US lawmakers head home amid impasse over impeachment trial

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump signed a \$1.4 trillion budget package for the fiscal year 2020 into law on Friday to avert a government shutdown. White House spokesman Judd Deere told journalists travelling with the president on Air Force One.

Trump signed the package on the flight from Washington to Florida. He had been expected to sign the bill into law after the government's spending plans were hammered out by Congress this week, and his signature was needed before midnight to avert a shutdown.

US lawmakers who control the fate of President Donald Trump left Washington for a holiday break on Friday with no agreement over how they will handle the Senate trial to consider his impeachment charges in January. Trump, a Republican, stands little chance of being convicted and removed from office by the Republican-controlled Senate, which will weigh the two impeachment charges that were passed on Wednesday by the Democratic-led House of Representatives.

Republicans and Democrats are at loggerheads over how the trial will play out. Democrats want to call top Trump aides as witnesses, and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has not yet sent the impeachment package to the Senate, a bid to increase pressure on

Republicans in the upper chamber.

Many Republican lawmakers prefer a quick trial to get the matter behind them, and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell has dismissed the idea of calling witnesses. Some Republicans suggested Democrats were delaying because they had a weak case. "Hypocritical to argue this is a solemn constitutional duty and POTUS is an imminent threat to democracy and then sit on the articles. No one is fooled," Senator John Cornyn, the No. 2 Republican in the Senate, said on Twitter.

Democrats have argued that impeachment was an urgent matter because Trump represented a threat to democracy, particularly the integrity of the 2020 election. The House will not be able to send over the impeachment articles until it reconvenes on Jan. 7, at the earliest, according to a Democratic congressional aide. The Senate is due to return on Jan. 3 but will not hold votes until Jan. 6, according to McConnell.

No matter the outcome, Democrats have ensured that Trump will go down in history as one of only three US presidents to be impeached, following Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Bill Clinton in 1998. Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 as he faced impeachment. Trump, 73, is accused of abusing his power by holding back \$391 million in security aid to Ukraine in an

effort to get Kiev to announce a corruption investigation of former Vice President Joe Biden, a leading candidate for the Democratic nomination to face Trump in the November 2020 election.

The president is also charged with obstruction of Congress for directing administration officials and agencies not to cooperate with the impeachment inquiry.

Trump says he did nothing wrong and has dismissed his impeachment as a partisan bid to undo his 2016 election win.

### 'Profoundly immoral'

A Senate trial would kick off a politically charged year. It poses logistical challenges for the four Democratic senators left in the 2020 presidential race, as the first nominating contest takes place in Iowa on Feb. 3, and political risks for other Democrats, including Pelosi, who has overseen the impeachment process in the House. If the impasse over the trial drags on, Democrats could end up reinforcing the argument made by Republicans that the process has been more political than judicial. A Reuters/Ipsos poll released on Thursday showed that less than half of Americans say Trump should be removed from office, a sign of the uphill battle facing Democrats in terms of public sentiment.

"I have confidence in Nancy Pelosi. I

think what she has done and said is consistent," Biden told reporters on Friday in Los Angeles. Republican groups have been running ads targeting Democrats from conservative-leaning House districts who are perceived to be vulnerable after supporting impeachment. Some 31 House Democrats represent districts that backed Trump in 2016, but only three voted against impeachment on Wednesday. One of those lawmakers changed parties on Thursday.

A long trial delay also could alienate moderate Republicans in the Senate who might support more extensive proceedings than McConnell seems to want. A majority vote of the 100-member chamber is needed to set the trial procedures, meaning the 53 Republicans would likely need to be in near-unanimous agreement to proceed. Trump's presidency has polarized the United States, dividing families and friends and making it more difficult for politicians in Washington to find middle ground.

Christianity Today, a magazine founded by the late US evangelist Reverend Billy Graham, called on Thursday for Trump's removal from office in an editorial that branded the effort to get Ukraine to probe Biden as "profoundly immoral." Trump dismissed the magazine's push for his removal. —Reuters

## N Zealand to close gun buyback sparked by mosque shootings

WELLINGTON: A firearms buyback scheme launched in New Zealand after the Christchurch mosque shootings ends on Friday, with gun control groups hailing its success despite opposition from some firearms owners. The March 15 attacks in which 51 Muslim worshippers were killed shocked the normally peaceful South Pacific nation and prompted a swift ban on assault rifles and military-style semi-automatic weapons used by the lone shooter.

A key element of the ban was a buyback scheme accompanied by an amnesty, giving gun owners a payment and a guarantee of "no questions asked" when they handed in weapons deemed illegal under new laws.

Police said Friday that 56,350 firearms and 188,000 parts had been handed in and they were expecting a late rush before the final collection event at 8:00pm (0700GMT) Friday.

"There will be no extension—anyone prosecuted may lose their firearms license and could face a penalty of up to five years imprisonment," police said. Gun control advocates say the scheme has succeeded despite opposition from some firearms owners, who they accuse of adopting headline tactics similar to the US National Rifle Association (NRA).

"Their rhetoric and style of approach very much comes from the NRA," Gun Control NZ spokeswoman Hera Cook told AFP. "Everything's a slippery slope, everything's a burden on gun owners, there are no compromises that are reasonable."

The Council of Licensed Firearms Owners (COLFO) estimates there are 170,000 banned firearms in New Zealand, arguing that its data indicates less than a third of the illegal weapons have been collected. "The scheme is looking like a failure due to the rush on implementing political and ideological remedies, instead of developing a more fair and reasonable hand-in regime," spokeswoman Nicole McKee said. But police have provided no official estimate of illegal firearms numbers and Waikato University law professor Andrew Gillespie said there was no way to gauge them accurately.

"I have no idea how they (COLFO) got to this figure, given there's been no central firearms register since 1982," he said. "Estimates of how many firearms are in the country overall are guesswork, with margins of hundreds or thousands either side."

Regardless of the numbers, University of Sydney gun policy researcher Philip Alpers said the buyback would result in a safer community. "No one pretended police would immediately find every one of these guns," he said.

"But... for each rapid-fire weapon destroyed, you can expect the risk of another mass shooting to decrease."

The buyback's completion is not the end of gun reform in New Zealand and the government has already introduced a second tranche of measures to parliament. They include establishing a firearms registry to track every gun in the country and ensuring only a "fit and proper person" can hold a firearms license.

The measure will give police the power to exclude anyone promoting extremism, convicted of violent crime or with mental health issues, including attempted suicide. Gun Control NZ's Cook said the latest reforms would lead to a long-term change in New Zealand's firearms culture. —AFP

## Buttigieg under fire as Democratic rivals see 2020 threat

WASHINGTON: US Democratic candidates galloped into a critical phase of the 2020 campaign Friday after a bruising presidential debate which saw Pete Buttigieg brave incoming fire as a credible emerging threat to his rivals' White House ambitions. The young mayor of South Bend, Indiana is not the frontrunner that title currently belongs to former vice president Joe Biden, who put in a solid performance in the year's final debate.

But Buttigieg's steady rise in recent nationwide polls has brought him attention, including attacks by rivals who see him as an obstacle to their success in early voting states Iowa and New Hampshire.

And so the 37-year-old moderate on Thursday found himself in a debate scrap with his elders, one from the same moderate lane and one in the liberal camp. To date, Buttigieg's national high water mark was 11.8 percent in late November. Although he has slid slightly, to 8.3 percent, he has consolidated his status as a genuine contender, leading the polls in Iowa, the state that sets the tone in the primary race with its February 3 vote.

He has also made impressive gains in New Hampshire, which votes the following week.

"This is a fight for Iowa and New Hampshire right now," California Governor Gavin Newsom told NBC after the debate. "Buttigieg is out-performing and, as a consequence, he's at the eye of that storm."

The tempest landed squarely on Buttigieg when Senator Elizabeth Warren clocked him for holding high-price fundraisers. "Billionaires in wine caves should not pick the next president of the United States," she said, in a memorable reference to a recent closed-door Buttigieg fundraiser in an extravagant California cellar.

Tensions have mounted for weeks between the two candidates, and for good reason, said Democratic strategist Kenneth Baer. Buttigieg is "cutting into some of the base support of Elizabeth Warren," Baer told AFP, pointing in particular to college-educated white voters. Buttigieg knew he would get roughed up by rivals, and he came prepared.

"I am literally the only person on this stage who is not a millionaire or a billionaire," he said, accusing Warren, 70, of having a net worth "100 times" his own. "This is the problem with issuing purity tests you cannot yourself pass," he said.

### 'Respect our experience'

Amy Klobuchar joined the crackling debate with "Mayor Pete," who leads a city of about 100,000, by chipping away at his skimpy political resume. "I have not denigrated your experience as a local official," the three-term senator from Minnesota said, appearing to do just that.

Klobuchar, 59, reminded viewers she did not take kindly to Buttigieg criticizing the establishment experience of candidates like her. Biden and Senator Bernie Sanders in the previous debate.

"I just think you should respect our experience when

you look at how you evaluate someone who can get things done," said Klobuchar, who then turned the knife by noting how Buttigieg lost his only statewide race, for treasurer, "by 20 points" in 2010.

But Buttigieg held his own, highlighting his military experience in Afghanistan and his ability to win re-election in South Bend after revealing his homosexuality. "He kept his composure, he didn't get rattled, and he had an answer," said G. Terry Madonna, director of the Center for Politics and Public Affairs at Franklin & Marshall College. Klobuchar had her strongest debate performance by far, and the smaller stage afforded her a chance to shine as a "lively and energetic" contender, Madonna said.

But while the top candidates have clear-cut themes, Klobuchar's message is less focused, experts said. "Klobuchar needs to have a message (beyond) 'I'm from the Midwest, I've won in a tough state several times and that's why you should make me the nominee,'" Baer said.

Her campaign is polling at about three percent nationally but can expect to gain at least moderate traction after the debate. But while they may cause temporary movement, "they don't produce staying power," Madonna said. A real test comes in the six-week sprint to Iowa. Klobuchar launched a 27-county bus tour in Iowa Friday, while Warren returned there yesterday and Buttigieg arrives today. —AFP



Pete Buttigieg



International

# Lebanon PM-designate vows expert govt but faces protests

Demonstrators seek removal of ruling elite • US envoy pushes for reforms

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon's premier-designate Hassan Diab vowed Friday to form a government of non-political experts to lead the protest-hit country back from the verge of economic collapse.

But Lebanon's sectarian politics flared again as Sunni protesters rallied and blockaded roads with burning car tires to protest the nomination of Diab, who has the support of Shiite group Hezbollah and its allies. Diab, a 60-year-old engineering professor, vowed to form a government made of technocrats that should win "full support from Europe and the US" and open Lebanon up to badly-needed Western aid. He rejected the idea that his backing by Hezbollah, which is blacklisted as a terrorist group by Washington, would stand in the way.

"I think the Americans, when such a government is formed, will lend support because it is a government that aims to rescue Lebanon," he told broadcaster Deutsche Welle. Over the past two months, the Lebanese pound, officially pegged to the US dollar, has lost around 30 percent on the black market, while many companies have slashed wages and laid off staff.

US envoy David Hale, visiting Lebanon, said Washington was ready to help-provided Lebanon forms a new government marked by "good governance and freedom from corruption".

Diab's promise of an expert government that is above communal politics is in line with the demands of a two-months-old protest movement which accuses the political elite of being inept, corrupt and loyal only to their sectarian groups. The nationwide protest movement has rallied against a power-sharing system in force since the end of the 1975-1990 civil war under which the premier is a Sunni, the president a Maronite Christian and the parliamentary speaker a Shiite.

Diab promised to meet on Sunday with figures from the protest movement and asked them to give him "a chance"—despite the fact that the movement has

stressed its is spontaneous and has previously rejected dialogue with mainstream politicians.

**Hariri supporters, army, clash**

The unprecedented protests brought down premier Saad Hariri in late October, deepening the country's political turmoil. Diab was designated on Thursday but in a sign that sectarian power blocs remain paramount, he was not backed by the main parliamentary bloc of his Sunni community.

Diab was to start Saturday consultations with the parliamentary blocs to create his government, but Hariri's party has decided it "will not participate in the next government", according to a close source.

Diab was also angrily opposed by Sunni protesters. For a second straight day, security forces in a Sunni district of Beirut scuffled with crowds of young men, mainly Hariri supporters, who tried to block roads.

On Friday evening Hariri supporters clashed with the army in a western district of Beirut as troops tried to open a main road the demonstrators had blocked, AFP correspondents said.

Protesters hurled stones and fireworks at the soldiers, prompting riot-police to intervene and fire tear gas. In the mainly Sunni northern city of Tripoli, schools were closed and Diab opponents also blockaded roads and called for a general strike. The unrest early in the day prompted Hariri to call on his supporters to stop the protests, his second such appeal in two days. Diab on protocol visits to ex-premiers Friday met Hariri and other Sunni political figures who had not endorsed his nomination the previous day. Following the meetings, Diab reiterated he wanted to form "a government of independent technocrats" and added that "Hariri is giving his full support to the formation of this government".

**'Freedom from corruption'**

Hale, the US undersecretary of state for political affairs, said Washington has "no role in saying who



**BEIRUT:** Lebanese supporters of outgoing prime minister Saad Hariri are seen in the midst of tear-gas fumes during clashes with army and security forces in the Corniche al-Mazraa neighbourhood in the capital Beirut, on Friday. —AFP

should lead" or make up the next cabinet.

Following meetings with President Michel Aoun, Speaker Nabih Berri and Hariri, Hale said the United States was "ready to help Lebanon enter a new chapter of economic prosperity characterized by good governance and freedom from corruption". "But we, and other friends of Lebanon, can do so only when

Lebanon's leaders undertake a credible, visible and demonstrable commitment to reform," the former US ambassador to Lebanon said. Picking a new premier was only the first step, and agreeing on a full cabinet line-up could take time, he added. Diab himself suggested a timeframe of four to six weeks after consultations were due to begin. —AFP

## Tens of thousands of civilians flee renewed Syria violence

**BEIRUT:** Tens of thousands of civilians are fleeing bombardment in Syria's Idlib region, the UN said, as fighting flares in the jihadist bastion fuelling an already dire humanitarian situation.

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, Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham. The Damascus regime has repeatedly vowed to take back control of it. There has been an uptick in violence in Idlib since Monday and, despite UN calls for a de-escalation, major clashes between Syrian regime forces and armed groups has flared in the past 24 hours, killing more than 80 people on both sides, a war monitor said Friday.

The fighting raged around the jihadist-held town of Maaret Al-Numan in southern Idlib, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. It came as warplanes from Syrian regime ally Russia pounded areas around Maaret Al-Numan and the nearby town of Saraqeb with a series of air strikes, it added. The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said tens of thousands of civilians have fled southern Idlib since Monday and headed north for safety, while thousands more were waiting for the violence to abate to leave.



**DAMASCUS:** Abu Oussama carries his belongings as he prepares to flee bombardment in the jihadist-held town of Maaret Al-Numan in Syria's southern Idlib governorate on Friday. Tens of thousands of civilians are fleeing bombardment in Syria's Idlib region, the UN said, as fighting flares in the jihadist bastion fuelling an already dire humanitarian situation. —AFP

"Following the intensification of air strikes and shelling since 16 December in southern Idlib, tens of thousands of civilians are reportedly fleeing from Maaret Al-Numan area in southern Idlib governorate to (the) north," OCHA said. The UN agency said a shortage of fuel for private vehicles is limiting the movement of civilians while roads leading out of the town are "extremely dangerous" as they are reportedly being hit by air strikes.

"Since the evening of 19 December, residents of Maaret Al-Numan town... began to communicate to the humanitarian community that they wanted to move to safety, but were unable to move due to the heavy aerial bom-

bardment," the UN agency said. "The numbers of families who already fled in the past 72 hours are estimated to have reached tens of thousands and there are thousands of others who are potentially waiting for the air strikes and bombardment to ease to allow them safety to move," it added.

On Friday alone "hundreds of families are reported to have fled north", it said. The UN agency said the displacement of civilians was straining an already dire humanitarian situation, especially because it is happening during the winter. "Displacement happening in winter months is exacerbating the vulnerability of people in need. —AFP

## Libya govt urges military aid from 'friendly' countries

**TRIPOLI:** Libya's UN-recognized unity government on Friday urged five "friendly countries" to implement military deals as it seeks to repel the forces of an eastern-based strongman fighting to seize the capital. The call came a day after the Government of National Accord (GNA) approved the activation of such a deal with Ankara, paving the way for a bigger Turkish role eight months into Haftar's offensive.

Mired in chaos since the NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi eight years ago, the North African country has become split between bitterly opposed administrations in the east and west—each backed by outside powers. Tripoli-based GNA head Fayez al-Sarraj sent letters to the leaders of the United States, Britain, Italy, Algeria and Turkey, urging them to "activate security cooperation deals", his office said in a statement.

The aim is to help the GNA "face aggression against the Libyan capital... by any armed group operating outside the legitimacy of the state, to preserve social peace and achieve stability in Libya," he said.

The United Arab Emirates and Egypt

have assisted Haftar while both Turkey and Qatar openly support the GNA. Haftar's April push to seize Tripoli from "terrorists" backing the GNA made early gains but has stalled on the edges of the capital in a bloody stalemate.

According to the latest UN figures on Friday, the fighting has left at least 284 civilians dead and 363 wounded since the April 4 start of the armed conflict that has forced more than 140,000 Libyans to flee their homes. Following the GNA's announcement over Turkey, the United Nations' mission in Libya, UNSMIL, renewed its call for a political solution to the conflict.

"UNSMIL regrets the recent developments: military escalation, growing foreign interference in Libya & exchange of treason accusations by Libyan parties, which put the unity of Libya at risk," it tweeted overnight. Sarraj also called for help to battle the Islamic State group and Al-Qaeda, saying Haftar's offensive had given the jihadist groups "the appropriate opportunity and environment" for a resurgence in Libya.

IS was pushed out of its stronghold Sirte by forces loyal to the GNA in December 2016. But despite losing its main territory, east of Tripoli, the group has repeatedly shown itself capable of launching deadly attacks. Sarraj also called for greater cooperation in the fight against organized crime and to prevent irregular migration. —AFP

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## More than 230 suspected MS-13 gang men arrested

**NEW YORK:** Investigators have arrested more than 230 suspected MS-13 gang members in New York, Baltimore and El Salvador, US officials announced Friday, in a move celebrated by President Donald Trump. The operation against the Hispanic gang was the result of more than two years of investigative work, US drug agency DEA officials and the Suffolk County prosecutor said in a statement.

Of more than 230 people arrested, 96 were from Long Island—a stronghold of MS-13 — although the statement did not specify if they were American or foreign nationals.

Shortly after the announcement, Trump tweeted: "We are getting MS-13 gang members, and many other people that shouldn't be here, out of our Country!"

The president has frequently linked illegal gang activity to his campaign to lower migration to the US. In 2017 he said MS-13 had "literally taken power in American cities and towns". "Today's arrests close the book on MS-13's attempt to build an arsenal of brutality on the East Coast," said DEA Special Agent Ray Donovan. —AFP



## International

# Macron looks to give 'new force' to Sahel anti-jihadist campaign

## French President in Ivory Coast to celebrate Christmas with French troops

**PORT-BOUET, Ivory Coast:** French President Emmanuel Macron arrived in Ivory Coast on Friday to celebrate Christmas with French troops, saying Paris would work to give "new force" to the regional fight against Islamist militants. The jihadist insurgency in several poor Sahel nations will be a top item on Macron's agenda in 48-hour stay in the region where attacks have spread since the Islamist militancy began seven years ago in Mali.

Away from weeks of protest strikes gripping France, Macron's personal chef travelled with him to cook dinner for around 1,000 troops at the military base in Port-Bouet, near Abidjan's airport.

"I hope we can give new depth, new commitments, a new force to this operation and a fight that is key to the stability and security of the Sahel," the French leader said addressing troops at Port-Bouet.

"We will keep up the fight against jihadist terrorists. We will continue to do so with our African partners and with our European and international partners," he said. "Because if we let the threat flourish, it will impact us too." Earlier Macron and his wife Brigitte were met at the airport with his Ivorian counterpart Alassane Ouattara.

Despite some 4,500 French troops in the Sahel region, alongside a 13,000-strong UN peacekeeping force in Mali, the conflict has engulfed the centre of the country and spread to neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger. The leaders of five Sahel nations are due to attend a summit in Paris on January 13, when Macron said they would clarify the "political and strategic framework" of the operation against the militants.

### Traditional French Christmas fare

Macron met several French soldiers who took part in November in an anti-terrorist operation in Mali, where 13 men lost their lives. Dining in a huge tent installed on a football pitch, on the menu for Macron and troops were traditional French Christmas fare, including foie gras, poultry from the Landes region served with morel mushrooms, regional French cheeses, chocolate cake and mandarins from Corsica. At midnight, a group of French Foreign Legion members joined by local staff sang happy birthday to the president who turned 42 yesterday.

Today, Macron will pay a flying visit for talks with President Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger, where jihadist attacks are frequent, as in both neighboring Mali and Burkina Faso.

Macron spent Christmas in 2017 with troops deployed to Niger and went last year to Chad. On Saturday, Macron and Ouattara will visit an International Counter-Terrorism Academy launched by the two countries near Abidjan in October 2018. Macron will also visit the rundown Abidjan district of Koumassi with Didier Drogba, a former hero of the Olympique de Marseille and Chelsea football clubs, to inaugurate sports facilities.

Two years after a first trip to Abidjan when he laid the foundation stone for a metro network, Macron is due to finalize plans with Ouattara to finance the vast construction effort, estimated at 1.5 billion euros (\$1.66 billion). — AFP



**ABIDJAN:** French President Emmanuel Macron celebrates his 42nd birthday with French soldiers from the Foreign Legion 2e REP regiment during a Christmas dinner with French troops at the Port-Bouet military camp near Abidjan yesterday during his three-day visit to West Africa. — AFP

## Trump has one of best weeks apart from impeachment

**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump kicked off Christmas vacation on Friday after a series of legislative victories gave him one of his best weeks in office—apart from becoming only the third US president ever impeached. Surprisingly, for a capital paralyzed by Democratic-Republican gridlock and a presidency mired in scandal, a whole string of breakthroughs came through at once.

While Democrats and Republicans tussle over how his Senate impeachment trial will unfold, possibly in January, Trump is fighting to refocus voters' minds on the brighter side of his presidency ahead of the 2020 election.

And as he packed his bags for a golf holiday through the New Year at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida, Congress handed him ammunition. Trump signed a giant \$1.4 trillion spending deal that the Senate passed on Thursday, ahead of a deadline to avoid leaving the federal government with empty coffers. Also Thursday, the House of Representatives, where the Democratic majority had voted for impeachment a day earlier, finally approved a new US-Mexico-Canada free trade deal, known as USMCA.

That will go to the Republican-controlled



**US President Donald Trump (center-left) stands with US First Lady Melania Trump after signing the "National Defense Authorization Act for FY2020" at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland on Friday. — AFP**

Senate and on to Trump. To top it all off, just before departing for Florida Trump signed a \$738 billion defense spending bill that includes funding for the creation of one of his pet projects—a new branch of the military called Space Force. "Amid grave threats to our national security, American superiority in space is absolutely vital, and we're leading, but we're not leading by enough, but very shortly we'll be leading by a lot," he said. "The space force will help us deter aggression and control the ultimate high ground."

### Economic boom, election boost?

One more slice of seasonal cheer was

delivered Friday with the White House accepting a formal invitation from House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, one of Trump's leading Democratic foes, to deliver his annual State of the Union speech to Congress on February 4.

Impeachment and the still-to-come trial were not even mentioned. Not bad for a president who some 48 hours ago was being pilloried by Democrats in the House for betraying his oath of office and impeached on two counts.

Republicans exasperated by Trump's erratic foreign policy, bombastic style and habit of insulting people in public have

long wished he would stick to touting the country's roaring economy. Unemployment is rock bottom, the stock market is hitting record highs and, usually, an incumbent president with a good economy gets a straightforward path to re-election.

The fact that despite these advantages Trump's approval rating is stuck in the low 40 percent range and almost half the country backs impeachment shows his inherent weaknesses. But Trump appears to be making more effort to stay on message since his impeachment.

At a rally on Wednesday in the swing state of Michigan—held as the House was voting his impeachment—Trump said the economy would be his shield against any assault from the eventual Democratic challenger in 2020. "When I'm on the debate stage with one of these characters and they try and say negative stuff, I'll just say, 'Well, here's the story: In the history of our country, this group is doing the best, and that group is doing the best, and the women are doing the best,'" he told the crowd.

"The whole country is doing the best." Democrats, who are yet to pick a candidate from the big field of hopefuls, say Trump's economic boom and the rosy macro-economic statistics ignore reality for swaths of the country. At the candidates' latest debate, Thursday, entrepreneur Andrew Yang said his party should focus on those voters, not the drama in Washington. "We have to stop being obsessed over impeachment, which unfortunately strikes many Americans like a ballgame where you know what the score is going to be," he said. — AFP

## Anti-Asian assaults a 'neglected' plight in France

**VITRY-SUR-SEINE, France:** Ming was getting off the bus in the Paris suburbs when a masked man attempted to rip her handbag from her. When she resisted, the attacker threw her to the ground and beat her unconscious. The ordeal left her with two fractures and suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. She could not work for three weeks.

Campaigners fear such attacks are part of an under-reported wave of racially-targeted violence against French people of Asian origin, fuelled by racist stereotypes and mistaken beliefs about "rich" tourists.

Ming, who gave a pseudonym because she continues to fear for her safety, lost her bag, containing a few dozen euros and her ID cards in the attack in the southeastern Paris suburb of Val-de-Marne. But it is the sense of helplessness and anger that the 41-year-old says she has struggled to get over.

"Why me? I didn't have any money on me, no jewelry, nothing. Why such violence?" she said. It was the death of tailor Zhang Chaolin in northern Paris in 2016 that first brought to light assaults on members of the Asian community. The 49-year-old father-of-two was on his way to a restaurant in a Paris suburb when he was violently mugged by two teenagers, who came away with just a phone charger and some sweets. They were jailed in 2018.

That attack, which followed a string of robberies targeting Chinese tourists and small-business owners in France's gritty high-rise suburbs, sparked mass protests against what demonstrators called a rise in anti-Asian racism in

poorer French communities. "We realized that there was a problem with the death of Chaolin but not its scale," said Sun-Lay Tan, spokesman of Security for Everyone, a community group based in Val-de-Marne. Because France bans statistics on ethnicity, there is no official data on these assaults, but campaigners said they have begun to see a pattern.

The victim, often a woman or an elderly person, is spotted in the street, followed into a deserted area and attacked. "The victims are targeted because they are Asian," said Tan. He said he has "no doubt" that the attacks are rooted in racism. "They are weak", they always have cash on them", they don't know how to defend themselves... these are the stereotypes behind the attacks."

Without an ethnicity breakdown in the police assault figures, only the broader number of complaints filed is available. Police recorded 114 assaults between May 2018 and May 2019, the equivalent of an attack every three days, most of them in the Val-de-Marne area.

But campaigners fear the issue is more widespread and accuse the authorities of "neglecting" this form of racism. Many people who have been attacked do not file a complaint, either fearing retaliation, because they are ashamed or because they do not have a valid residency permit.

"Getting into contact with people who have been assaulted isn't easy because victims feel isolated and are not aware that other people are being attacked," said Laetitia Chhiv, head of Association for Young Chinese in France (AJCF). Robert Na Champassak said he joined Security for Everyone, which supports victims in their legal battles to bring the attackers to justice, to "lift the taboo" surrounding these attacks. His 64-year-old mother died from a stroke 18 days after being assaulted on her way to a dance class in 2017. While the doctors did not draw a causal link between the attack and the stroke, Robert is convinced the assault precipitated the deterioration of her health. — AFP



**Asylum seekers from Guerrero State eat at their makeshift camp in Chamizal Park in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. In the mud and biting cold of a makeshift camp in the border city of Ciudad Juarez, more than 1,000 Mexican migrants had been waiting for weeks, some for months, for a chance to file for asylum in the United States. — AFP**

## At US-Mexican border, migrants give up hope of crossing

**CIUDAD JUAREZ, Mexico:** In muddy makeshift camps in the Mexican border city of Ciudad Juarez, more than 1,000 migrants had waited for weeks for a chance to request asylum in the United States, enduring cold nights and long days of uncertainty. Frustrated, many are giving up and clearing out.

Authorities say as of last week, there were still about 1,400 migrants, most of them from southwestern Mexico, holding out hope under tents and tarps not far from the Rio Grande. But on Thursday, only about 700 remained. The others grew tired of the near-freezing temperatures at night and the seemingly fruitless quest to be heard by US officials. Local associations

convinced several families to head to shelters or hotels when the mercury started to plummet. Some instead made their way across the river, without any idea if they would succeed. And still others opted to remain—they are afraid to lose their place on the murky wait list system they themselves created to convince US border agents to take them in order of their arrival.

"They won't let us proceed unless we hand them our slips to show them we have indeed been waiting," said Rosa, who keeps up the list on a daily basis. Every night, the men and women at the camp keep watch on the comings and goings on the bridge crossing the Rio Grande—the natural, international border—to make sure new arrivals don't jump the queue.

According to a survey recently led by several universities in northern Mexico, 60 percent of displaced people in camps wait their turn in tents, but more than a quarter are sleeping in the open air. Many migrants say they are fleeing violence in their hometowns. "The cartels threatened us and took our land," said one man from Guerrero state. "At first, they asked us for money," he explained. — AFP

## Bolsonaro: A year of anti-establishment uproar in Brazil

**RIO DE JANEIRO:** Right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro has had a combative first year leading Brazil after vowing to "liberate" the country from the left and "globalization," while pushing his pro-gun and religion agenda. Yet it hasn't been easy for the former army captain, a self-confessed fan of Brazil's 1964-85 dictatorship who has readily blamed democratic checks for his inability to deliver on promises.

"I always dreamed of liberating Brazil from the nefarious ideology of the left," he said during a visit to Washington in March. "We have to deconstruct many things, undo many things, before starting to do" others, he added. He's been at loggerheads not just with Brazil's left wing, but also climate change activists and international organizations castigating him for policies that have seen deforestation in the Amazon rainforest surge since he took office.

In September, as hugely damaging wildfires raged in the Amazon eliciting worldwide alarm, Bolsonaro warned the United Nations to stay out of Brazil's affairs. "We're not here to erase nationalities and sovereignty in the name of abstract 'global interests,'" Bolsonaro told the UN's General Assembly.

It's been a turbulent time domestically since the 64-year-old took office on January 1, and months without resignations or sackings in ministries or state agencies have been rare. Bolsonaro's more pragmatic supporters—the financial markets, farming industry and military high command—have been competing for influence against evangelical churches and the president's three eldest sons, who have been highly active on Twitter. The government is split between the "enlightened side and a dark side," former finance minister Antonio Delfim Neto told Exame magazine, praising in particular ultra-liberal economy minister Paulo Guedes.

This is "a government that is economically liberal and politically anti-liberal," said Marcos Nobre, a philosophy professor at Campinas University.

### 'Anti-system president'

Having originally promised he wouldn't seek re-election, Bolsonaro has already backtracked, saying in June: "If the people want it, we'll stay for another four years." The left is divided and was weakened by the jailing of former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, giving Bolsonaro the opportunity to rally his supporters. It seems to be working. After an initial dip, his popularity has stabilized with one third of voters judging his government's performance as good, one third bad and a final third calling it fair.

A poll by FSB/Veja earlier this month said the only person who could defeat Bolsonaro at the next election was his own justice minister, Sergio Moro. While a judge, he jailed Lula, who was released last month. Bolsonaro is behaving "like an anti-system president and when he fails he can say that he's trying to change things democratically but the system won't let him," said Nobre.

He says Bolsonaro wants to "install an authoritarian regime but can't do it" right now. Bolsonaro and his sons are nonetheless testing the system's limits. Eduardo Bolsonaro, a lawmaker, said in October: "If the left radicalizes, we'll have to respond" like the military dictatorship did in 1968, when it dissolved Congress, suspended the constitution and imposed censorship.

Having been elected president despite the lack of backing from a powerful party, Bolsonaro founded his own political grouping—Alliance for Brazil (APB)—in November with the promise to "respect God and religion," oppose abortion and legalize the carrying of arms. APB is due to make its entrance to the political scene in municipal elections next October.

But while Bolsonaro appears to be flexing his political muscles for some, others view his actions as an admission of powerlessness. Guedes managed to get his pension reform through Congress but the expected economic recovery hasn't happened and unemployment isn't reducing either.

Other campaign promises—such as legalizing the carrying of arms and offering immunity to police carrying out lethal operations—were either rejected by Congress or halted by the Supreme Court. — AFP



## International

## US 'prepared for whatever' from N Korea: Top Pentagon general

## Pyongyang warns Washington could 'pay dearly' for rights criticism

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon's top general said Friday the US military is ready for anything from North Korea in the face of Pyongyang's ominous promise of a "Christmas gift" if Washington does not act to ease tensions. "Korea is one of those places in the world where we've always maintained high levels of readiness," said General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The US alliance with Japan and South Korea is "rock-solid," he said. "I think it's prepared to defend the interests of the United States, Japan and South Korea at a moment's notice," he told reporters.

Milley declined to say whether US and allied forces in the region had stepped up readiness in the face of the possibility that North Korea could test a new nuclear-capable missile in the near future.

"North Korea has indicated a variety of things. And I think you're aware of all those. So we are prepared for whatever," he said. Speaking next to Milley, US Defense Secretary Mark Esper said the US was ready "to fight tonight" if necessary, but stressed the need for diplomacy with North Korea.

"I remain hopeful that we could get the process started again and remain on the diplomatic path," Esper said. Pyongyang has shown frustration at the lack of sanctions relief after three summits with President

Donald Trump. Earlier this month it promised a "Christmas gift" if the US does not come up with concessions by the end of the year after it placed a moratorium on long-range missile tests. US North Korea negotiator Stephen Biegun-just confirmed to the number two position in the State Department-visited Seoul, Tokyo and Beijing this week for discussions on the regional security situation.

In Seoul, he called Pyongyang's comments "so hostile and negative and so unnecessary."

He challenged North Korea to restart discussions. "It is time for us to do our jobs. Let's get this done. We are here and you know how to reach us."

## Rights criticism

North Korea yesterday warned Washington would only aggravate tensions and "pay dearly" for criticizing Pyongyang over human rights, with nuclear negotiations between the two deadlocked.

The international community has frequently condemned North Korea for political repression, and for decades of prioritizing its military and its nuclear weapons program over adequately providing for its people. Criticizing Pyongyang's human rights record would only aggravate the "already tense situation" on the Korean peninsula, "like pouring oil over burning fire", a North Korean foreign

ministry spokesperson said, according to the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). The statement was in response to concern expressed by a US state department official over North Korea's human rights situation, KCNA said.

The United States "will be made to pay dearly" for such remarks, the North Korean spokesperson was quoted by KCNA as saying. The United Nations General Assembly this week had also condemned Pyongyang's "long-standing and ongoing systematic, widespread and gross" violations of human rights.

Negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program have been deadlocked since a summit in Hanoi collapsed in February, and Pyongyang has said that if Washington fails to make it an acceptable offer, it will adopt an unspecified "new way". Earlier this month, it even promised a "Christmas gift" if the US does not come up with concessions by the end of the year.

It has carried out a series of static tests at its Sohae rocket facility this month, after a number of weapons launches in recent weeks, some of them described as ballistic missiles by Japan and others-which Pyongyang is banned from testing under UN sanctions. The Pentagon's top general said Friday the US military is ready for anything from North Korea. — AFP



ARLINGTON, VA: (Left to right) Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Army Gen Mark Milley hold an end of year press conference at the Pentagon on Friday in Arlington, Virginia. — AFP

## 'Catastrophic' conditions as bushfires rage in Australia

BARGO, Australia: A scorching heatwave intensified bushfires ravaging parts of Australia yesterday, and out-of-control blazes surrounding Sydney worsened under "catastrophic" conditions. Australia's eastern coast has been hit by a record-breaking heatwave, which has moved in from the west of the country, fanning hundreds of fires in its path. Sydney was shrouded in toxic smoke as blazes flared to its north, south and west, some just 130 kilometers (80 miles) from Australia's largest city.

"Today has been an awful day," New South Wales state fire commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said yesterday afternoon. Temperatures were expected to peak at 47 degrees Celsius (116 Fahrenheit) in parts of the state-the country's most populous-including in parts of west Sydney.

Australia endures bushfires every year but the early and intense start to this season, along with the record temperatures, has fuelled concerns about global warming.

The fires have torched at least three million hectares (7.4 million acres) of land-an area equivalent to the size of Belgium-



SYDNEY: Firetrucks are seen stationed on a road as a bushfire burns in Bargo, southwest of Sydney yesterday. — AFP

with at least 10 people killed and more than 800 homes destroyed.

Two massive blazes south of Sydney generated their own thunderstorms, fire authorities said, with a "mega fire" burning to the north also threatening the dangerous phenomena. A fire-generated thunderstorm can occur when a smoke plume is cooled as it meets pressure in the atmosphere, creating a cloud capable of producing its own lightning and powerful winds.

Some 3,000 firefighters across the state were bracing for a wind change in the

afternoon, expected to bring "dangerous and difficult, volatile conditions", Fitzsimmons added. "We will not get on top of these fires until we get some decent rain," Fitzsimmons said of the outlook.

"We are seeing a relentless pattern of hot, dry air dominating the weather features at the moment," he added. Evacuations were being carried out in the town of Bargo, on the front of a 185,000-hectare blaze which tore through the nearby area on Thursday. "It's horrific, it's devastating driving around. We feel pretty iso-

lated where we are with the roadblocks. Loved ones can't come and see us," Bargo resident Corey Cartes told AFP. Cartes was told to leave two days ago, but has stayed behind to defend his property. "Everyone is offering to help, but there is nothing they can do. Not for us now, just stay out and stay safe and we hope the fireies (firefighters) can do their job." In the state of South Australia, which in the past few days has borne the brunt of the heat wave, more than 1,500 firefighters have been battling fires that ripped through more than 40,000 hectares.

Two people died in fires there over the past two days, and dozens of firefighters and residents have been treated for injuries and smoke inhalation. Emergency crews were also on alert in the southern state of Victoria, where fires were burning following days of scorching temperatures.

Leading doctors have warned of a "public health emergency" given the unprecedented toxic smoke choking Sydney, which worsened to a dense haze on Saturday evening.

"It is pretty much the whole New South Wales population being exposed to prolonged smoke and because we have never experienced this before, we don't know what the eventual outcome will be," Kim Loo told AFP. "It probably won't be obvious for months, or even years," added Loo, also a member of advocacy group Doctors for the Environment. Hospitals have been recording sharp increases in emergency room visits for heat exhaustion and respiratory problems. — AFP

## Aceh tsunami survivor hopes next generation will learn lessons

BANDA ACEH: Armilla Yanti was returning from her regular Sunday trip to the market in this Indonesian city when a towering tsunami wave crashed ashore. She and her parents survived, but her two sisters were killed on that fateful day on Dec. 26, 2004. Fifteen years on, she frequently relives the traumatic events when recounting her story to visitors at the Aceh Tsunami Museum, where she works as a guide.

In doing so, she hopes to spread the lessons learned from her heartbreaking experience - such as the importance of early warning systems and fleeing to higher ground when an alarm is raised or if there is an earthquake. "Since I'd experienced the trauma of tsunami, when I meet visitors I share my experiences... so that they will never forget," said the 44-year-old. The museum where she works, built to commemorate the disaster, also has an education centre and acts as a disaster shelter.

More than 230,000 people were killed in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and nine other countries after a 9.1 magnitude quake off the coast of Indonesia's Aceh province triggered a tsunami as high as 17.4 metres (57 feet). Northern Aceh province bore the brunt of the disaster, where a total of 128,858 were killed and another 37,087 are still listed as missing, according to data compiled by the government and aid agencies. Many lost their lives simply because there was little information on what to do.

"I always tell the younger generation if you live or near to the beach areas like us, and if there is a strong earthquake after the shock has stopped just run away," said Mundiayah binti Sahan, 70, who sell souvenirs near a spot where a boat washed ashore by the tsunami remains lodged atop a building. Local officials say they have put more efforts into tsunami mitigation and educating the communities.

Almost every village in the province has at least one tsunami-damaged building, which serves as a reminder of the destructive power of the waves. More than 25,600 buildings remain in the "red zone" that is considered prone to tsunamis, liquefaction and flooding, according to Banda Aceh's public works and urban housing agency. At the museum, kindergarten student Bima al Farizi did not hesitate when asked what she should do in the event of an earthquake and a tsunami. "We should run to higher ground," she said. — Reuters

## Pakistan court hands down death sentence to scholar

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani anti-terrorism court yesterday sentenced a liberal scholar and former university lecturer to death on blasphemy charges. In 2013, Junaid Hafeez was accused by students at the university where he taught of making blasphemous Facebook posts. Insulting Islam's Prophet Mohammad carries a mandatory death penalty in Pakistan, which is about 95 percent Muslim.

His lawyers say he was framed by students from an extremist Islamist party for his liberal and secular views and this month a US religious freedom commission placed Hafeez on its list of global victims.

"He (Junaid Hafeez) shall be hanged by neck till his death subject to its confirmation by the honorable high court," a court order stated. His defence lawyer Asad Jamal said he would appeal against the ruling in a higher court. "There can't be a fair trial in blasphemy cases in Pakistan," Jamal told Reuters. "We have a spineless system. No one can stand up to a blasphemy charge."

Hafeez, who quit his studies at Pakistan's top medical college to pursue a passion for art and literature, secured a Fulbright scholarship and attended Jackson State University where he majored in American literature, photography and theatre. The trial was held in a prison in the central Pakistan city of Multan under tight security due to threats to Hafeez's family and his lawyer. — Reuters

## Jail me, hang me: Duterte says won't answer to ICC

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte dared the International Criminal Court (ICC) on Friday to jail him or hang him over alleged extrajudicial killings in his war on drugs, but said he would refuse to cooperate with foreigners if put on trial.

His remarks were the latest vows of defiance against the court in The Hague that has yet to decide whether to investigate him over thousands of deaths in his crackdown, during which activists say crimes against humanity were committed. "You do not scare me that you will jail me in the International Criminal Court. I will never allow myself to answer these whites," Duterte said in a speech to military cadets and reservists.

"I will never, never, never answer any question coming from you. It's bullshit to me. I am only responsible to the Filipino. Filipinos will judge." "He added: "And if you hang me for all what I did, go ahead. It will be my pleasure." Duterte has also blasted the United Nations after its human rights body approved a resolution in July to investigate alleged abuses in the Philippines.

The maverick former mayor has repeatedly taunted the ICC and threatened to slap or arrest its prosecutor, who in February 2018 announced a preliminary examination was being conducted into the drugs killings. Duterte, 74, responded by unilaterally cancelling his country's membership of the court a month later, without legislative approval, saying it had deprived him of a presumption of innocence. Amnesty International called his move "misguided" and "cowardly". The ICC's prosecutor says jurisdiction applies to crimes committed while a country is a member.

In a scheduled Dec. 5 report on its activities worldwide, the ICC said it had "significantly advanced" its examination and aimed to finalise it in 2020, then decide whether to seek a formal investigation.

Human rights groups say Duterte's anti-drugs crackdown had led to systematic executions and police cover-ups. Police reject that and say the nearly 7,000 people they have killed were armed drug suspects who resisted arrest. — Reuters



DHAKA: In this file photo, Former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (right) meets with Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus (center) and Fazle Hasan Abed, founder of non-governmental development organization BRAC, in Dhaka on May 6, 2012. — Reuters

## Fazle Abed, founder of world's biggest non-government body BRAC, dies

LONDON: Fazle Abed, the founder of BRAC, the world's largest non-governmental development organization, died on Friday at the age of 83 in his home country of Bangladesh. Abed founded BRAC in 1972 as a small rehabilitation project and over five decades built up the massive operation that worked in 11 countries in Asia and Africa, with offices in Britain, the United States and the Netherlands. Its goals were helping the landless poor by educating children, teaching women about health care, and funding small businesses.

Ameerah Haq, its global board chairwoman, said Abed had "unflinching dedication, focus and work ethic". "He always put others before himself and let his work speak for itself," she said in a statement.

Educated in Dhaka and at the University of Glasgow in Scotland, Abed trained as an accountant before returning

to East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, to join the Shell oil company. When a devastating cyclone hit the south of the country, killing 300,000 people, Abed quit corporate life to set up an organization called HELP to aid victims. Then came East Pakistan's nine-month fight for independence from Pakistan in 1971, when some 10 million refugees flooded Bangladesh and 30 million other people were displaced. "The death and devastation that I saw happening in my country made my life as an executive in an oil company seem very inconsequential and meaningless. From then on I was committed to helping change lives," Abed told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview in London in 2014.

Abed founded BRAC, originally the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee, then the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee.

Along with working on behalf of the landless poor, particularly women, BRAC tackled crucial problems such as infant mortality and illiteracy. BRAC staff went door-to-door to teach mothers in 16 million homes how to cope with dehydration caused by diarrhoea, a major cause of child mortality, and ran a four-year program to encourage child immunization. The organization also developed sustainable business models that could be replicated, creating networks of self-employed micro-entrepreneurs using microfinance to build business. — Reuters



## Analysis

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The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

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## Uzbek-Kuwait ties

From the first years of the Independence, Uzbekistan is open to establish friendly relations with all foreign countries. The State of Kuwait is one of the principal and important partners of Uzbekistan in the Middle East and in the Arabic world. The State of Kuwait recognized the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan on 30 December, 1991. Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in July 1994, with Kuwait opening an embassy in Tashkent in 2001, and Uzbekistan opening an embassy in Kuwait in November 2004.

This year we celebrate 25th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. During this period, the political dialogue and parliamentary cooperation were reinforced. We organize regular political consultations between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of two countries. A significant impetus to the development of relations between the two countries came with the official visit by the first President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, to Kuwait on 19-20 January, 2004. The visit also laid the foundation for further strengthening bilateral relations.

In July 2008, His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah officially visited Uzbekistan and the two countries signed a number of documents aimed at strengthening Uzbek-Kuwait relations and enhancing trade, economic and investment cooperation.

In May 2006, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Salim Al-Sabah visited Uzbekistan and during the visit, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries on political consultations. In May 2015, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov visited Kuwait to participate in the 42nd session of the OIC Ministerial Council. The delegation of Kuwait headed by Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kuwait, took part in the 43rd session of the OIC Ministerial Council in Tashkent on 18-19 October, 2016. Head of the Kuwait delegation was received by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan HE Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov officially visited Kuwait on 7-10 February, 2017 and held the first-round of political consultations between the foreign ministries of the two countries.

A delegation of the Foreign Ministry of Kuwait headed by Deputy Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ali Sulayman Al-Sayid officially visited Uzbekistan from 27 April to 1 May, 2017 and during his visit the second-round of political consultation was held in Tashkent. On 9-11 May, 2018 the Special Representative of the President of Uzbekistan on Afghanistan Ismatillo Irgashev visited Kuwait. A delegation of the Foreign Ministry of Uzbekistan headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Dilshod Akhatov officially visited Kuwait on 3-5 December 2018, and during his visit the third-round of political consultation was held.

On 29 March 2019, the meeting of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense of Kuwait His Highness Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was held in Tashkent. Members of the National Assembly (Parliament) of Kuwait visited Uzbekistan on five occasions in October 2002, September 2005, April 2010, April 2015 and March 2019. In June 2017 the inter-parliamentary group "Uzbekistan-Kuwait" was established in the Oliy Majlis of Uzbekistan.

The representatives of Kuwait participate permanently at the presidential and parliamentary elections as an international observer, and other important political manifestations in Uzbekistan. Professors of Kuwait university Abdul Reda Assiri and Hamad Al-Abdulla, the executive director of "Times Kuwait" Reaven DSuza and the journalist of "Al-Nahar" Samira Frimesh participated at the parliamentary elections in December, 2014.

Assistant of the State secretary of the Ministry of information of Kuwait Haila Al-Mekaimi, member of the Constitutional council, professor of Kuwait university Mohammed Al-Fili and the journalist of newspaper "Al-Seyassah" Ussama Surur were participated at the elections of President of Uzbekistan in December, 2016. Professor of Kuwait university professor Haila Al-Mekaimi participated at the international conferences "Central Asia: one past and a common future, cooperation for sustainable development and mutual prosperity" (Samarkand, 10-11 November, 2017) and "Interconnectedness in Central Asia: challenges and new opportunities" (Tashkent, 19-20 February, 2019). Economic and trade cooperation is growing positively. According to the agreement on trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation signed on 19 January, 2004 a joint intergovernmental commission on trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation was established. The International Investment Forum, which was held on 5-6 November, 2015, in Uzbekistan, saw a large delegation from Kuwait. — Embassy of Uzbekistan

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



In this photo taken on Dec 19, 2019, students and demonstrators light up their mobile phones and shout slogans during a protest against India's new citizenship law in Chennai. — AFP

## Protesters tweet, TikTok but Delhi fights back

With the world's cheapest data, young Indians have lapped up Facebook, TikTok and WhatsApp. But when these toys are used as tools to organize protests or fuel unrest, the government gets scared. India is the world leader when it comes to cutting off access to the internet, activists say, despite the country's ambition to be a digital superpower. Seven million Kashmiris have been offline since August, and over the past week mobile internet was cut for tens of millions of others during demonstrations against a new citizenship law criticized as anti-Muslim.

Mumbai student Suvarna Salve said she and her friends started formulating tweets and eye-catching memes hours after the legislation was passed. "We are using technology to amplify our message by means of tweets, posters, hashtags on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and even Telegram to mobilize people to come in large numbers to register their dissent," Salve told AFP. "We are using social media with common hashtags to keep them on top of India trends," Salve said, adding that she was inspired by the youth-led pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong.

As of Thursday evening, the hashtags #IndiaAgainstCAA and #CAAProtest were among Twitter's top trends in India, with more than 300,000 tweets. On photo-sharing app Instagram, posts offering advice on everything from what to take to a demonstration to what to do if you are detained by police have gone viral. Politics has even made it to TikTok - which, like WhatsApp and Facebook, has more users in India than anywhere else and is usually a showcase for amateur Bollywood dance

performances. Now the Chinese-made platform is being used to share montages of marching students and videos - set to music - of police beating demonstrators. Mohammed Javed, 23, initially heard about the demonstrations on social media. On Thursday afternoon, he made his way to a protest in Mumbai - his first. "When I saw my friends sharing videos about this issue on TikTok and Instagram, I felt that I needed to be here," he told AFP.

## Internet lockdown

There were no restrictions in Mumbai for Thursday's protests, which were peaceful, but elsewhere in areas where police and demonstrators clashed - and even where they didn't - mobile internet was blocked. In India's northeast, where the current wave of anger began and where six people have died, a 10-day mobile internet blackout only ended on Friday. On Thursday, people in parts of the national capital Delhi saw their phones go dead, unable to access the Internet, make calls or send text messages. And in Uttar Pradesh - home to over 200 million people - mobile Internet and text messaging services were cut in several areas including in Ghaziabad, which neighbors Delhi. There, like elsewhere, the demonstrations have not always been peaceful, with protesters hurling rocks at security forces and setting fire to buses and police outposts.

## Chinese praise

In Kashmir, where tens of thousands of people have died since 1989 in an anti-India uprising, most of them civilians, the government says that the blackout is to stop

milants communicating. But the shutdown has had a devastating effect on Kashmiris and the local economy, with the region's paltry dozen "Internet kiosks" set up by the government being of little help, residents say.

Social media in India is also awash with misinformation with the government warning that at times of heightened tensions, the sharing of such material could "inflame passions". This week New Delhi won praise from Chinese state media. India's actions show "that shutting down the internet in a state of emergency should be standard practice for sovereign countries", an editorial in the People's Daily said. "China's favorable statement effectively puts India in the same category as an authoritarian state," said digital rights activist Nikhil Pahwa. "It makes it clear that democratic protest is being stifled in this country," Pahwa told AFP.

## 'Onslaught'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and its supporters meanwhile have been avid users of social media to get their message across, as have their opponents. "There has been an onslaught of tweets attacking our protests, so we are using social media to push back against them," student Salve said. "If opposition IT cells can push forward their propaganda on social media, we are also countering that this time around instead of sitting on the margins." But if an internet shutdown forces her and fellow protesters to log out, she said they would "use pamphlets and send volunteers across the city to create awareness". "There's no stopping public protests now." — AFP

## Australia's volunteer firefighters battle fatigue, injury, loss

After six exhausting weeks battling massive bushfires that are ripping through rural Australia, volunteer firefighter Andrew Moyle wishes for just two things: rest and rain. "Rain would be best," said Moyle, who juggles firefighting shifts of up to 18 hours with running his own maintenance business and managing a family cattle station. The colossal task of fighting New South Wales' unprecedented bushfires falls largely to people like Moyle - a band of doctors, farmers and factory workers who at 70,000-strong are the world's largest volunteer fire service.

For weeks the 57-year-old and his crew have toiled in searing temperatures and thick acrid smoke as they try to curb a "mega-blaze" that has turned a swathe of national park near Sydney to ash. "People are really tired," Moyle said, describing the service as "very stretched". "As you get older like me it's hard, it's very tir-

ing. It takes a toll on everybody here." The risks are enormous and the sacrifice is immense. Two volunteer firefighters have died and some have had their homes destroyed while they were out saving other people's properties. Gary Stokes, a veteran firefighter who last week spent 80 hours volunteering, said fatigue was affecting his whole brigade. "I was sitting having a cup of tea yesterday and a little old lady came up to me and sort of gave me a hug and I actually had tears," he said. "You just need people knowing what you're doing, we're just trying to do our best."

Australia is no stranger to bushfires, but even among veterans there is a sense that this year's climate change-fuelled blazes are different. Bushfires have been raging along Australia's east coast for months, burning three million hectares - equivalent to the size of Belgium - and razed more than 800 homes in worst-hit New South Wales alone. "Last time, you'd be on the job for a couple of days. This time you're on the job week after week after week," said the 63-year-old airline pilot. "It's an emotional thing, because you've got to be on top of the game all the time, or someone will get hurt."

Stokes worries about the strain on his family, and his wife is concerned about the dangers he faces. "I don't know when to say, for myself, enough's enough, I can't just keep going day after day after day after day. But we

have to at this stage." Scientists say Australia's fire seasons are beginning earlier and burning with more ferocious intensity due to climate change. Much of the country's east is also gripped by a prolonged drought - that has worsened fire conditions.

Retired NSW Fire and Rescue commissioner Greg Mullins, a leader of ex-fire chiefs advocating for climate action, has predicted the season could stretch into May - months beyond its typical endpoint - and pile more pressure on volunteers. Since 1896 - when the first volunteer brigade was founded in New South Wales - the service has relied on amateurs because hiring professional staff year-round across a vast landmass would be prohibitively expensive and, for most of the year, unnecessary.

But shrinking rural communities, an ageing population and the prospect of longer and more intense fire seasons are all straining the volunteer model. The deaths of two volunteers have highlighted the "inherent risks" facing firefighters, according to New South Wales Rural Fire Service commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons. "When this sort of tragedy confronts an organization like the RFS, everybody hurts, it hurts everybody to the core and we know that we've lost absolutely valued members of our RFS family," he said. "We know that these men and women, our volunteers, are remarkable individuals." — AFP

## With Israel thaw, Hamas leader tours globe for support

Egypt, Turkey, Malaysia: The leader of Hamas has been on a whistle-stop tour of prominent Muslim countries seeking legitimacy and support as an informal truce firms up with Israel. In his first major foreign tour since taking over as leader of the Palestinian Islamist movement in 2017, Ismail Haniya has sought to drum up support from allies and find new ones. He visited the leaders of Turkey and Gulf state Qatar, both of which are long-time Hamas supporters with leaders allied to the Muslim Brotherhood - in which Hamas has its roots.

Haniya is currently in the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur for a summit of Muslim leaders, including Iranian President Hassan Rouhani. The delegation is expected to travel on to Russia, Lebanon, Mauritania and Kuwait before Haniya returns to Gaza. Blacklisted as a terrorist organization by the European Union and the United States, Hamas has fought three wars with Israel since 2008 and does not recognize the country's right to exist.

But, ground down by 12 years of economic blockade, it has struck an informal long-term truce with Israel. Israeli officials hint the organization has become less dogmatic. In the most recent major flare-up in Gaza last month, Hamas largely watched from the sidelines as Israel fought its ally Islamic Jihad. Mukhaimer Abu Saada, a professor of politi-

cal science at Al-Azhar University in Gaza, said Haniya's tour was "not an ordinary visit" but part of a wider strategy. "(Hamas) wants to bring support and strengthen its ties regionally and arrangements for a long-term ceasefire with Israel." Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said the movement was seeking to "mobilize political support for the Palestinian cause."

## 'Keep Gaza calm'

Hamas has controlled the impoverished Gaza Strip since it ousted loyalists of Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas in 2007. Abbas, whose government is based in the occupied West Bank, accuses Israel and now the United States of seeking to recognize Hamas rule in order to permanently split the Palestinians. The truce deal, the details of which remain secret, is meant to see Israel ease its crippling 12-year blockade of Gaza in exchange for calm.

Risks remain that could lead to a fourth war - rocket fire from Gaza prompted retaliatory air strikes both Thursday morning and evening, while Israel has in recent days accused Hamas of planning attacks from Turkey. But Israel has allowed millions of dollars a month in Qatari aid to flow into Gaza for more than a year and is allowing a number of further steps, including the construction of a new field hospital next to the Israeli border fence.

Hugh Lovatt, Israel-Palestine analyst at the European Council on Foreign Relations think tank, said Israel at least tacitly supported Haniya's tour alongside the improving relations. "In some ways Hamas has positioned itself as the more pragmatic Palestinian actor," he said, comparing them to the 84-year-old Abbas - who has been increasingly intransigent in the face of Israeli and US opposition. "They are keeping Gaza calm." Ofer Zalzberg, senior



A handout picture taken and released on Dec 14, 2019 shows Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) and Hamas' political bureau chief Ismail Haniya during their meeting in Istanbul. — AFP

Middle East analyst at the International Crisis Group think tank, put Hamas's policy shift in the context of a thawing of attitudes towards Israel in the Muslim Brotherhood following a change of spiritual leader last year. "We are seeing a shift in the wider Muslim Brotherhood towards principled engagement with Israel," he said. "There are no signs (Hamas) will accept Israel as a permanent fact but indications they have come to accept it in the medium term and seek arrangements with it." Israel, too, benefits from the calm. Zalzberg said, with the five years since the last war seeing strong economic growth. — AFP



## Business

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2019

**12** Britain names new central banker for post-Brexit era**13** US consumers put economy on moderate growth path in Q3**14** VIVA rebrands as stc

# Kuwait achieves 'Emerging Market' status

## Latest status upgrade represents a tremendous achievement: Al-Humaidhi

**KUWAIT:** Marking a momentous milestone in its transformation into a world-class financial and commercial center, Kuwait has been officially upgraded to Emerging Market status by leading index compiler MSCI Inc. Effective May 2020, the country's MSCI indexes will be reclassified to Emerging Markets status.

Paving the way for increased participation from foreign investors in Kuwait's capital market and driving significant capital inflows to the country, the inclusion will take place in one phase with the addition of nine blue chips to the benchmark. Kuwait's addition adds further diversification to the MSCI Emerging Markets Index with an estimated weight of 0.69 percent.

The reclassification of Kuwait from its previous 'Frontier Market' status comes as an emphatic endorsement for the sweeping market development reforms undertaken by the tri-lateral task force of Boursa Kuwait, the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) and Kuwait Clearing Company's (KCC).

MSCI had granted conditional approval for the inclusion of Kuwait in the coveted index as part of the benchmark provider's 2019 Annual Market Classification Review held on June 25, 2019. The country successfully completed the

implementation of MSCI's recommendations, including the introduction of omnibus account structures and same National Investor Number (NIN) cross trades by the end of October, a month ahead of the stated deadline.

The official status upgrade follows the country's inclusion in S&P Dow Jones Indices' Global Equity Indices, with an Emerging Market classification in December 2018 and in the FTSE Russell Emerging Markets Index in September 2017.

Commenting on the achievement, Hamad Al-Humaidhi, Chairman, Boursa Kuwait, said: "Kuwait's MSCI status upgrade represents a tremendous achievement that places the country firmly on the global investment map, and will contribute to sustainable prosperity for the nation and its people. I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of Kuwait, and His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of Kuwait, for their wise leadership and tireless support for the Kuwaiti economy, which, under their visionary stewardship, continues to go from strength to strength."

Mohammad Al-Osaimi, Chief Executive Officer, Boursa

Kuwait, commented: "As we celebrate this milestone accomplishment, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the Board of Directors, the senior management and my colleagues at Boursa Kuwait as well as the Capital Markets Authority and the Commissioner's Council for their unremitting commitment and tireless efforts. The seamless support we received from the Kuwait Clearing Company and its employees have also been instrumental to the success of our endeavors in developing the Kuwaiti capital market in accordance with global standards. Our regulatory and operational reforms as well as infrastructure improvements to enhance market access for foreign investors enabled us to secure the coveted MSCI Emerging Market status, representing a major step towards realizing the country's overarching objectives outlined in the New Kuwait 2035 vision."

Boursa Kuwait's recent milestones include the completion of its privatization, becoming the only stock exchange in the Middle East that is 94 percent owned by the private sector. The achievement follows the conclusion of the public offering to Kuwaiti citizens for the Capital Markets Authority's 50 percent stake in the company in December.



Hamad Al-Humaidhi



Mohammad Al-Osaimi

The company has also rolled out numerous initiatives to improve market access and efficiency, enhance transparency and governance, increase liquidity, and strengthen investor confidence. It also hosted a series of roadshows and corporate day events across leading markets around the world to promote the Kuwaiti capital market.

## Trump approves Russia-Europe gas pipeline sanctions

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump on Friday signed off on US sanctions against companies building a Russian natural gas pipeline to Germany that Congress fears will give the Kremlin dangerous leverage over European allies.

The sanctions, which are opposed by the European Union, were included in a sprawling defense spending bill Trump signed at a ceremony on Joint Base Andrews, an air force installation outside Washington, DC. They target companies building the nearly \$11 billion Nord Stream 2 pipeline under the Baltic Sea with the aim of doubling deliveries of Russian natural gas to Europe's leading economy, Germany. US lawmakers have warned the pipeline would enrich a hostile Russian government and vastly increase President Vladimir Putin's influence in Europe at a time of heightened tension across the continent.

Both houses of Congress overwhelmingly approved the sanctions, with the Senate voting Tuesday to send the measure to Trump's desk. Trump, who has been accused by Democratic opponents of being soft on Putin, had little choice but to give his approval.

The sanctions were inserted into a much wider \$738 billion annual Pentagon funding bill and, given the level of congressional support, a veto would likely have been overturned.

The US measures have angered Moscow and the European Union, which says it should be able to decide its own energy policies. Germany's foreign minister, Heiko Maas, discussed the issue during a phone call Friday with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said. Pompeo expressed "strong opposition" to the project, Ortagus said in a statement.

The German-Russian Chamber of Commerce insisted last week that the pipeline was important for energy security and urged retaliatory sanctions against the United States if the bill passes.

The US sanctions target pipe-laying vessels for Nord Stream 2 and TurkStream, a Russia-Turkey pipeline, and include asset freezes and revocations of US visas for the contractors. One major contractor that could be hit is Allseas, which has been hired by Russia's state-owned energy giant Gazprom to build the offshore section. Following the act's signing, the Swiss-based company said in a statement it had "suspended its Nord Stream 2 pipelay activities." The power of Gazprom, which is closely integrated with the Russian state, is at the center of concerns about the pipeline in the United States, and also in eastern and central European countries. Senator Ted Cruz, a Republican ally of Trump, said that halting Nord Stream 2 should be a major security priority for the United States and Europe alike.

Meanwhile, the EU yesterday voiced its opposition to US sanctions against companies building a Russian natural gas pipeline to Germany. "As a matter of principle, the EU opposes the imposition of sanctions against EU companies conducting legitimate business," an EU spokesman said.

The sanctions were signed off by US President Donald Trump on Friday, targeting companies building the nearly \$11 billion Nord Stream 2 pipeline under the Baltic Sea. The project aims to double



In this file photo, an employee of the Allseas offshore service company works on the ship "Audacia", from where parts of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline are laid in the Baltic Sea off the coast of Laage, northeastern Germany. —AFP

deliveries of Russian natural gas to Europe's leading economy, Germany, but US lawmakers warn it will enrich a hostile Russian government and vastly increase President Vladimir Putin's influence at a time of heightened tension across the continent. The European Commission, the bloc's executive, is now analyzing the likely impact of the US sanctions.

"The Commission's objective has always been to ensure that Nord Stream 2 operates in a transparent and non-discriminatory way with the appropriate degree of regulatory oversight," the spokesman said.

The spokesman noted that EU rules on pipelines to the bloc, which came into force in May, have been recognized by the US. The US sanctions came just days after the EU brokered a deal between Russia and Ukraine on the transit of gas to Europe ahead of a looming New Year deadline. Some 18 percent of the EU's annual natural gas consumption comes from Russia via Ukraine, putting additional pressure on EU officials to broker a deal. —AFP

## France braces for holiday travel chaos amid pensions strike

**PARIS:** Cancelled trains, packed roads, frazzled nerves: Travellers scrambled across France on Friday to begin Christmas vacations upended by a weeks-long transport strike over a pensions overhaul that unions have vowed to defeat. Hopes of a holiday truce were dashed after talks between the government and union leaders this week failed to ease the standoff, with train operator SNCF warning of massive cancellations ahead of the holidays.

Many stranded travellers turned to car rental agencies or sharing platforms, but the last-minute surge in demand meant vehicles were hard to come by. "We've seen twice as many requests in some regions," mainly Paris and southwest France, said Robert Ostermann, France director for Europcar.

Taxi companies in Paris had already stopped taking Friday reservations early this week as many metro lines remain shut, while Twitter is awash with irate Uber users forced to pay two to three times normal rates. Others booked trips on buses, whose drivers have been allowed to stay behind the wheel longer until December 24 to cope with an "emergency situation," according to a government decree published Wednesday.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said Thursday that talks with unions had nonetheless made progress, and called on unions to lift the strike "so that millions of French can join their families for the end of this year". Although the moderate UNSA union agreed, the hard-line CGT and Force Ouvrier unions said they would not let up. —AFP



Business

# Britain names new central banker for post-Brexit era

## Carney to stay on a while to ensure a 'smooth transition'

**LONDON:** Britain on Friday named its top financial regulator, Andrew Bailey, to lead the Bank of England and help shepherd the lackluster economy through the dislocation of Brexit. Finance minister Sajid Javid said the former BoE deputy would succeed Mark Carney on March 16 — six weeks after the Canadian-born governor had been due to step down.

Carney's previous departure date of January 31 coincides with when Britain's separation from the European Union is meant to take effect, and Javid said Carney had agreed to stay on a while to ensure a "smooth transition". The chancellor of the exchequer said of Bailey, the 60-year-old head of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA): "Without question, he is the right person to lead the bank as we forge a new future outside the EU."

The Briton was the "clear front-runner" in the contest to succeed Carney, Javid said, describing Bailey as the "standout candidate in a competitive field". That field included two prominent women.

### Growing risks

Bailey, who has spent most of his career at the BoE, will have the daunting challenge of conducting Britain's monetary policy as it unwinds nearly five decades of EU membership following Prime Minister Boris Johnson's election triumph this month. Bailey said it was a "tremendous honor" to be chosen, "particularly at such a critical time for the nation as we leave the European Union". He pledged to continue Carney's work to ensure monetary stability and "safe and sound" financial institutions.

On Thursday, the central bank froze interest rates at 0.75 percent, but left the door open to a reduction in the event of fresh turmoil. Economic growth turned negative in the second quarter before recovering in the third. Many economists say that it is likely to deteriorate if Johnson delivers on his vow to quit the EU on

time and exit a subsequent transition period by the end of 2020.

Bailey may need to consider raising interest rates "back to more normal levels or fight the next downturn with not much ammunition" and defend the bank from "the growing risk of political interference", noted Ruth Gregory, economist at Capital Economics.

### Cool customer

Cambridge-educated Bailey worked at the Bank of England in various posts between 1985 and 2016. He played a crucial role during the global financial crisis a decade ago and a subsequent vicious recession, overseeing the BoE's special operations to help troubled banks.

In a 2012 interview with the Financial Times, Bailey reflected on the bailout four years earlier of the crippled Royal Bank of Scotland. The then RBS treasurer had come into his office "and I thought he was going to have a heart attack... and he looked at me and said I need £25 billion today, can you do it?" Bailey said, according to the FT. "I said 'Yes, I can do that,'" he recounted.

The newspaper said the RBS official "looked shocked at Mr Bailey's cool confidence, but what he did not know was that Mr Bailey had already done the same thing for HBOS".

Bailey was a deputy governor for prudential regulation between 2013 and 2016, when he was appointed as head of the FCA, the watchdog for Europe's largest financial sector.

In that role, he has attracted criticism for lax oversight, particularly following the collapse this year of a flagship investment fund run by the money manager Neil Woodford.

### Criticism

John McDonnell, finance spokesman for the opposi-



**LONDON:** Britain's Chancellor of the Exchequer Sajid Javid speaks during a news conference to announce the new Governor of the Bank of England, at the Treasury offices in central London on Friday. —AFP

tion Labour Party, said Bailey was "an establishment figure with what some consider is a less than inspiring record at the FCA". Bailey, he said, would "need to demonstrate early that he appreciates the need to address the deep structural problems of our economy and, like Mark Carney, understands the climate change threat". Carney, 54, who became a British national during his time in London, had already extended his tenure

twice due to Brexit uncertainty. His next job is already lined up, as the United Nations special envoy on climate action and finance.

In one of his last big policy announcements, Carney this week said that Britain's banks—already subject to annual financial health checks since the crisis—face being stress-tested for risks posed by climate change under a new consultation. —AFP

## New Alphabet chief Pichai sees big pay boost

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Google parent Alphabet boosted the salary of newly anointed chief Sundar Pichai and promised more than \$200 million in shares if the company hits performance goals, a regulatory filing Friday said. Pichai's annual pay will more than double to \$2 million next year, and he will be in line for \$90 million shares of stock based on how well the internet titan does in the market and another \$120 million in shares that vest over time, according to a Securities and Exchange Commission filing by the Alphabet board.

The value of the performance-based shares could be zero depending on whether Alphabet stock hits goals set in comparison to the S&P 100 in the coming two years, the filing said.

Taking the reins as chief executive of Google parent Alphabet, the soft-spoken, Indian-born Sundar Pichai faces a host of challenges at one of the world's most valuable companies, which has become besieged by activists and political leaders. The 47-year-old Pichai, who will remain as Google CEO in addition to taking up the new post, is seen as a steadying influence at a time when Alphabet faces an onslaught from regulators and others. Google co-founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin are stepping away from their roles at the company they founded two decades ago in a California garage, but will remain in control of the Alphabet board based on share voting rights.

Pichai will take over from Page as CEO of Alphabet, which includes Google as well as units focused on its "other bets" in areas including self-driving cars, life sciences and a variety of "moonshot" projects.

Sundar steps into his new role as antitrust enforcers in Washington, Brussels and elsewhere are stepping up their scrutiny of Google, which is the internet's dominant search engine and also the maker of the leading Android mobile operating system. The company has also been in the crosshairs over how it manages "hate speech" and extremist content spread online, and how it deals with children's privacy on its YouTube video service. —AFP

## The New Emerging Market Landscape

### Outlook for emerging markets equity investing

By Manraj S Sekhon

**"E**merging markets are at a rare inflection point with multiple crosscurrents. We believe they remain promising for investors who can overlook near-term volatility and invest for the long term."



Emerging markets are at a rare inflection point with multiple crosscurrents. A combination of the ultra-loose monetary policy hangover from the global financial crisis, a low global growth environment from weak manufacturing and industrial activity, the continued rise of the consumer, and the disruption and opportunities of the new economy have provided a heady mix.

### Addressing uncertainties

While market sentiment in 2019 was weighed down by easing growth concerns, emerging market growth is forecast by the International Monetary Fund to accelerate in 2020 and remain more than double that of developed markets. Improving fiscal, economic and monetary policies and a renewed focus on structural reforms in many emerging markets has been gaining traction.

Supported by more conducive monetary policies in developed economies and easing inflationary pressures, central banks in emerging markets generally turned more dovish in 2019. We expect this trend to continue in 2020, as policymakers have greater flexibility in stimulating economic activity.

Although US-China trade tensions have deescalated in the short term on rising expectations of a partial trade deal and plans for both countries to scale back tariffs, we expect the broader economic conflict to remain for some time. The impact from the trade conflict has not been limited to China. While US imports from China over the last year declined \$35 billion to \$497 billion, China's imports from the United States decreased by more-\$40 billion to \$125 billion. Therefore, we believe a comprehensive agreement remains in the best interests of both sides. The Trump administration will be acutely aware of this heading into an election year.

### Opportunities in 2020

China's initiatives to strengthen and diversify its economy have been largely overshadowed by trade and slowing growth fears. The government's focus on economic restructuring and long-term sustainable growth has led to an acceleration in the implementation of structural reforms and widespread industry consolidation, as well as the development of local supply chains in the technology space to replace US sources. China will be a frontrunner in the 5G arena and is expected to have some 600 million 5G subscribers by 2025, or about 40 percent of the forecasted 1.6 billion subscribers globally. Together with artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, this will help drive growth in China's new economy as it strives to become less reliant on the United States. In our view, China will emerge stronger and more self-reliant with multiple pillars of economic support through this crisis.

Taiwan is seeing some spillover benefits from the trade war as its companies start onshoring some operations. Government incentives to attract operations back to Taiwan mean that this will have ripple effects on the domestic economy. As one of the largest and fastest growing markets for digital consumers, India is a market where disruptive technology is driving productivity and deflation more than generally expected, with value accruing to end-users. Key reforms—including the recent reduction in corporate tax rates, measures to improve the regulatory environment and monetary easing—will likely steady the economy.

In Brazil, optimism surrounding the government's economic agenda has resulted in a more favorable

investment climate. While the country's economic recovery has been slower than expected, we believe government and central bank efforts are improving the country's longer-term growth potential. Inflation has remained under control, allowing the central bank to ease rates to record lows to stimulate the economy. Social security reform is key to stimulating investment and credit, which will help improve economic activity and can significantly reduce Brazil's fiscal deficit. A major privatization plan has also been announced, and tax and other structural reforms should improve the ease of doing business.

### The new emerging market landscape

The emerging market landscape continues to transform as policymakers focus on building resilience during times of stress. Emerging market economies are more diversified now—with domestic consumption and technology offering new drivers of growth—and are growing less reliant on low-cost manufacturing and commodities. Since the turn of the century, we have witnessed a significant increase in the trade value of high-tech goods being exported by emerging market countries.

We have also seen how companies are using innovation and technology to leapfrog and disrupt traditional business models. Areas such as e-commerce, digital banking and mobile computing will be fundamental drivers of emerging markets for years to come. Equally, fields such as AI, autonomous driving, robotics and the "Internet of Things" continue to attract investment, signaling strong long-term prospects.

### Staying the course

Much noise and conflicting signals dominated 2019, which led many investors to limit their risk appetite and discount the long-term growth drivers in emerging markets. While some of these uncertainties may persist in the near term, we believe it is essential to stay the course. The markets are just beginning to realize opportunities from technology disruption and the transition of businesses away from traditional models. We believe the investment scope in the emerging world is wide and promising for investors who can overlook near-term volatility and invest for the longer term.—Manraj S Sekhon is Chief Investment Officer, Franklin Templeton Emerging Markets Equity

## EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
<b>EUROPEAN &amp; AMERICAN COUNTRIES</b>	
US Dollar Transfer	304.050
Euro	340.380
Sterling Pound	400.430
Canadian dollar	232.190
Turkish lira	52.790
Swiss Franc	312.170
US Dollar Buying	296.600
<b>ASIAN COUNTRIES</b>	
Japanese Yen	2.779
Indian Rupees	4.280
Pakistani Rupees	1.971
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.676
Nepali Rupees	2.670
Singapore Dollar	225.310
Hongkong Dollar	39.047
Bangladesh Taka	3.542
Philippine Peso	6.014
Thai Baht	10.080
Malaysian ringgit	77.762
<b>GCC COUNTRIES</b>	
Saudi Riyal	81.134
Qatari Riyal	83.565
Omani Riyal	790.253
Bahraini Dinar	807.890
UAE Dirham	82.836
<b>ARAB COUNTRIES</b>	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.800

Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18,974
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.221
Tunisian Dinar	110.160
Jordanian Dinar	428.990
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.209

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd	
Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.700
Canadian Dollar	231.345
Sterling Pound	399.445
Euro	339.670
Swiss Frank	300.475
Bahrain Dinar	807.650
UAE Dirhams	83.090
Qatari Riyals	84.325
Saudi Riyals	81.880
Jordanian Dinar	429.635
Egyptian Pound	18.976
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.677
Indian Rupees	4.277
Pakistani Rupees	1.960
Bangladesh Taka	3.541
Philippines Peso	6.008
Cyprus pound	18.070
Japanese Yen	3.775
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.670
Malaysian Ringgit	74.265

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	43.768
Thai Bhat	11.020
Turkish Lira	51.995
Singapore dollars	223.015

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL			
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL	
<b>Europe</b>			
British Pound	0.389351	0.403251	
Czech Korune	0.005296	0.014596	
Danish Krone	0.041195	0.046195	
Euro	0.330133	0.343833	
Georgian Lari	0.114079	0.114079	
Hungarian 0.001146	0.001336	0.001336	
Norwegian Krone	0.029941	0.035121	
Romanian Leu	0.065164	0.082014	
Russian ruble	0.004914	0.004914	
Slovakia	0.009088	0.019088	
Swedish Krona	0.028323	0.033323	
Swiss Franc	0.303485	0.314485	
<b>Australasia</b>			
Australian Dollar	0.201987	0.213987	
New Zealand Dollar	0.195036	0.204536	
<b>America</b>			
Canadian Dollar	0.226200	0.235200	
US Dollars	0.300050	0.304600	
US Dollars Mint	0.300550	0.304600	
<b>Asia</b>			
Bangladesh Taka	0.002974	0.003775	

Chinese Yuan	0.042099	0.045599
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036904	0.039654
Indian Rupee	0.003611	0.004383
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002698	0.002878
Korean Won	0.000253	0.000268
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069475	0.075475
Nepalese Rupee	0.002622	0.002962
Pakistan Rupee	0.001293	0.002063
Philippine Peso	0.005960	0.006260
Singapore Dollar	0.219114	0.229114
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001317	0.001897
Taiwan	0.010117	0.010297
Thai Baht	0.009728	0.010278
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013
<b>Arab</b>		
Bahraini Dinar	0.800619	0.808665
Egyptian Pound	0.018923	0.021663
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000199	0.000259
Jordanian Dinar	0.422998	0.431998
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000103	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021164	0.045164
Omani Riyal	0.784874	0.792762
Qatar Riyal	0.082887	0.083721
Saudi Riyal	0.080020	0.081320
Syrian Pound	0.001289	0.001509
Tunisian Dinar	0.102702	0.110702
Turkish Lira	0.044695	0.054540
UAE Dirhams	0.082176	0.083002
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069



Business

# US consumers put economy on moderate growth path in Q3

## Corporate profits revised sharply down

WASHINGTON: US economic growth nudged up in the third quarter and the economy appears to have maintained the moderate pace of expansion as the year ended, supported by a strong labor market.

Other data on Friday showed consumer spending increased solidly in November, adding to a string of upbeat data that have helped to quell recession fears which gripped financial markets in the summer.

The longest expansion in history, now in its 11th year, remains on track thanks to the Federal Reserve cutting interest rates three times this year. The US central bank last week kept rates steady and signaled borrowing costs could remain unchanged at least through 2020. Though growth has been relatively strong, economists did not expect the economy to achieve the Trump administration's 3.0 percent target this year. Still, the resilient economy could offer some respite for President Donald Trump who was impeached on charges of abusing his office on Wednesday by the Democratic-led House of Representatives.

"The data will comfort the Fed that the economy is in a 'good place' and monetary policy is 'appropriate,'" said Gregory Daco, chief US economist at Oxford Economics in New York. Gross domestic product increased at a 2.1 percent annualized rate, the Commerce Department said in its third estimate of third-quarter GDP. That was unrevised from November's estimate. The economy grew at a 2.0 percent pace in the April-June period. Despite the unrevised estimate, which was in line with economists' expectations, consumer spending was stronger than

previously reported in the third quarter.

There were also upgrades to business spending on nonresidential structures such as power infrastructure, which limited the drop in overall business investment. That offset downward revisions to investment in homebuilding and inventory accumulation. Imports, which are a drag to GDP growth, were higher than previously estimated. Growth estimates for the fourth quarter range from as low as a 1.5 percent rate to as high as a 2.3 percent pace. Growth has slowed from the 3.1 percent rate notched in the first three months of the year in part because of the 17-month trade war between the United States and China and the fading stimulus from last year's \$1.5 trillion tax cut package.

When measured from the income side, the economy grew at a 2.1 percent rate in the last quarter, rather than the 2.4 percent pace estimated in November. Gross domestic income (GDI) increased at a rate of 0.9 percent in the second quarter. The revision to the income side of the growth ledger reflected a downgrade to corporate profits. After-tax profits without inventory valuation and capital consumption adjustment, which corresponds to S&P 500 profits, were revised down to show them declining \$23.1 billion, or at a rate of 1.2 percent. Profits were previously reported to have decreased \$11.3 billion, or at a rate of 0.6 percent in the third quarter.

They were in part held down by legal settlements with Facebook and Google. Profits increased at a 3.3 percent rate in the second quarter. The average of GDP and GDI, also referred to as gross domestic output and considered a better measure of economic activity,

also increased at a 2.1 percent rate in the July-September period.

The data boosted the dollar against a basket of currencies, while US Treasury prices fell. Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher, pushing key indexes to new record highs.

### Moderate growth path

The economy's moderate growth speed appears to have persisted in the fourth quarter. In a second report on Friday, the Commerce Department said consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, rose 0.4 percent last month as households stepped up purchases of motor vehicles and spent more on healthcare. Consumption increased 0.3 percent in October. Consumer spending is being supported by the lowest unemployment rate in nearly half a century. But inflation stayed tame last month and could remain so for a while. The University of Michigan's survey of consumers showed households' one-year inflation expectations fell in December to 2.3 percent, the lowest in three years, from 2.5 percent in November.

"If this month's drop in inflation expectations is sustained or intensifies, it would be concerning to the Fed, which is trying to lift inflation, and would suggest easier monetary policy than would prevail otherwise," said Scott Hoyt, a senior economist at Moody's Analytics in West Chester, Pennsylvania. Despite the economy improving prospects, risks remain. Boeing's decision this week to suspend production of its best-selling 737 MAX jetliner in January after two fatal crashes of the now-grounded aircraft means the fallout is likely to drag into 2020. That could



Consumer spending increased solidly in November, adding to a string of upbeat data that have helped to quell recession fears which gripped financial markets in the summer. — Reuters

pressure the fragile manufacturing sector, which was starting to stabilize as the US-China trade tensions ebb.

Economists estimate 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. In the GDP report, growth in consumer spending was raised to a 3.2 percent rate in the third quarter from the previ-

ously reported 2.9 percent pace. Inventories rose at a \$69.4 billion pace instead of the \$79.8 billion rate reported last month.

Business investment dropped at a 2.3 percent rate in the third quarter, rather than contracting at a 2.7 percent pace as previously reported. Spending on nonresidential structures such as mining exploration, shafts and wells declined at a 9.9 percent rate instead of the previously reported 12.0 percent pace. — Reuters

## KFHonline total transactions exceed 100m in one year

KUWAIT: The total transactions completed by Kuwait Finance House's (KFH) customers through KFHonline on the website or the mobile app exceeded 100 million in the last 12 months until November 2019, with a growth rate of over 25 percent compared to same period last year.

The e-banking transactions included: logins, local and telex financial transfers, opening deposits, adding beneficiaries, balance inquiry, cheque book request, opening KFH gold account, conducting gold transactions (purchase, sell and trade), requesting financing, opening an account, applying for Al-Khair card, and checking the PINs for credit and debit cards. Among the other services, for example but not limited to: activating new bank cards, reporting a lost credit/debit



Waleed Khaled Mandani

cards as well as checking the financing obligations and the number of installments. Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer at KFH, Waleed Khaled Mandani said that these figures reflect the efficiency of KFHonline services, confirming the bank's leadership position in providing mobile banking services that enable customers to complete their banking transactions anywhere in Kuwait or abroad, around the clock.

Mandani confirmed that KFH had made significant strides with its digital transformation journey, drawing attention to its advanced and innovative financial services and products. He confirmed KFH's keenness on constantly improving its digital banking solutions, especially that the bank has uniquely rolled out innovative services that can be completed online and via mobile using robotics and AI. Mandani also mentioned that the XTMs and the smart branches: KFH Go con-

tributed in adding value to customer experience, reiterating that the easy banking services encourage customers to use KFHonline in their transactions.

He listed some of the financial solutions that KFH launched such as KFH Xpress, instant financial transfers service using RippleNet network, Mobile Deposit of Cheques that enables quick deposit of cheques in a fast and efficient way to customers' accounts, the queuing system Skiplino for booking appointments electronically in bank branches, opening several KFH-Go self-banking stations, cash withdrawals via mobile using QR code, Civil ID or mobile number, KFH Pay service for electronic payments, instant cheques printing, receiving gold biscuits (10 grams), opening Al-Rabeh and savings accounts, Robotics Process Automation, Artificial-Intelligence-driven Chatbot, KFH Pass that allows customers to postpone the one of their installment payments online, and many other digital services.

Mandani said that KFH has received "Best Product Launch in the Middle East for KFH Go Digital Self-Banking Station" award from EMEA Finance Magazine, indicating the award comes in recognition of the high-quality services offered by this smart branch and met customers' expectation.

## AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced on the 18th of December 2019 the winners of its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait that has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners. Al-Hassad has have over 850 prizes. Over 12-month period.

The grand prize winner of KD 10,000 is Fahhad Mubarak Fahhad.

20 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 each are: Adnan J Alsayari, Rabab Mohammad Alkamees, Abdulwahab Abdullah Alwazzan, Ahmad Tareq Alali, Faisal Saleh Aleidan, Hasan Saleh Al-Ajmi, Mohamad Ali Mohamad, Yaqoub Kh Alkhedry, Tulin Ahmad Mohammad, Musaed Faraj Alsaeed, Abdullateef Ali Alsaleh, Saleh Hamad Saleh, Mohammad Nabeel Habeeb, Abdulhameed Hussain Mohammad, Jassim Mohammed Abdulla Mustafa Mirza Jassim, Fadhel Abbas Abdulla, Bashar Yousif Habib, Rabab Hasan Jasim, A Bashar Hashim Shubbar.

On the occasion, Ahli United Bank congratulates its winning customers, and commented that there are many chances to win waiting for our customers. Draws are held every Wednesday at AUB Kuwait or AUB Bahrain depending on the draw plan. On public holidays, the draw is postponed to the next business day. Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 4 quarterly mega prizes of KD 250,000 that will help the lucky winners achieve their dreams and aspirations in addition the monthly draw to win a prize of KD 100,000.

## AFP renews financing contract with French state

PARIS: Agence France-Presse (AFP) signed a new five-year contract with the French government on Friday which provides for a 17-million-euro (\$18.8-million) injection shared between 2019 and 2020, the global news agency's management said. AFP is supported financially by the French state, but its editorial independence is guaranteed by an act of parliament. It also has private clients in the media and other industries.

The agreement, covering the period 2019-2023, will see a state contribution of 124 million euros for 2019, 119 million for 2020 and 113 million for each of the following three years, AFP chairman and CEO Fabrice Fries said. AFP aims to increase revenue from selling photo and video products by 23 million euros over the five years, and to boost by five million euros the income generated by its fact-checking service. AFP works with Facebook's fact-checking program in more than 30 countries and 10 languages.

The Paris-based agency will seek to bringing down staff costs through a voluntary departure plan that aims to cut 95 posts by the end of 2023 for a saving of 14 million euros. By the end of 2019, 67 full-time staff will have left the agency under the plan, which includes not replacing people who leave on retirement. AFP hopes to save another 2.5 million euros in rent each year by bringing together all Paris staff, currently spread over two buildings, in the company's headquarters in the city center. "The State supports the ambitious transformation of the company, serving pluralistic, reliable and quality information," French Culture Minister Franck Riester said on Twitter.

The agency's 2020 budget, approved by the board this week, forecasts revenue growth of 2.7 percent to 172.5 million euros. Fries described that as a "reasonable" objective in a complicated media landscape. Staff representatives on the board had voted against the budget, judging the forecast "unrealistic". — AFP

## Argentine senate gives final OK to economic overhaul plan

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's Senate gave final legislative approval yesterday to an emergency economic reform package to an emergency economic reform package touting by new President Alberto Fernandez as the country's best chance at sparking growth, reducing poverty and taming inflation. The "Social Solidarity and Production Reactivation" act was approved 41-23 with one abstention in the Senate after passing the lower House on Friday, all less than two weeks after moderate Peronist Fernandez took office.

The new leader is faced with inflation of more than 50 percent and an economy expected to shrink for a third straight year in 2020. He is headed into restructuring talks on about \$100 billion in debt owed to bondholders and the International Monetary Fund. The reforms are meant to show creditors that Argentina is on a path toward sustainable growth after years of malaise.

"This bill represents a new type of fiscal adjustment for Argentina, in that it is focused on taxing the rich," said analyst Julio Burdman, head of local consultancy Roger Data.

"It combines sound economic policy with a progressive political approach," Burdman added. "In the past, we either had orthodox austerity without social sensitivity, or inflationary policies without macro-economic rationality."

Fernandez is aiming for fiscal equilibrium in 2020 while ending the painful government subsidy cuts that killed growth under previous President Mauricio Macri and derailed his re-election bid. Fernandez, promising to bring relief to the poor, thumped Macri in the October election. Utility prices are to be frozen until June 30 next year, under Fernandez's program. Subsidy cuts under Macri had jacked up electricity and heating gas bills during his four-year administration, stoking inflation and social anger.

"The emergency law is not business friendly, especially not for the utility sector, but it delivers a sense of pragmatism," said Alberto Bernal, chief emerging markets strategist at XP Investments in New York.

"Its approval implies the government will have the resources to deliver on its promises of increased social spending without resorting to printing money," Bernal said. — Reuters



BUENOS AIRES: Argentinian Vice-President and ex-president (2007-2015) Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (center), presides a session in which new economic laws proposed by President Alberto Fernandez are discussed in Buenos Aires, on Friday. — AFP

## Can Lebanon's newly-designated PM salvage the economy?

LONDON: After two months of political deadlock, Lebanon has finally designated a new prime minister to form a government. Now comes the hard part: saving Lebanon from an unprecedented financial crisis.

Nominated with the support of Iran-backed Hezbollah and its allies, Prime Minister-designate Hassan Diab and the cabinet he has vowed to form quickly must win over investors and foreign donors. What are the main concerns for investors as Lebanon grapples with a hard currency shortage, a huge public debt and a weakening currency?

Lebanon's public debt burden, equivalent to around 150 percent of GDP, and its twin current account and fiscal deficits looked unsustainable even before anti-government protesters took to the streets two months ago. Lebanon will face a test

of its ability to meet its obligations in 2020, with \$10.9 billion of debt maturing across the year, including a \$1.2 billion eurobond due in March, Refinitiv data shows.

The international sovereign bonds continue to trade at less than half their face value, while credit default swaps have rocketed, suggesting Lebanon may be drifting towards a default. But that might not be a given. "A combination of fiscal reforms and a restructuring of the domestic debt could be enough to put public finances on a sustainable footing without having to resort to an external default," Farouk Soussa, senior economist at Goldman Sachs, said in a note this week. And even if a default does occur, Lebanon might be able to cushion the fallout.

Central bank holdings of government securities implied that Lebanon had near-term debt management options that would limit losses borne by the private sector in the event of a default, Moody's Investors Service said in a note. Lebanon's 22-year-old peg to the US dollar has been strained to near breaking point by the country's political and banking crisis. With the pound losing roughly a third of its official value on the black market, a devaluation has loomed increasingly large. — Reuters



# VIVA rebrands as stc

Al-Harbi: We will enrich the lives of our customers with the digital transformation in Kuwait



Maziad Al-Harbi, stc CEO (third left) stands of stc chiefs

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Telecommunications Company, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers and enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, and a subsidiary of stc Group, announced that it has re-branded from 'VIVA' to 'stc', in line with the new strategy focusing on the digital transformation and enriching the customer experience through innovative solutions and services. This move will bring into stc a significant change across its operations in the State of Kuwait and mark another step forward for its brand achievements.

Since its inception in 2008, the company accomplishments have transformed the Kuwaiti telecom market, including changing wireless pricing models and fees. In 2014, the company was listed on Boursa Kuwait, marking a new phase in its expansion. Since then, the confidence of its shareholders has only increased.

Through excellence in service, transparency and proactivity, stc is leading the industry by providing a range of high-quality services and information solutions, focused on the global digital transformation in the telecom arena. As the fastest-growing and most advanced telecom operator in Kuwait, the company's customer base has exceeded two million.

The company has succeeded in attracting private sector investments, driving the economy and repositioning the telecom sector as one of the most vital and active sectors in the evolution of global technology, focusing on the growth and the process of digital transformation and providing the best digital solutions to the Kuwaiti market, with an aim to support the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for Kuwait 2035, in positioning Kuwait as a major financial and commercial hub in the region.

The company has invested in building its most advanced 5G network, and it owns currently the largest network that covers up to 100 percent of the population areas in Kuwait. It aims through this new technology to resolve the various issues that have developed due to the wide popularity of 4G LTE, including the need for higher speeds and lower latency. 5G will provide fiber like service experience to VIVA users, while enabling new digital services to emerge such as AR/VR immersive experience, cloud gaming, autonomous drone, driverless cars, and a wide range of IoT uses.

In 2019, the company has acquired 100 percent of the share capital of the Internet Service Provider General Trading and Contracting Company (Qualitynet) in Kuwait. This acquisition has reflected positively and significantly on both customers, benefiting from innovative and high quality products and services.

It strives to provide its customers, both consumers and enterprises, with a unique set of products and services that cater to their needs, and offers them various opportunities in the fields of communications, entertainment, information, digital services and data transmission, and provides the best customer experience round the clock.

On this occasion, Eng. Maziad Al-Harbi, stc CEO stated: "We have been very keen to establish our footprint in the Kuwaiti market during the first

# stc

decade, and we are planning in the coming decade to create new opportunities, enable the digital transformation and develop our strategy to be launched in 2020, supported by our mother company, stc Group."

He added: "The mother company has launched this brand with a new spirit and shape that reflect the digital transformation and enhance the stance of the company and its subsidiaries by implementing the strategy and aspirations of the stc Group in the region with regards to digital transformation and enriching the customer experience, through the solutions and services that we intend to introduce. So today we are proud that we have become a unified brand amongst the group companies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Kingdom of Bahrain and the



State of Kuwait, which will enhance the value of the brand of "stc" as one of the most expensive brands in the Middle East. Moreover, the positioning of stc among the 50 best companies in the world providing digital solutions is an added value for us as we count on the expertise and great capabilities that the mother company maintains in this field which will be posi-



Maziad Al-Harbi, stc CEO



Bassel Merheb (right) and Hussein Al-Kandari

our new stc identity to make a leap in the telecommunications market, and this change will boost the brand towards becoming one of the top leading mobile telecommunications companies in the local and regional market. In the frame of the significant impact of technology on the financial industry and development, and in line with the strategy of the new company, stc seeks to offer digital financial services "Fintech" in the future in the Kuwaiti market, after obtaining the necessary approvals from regulatory authorities as we count in this field on the expertise of the mother company stc that offers a range of such services as 'stc Pay'."

He concluded: "I would like to hail the positive and organizational role played by Communication and Information Technology Regulator Authority (CITRA) in the State of Kuwait, which contributed in enhancing the position of the Kuwaiti telecommunications sector on regional and international scales. CITRA strives through its strategy to transform Kuwait into a regional data center, by investing in the fields of communications and information technology. Hence, we would like at stc to offer all the support to implement this strategy as we believe it has a substantial positive impact on the development of the industry, information technology and digital solutions."

"We succeeded in creating job opportunities and focusing on Kuwaitization plan which has reached 65 percent, by attracting top talents through partnerships and collaborations in the Kuwaiti market. stc is committed to a rich Corporate Social Responsibility 'CSR' program and has launched multiple initiatives for supporting talent in the fields of healthcare, sports, entrepreneurship, education and environment."





## What's On



The Ambassador of Uzbekistan Bahroomjan hosted a dinner for three member delegation travelling to observe the parliamentary election. Representatives of local media also attended.

## Kuwaiti Proteins Co joins Horeca 2020 as golden sponsor

In view of the growing number of companies announcing intention to take part in the Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition due to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Co. at Mishref International Fair Ground from January 20-22, 2020, Kuwait Proteins Company recently announced participating in the exhibition as a golden sponsor.

In a statement issued by Leaders Group

on signing the golden sponsorship agreement, it stressed that Horeca Kuwait has become a reference for those interested in restaurants, hotels, resorts and other hospitality companies "cooperation with Kuwait Protein Company. The famous company in food stuff distribution and one of the main suppliers for hotels, coops, super markets, hospitals, clubs, wholesalers, supply companies, mini markets, bakeries and groceries, originates from our belief in the role played by Horeca Kuwait in this sector.

In this regard, Proteins' deputy board chairman, Saud Fuazan Al-Fauzan stressed



Saud Al-Fauzan

that taking part in Horeca 2020 reflects the company's keenness on probing the latest in hospitality, food industries and hotel equipment business, that had been on ever since its establishment in 1982. He added that Kuwait Proteins Company provides the world's best trademarks products and that it is always keen on adding new brands to win customers' satisfaction.

Al-Fauzan added that the hospitality sector has been annually growing as a result of several factors including the growing investments in hospitality projects, the growing population, the growing purchase power and the growing level of competition.

Further, Al-Fauzan added that Kuwait Protein Company has many subsidiaries operating in local and Arab markets and that Horeca Kuwait is a great opportunity and a smart window through which the company could pursue its future expansion plans.

## LOYAC to organize trip to Cambodia

LOYAC recently announced intentions to organize a unique trip to Cambodia for youth ageing 14-18 in the period of 24th December to 1st January. The trip will be sponsored by NBK. In this regard, LOYAC's community services manager, Yosra Al-Essa said that the trip program would include various activities and visits to Cambodian heritage sites for cultural exchange purposes.

Al-Essa added that the trip is prepared for youth who had never traveled before on their own to give them a chance to interact and communicate with others with the ultimate goal of enhancing peace.



Further, Al-Essa said that participants would visit the Silk Island, explore the Cambodian economy, visit a local NGO, Cambodian landmarks, practice Community Service at local school, explore local markets

and shows and visit the fascinating Angkor Wat. On her part, NBK's PR officer, Asma Bin Hussein stressed that sponsoring the trip comes as part of NBK's sponsorship of LOYAC's events and activities.

## ICSK walks in pride at NBK annual walkathon



Strength does not come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will." We ourselves must walk the path. In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks. The National Bank of Kuwait popularly known as the NBK had arranged a walkathon on 7th December 2019 that was open to all.

The Indian Community School Kuwait has always put an effort to keep health as the priority. In order to encourage the concept of sound mind and healthy body, around 250 ICSK ians including the staff and children had participated in the walkathon. Out of 250, 200 participants were from ICSK Senior, including the staff and children. The walkathon saw a proactive leadership with members of the school board, Principals, Vice Principals and teachers leading the pack of ICSK ians from all ages, which also included the supporting parents.

The starting point was Green Island and the finishing point was The Grand Mosque at Shuyoukh. The walkathon commenced sharp at 8.30 am and was completed by 11.30 am. The participants covered an incredible journey of 11 kilometres walking shoulder to shoulder. Mr. Balan from the Junior branch received the coveted award for being the first to reach the finishing point in the above 60 year category.

Medals were awarded to all those who completed and covered the entire 11 kilometres journey of walkathon.

Yet another feather added to the cap of ICSK.



## ACK sign MoU with LOYAC on cooperation in education



In a step towards achieving cooperation with various local NGOs, the Australian College in Kuwait (ACK) recently signed a memo of understanding with LOYAC to consult each other on potential opportunities of cooperation in education.

The memo focuses on developing opportunities in voluntary work, local training, workshops, seminars, professional development programs and others for the benefit of students and Kuwait youth in general.

The signing ceremony was attended by ACK's President, Professor Hosam Za'balawi, his assistant for backup services affairs, Engineer Sager Al-Sharhn and LOYAC's General Manager, Al-Razi Al-Bedaivi.

Speaking on the occasion, Za'balawi hailed LOYAC's role in serving the Kuwaiti community and empowering manpower to be more effective and productive. On his part, Al-Razi Al-Bedaivi thanked ACK for supporting LOYAC's program to empower students.

## More than 1.5m NBK followers on social media

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to achieve success on social media with more than 1.5 million followers by 2019 year end.

NBK had the highest growth rate across all channels which allows it remain the leader in followers amongst competition. NBK maintained its position as the leader of the banking digital platforms through constant engaging content, rapid responses to customer inquiries and ensuring that the content stays on trend with the market.

"NBK's Social media has been an official channel of communication between us and our customers," said Abdul Mohsen Al Rushaid, NBK Public Relations Executive Manager. "More than 1.5 million are now following NBK on our various social media channels."

Al Rushaid noted "NBK's Social Media platforms provide the highest engagement and the quickest response

in comparison with competition. NBK Social Media platforms were the main factor of communication that pushed over 19,600 online registrations for the NBK Walkathon."

NBK actively started using LinkedIn sharing our corporate news and market related reports. Youth competitions were also covered successfully on Social Media and received a high engagement and reach.

It's worth mentioning the high impact of NBK CSR awareness campaigns on social media. These campaigns comprised of Health awareness tips, supporting cancer patients, tips to fasters during Ramadan, safety Tips and others.

NBK is keen to support customers through all channels and views social media networks as important aspects for supporting the lifestyle and banking habits of NBK customers. Check out National Bank of Kuwait official pages on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube and LinkedIn.



Abdul Mohsen Al Rushaid

## KIB: Main sponsor of the 3rd B2B4SME symposium



For the third consecutive year, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) offered its main sponsorship to the B2B4SME symposium. Organized by the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises of Kuwait (ASMEK), the symposium took place at Al-Shaheed Park.

KIB participated in one of the panel discussions during the forum, where a number of the Bank's employees took part in offering advisory and consultation services to answer queries about the advantages of startups and SMEs. Additionally, the Bank introduced attendees to the range of products and services it has on offer for these businesses.

As part of the press conference announcing activities taking part in the symposium, Deputy General Manager of Wholesale Banking - Head of Domestic Commercial Banking, Hesham Al-Mubarak said: "KIB's main sponsorship of this forum reflects its social commitment towards entrepreneurs. As part of this commitment, we are dedicated to positively impacting the community and empowering youth by sup-

porting events that aim at nurturing entrepreneurs and providing them with a platform for exchanging experiences and expertise."

Moreover, Al-Mubarak noted that KIB believes Kuwait offers favorable entrepreneurship conditions and a start-up friendly business environment. Accordingly, the Bank established a specialized function for financing SMEs, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Division, which consists of a group of experts, specialized in this type of business. Through this Division, the Bank is adamant on providing easy and simplified banking and financing solutions that meet the needs of these businesses. KIB believes in the vast potential of entrepreneurial youth as key drivers in national economic development.

At the end, Al-Mubarak expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation for ASMEK as well as all participants in this event from across both public and private sectors. He also lauded their notable participation, which served as a key stepping stone to promoting and developing the local SME sector.



# Novartis eyes give-away of costly therapy for babies

GENEVA: Swiss pharmaceutical company Novartis is preparing to give away 100 doses of the world's most expensive drug, which treats a rare childhood disorder, but its recipient selection process has drawn criticism. The company announced this week that starting next month, its AveXis unit will begin distributing doses of Zolgensma, a one-time gene treatment for spinal muscular atrophy, also known as SMA. The disease affects about 1 in 10,000 births, and which results in death or the need for permanent ventilation by the age of two in 90 percent of cases. Novartis said a total of 100 doses — which cost around \$2 million a pop — would go to eligible patients who are "under the age of two and are a citizen or legal resident of a country where the therapy is not yet approved by regulatory authorities."

The therapy was approved by US regulators in May, but approval in Europe and Japan for instance has been delayed until next year. Novartis stressed in a statement that AveXis so far had only one facility licensed to produce the therapy, and that the company's first obligation was to provide it where it had been approved or was pending approval, as well as to clinical trials. "We work diligently to get two more facilities licensed in 2020," it said.

As for the giveaways, Novartis said the intention was for a long-term commitment, with additional doses added to the program on a rolling six-month basis based on patient need and the expansion of capacity. Novartis said AveXis had worked with an independent bioethics advisory committee to develop the program, which it insisted was "anchored in principles of fairness, clinical need and global accessibility to best determine the equitable global distribution of a finite number of doses."

### 'Blinded selection'

It would not favor any child or country over another, it said. A third party would administer "a blinded selection" every two weeks from a pool of patients proposed by their treating physicians who had been proven to be medically eligible, it said. Novartis stressed that patients



BASEL: This file photograph taken on October 27, 2015, shows a sign of Swiss pharmaceutical giant Novartis is seen on the top of a building at the company's campus in Basel. — AFP

not picked in one selection round would automatically be submitted to the pool of candidates for the next selection as long as they remained medically eligible. But the process drew criticism.

TreatSMA, a British advocacy group for the disorder, praised Novartis for trying to increase access, but it said it had "yet to be convinced that a health lottery is an appropriate way of meeting the unmet medical needs in this severe disease." France's AFM-Telethon, which works to raise donations to fund treatments for SMA and genetic disorders, went further, criticizing the program as a cruel "lottery" offered to "parents whose children afflicted with spinal muscular atrophy are condemned to death in the short term." "How can one envisage even for a second that the life of a child can be the big prize in a lottery," the organization asked on its website. — AFP

## Ebola vaccine 'at low price' for poor nations

WASHINGTON: Merck & Co said on Friday it expects to make licensed doses of its recently approved Ebola vaccine available in the third quarter of 2020 and price the single-dose injection at the lowest possible access price for poor and middle-income countries.

The vaccine, Ervebo, was approved by the US Food and Drug Administration on Thursday, a month after Europe gave its nod to the vaccine, a move that has been hailed by the World Health Organization.

"We have made a commitment to making the vaccine available to GAVI-eligible countries at the lowest possible access price," Merck spokesman Skip Irvine said. "We have made that commitment but we have not yet established the price for the vaccine." Stockpile of 500,000 doses of Ebola vaccine is being established for emergency use in outbreaks of the deadly fever by the GAVI global vaccine alliance.

Reuters reported earlier this month. The stockpiling will start with Merck's Ervebo vaccine. GAVI, a public-private partnership backed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the WHO, the World Bank and UNICEF, arranges bulk buys to reduce vaccine costs for poor countries. "We are partnering with both GAVI and WHO to put that stockpile in place as quickly as possible," the company said in a statement, adding that the stockpile of vaccines will be governed and executed by the owner of the stockpile and not by Merck.

The Ebola virus causes hemorrhagic fever and spreads from person to person through direct contact with body fluids. It kills around half of those it infects. There have been more than 3,000 cases of Ebola, including 2,199 deaths, in the outbreak that was declared in August 2018. The WHO declared it an international emergency in July 2019.

The company said it was working closely with the US government, WHO, UNICEF, and GAVI to prepare against the disease. Johnson and Johnson's two-dose vaccine is currently being reviewed by the European regulator. The company is in discussion with the FDA for US approval. Merck shares rose as much as up 2.8 percent to record high of \$92.55 on Friday. — Reuters

CLINIC

PAGE







248 33 199

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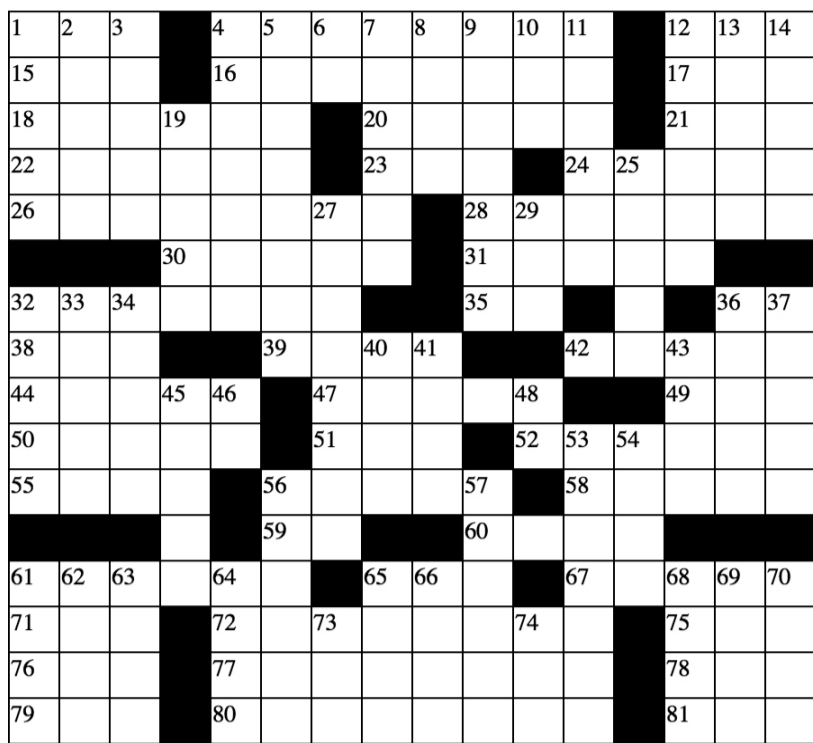
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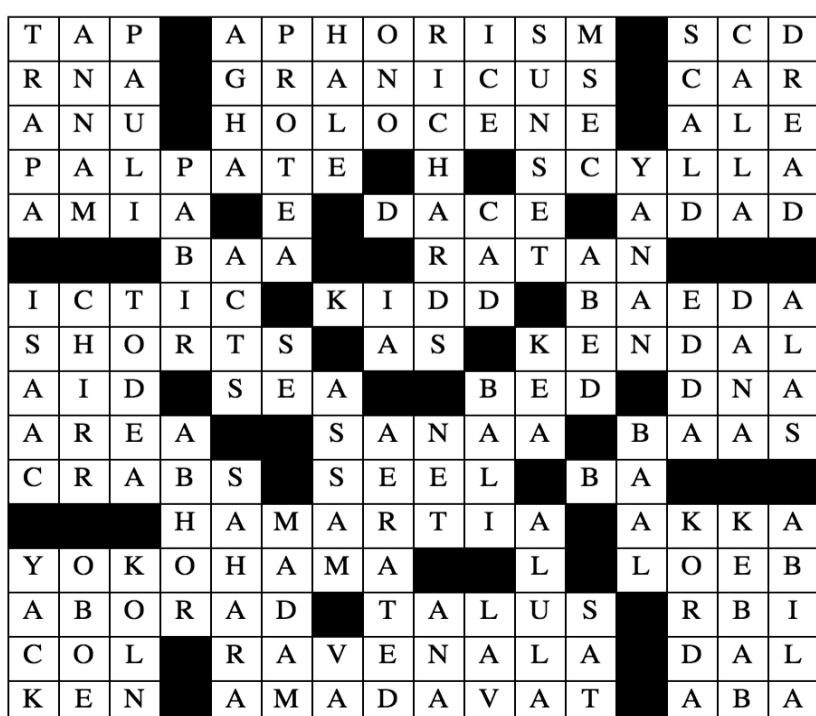
ACROSS

1. A coenzyme derived from the B vitamin nicotinic acid.
4. Warm-blooded vertebrates characterized by mammary glands in the female.
12. A user interface in which you type commands instead of choosing them from a menu or selecting an icon.
15. How long something has existed.
16. Absent-minded dreaming while awake.
17. 100 avos equal 1 pataca.
18. Any of several tropical and subtropical tree-like herbs of the genus *Musa* having a terminal cord of large entire leaves and usually bearing hanging clusters of elongated fruits.
20. Having the appearance of being real but lacking capacity to function.
21. Ancient Hebrew unit of liquid measure = 1.5 gallons.
22. Beaten eggs or an egg mixture cooked until just set.
23. Small cubes with 1 to 6 spots on the faces.
24. Being three more than ninety.
26. A woman's headscarf folded into a triangle and tied under the chin.
28. Of or relating to or characteristic of Asia or the peoples of Asia or their languages or culture.
30. Openly distrustful and unwilling to confide.
31. English aristocrat who was the first wife of Prince Charles.
32. An intersection or crossing of two tracts in the form of the letter X.
35. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
38. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
39. A Loloish language.
42. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
44. A state in the Rocky Mountains.
47. A high wave (often dangerous) caused by tidal flow (as by colliding tidal currents or in a narrow estuary).
49. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
50. (British) A local tax on property (usually used in the plural).
51. Of a light yellowish-brown color n 1.
52. Archaic name for England or Great Britain.
55. Evergreen trees and shrubs having oily one-seeded fruits.
58. West Indian evergreen with medium to long leaves.
59. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
60. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
61. Marked by practical hardheaded intelligence.
67. The mission in San Antonio where in 1836 Mexican forces under Santa Anna besieged and massacred American rebels who were fighting to make Texas independent of Mexico.
71. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
72. A sandal with flat heels and an upper of woven leather straps.
75. The month following February and preceding April.
76. An advanced law degree.
77. An inhabitant of ancient Assyria.
78. A city in the European part of Russia.

DOWN

1. A wealthy man (who made his fortune in the Orient).
2. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
3. The brightest star in Cygnus.
4. 1 species.
5. A detested person.
6. A state in New England.
7. The middle of the day.
8. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
9. Sweetened beverage of lime juice and water.
10. A belief (or system of beliefs) accepted as authoritative by some group or school.
11. A condition in which no mucus is produced.
12. A member of the Taracahitian people of central Mexico.
13. Being eight more than fifty.
14. Containing or involving or occurring in the form of ions.
19. Scale-like structure between the base of the wing and the halter of a two-winged fly.
25. Any plant of the genus *Canna* having large sheathing leaves and clusters of large showy flowers.
27. A small volcanic island in Indonesia between Java and Sumatra.
29. Intentionally so written (used after a printed word or phrase).
33. Relating to the deepest parts of the ocean (below 6000 meters).
34. Feeling or showing extreme anger.
36. Of or relating to or characteristic of Morocco or its people.
37. A republic in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea.
40. A form of energy that is transferred by a difference in temperature.
41. God of fire.
43. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
45. An upward movement (especially a rhythmic rising and falling).
46. A mouth or mouthlike opening.
48. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
53. Type genus of the Lycaenidae.
54. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
56. (Greek mythology) A woman transformed into a Gorgon by Athena.
57. A sheet or band of fibrous connective tissue separating or binding together muscles and organs etc.
62. Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
63. Avatar of Vishnu.
64. Hit hard.
65. Genus of prickly shrubs and small trees of the Caribbean region.
66. Queen of England as the 6th wife of Henry VIII (1512-1548).
68. An Asian river between China and Russia.
69. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
70. Toward the mouth or oral region.
73. The residue that remains when something is burned.
74. A pilgrimage to Mecca.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You seem to work best today when exchanging ideas with others. You may find yourself in a group who is able to throw ideas back and forth until problems are conquered and much progress is made. This is an ideal situation for you today. You may find this to be an extremely productive day in the workplace. Later this even you may find you have a deep desire to connect with friends, neighbors, and love ones. Great connections can be made, and fences can be mended with little effort.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may feel as if someone is cutting you off today. They may be making it difficult for you to express yourself. This may put you in a mood to shut down and keep to yourself. Know any obstacle you face today will be short-lived and temporary. Frustration may come over you. Time will eliminate these obstacles. You will be back to your old self shortly. Keep a positive attitude today.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Just because it is easy doesn't make it right. You may be very tempted today to take a shortcut. If you can not tell yourself this is the right thing to do, you should steer clear of making the wrong decision. Doing the right thing never goes unnoticed. In the long run, you will be rewarded for going the extra mile and doing the right thing. You may find this gives you a grasp for all that is spiritual.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have an appreciation for your responsibilities. What is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong. This is a motto for you. This way of thinking has brought you a long way on your path towards success. You are focused and driven and most of all...honest. By not cutting corners nor taking the easy way out, you have developed a good reputation for having an excellent work ethic. You have a lot to proud of and you may find many opportunities beginning to come your way.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Make time for your loved ones. Don't wait for a holiday or special event. What is a little thing to you can make a big difference in the life of someone you care about. You are creative enough to turn a small act into a big memory. Take the time. Make the effort. You will find it rewarding.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You have the ability to find beauty in everything and everyone surrounding you. In a way you may find this as a weakness because this can cause you to over indulge. This may include material things or involve your investing too much of yourself into others. Resist that urge at this time. You may find a child or someone younger who is close to you as a disappointment and find yourself at odds with them. This is temporary, and you should resist the urge to make permanent decisions that affect your living situation or theirs at this time. You may feel as if your level of authority is being challenged today and find it difficult to react.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may have never put much thought into how you love. It has always just been an emotion or feeling that came natural to you. You may have an experience that leads you to see things in a different light. You may experience a sense of awakening that opens your eyes not only to the way you express love but to the way others close to you need to be loved. This may develop stronger bonds and relationships in your life and bring much harmony and passion into your world.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Make sure to spend some time outdoors today. This is a day the beauty of creation will be filled with special meaning for you. It seems everything may take on a more special meaning in your life now. A positive attitude and an open mind seem to take you far in this world. You have both. When you choose to be happy, you will be happy. You have an attitude that no one nor anything can steal your joy. This is the answer. This is the way to face your day and conquer the world.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may feel as if you are on the outside looking in today. Difficulty getting your point across to others could find you frustrated. Group situations may be the thing to avoid for you today. This day would be best spent taking some time to yourself. Step outside and take a breath of fresh air. Find a way to have a little escape and clear your mind. You will be back to your old self in no time.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may feel torn between two worlds. You may find conflict when delegating your time between family life and home. You will have to get your priorities straight and try to find a balance between the two. You may find that you feel led to pass up a career opportunity because of the effect it will have on your personal life. Remember, family is forever. The tie that binds. Not everything in life revolves around money. This is a time you may come to realize, money can not buy happiness.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You can really get your thoughts and ideas across. Your communication skills are on point today. You may find yourself being especially kind to a friend and feeling a desire to share the love in your heart with all who surround you. You may find others admire the kindness you show to others and are drawn to you. You could enjoy being the recipient of many compliments today. Others seem to notice your belongings, your good taste, and the way you treat those around you. Your goodness and emotions seem to be accepted today and you should expect much support from your friends and family.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are hungry for knowledge. Eager to see what all this world has to offer you. You are at your best when visiting with siblings or neighbors today. A great time to sit and express your views and feelings about some situations that have bothering you. Getting things off of your chest will help you regain focus. You are getting back on track.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Songs From the Year 2001

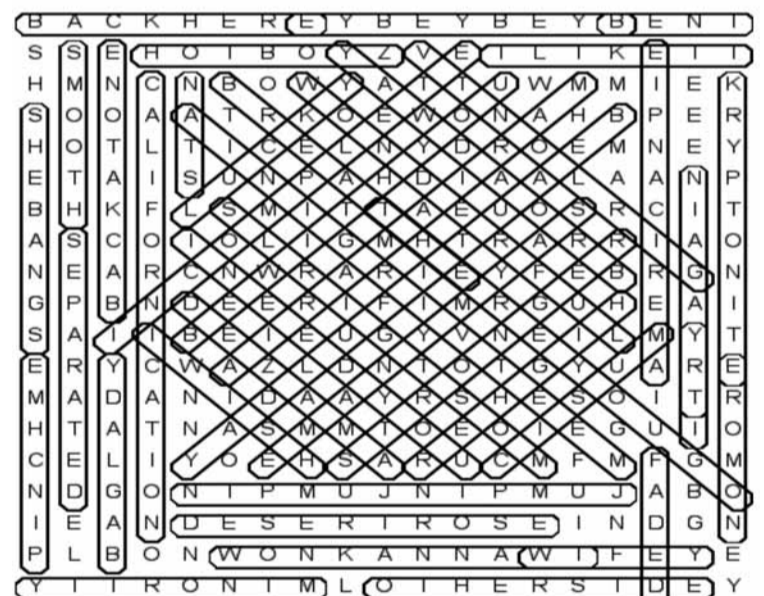
Find and circle all of the songs from 2001 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 22 letters spell an additional song title from 2001.



- |               |               |                |             |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| AGAIN         | DRIVE         | KRYPTONITE     | PLAY        |
| ALL FOR YOU   | EMOTION       | LADY MARMALADE | PROMISE     |
| ANGEL         | EVERYWHERE    | LOVE           | RIDE WIT ME |
| AUSTIN        | FAMILY AFFAIR | MISSING YOU    | SOUTH SIDE  |
| BE LIKE THAT  | FIESTA        | MOST GIRLS     | STUTTER     |
| BEAUTIFUL DAY | FILL ME IN    | MUSIC          | SURVIVOR    |
| BUTTERFLY     | FOLLOW ME     | MY BABY        | THANK YOU   |
| CONTAGIOUS    | HERO          | ONE MORE DAY   | U REMIND ME |
| CRAZY         | I WISH        | ONLY TIME      | VIDEO       |
| DANCE WITH ME | IRRESISTIBLE  | OOCHIE WALLY   | WALK ON     |
| DIFFERENCES   | JADED         | OUTSIDE        | WHO I AM    |
| DIG IN        |               |                |             |

Friday's Solution

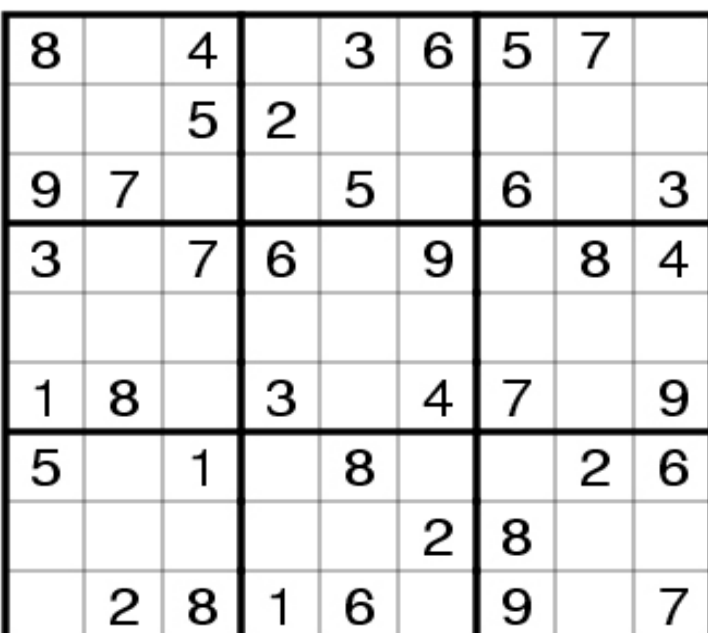
Songs From the Year 2000



- |               |                 |                 |              |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 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    |

The hidden message is: SHOW ME THE MEANING OF BEING LONELY

Daily SuDoku



easy

Friday's Solution



very hard



# Lifestyle

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22, 2019



Saudi fans attend the "MDL Beast Fest", an electronic music festival held in Banban on the outskirts of the Saudi capital Riyadh on Dec 19, 2019. — AFP photos



## Top DJs headline Saudi Arabia's biggest music festival



Tens of thousands of Saudis have flocked to an electronic music festival billed by organizers as the biggest in the ultra-conservative kingdom since it began easing decades-old restrictions on entertainment. Dutch DJ Tiesto, South Africa's Black Coffee and France's David Guetta are among the top acts at the three-day MDL Beast festival, which began near Riyadh on Thursday. "This is the biggest music festival in the region," said DJ Cosmicat, one of a few female Saudi artists performing at the event. "The whole country is going through a huge change," she said in a statement released by the organisers.

Young Saudi revellers held their mobile phones aloft in front of one of the stages as lasers and spotlights lit the evening sky on Thursday. Many of the women went without the hijab headscarf - not a legal requirement but widely worn in the conservative

Muslim country. The multi-stage festival attracted 130,000 fans on its first day, said organizers, calling it the "largest music, arts and culture festival Saudi Arabia has ever seen".

Saudi Arabia has eased tight restrictions on various forms of entertainment as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman seeks to shake off his country's ultra-conservative image. He has scrapped decades-old bans on cinemas and women drivers while allowing gender-mixed concerts and sports tournaments. The relaxed social norms have been welcomed by many Saudis, two-thirds of whom are under 30. The reforms come as the OPEC kingpin, hit hard by low oil prices, seeks to boost domestic spending and diversify its economy.

Saudis currently splurge billions of dollars annually to see films and visit amusement parks in neigh-

boring tourist hubs like Dubai and Bahrain. But introducing such facilities at home has fuelled controversy in a deeply conservative society. And alongside sweeping social reforms, the kingdom has carried out a crackdown on dissent. Nearly a dozen women activists were arrested for demanding the right to drive, just weeks before the kingdom lifted the ban on female motorists last year.

The kingdom has also faced intense international scrutiny over its human rights record since last year's killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the country's consulate in Istanbul. In July, American rapper Nicki Minaj pulled out of a concert in Saudi Arabia in what she described as a show of support for women's and gay rights in the kingdom. — AFP





## Lifestyle | Gossip



Paleontologists from CAPP are seen at an excavation site in Agudo, Brazil, on Dec 3, 2019. — AFP photos

## In Brazil pampas, a Triassic Park once flourished

Millions of years before the arrival of the mighty Tyrannosaurus rex, another fearsome dinosaur - the Gnatavorax - roamed what is now southern Brazil, ripping apart its prey with sharp teeth. Measuring nearly 10 feet (three meters) long, it was the biggest dinosaur of its time, and also the most ferocious - placing it at the top of the food chain, as T.rex once was. Basically, the Gnatavorax cabreirai was the king of Triassic Park, if you will, as the dominant creature of the pre-Jurassic period that began roughly 250 million years ago.

"In the Triassic ecosystem, it held a place similar to what lions have today," says Rodrigo Temp Muller, a 26-year-old paleontologist at the Federal University of Santa Maria. And the Gnatavorax's stomping grounds were the Brazilian pampas - sprawling plains that were then a fertile jungle of trees, mosses and non-flowering plants, and now are a gold mine for paleontologists. About 100 dig sites filled with fossils are located in Rio Grande do Sul state, on Brazil's border with Argentina and Uruguay - and are yielding clues to help experts understand that long-ago era.

### 'Hooked claws'

The first Gnatavorax skeleton was found in 2014 at Sao Joao do Polesine, a small town located about 300 km west of the state capital Porto Alegre. Dating back more than 230 million years, it was one of the oldest and best preserved dinosaur fossils ever found - the skeleton was nearly complete. It's one of the oldest meat-eating dinosaurs ever identified. "The fact that it is in such good condition



Paleontologist Jose Darival Ferreira digs at an excavation site in Agudo.

allowed us to glean a large amount of information about its anatomy," Muller told AFP.

"It was a bipedal dinosaur that walked on its hind legs and had hooked claws to trap its prey," added the researcher, whose study was published last month in PeerJ - the Journal of Life and Environmental Sciences. The Gnatavorax was only about 1.5 meters tall, and weighed about 70 to 80 kilos, Muller said. Some of those characteristics were similar to those of T.rex, which appeared more than 150 million years later in North America at the very end of the Cretaceous period.

That dino could grow to more than 12 meters, but it was

not a distant cousin to the Gnatavorax, which instead belongs to the Herrerasauridae family of dinosaurs of the Triassic period. It appears to be more closely linked to other species whose fossils were found in Brazil and Argentina. During the Triassic era, the continents were not separated as they are now, and dinosaurs were smaller than those that would follow in the Jurassic and Cretaceous periods.

"These dinosaurs eventually vanished in a massive flood plain. "We've discovered numerous fossils across the region and there are surely more. The type of sediment that we have here is ideal for preserving fossils," Muller said. "The future is promising."

### Long-necked giant

At the Center for Paleontological Research at the Federal University of Santa Maria in Sao Joao do Polesine, the Gnatavorax skeleton is on display in a glass case. The skull is particularly well preserved, and observers can easily see the dinosaur's powerful jaw that gives it its name - Gnatavorax cabreirai means "ravenous jaws". Once the fossils were extracted from the soil, they were carefully examined with tools that look like a dentist's drill. In some cases, the work can take years. The Gnatavorax is not the only species studied by the Brazilian research team. They also found impressive remains of the Macrocollum itaquii, the oldest long-necked dinosaur in the world, which lived about 225 million years ago. Those fossils were found in 2012, on a vacant lot along a road in Agudo, about 20 kilometers outside Sao Joao do Polesine. — AFP



Paleontologist Rodrigo Temp Muller examines a dinosaur fossil from the Triassic period at CAPP, a Brazilian research support center for paleontology, in Sao Joao do Polesine, Brazil, on Dec 2, 2019.



A foam model head based on the Gnatavorax Cabreirai dinosaur is seen at CAPP.



Fossilised dinosaur skeletons are seen at CAPP.



A fossilised skeleton of a Buriolestes Schultzi dinosaur is seen at CAPP.



A fossilised head of the Prestosuchus Chiniquensis dinosaur is seen at CAPP.



An almost complete fossilised skeleton of the Macrocollum Itaquii dinosaur is seen at CAPP.



A fossilized skeleton of a 233-million-year old Bagualosaurus Agudoensis dinosaur is seen at CAPP.

## A Mexican indigenous town's environmental revolt

When illegal logging turned their green, pine-covered hills into an ecological wasteland, the people of the Mexican indigenous town of Cheran decided to arm themselves with rifles and reclaim their land. Today, eight years after rising up against illegal loggers and the drug cartel behind them, Cheran is practically an independent enclave tucked into the lawless mountains of western Mexico. Its residents have their own system of government based on community assemblies. They have their own police force.

And they run ambitious environmental programs that have begun covering their bare, charred land in verdant pine trees again. "As you can see, the forest has grown back. Everything is green again. We've worked hard to rescue our environment," said Luz Torres, a 43-year-old housewife who keeps an organic garden and gathers medicinal plants. The area has been transformed since the days when hitmen from the Familia Michoacana cartel armed with AK-47s showed up, seeking to branch out into other illegal activities as the Mexican government waged an all-out war on drug trafficking.

The gunmen lorded over an illegal logging operation that felled vast swathes of forest to sell the wood on the black market. The loggers then burned the remaining tree stumps, possibly to make way for avocado trees, a lucrative but environmentally taxing crop caught up in bloody turf wars between rival drug cartels in Michoacan, the violence-plagued state where Cheran is located. "They were taking out 100 or 200 truckloads of wood a day, and (the authorities) didn't say a word," said Torres.

The drug traffickers "said that after they finished cutting down the pine trees, they were going to kidnap the women they liked and take the houses they wanted." Then, at dawn on April 15, 2011, the church bells of Cheran rang out: the signal to launch the revolt.

### Call to arms

Armed residents blocked the roads into the Purepecha indigenous town, set up checkpoints and lit bonfires to stand guard overnight at every intersection. The rebellion



A mural of Mexican revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata is seen at the "Greater Council" in Cheran.

led to a series of shootouts between townspeople and cartel gunmen. Two residents were killed in the clashes. Since then, another six have been murdered, allegedly by illegal loggers seeking to reclaim the land, according to indigenous authorities. But Cheran has managed to wrest back control. Residents now patrol the forests armed with 7.62-caliber rifles.



A Mexican lumberjack works in front of his house to prepare firewood for sale in Cheran.



Members of the community police deliver a suspected thief to police of the state of Michoacan, in Cheran, Mexico, on Dec 11, 2019. —AFP photos

They have set up a "Great Council" modeled on their ancestors' system of government. And communal companies now protect the environment and run one of Mexico's most advanced recycling programs. "Things had gone too far. They were threatening to kidnap our children. Now we can live our lives in peace," said one community guard, who asked not to be identified for security reasons, toting her nine-millimeter pistol. The community has reforested more than half the 12,000 hectares of pine trees that were lost - reclaiming an area the size of more than 17 Central Parks.

### Forbidden fruit

In Cheran, it is now illegal to farm avocados. Mexico, the world's largest producer of the fruit, exported \$2.4 billion in avocados last year, but Cheran took a collective decision to ban the crop from its territory. Avocado trees consume too much water, are too resource-intensive and draw too much unwanted attention from cartels, they decided. "It is the opposite of the pine tree. Pine trees give us water and oxygen," said Miguel Macias, 62, head of the community tree nursery. "This is like an island of pines... We fought to make it that way."

### Zero waste

At the town's recycling center, Samuel Martinez wipes the sweat from his forehead as he finishes his shift. The center's workers have limited safety gear and rusty composting equipment, but Martinez says he is "proud" to help implement another of the community's key environmental policies: zero waste. Cheran separates its trash into six categories - twice as many as Mexico City households. The goal is to reuse, recycle or compost everything. "It separates waste better than any other municipality in Mexico," said Ana Martinez, head of the Inclusive Recycling Program at AVINA, a sustainable development foundation. The town has even given birth to a new verb in Spanish: "cheranizarse" - "to become like Cheran". Environmentalists use it to describe a no-holds-barred approach to wresting back control of a blighted environment. — AFP

## Scientists may have found world's oldest forest

Scientists have discovered what could be the world's oldest forest, potentially rich in information on the link between forests and climate change, according to a study published Thursday in the journal Current Biology. The title of world's oldest fossil forest had previously been given to a site in Gilboa, in the Catskills region of upstate New York, dating back about 385 million years. The new site is an old quarry in the same region, just 40 km further east, near the town of Cairo.

After 10 years of samples and studies, an international team of 11 scientists concluded the quarry had once housed a forest two to three million years older and more varied in types of trees. As at Gilboa, scientists found traces of the primitive tree type "Eospermatopteris". Somewhat similar to a palm tree, it has a thick bottom and crown of branches at the top, though no leaves.

But at the new site, they also found trees from the "Archaeopteris" type. The "Archaeopteris" has "much more modern" characteristics, with leaves and root systems comparable to a spruce or pine, explained William Stein, one of the study authors and a biology professor at Binghamton University in New York. Those trees could help understand how forests modernized, at a time when carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere were getting lower and temperatures were dropping. Stein told AFP. By studying the cooling process, it could be possible to better understand the relationship today between climate warming and deforestation, since it may be a similar process in reverse, he said. — AFP



Lifestyle | Features

# Mysterious artist Banksy unveils dark nativity in Bethlehem



A new Christmas-themed artwork dubbed the "Scar of Bethlehem" by secretive British artist Banksy is displayed at his Walled-Off Hotel in Bethlehem in the occupied West Bank on Dec 20, 2019. — AFP photos

A manger scene juxtaposed against concrete blocks seemingly pierced by a mortar shell: with Christmas looming, the latest Bethlehem offering by secretive artist Banksy appeared Saturday in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Dubbed the "Scar of Bethlehem", the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph are backlit through damaged concrete, chiseled pockmarks exploding out from a gaping hole in four directions to approximate the Christmas Star.

The work is installed at Banksy's Walled-Off Hotel, where all rooms overlook a concrete section of the barrier built by Israel to cut off the occupied West Bank from Israeli territory. "Love" and "peace" are respectively graffiti tagged in English and French on the artistic installation's concrete blocks, while three large wrapped presents are at the forefront of the scene. "It is a nativity," the hotel's manager Wissam Salsaa told AFP after the piece was installed. "Banksy has his own contribution to Christmas."

"It is a great way to bring up the story of Bethlehem, the Christmas story, in a different way - to make people think more" of how Palestinians live in Bethlehem. Salsaa calls the Israeli wall a "scar" that should induce "shame in anyone who supported" its construction. Israel

began building the separation barrier - in parts concrete, with other stretches consisting of fencing - in 2002 during the Palestinian uprising, or intifada. Built mostly inside the West Bank, Israel says it is necessary to prevent attacks, but Palestinians label it an apartheid wall, separating them from Jerusalem.

### Regular Banksy haunt

Traditional Bethlehem Christmas festivities will take place next week at the church built on the spot where Christians believe Jesus was born. The manger scene and hotel - an establishment opened two years ago - are far from Banksy's only West Bank imprint. In 2007, he painted a number of artworks in Bethlehem, including a young girl frisking an Israeli soldier pinned up against a wall.

In 2005, he sprayed nine stencilled images at different locations along the eight-metre-high (27-foot) separation barrier. They included a ladder on the wall, a little girl carried away by balloons and a window opening onto a peaceful mountain landscape. Palestinian graffiti artists, too, have made the separation wall a place of political and artistic expression.

Like elsewhere in the world, Banksy's works in the occupied territory have become tourist



attractions - in part due to him often ghosting in to create his works in the dead of night. The identity of the world's best known graffiti artist remains a mystery and he was not present during the revealing of his latest work. "Banksy is trying to be a voice for those that cannot speak," Salsaa said. He "is creating a new model of resistance through art." Banksy rose to prominence after his subversive artworks started to appear in public spaces in the United Kingdom in the early 2000s, and he has long worked on themes of violence and conflict. — AFP



Manager of the Walled-Off Hotel Wissam Salsaa presents the "Scar of Bethlehem".



A picture taken on Dec 20, 2019 shows Banksy's Walled-Off Hotel facing Israel's controversial separation wall in Bethlehem.



Illustrations and artworks by Banksy are pictured in his Walled-Off hotel.

## What is love? It depends on what language you speak

The English word "love" can be translated as "sevgi" in Turkish and "szerelem" in Hungarian - but does the concept carry the same meaning for speakers of all three tongues? Researchers from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History have used a new tool in comparative linguistics to examine emotional concepts across the world, finding the way we think of things such as anger, fear, and joy depends on our language.

Their paper drew on data from nearly 2,500 languages, from large ones with millions of speakers to small ones with thousands, and was published in the journal *Science* on Thursday. Sometimes, words used to describe emotions are so unique, it seems they are rooted exclusively in a particular culture. The German

word "Sehnsucht," referring to a strong desire for an alternative life, has no translation in English.

Nor does the word "awumbuk", used by the Baining people of Papua New Guinea to describe feelings of listlessness that hosts feel after their guests leave. But many other emotional states are named across the world's languages, leading scientists to wonder how close their meaning really is. To approach the question, the team relied on "colexified" words, which refers to when a word has more than one meaning and the different meanings are seen by speakers of that language as conceptually similar.

For example, the English word "funny" can mean both humorous and odd, and humor is often found in things that are odd. In Russian, the word "ruka" is used for both the hand and the arm, in Japanese, "ki" can

mean both tree and wood, and in French, "femme" means both woman and wife. The researchers constructed networks of colexified emotional concepts and compared them across languages and language families, finding the words varied greatly in their nuance even if their meaning was equated in translation dictionaries.

In Austronesian languages, for example, "surprise" was closely associated with "fear," whereas in the Tai-Kadai languages of southeast Asia and southern China, "surprise" was linked to the concepts of "hope" and "want". "Anxiety" was closely related to "anger" among Indo-European languages, but was linked more to "grief" and "regret" amongst Austroasiatic languages, while the concept of "pride" likewise correlated to positive or negative emotions depending on culture.

### Primary emotions hardwired

"Not every language family seems to see emotion in the same way as the other, and that's a really important finding on such a large scale," Kristen Lindquist, a psychology and neuroscience associate professor at UNC-Chapel Hill and the paper's senior author, told AFP. The analysis found that those language families with similar

colexifications were close in geographic proximity, suggesting the variation could be tied to patterns of trade, conquest and migration.

Yet there were some universal findings too: all languages distinguished emotions based on whether they are pleasant or unpleasant to experience, and whether they involve low or high levels of arousal. Few languages equated the low-arousal emotion of sadness with the high-arousal emotion of anger, and few viewed the pleasant emotion of "happy" as similar to the unpleasant emotion of "regret."

That supports the idea that certain primary emotions are hardwired into mammalian brains, which humans have added to over millennia through new experiences that they have gone on to name. "There are the basic building blocks of emotion, but humans have been scaffolding on these building blocks for thousands of years within our cultures," Joshua Jackson, a doctoral student at UNC-Chapel Hill and the lead author, told AFP. "The way that we've named emotions, the way we communicate emotions, has been an important part of that process and that's why we have so much diversity in how we express emotions today." — AFP



# 'Star Wars' struggles in a country far, far away



This photo taken on Dec 17, 2019 shows a room at a cafe that screens previously-released Star Wars films, in Beijing. — AFP photos



This photo taken on Dec 20, 2019 shows children dressed as Star Wars characters playing with another moviegoer as they wait outside a cinema to watch "The Rise of Skywalker" at a mall in Beijing.

While "Star Wars" fans from around the world waited in line for days to catch "The Rise of Skywalker", the sci-fi series has struggled to woo film-goers in the increasingly important Chinese market. Special previews of the long-awaited "Star Wars" film in Beijing this week drew just a handful of fans. Chen Tao is a rare superfan in a country where Friday's opening day pre-sales were just 12 million yuan (\$1.7 million). Xinhua news agency said, a fraction of the 218 million yuan taken recently on release by a Chinese-made crime drama, according to state broadcaster CCTV.

The 35-year-old Shanghai resident only became curious about the space saga by accident after stumbling across a pre-installed "Star Wars" video game on his first computer. Chen now runs one of China's biggest online "Star Wars" fan groups, debating lightsaber physics on the online message board Zhihu and managing a Twitter-like Weibo account with 30,000 followers. He loves the "Star Wars" world for its vast scale and rich detail that fans can piece together through movies, books and games. "Its world is like a jigsaw-puzzle... which feels very magical to me, and inspires a desire to explore this universe," he said.

But Chen and his fellow fans are rare in China, where cinemagoers flock instead to see Marvel superheroes and domestic films. "The Last Jedi" ranked number 47 at the box office in China in 2018, far behind Marvel's superhero film "Avengers: Infinity War" at number six, according to Box Office Mojo. Since buying Star Wars studio Lucasfilm in 2012, Disney has stepped up efforts to gain fans in the world's fastest-growing movie market.

In October, Disney and Tencent-owned e-book company China Literature announced they would be publishing the first-ever "Star Wars" novel written specifically for Chinese audiences featuring "Chinese-style expression". "We will introduce interpersonal relations and other con-



This photo taken on Dec 15, 2019 shows Chen Tao, the administrator of one of China's biggest Star Wars fan sites StarWarsChina.com, posing with Star Wars collectibles at his home in Shanghai.

cepts from Chinese custom into Star Wars," a China Literature representative told AFP, without providing further details.

#### Empty screening

The made-for-China "Star Wars" novel will have to overcome significant obstacles. A Beijing bar hosted a screening Tuesday of previous "Star Wars" films ahead of Friday's China release - but the special room was mostly empty. The indifference could be explained by the fact that Chinese audiences were introduced to the series in 1999 with the prequel "Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace" - a disappointment to original fans and panned by critics.

"When Star Wars was released worldwide in 1977 it was a real film revolution," said Steffi Noel, an analyst from



A man walks past a poster for the latest Star Wars movie, "The Rise of Skywalker", in Beijing.

Shanghai-based market research firm Daxue Consulting. "Each new episode of Star Wars is linked to a craze, a nostalgia," Noel told AFP. But most Chinese viewers never formed this nostalgic bond with the movies. In 1977, as foreign audiences were introduced to George Lucas' Skywalker saga, China had just emerged from the chaotic Cultural Revolution and had little access to Western popular culture. The three original films were only finally shown at a Shanghai film festival in 2015.

#### 'Old technology'

By the time Chinese audiences were introduced to the franchise, "the technology seemed old", Fan Yunxin, from a Beijing-based science fiction reading group, told AFP.



Moviegoers dressed as Star Wars characters wait outside a cinema to watch "The Rise of Skywalker" at a mall in Beijing.

"Space opera isn't really something Chinese people related to," Fan said, adding while she likes the films, she didn't know of any "hardcore" fans. Alex Hu, a 24-year-old science fiction fan, said he was unimpressed with the visual effects. "I would say a lot of fight scenes in Star Wars are similar," he said. Chen said Chinese sci-fi fans tend to prefer "hard" science fiction that focuses on scientific theory and have high demands for a story's logical consistency, but "Star Wars" was more like a "Roman empire tale that had been moved into space". When he first watched one of the films, he was amazed by how casually alien and human characters co-existed in the "Star Wars" universe, something he had never encountered before in a science fiction film. — AFP

## Former Romanian dictator Ceausescu's 4x4 sold at auction

A 4x4 vehicle which belonged to Romania's former communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was sold at auction Friday by tax authorities, just days before the 30th anniversary of his removal. The grey-blue vehicle was the same one that Ceausescu and Mikhail Gorbachev travelled in during the Soviet leader's visit to Romania in 1987. They waved through the sunroof to crowds thronging the streets of Bucharest. The vehicle was made in 1977 by Romanian carmaker ARO and had 72,453 km on the clock. It sold for almost A40,000 (\$44,000), almost double the asking price. The buyer's name was not made public.

According to local media, the car is one of only four its kind ever made by ARO for Ceausescu and his security detail. The company went bankrupt in the 2000s. The vehicle had previously been sold at auction in 2002 along with the three others but it was confiscated by tax authorities

several years later after the businessman who bought it was given a jail sentence for fraud. It's one of a host of objects belonging to Ceausescu and his wife Elena which have been sold off in the past 20 years, among them luxurious gifts from fellow heads of state.

In January 2018, the Artmark auction house put a lot under the hammer which included clothes, photos and even carpets adorned with the face of the "nation's beloved son", offered to Ceausescu on his birthday. Auctioneers report continued strong interest in such objects from collectors as well as those nostalgic for the communist era. Born in 1918, Ceausescu became president of Romania in 1974 and built up an intense cult of personality which ended with his overthrow in the anti-communist revolution of December 1989. Ceausescu was arrested along with his wife and executed on December 25 of that year after a summary trial. — AFP



In this file photo taken on Oct 29, 2003, a new all-terrain car is presented at ARO factory, owned now by US group Cross Lander, in Campulung city, some 200 km from Bucharest. — AFP

## Elba conferred Sierra Leone citizenship



British film actor Idris Elba received Sierra Leone citizenship and a diplomatic passport on Friday on his first visit to his father's native country, an AFP journalist saw. Sierra Leone President Julius Maada Bio conferred the passport to Elba at an emotional private ceremony at his colonial-era residence in the capital Freetown. "I'm humbled and thankful for the opportunity to become a citizen of my father's country, it's an honour for our family," Elba said. The actor was born in London but his mother is from Ghana and his father from Sierra Leone.

Speaking in mixture of standard English and British-accented Krio, Elba said he had wanted to visit the West African country earlier but "it was in turmoil and I was chasing my own dreams". His father and uncle left Sierra Leone for London in the 1960s and 1970s "with only two bags and prayers", he said. Elba's father died in 2013. But his uncle, as well as senior government ministers, attended the ceremony, an AFP journalist said.

Elba, 47, is best known for his roles in Marvel franchise films such as "Thor" and "The Avengers". However, he is also a successful rapper, and was named People magazine's "sexiest man alive" in 2018 to boot. "My heart is what I want to bring to Sierra Leone and what my heart brings is determination," said Elba, who has expressed an interest in investing in eco-tourism in the country.

President Bio said he hoped Elba would help Sierra Leone shed its image as a source of blood diamonds and Ebola virus. The diamond-rich former British colony is one of the world's poorest countries and is still recovering nearly two decades after the end of a civil war which claimed some 120,000 lives. It was also hit badly by West Africa's 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak. "We want to tap into your network to be able to tell the world that the little nation they knew for only wars and Ebola and all the horrible stories is now a new Sierra Leone," Bio said. — AFP

## UK royals Meghan and Harry take a break in Canada

Britain's Prince Harry, his wife Meghan and baby Archie are spending some "private family time" in Canada, a spokeswoman for the couple said on Saturday. The Duke and Duchess of Sussex are taking a break from royal duties after speaking of the pressure of being in the spotlight following their wedding last year and Archie's birth in May. They had previously announced they would miss Christmas with Queen Elizabeth II, choosing to spend it instead with the duchess' mother, Doria Ragland.

The queen has also begun the holidays without her husband Prince Philip, after he was admitted to hospital on Friday for precautionary treatment for a pre-existing condition. "Prince Harry, Meghan and Archie, we're all wishing you a quiet and blessed stay in Canada," Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted. "You're among friends, and always welcome here."

Harry has been a frequent visitor to Canada and Meghan, a US former actress, lived there for seven years while filming the TV series "Suits". "Their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Sussex are spending private family time in Canada," the spokeswoman said. "The decision to base themselves in Canada reflects the importance of this Commonwealth country to them both." She added: "They are enjoying sharing the warmth of the Canadian people and the beauty of the landscape with their young son."

Prince Philip, 98, is reported to have spent the night in hospital after being admitted on Friday for what Buckingham Palace described as "observation and treatment in relation to a pre-existing condition". The Sun tabloid said the Duke of Edinburgh had suffered a month of ill-health, including a "bad fall" which left him confined to bed for a couple of days. — AFP

## Rock 'n' sausage roll tops UK Christmas charts

A novelty song about sausage rolls secured the coveted Christmas number one spot Friday on the UK singles charts. LadBaby landed the festive crown for the second year running with "I Love Sausage Rolls" - a comedy reworking of "I Love Rock 'n' Roll", which was a 1982 hit for US singer Joan Jett. Last year, LadBaby - 32-year-old YouTube 'dad blogger' Mark Hoyle - topped the charts at Christmas with "We Built This City" - a similar sausage roll-based revamp. Proceeds from the single are going towards The Trussell Trust food bank charity.

LadBaby became the first artist to serve up two consecutive novelty Christmas number ones. The only other acts to have pulled off back-to-back festive chart-toppers are The Beatles between 1963 and 1965 and the Spice Girls, who also had three straight Christmas number ones between 1996 and 1998. "How have we done this again? It's the best feeling in the world - it's a Christmas miracle yet again!" said Hoyle. "Who doesn't love a sausage roll at Christmas?"

LadBaby beat Stormzy's "Own It" featuring Ed Sheeran to the top spot, while Lewis Capaldi's "Before You Go" rose one place to number three. The battle to secure the Christmas number one took off in the 1970s, seeing some epic contests between huge hits. Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody", "Mull of Kintyre" by Wings, Band Aid's "Do They Know It's Christmas?" and "I Will Always Love You" by Whitney Houston were all giant Christmas chart-toppers.

Since 2002, the race has commanded less national excitement, being predictably dominated by reality television contest winners - though novelty records and charity singles have recently started to chip their way in. Meanwhile Rod Stewart has the Christmas number one album with "You're In My Heart" - a collection of his classic hits with new backing from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Stewart is only the fifth British act in UK chart history with 10 or more number one albums; only The Beatles, Robbie Williams, the Rolling Stones and David Bowie have more. — AFP



# Classifieds

Sunday, December 22, 2019



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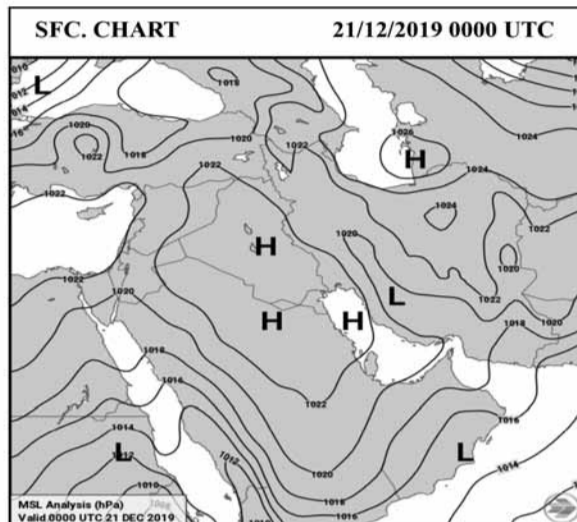
### Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h .

**BY NIGHT:** Cold with light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 20 km/h with a chance for fog forming over some areas.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
-----------------	---------------------

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	11 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	06 °C
ABDALY	19 °C	06 °C
BUBYAN	20 °C	08 °C
JAHRA	21 °C	09 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	19 °C	14 °C
AHMADI	20 °C	12 °C
NUWASIB	23 °C	08 °C
WAFRA	21 °C	06 °C
SALMY	18 °C	05 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	12/22	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	20 °C	07 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 25 km/h
Monday	12/23	Fair	21 °C	08 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 26 km/h
Tuesday	12/24	Fair	21 °C	06 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Wednesday	12/25	Fair	21 °C	07 °C	SE	15 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:13
Sunrise	06:38
Zuhr	11:46
Asr	14:36
Sunset	16:54
Isha	18:16

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	20 °C
MIN. Temp.	09 °C
MAX. RH	93 %
MIN. RH	40 %
MAX. Wind	NW 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

### CHANGE OF NAME

**VARGHESE. (C 5480) 19-12-2019**

**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**

### 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, Abraq Khaitan, Kuwait / +965-60423355. **(C 5479) 18-12-2019**

### SHARING ACCOMMODATION

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

## EMERGENCY 112

Automated enquiry about the CivIID card is **1889988**

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

## DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 22/12/2019				Departure Flights on Sunday 22/12/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	JZR	215	Jeddah	00:05
FEG	241	Alexandria	00:30	QTR	1093	Doha	00:25
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35
NIA	561	Asyut	00:45	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:45
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	AIC	990	Mumbai	01:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10
KAC	102	London	00:55	FEG	342	Sohag	01:30
KAC	504	Beirut	00:55	NIA	364	Alexandria	01:40
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	JZR	119	Dubai	01:55
ETH	3424	Addis Ababa/Bahrain	01:30	KAC	677	Dubai	01:55
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	JZR	111	Doha	01:55
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:00
PGT	840	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	THY	773	Istanbul	02:20
IGO	002	LGW	01:55	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:30
UAE	1759	Delhi	01:55	KAC	417	Manila	02:30
ETH	620	Dubai	02:15	PGT	841	Istanbul	02:50
RBG	551	Addis Ababa	02:25	ETH	3425	Addis Ababa	02:55
KLM	446	Alexandria	02:30	IGO	1765	Delhi	02:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
QTR	1086	Bahrain	02:40	RBG	552	Alexandria	03:05
OMA	643	Doha	02:55	UAE	854	Cairo	03:40
RJA	648	Muscat	03:05	KAC	621	Doha	03:50
PGT	860	Amman	03:05	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
ETD	305	Istanbul	03:05	QTR	1087	Doha	04:00
MSR	612	Abu Dhabi	03:15	OMA	644	Muscat	04:00
KAC	414	Cairo	03:15	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
LMU	510	Bangkok	04:00	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
QTR	1076	Cairo	04:00	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25
IGO	1751	Doha	04:00	JZR	713	Sohag	04:30
KAC	418	Chennai	04:10	KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:35
OHY	352	Dubai	04:25	JZR	707	Luxor	04:40
KAC	302	Istanbul	04:30	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
KAC	406	Mumbai	04:40	KAC	103	London	05:00
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:30
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	THY	771	Istanbul	06:25
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR	121	Dubai	06:35
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	JZR	113	Doha	06:40
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	JZR	001D	LGW	06:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	RJA	649	Amman	06:55
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	FDB	070	Dubai	07:05
QTR	8511	Doha	05:45	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	KAC	167	Paris	07:35
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:55	QTR	8512	Doha	07:45
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	IGO	1767	Mumbai	08:10
JZR	120	Dubai	06:50	KAC	165	Rome	08:15
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	KAC	161	Geneva	08:20
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
BAW	157	London	07:10	KAC	545	Cairo	08:50
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	BAW	156	London	09:00
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:00
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	163	MXP	09:00
KAC	622	Doha	08:00	JZR	539	KTM	09:05
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	JZR	731	Cairo	09:10
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	691	Muscat	09:20
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	671	Dubai	09:35
KAC	334	Trivandrum	09:00	QTR	1085	Doha	09:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	KAC	101	London	09:45
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	KAC	561	Amman	09:45
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:45	KAC	117	New York	10:00
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	791	Madinah	10:00
JZR	114	Doha	10:20	KAC	613	Bahrain	10:05
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	JZR	301	Istanbul	10:05
JZR	714	Sohag	10:50	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:15
JZR	708	Luxor	10:55	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:20
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KAC	617	Doha	10:35
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
GFA	209	Bahrain	12:05	JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	JZR	611	Tbilisi	10:45
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	KAC	741	Dammam	11:05





A man sells balloons at the traditional Souq Waqif market in the Qatari capital Doha on Friday. — AFP

## Eyeing combat in outer space, US creates space force

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump signed legislation Friday to create a full-fledged Pentagon force for combat in outer space - the first new military service in seven decades. Capping an ambitious order Trump issued in June 2018, the US Space Force officially came into being when Trump signed the annual military budget, the \$738 billion National Defense Authorization Act. The legislation will create the Department of Defense's sixth force, a coequal of the five existing forces - the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard.

"Our reliance on space-based capabilities has grown dramatically, and today outer space has evolved into a war-fighting domain of its own," said Secretary of Defense Mark Esper. "Maintaining American dominance in that domain is now the mission of the United States Space Force." The new organization builds on the US Space Command, already operating under the Air Force since it was created in August. And, like the Marines, which operate within the umbrella of the Navy, the

Space Force will be under the Air Force.

The Space Command will focus on war fighting - akin to the Pentagon's regional commands like CentCom - while the Space Force will encompass broader missions like training, procurement, long-term planning and other functions. The Space Force will be comprised of about 16,000 Air Force and civilian personnel, some already taking part in the Space Command, according to Air Force Secretary Barbara Barrett. It will have its own uniform, shoulder patches and even, eventually, its own song, just like the other branches.

"The US Space Force will protect America's national interests by its singular focus on space. The United States has the best space acumen in the world," Barrett said. A staff of 16,000 would make it much smaller than the other forces, but Barrett said the technology-centric nature of the work requires fewer people. "It's a different sort of portfolio than what we might be thinking of when we generally think about warfighting machines," she said. — AFP

## Ethiopia celebrates launch of first satellite

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's first satellite was sent into space on Friday, a landmark achievement for the ambitious country that also caps a banner year for Africa's involvement in space. A Chinese Long March 4B rocket hoisted the first Ethiopian Remote Sensing Satellite (ETRSS-1) aloft from the Taiyuan space base in northern China. Scores of Ethiopian and Chinese officials and scientists gathered at the Entoto Observatory and Research Centre outside the capital, Addis Ababa, early Friday to watch a live broadcast.

The 70-kg satellite was developed by the Chinese Academy of Space Technology with the help of 21 Ethiopian scientists, according to the specialist website africanews.space. It will send back data of the environment and weather patterns in the Horn of Africa - a boon for a country dependent on agriculture and forestry and vulnerable to flood, drought and other climate perils. "This will be a foundation for our historic journey to prosperity," Deputy Prime Minister Demeke Mekonnen said in a speech.

It is the eighth launch of an African satellite this year, topping the previous record of seven in 2017, according to Temidayo Oniosun, managing director of Space in Africa, a Nigeria-based firm that tracks African space programs. "We can say that 2019 is pretty much the best year in the history of the African space industry," Oniosun told AFP.

The launch makes Ethiopia the eleventh African country to have a satellite into space. Egypt was the first in 1998. All told, 41 African satellites have now been launched - 38 from individual countries and three more that were multilateral efforts, Oniosun said. None of those launches has taken place from African soil. China covered most of the satellite's \$8 million cost, according to an official involved in Ethiopia's

space program who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to disclose details of the project.

### Humble beginnings

The country's space program was originally championed by private individuals, who formed the Ethiopian Space Science Society (ESSS) in 2004. Paulos Alemayehu, a longtime member of the group, said many were at first skeptical of the organization's ambitions to develop an Ethiopian satellite. "They were saying, 'In a country where tap water is not even reaching the upper stories of buildings, what the hell are you talking about?'" he recalled.

Paulos credited Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed for taking a special interest in the program and for encouraging the partnership with China when he served as minister of science and technology in 2015 and 2016. The government established the Ethiopian Space Science and Technology Institute in 2016. At a press briefing ahead of Friday's launch, Innovation and Technology Minister Getahun Mekuria said the satellite would ultimately save Ethiopia money as the country would no longer need to pay for remote-sensing data from foreign satellites.

"After the launch of the ETRSS-1 is done, we will work to be self-sufficient maybe at our third or fourth satellite, using our own domestic system," he said. The importance of the data provided by the new satellite is secondary to the sense of pride it can instill in Ethiopians, Paulos said.

Ethiopia, which has a population of more than 100 million, has one of the world's fast-growing economies. GDP expanded annually at 9.9 percent on average from 2007/8 to 2017/18, according to the World Bank. "For us as a society, we are valuing this launch as something which lifts our national pride," Paulos said. "You know, this is a very poor country. Many in the younger generation don't have big hopes of reaching space. But today we are giving this generation hope, helping this generation to think big and have self-esteem." — AFP

## ICC to probe war crimes in...

Continued from Page 1

West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza." The prosecutor added however that she did not require any authorization from judges to open a probe as there had been a referral from the Palestinians, who joined the court in 2015.

"Palestine welcomes this step as a long overdue step to move the process forward towards an investigation, after nearly five long and difficult years of preliminary examination," the Palestinian Authority, a limited self-rule body in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, said in a statement. Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad Al-Maliki said the ICC decision was "a dark day in the history of Israel".

"We firmly oppose this and any other action that seeks to target Israel unfairly," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said of Washington's top ally in the region. "We do not believe the Palestinians qualify as a sovereign state, and they therefore are not qualified to obtain full membership, or participate as a state in international organizations, entities, or conferences, including the ICC."

The issue is highly sensitive, with former White House national security adviser John Bolton threatening last year to arrest ICC judges if they moved against

Israel or the United States. Both countries have refused to sign up to the court, which was set up in 2002 to be the only global tribunal trying the world's worst crimes, war crimes and crimes against humanity. Bensouda launched a preliminary probe in January 2015 into allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Israel and the Palestinian territories, in the wake of the 2014 Gaza war.

A full ICC investigation could possibly lead to charges against individuals. States cannot be charged by the ICC. "Palestine welcomes this step as a long overdue step to move the process forward towards an investigation, after nearly five long and difficult years of preliminary examination," the Palestinian statement said. Netanyahu however lashed out at what he called a "dark day for truth and justice". "The ICC prosecutor's decision has turned the International Criminal Court into a political tool to delegitimize the State of Israel," he said.

The ICC's preliminary investigation has looked at the 2014 war which left 2,251 dead on the Palestinian side, the majority civilians, and 74 on the Israeli side, most of them soldiers. It has also looked at violence near the Israel-Gaza border in 2018. Earlier this month, the ICC prosecutor refused to press charges over a deadly 2010 Israeli raid on a flotilla bringing aid to Gaza, and urged that probe to be shut. Nine Turkish citizens died in May 2010 when Israeli marines stormed the Mavi Marmara, among eight ships trying to break a naval blockade of the Gaza Strip. One more died in hospital in 2014. — Agencies

pletely rejected under any circumstances. It is a clear violation of human dignity protected by both Islamic sharia and the Kuwaiti constitution," the statement stressed, noting that this incident reminds of what happened in the past to citizen Mohammad Al-Maimouni who also died of torture during detention.

The NGOs signing the statement included Kuwait Human Rights Society, Women's Cultural and Social Society, Kuwait Society for Following up Parliamentary Performance, Kuwait Society for Following up Disabled Concerns, Social Workers Syndicate, Dar Al-Khebra Development Society, Kuwait Lawyers Association, Kuwait Graduates Association, Teaching Staff Members Society, Kuwait Society for Hearing Disability, Kuwait Society for National Fraternity, Kuwait Society for Defending Public Funds, Society of Kuwaiti Missing And Martyrs' Families, Kuwait Cinema Club, Kuwait Nursing Society, Kuwait Society for Social Service, Kuwait Society for Beekeepers, Men's Sociocultural Society, Kuwait Transparency Society and many others.

## Twitter, Facebook target accounts...

Continued from Page 1

Most of the accounts blocked by Twitter on Friday were in Arabic and aimed at "amplifying messages favorable to Saudi authorities", but that some English language content was aimed at "Western audiences". "Our internal analysis shows the network was involved in various forms of platform manipulation, targeting discussions related to Saudi Arabia and advancing their geopolitical interests on the world stage," the Twitter safety team said in a blog post. Twitter said it released details on 5,929 accounts which it called a "representative sample" of the 88,000 suspicious accounts.

Twitter's investigations traced the source of the coordinated activity to the Saudi-based social media marketing firm Smaat, which has been permanently blocked from the

platform. Smaat was working for "high-profile individuals", Twitter said, and several government departments in Saudi Arabia, using automated tools "to mask the overall platform manipulation originating from these accounts".

Some of the tweets in question date back to 2016 and appear to be supportive of President Donald Trump or his campaign. One dated Nov 11, 2016 showed a photo of billionaire George Soros - a frequent target of conservatives - and said Trump should put him "on the FBI most wanted list". Another from Oct 2016 showed a picture of former president Bill Clinton and said: "You don't even need these polls, Donald Trump won. You can read it on Bill Clinton's face."

Both Facebook and Twitter have in the past acted against manipulation efforts from Russia, Iran and other countries. A recent report by the Oxford Internet Institute found manipulation efforts have doubled over the past two years and are being used in 56 countries. The researchers said "sophisticated state actors" from at least seven countries are working outside their borders on global foreign influence operations, using Facebook and Twitter. The report identified the countries as China, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. — AFP

## Muslim states eye gold, barter trade...

Continued from Page 1

By the fourth and final day of the summit, no joint statement had been released. The summit had been expected to discuss major issues affecting Muslims, including Palestine, Kashmir and the plight of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and China's camps for Uighur Muslims in its western Xinjiang region.

## India protests rage on as death...

Continued from Page 1

The unrest had already seen one death in Uttar Pradesh, two in the southwestern state of Karnataka and six in Assam.

Yesterday, police erected barricades along Delhi's Jantar Mantar, an avenue that in recent years has been a hotspot for protests. It came after street battles broke out on Friday evening in Delhi with police firing a water cannon and baton-charging protesters, who chanted

Without naming any country, Mahathir said there was concern that Muslims in non-Muslim countries were forced to undergo assimilation. "We support integration but assimilation to the extent of shedding our religion is unacceptable," he said. At a news conference, he said the summit participants had been told that Uighurs were being detained in China. "We have to hear the state, we have to hear the people who complain, then only it will be fair," he said. He called India's new citizenship act unfortunate. The act facilitates for faster naturalization of non-Muslims from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan who had settled in India prior to 2015. — Reuters

anti-Modi slogans and threw stones. An AFP reporter at the scene saw protesters, including children, being detained and beaten by police.

Forty people were taken into custody, including at least eight under 18 years old, police told AFP yesterday, adding that most of them were released. Sixteen others were arrested over charges of violence, the police spokesman added. Delhi's chief metropolitan magistrate late Friday had ordered the release of everyone under 18 who was detained.

The leader of a prominent organization in the Dalit community - the lowest group in the Hindu caste system - who joined the Delhi demonstrators was arrested yesterday, police added. Yesterday, distraught families and lawyers waited outside a police station in Old Delhi where nearly dozen people were being held. — AFP

## Outrage after disabled citizen...

Continued from Page 1

MP Khalid Al-Otaibi said the case of Dhafiri brought back the incident of Maimouni, which was a "murder", adding the interior minister must announce the details of the case and reveal those who caused it. Otaibi said Saleh "should remember that the first statement about Maimouni's murder was contrary to the truth and was covering up for the killers".

Meanwhile, a number of local NGOs issued a statement expressing their grief and concern over the death of Dhafiri. The statement urged the interior ministry to conduct further independent and non-biased investigations, declare the results to the public and hold whoever is proven guilty legally accountable. "Torture is com-



Sports

# Acciari scores 2nd straight hat trick as Panthers bomb Stars

## Three-goal burst in 3rd lifts Leafs over Rangers

**FLORIDA:** Noel Acciari scored his second straight hat trick, racking up three consecutive goals during Florida's five-goal second period, as the Panthers defeated the Dallas Stars 7-4 on Friday night in Sunrise, Fla. Pavel Bure is the only other Panthers player ever to record consecutive hat tricks, accomplishing the feat in February 2001. But Bure scored 437 career goals, including 60 each in back-to-back seasons. Acciari, meanwhile, has just 29 goals in five seasons. His improbable barrage started right after Panthers coach Joel Quenneville adjusted all four of his lines on Monday, and the unit of Acciari, Jonathan Huberdeau and Vincent Trocheck has erupted with a combined eight goals and 18 points in two games. Huberdeau, Trocheck, Anton Stralman and Colton Sceviour also scored for the Panthers. Huberdeau had three assists, Trocheck and Aleksander Barkov had two apiece, and Acciari had one. Dallas got two goals from Tyler Seguin and one each from Jamie Benn and Denis Gurianov. Corey Perry added two assists.

### PENGUINS 5, OILERS 2

Five Pittsburgh players scored, and goaltender Tristan Jarry made 26 saves as the visiting Penguins continued their mastery of Edmonton. Chad Ruhwedel, Joseph Blandisi, Jared McCann, Kris Letang and Brandon Tanev scored for Pittsburgh, which extended its point streak against the Oilers to 19 games (15-0-4), a franchise record and the longest active stretch in the NHL. Zack Kassian and Riley Sheahan scored for Edmonton, which dropped

to 1-5-1 in its past seven games. Goalie Mike Smith, making his first start since allowing six goals in a loss to Minnesota on Dec. 12, stopped 21 of 25 shots.

### CAPITALS 6, DEVILS 3

Nicklas Backstrom recorded four points to give him 900 in his career, and Washington beat New Jersey as Backstrom had two goals and two assists in Newark, N.J. His 900th point came on the night he and Alex Ovechkin became the 21st set of NHL teammates to play 900 games together. Ovechkin and John Carlson added a goal and an assist each. Jonas Siegenthaler and Richard Panik also scored, and Ilya Samsonov made 24 saves. Kyle Palmieri scored for the third straight game for New Jersey, which was looking for its first three-game winning streak of the season. Blake Coleman and Miles Wood also scored.

### MAPLE LEAFS 6, RANGERS 3

William Nylander had two goals and an assist to lift Toronto to a win at New York. Toronto's Mitch Marner also scored twice, Auston Matthews had two assists, Ilya Mikheyev a goal and assist, and Pierre Engvall also scored. Frederik Andersen made 19 saves for the Maple Leafs, who have won five of their past six. Pavel Buchnevich had a goal and an assist, Brady Skjei and Ryan Strome also scored, and Alexandar Georgiev made 34 saves for the Rangers, who have dropped three in a row overall and four straight at home. — Reuters



NEW YORK: Alexander Kerfoot #15 of the Toronto Maple Leafs skates against the New York Rangers at Madison Square Garden in New York City. The Maple Leafs defeated the Rangers 6-3. — AFP

## Arab Tennis Federation moved to Kuwait from Cairo

By Abdellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** The Arab Tennis Federation unanimously approved moving the tennis federation permanent premises from Cairo, Egypt to Kuwait, and approved the Arab championships schedule for 2020.

The approval took place in the meeting that took place in Kuwait, chaired by President of Arab and Kuwait Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah with representatives of 16 Arab countries federations. Secretary General of Arab Sports Federations Union Saud bin Ali Al-Abdelaziz.

Arab federations representatives made a field visit to Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex, after their meeting at Jumaira hotel. The delegations had a look at the final stages of the sports project scheduled to be opened in February.

Meanwhile, KTF held a dinner at Kuwait Towers for the delegations in the presence of Sri Lankan Olympic Committee President Suresh Subramaniam and Honorary President of the Arab Tennis Federation Sami Al-Ibrahim.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber was pleased with the large presence of Arab federations presence and officials, adding that the meeting confirms Kuwait's prestigious status, and the credibility of KTF enjoys with its brotherly federations, adding that we prepared a lot in order to ensure the success of this Arab gathering, which witnessed the approval of many positive decisions in the interest of Arab tennis.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber said the moving of Arab Tennis Federation to Kuwait, coinciding with the opening of



Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah International Tennis Complex will contribute to increasing the number of Arab championships in the future, and lauded the consensus of general assembly members, and the unified vision in order to have a new launch for the Arab federation.

President of Egyptian Tennis Federation Ismail Al-Shafei said Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah International Tennis Complex is considered an important addition to Arab tennis. He said he hopes that this major facility will have a clear affect in taking Arab tennis to a brighter future.

He said that the complex is among the best in the world due to its high technical facilities in addition to having eight outdoor and seven indoor courts, and this will give a big push for Arab tennis through hosting major international tournaments for men, women and juniors, that in addition to having contracts with Rafael Nadal Tennis

Academy, which will cause an excellent move forward for tennis in Kuwait.

Secretary General of Arab Sports Federations Union Saud bin Ali Al-Abdelaziz said the Arab Tennis Federation is among the best and most responsive, and that there is notable improvement and interest in tennis in most Arab countries.

Meanwhile, Oman Tennis Federation President, Chairman of the Tennis Organizing Committee in GCC countries Khalid Al-Aadi said the meeting of the Arab Federation is highly important, adding that we hope the coming period will see the Arab federation fulfil hopes and goals.

He said Gulf tennis is developing and will be hosting regular championships. He said beach tennis was added lately to the organizing committee's activities.

## Dressel, Seto clock world records in swim league final

**LAS VEGAS:** Daiya Seto and Caeleb Dressel clocked short course world records Friday as the International Swimming League brought its high-octane brand to Las Vegas for the season one series finale.

Japan's Seto, who figures to be a star of the Tokyo Olympics next year, made a splashy ISL debut, clocking 3min 54.81sec to win the 400m individual medley — breaking the previous record of 3:55.50 set by American Ryan Lochte at the short course world championships in Dubai in 2010.

"I was going for it," said Seto, who said the time confirmed his preparations for Tokyo are right on track. Dressel, whose eight medals at last July's long course world championships included six golds, clocked 20.24sec in the 50m free to break the previous record of 20.26 set by France's Florent Manaudou at the 2014 short course worlds in Doha.

Manaudou, who returned from retirement this year in a comeback aimed at the Tokyo Games, settled for second on Friday in 20.69. Seto, swimming for the Energy Standard team, was making his first appearance in the series, which was launched this year with eight teams swimming in six meets — the top four teams advancing to the final.

Vegas, the US gambling haven known for glitz and risk-taking, was hailed as the perfect venue for a league aiming to shake up the sport, stepping out from under the umbrella of international governing body FINA and offering significant prize money in a quick-paced format aimed at exciting swimmers and fans alike.

"I think what is noticeable about this league is how much chatter it's creating. It's a disruptive force," said London Roar's Cate Campbell of Australia. "I have had people who don't follow swimming come up and talk to me."

"And I think that really is the first step, getting the name out there and spreading the word and telling people it's swimming reinvented, it's a different way of looking at swimming. It's bringing swimming into the 21st century."

The finals are unfolding steps from the Mandalay Bay casino, in a high-tech temporary pool erected for the occasion. "I remember going to basketball games as a kid and I'd be like 'Man, why can't we have the jumbotron? Why can't we have the lasers and the light show going on?'" said US Olympic gold medalist Nathan Adrian, calling the addition of such elements "awesome."

With a \$100,000 prize to be shared by the team that tops the final points standings — and double points on offer on the final weekend — Dressel's Cali Condors roared off the blocks, winning the first five events before Seto's dominant victory.

"We knew we were coming in hot," said Cali's Nic Fink, who beat world champion Adam Peaty of London Roar in the 50m breaststroke. Dressel opened his day with a victory in the 100m butterfly, with Cali teammate Kelsi Dahlia upsetting Energy Standard's Sarah Sjostrom in the women's 100m fly.

Cali's Lily King maintained her perfect record in ISL, winning the 50m and 200m breaststrokes to improve to 11-0 in the series. Dressel would add a runner-up finish in the 4x100m free to lead the meet Most Valuable Player standings heading into the final day on 52 points ahead of Cali teammate Fink, who also won the 200m breaststroke and headed into Saturday with 41 points. Sjostrom was in third on 37, but she still led the season MVP race — which carries a prize of \$50,000 — with 188.5 points. Dressel was second on 171. — AFP

### SPORTS SNIPPETS

#### NBA to offer \$1m player prize

As NBA officials continue to mull the addition of an in-season tournament, they also are considering paying members of the winning team \$1 million each. That's according to a report Friday from ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski, who wrote the league hoped "an additional financial incentive would motivate players to treat a new tournament with a competitive fervor." The proposed 30-team, in-season tournament is one of the innovations that commissioner Adam Silver has brought to the table for consideration in the league's 75th season in 2021-22. Other potential changes include the reseeding of the final four playoff teams, regardless of conference, as well as play-in games for the season-ending playoffs. The midseason tournament, based loosely on the European Champions League soccer model, would use regular-season divisional games to double as round-robin games to set up a separate playoff field. Those teams advancing would have a chance to play for the in-season title and the league presumably would be able to sell the broadcast package. The league is discussing potential changes with broadcast partners and the players union.

#### Australian PGA Championship

**MELBOURNE:** Home hero Adam Scott shot a patient three-under 69 to take a one-shot lead at the Australian PGA Championship after the third round yesterday and raise his hopes of a second title at the A\$1.5 million (\$1.03 million) event on the Gold Coast. The former world number one overcame a slow start and a bogey on the fifth hole to roll in four birdies from the ninth and reach a 10-under total of 206, one ahead of compatriot Wade Ormsby at the Royal Pines Resort. Australian Nick Flanagan soared into contention with a course record 63 to stand a stroke adrift of Ormsby, in a group of four tied for third. Flanagan had flirted with the cut-line after opening rounds of 72 and 73 but got off to a flying start yesterday with four of his nine birdies coming in his first four holes. "Yeah, it was kind of out of the blue," the 35-year-old told reporters. "Puts me in a good spot for tomorrow and hopefully go out there and just kind of play similar golf." Double defending champion Cameron Smith's hopes of completing a hat-trick of titles at the European Tour co-sanctioned event dimmed with a scratchy even-par 72.



## KIB sponsors Al-Fadhil at King's Cup Jet Ski Championship in Thailand

**KUWAIT:** As part of its commitment to empowering youth and local athletes, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored the international Kuwaiti champion, Abdullah Al-Fadhil. The national athlete recently took part in the King's Cup Jet Ski - World Cup 2019 championship held in Pattaya, Thailand, which featured 19 categories and the participation of 23 countries from across the globe. Al-Fadhil nabbed second place in the professional stock category at the championship and was also named runner-up 2019 World Champion for the same category.

On this occasion, KIB noted that it continues to sponsor this talented champion, as part of its leading social responsibility program that aims at empowering youth across various areas; thereby encouraging local, talented athletes in championships and raising Kuwait's standing on both regional and international arenas.

KIB always seeks to participate in competitive sports events and activities that aim at spreading awareness about the importance of physical activity and its positive impact on health, thereby improving productivity and quality of life. The Bank continuously invests in youth in order to nurture their talents, as it believes they are key drivers in building a better future for the nation. Moreover, KIB lauded Al-Fadhil's outstanding perform-



ance in representing Kuwait in the best possible way and raising its standing across various tournaments. The Bank also congratulated Al-Fadhil on winning this new title, adding to his impressive track record of local, regional, and international achievements that boost Kuwait's global standing. On his part, Al-Fadhil praised KIB's continued support, saying: "I am truly grateful and honored to have won second place in the professional stock category at the King's Cup in Thailand. I would like to thank KIB, as the official sponsor, as well as the Marine Sports Club for their continued support and guidance."

Al-Fadhil has also dedicated this achievement to his home country, Kuwait, and to KIB, for its trust in him and its unwavering support of his sports career both financially and morally in various tournaments; thereby motivating him to garner more honorable achievements at the local, regional and global levels.

As part of its leading social responsibility program, KIB has always sought to sponsor community-based activities, particularly those related to culture, youth, the society and sports. The Bank aims at positively impacting the community and nurturing a younger generation of physically and mentally healthy individuals, enabling them to better serve their nation in the future.



## Sports

# Greece defeat Serbia to clinch FINA World Junior Water Polo Championship

## Greece equals record held by Spain and Italy



By Adellatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Greece Water Polo team, maintained its hold on the title of FINA World Men's Junior Water Polo Championship, Kuwait 2019 for the second consecutive year and the third in its history equaling the record being held by Spain and Italy, by beating Serbia 6-4 in the final match of the 20th in the final match of the 20th championship that was held on Friday at HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Olympic Swimming pools complex of Al-Nasr Sports Club, under the patronage of National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, and with 20 teams participating.

The closing ceremony was attended by President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait and Asian Swimming Federations Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader, Deputy Director General of Public Authority for Sport for Competitive Sports Sector Dr Saqer Al-Mulla, and first Vice-president of International Swimming Federation Hussein Al-Musallam.

Italy ended with the bronze medal by beating Croatia 9-6 in the match deciding third and fourth place. Spain was fifth by beating Montenegro 14-8. USA ended in seventh by beating Japan 19-14.

Greece became the second team in history to keep the title after Serbia-Montenegro in 2003 and 2005, it also won the third title after 2001 and 2017, and with this equaled Spain 1983, 1987, 1991, and Italy 1993, 1999, 2013. Serbia was hoping to win its third title after 2009, 2015.

The semifinals that were held Thursday resulted in Greece defeating Croatia 15-16, Serbia beat Italy 9-7, USA lost to Spain 12-13, Montenegro vs Japan 18-11 in the classification stage from 5th to 8th places.

Meanwhile, Japan's Yusuke Inaba won best player of the tournament, Greece's Nikolaos Mitrakis best goal keeper and Italy's Ettore Novara won the best center forward player.

Sheikh Khalid Al-Bader said the championship was highly successful, adding that serious and hard work of all committees was the corner stone of this success as all delegations have said. He said this successful start internationally will be the launch of hosting major international championships.

Hussein Al-Musallam expressed satisfaction towards the success of the championship and said "it is the first world championship Kuwait hosts after long absence", and he lauded the government and sponsor companies which contributed to this major event.

Al-Musallam said "everybody benefited from having this championship in Kuwait at all levels, starting with referees who gained major experience in managing games, TV broadcasts that allowed more than 500 thousand to follow the games around the world." He said that we cannot forget the experience gained by more than 100 volunteers while working at the championship.

He said "we have to work hard to invest in sports and develop ourselves in all aspects be it technical or develop players levels, fix facilities or improve thinking to go along with quick developments in the world of sports."

Greece's team captain Alexander Papanastasiou said his feelings are just a wave of happiness that he cannot describe. He said matches were highly competitive, and each game was fascinating. There were many goals, while in other matches defence was dominant.

He added that this tournament showed that there is



much future for the game of Water Polo.

Papanastasiou, responding to a question whether they believed they will win again, said "when you get involved in such a tournament, you cannot say that I

will win it, you go step by step and match by match. We have confidence from winning the European Championship last year, plus that we also have talent that paid off at the end."

## Surfing legend Slater won't compete at Tokyo Olympics

**LOS ANGELES:** Surfing legend Kelly Slater, seen by many as the greatest of all time, won't be competing at the Tokyo Olympics. The 47-year-old American was edged for a spot on the US squad for the sport's Olympic debut next July, with John John Florence returning from knee surgery to edge Slater for the final spot at an event in Hawaii on Thursday.

Slater, an 11-time world champion who became the youngest and oldest to win the crown, inspired a generation of surfing stars with videos of his amazing efforts becoming must-see viewing for fans and competitors.

Competing as an Olympian would have been an epic farewell for a 40-year career than began at age eight in a youth event but instead he will be watching the event. "I'm going to enjoy it as a spectator," Slater told the New York Times, dismissing any notion he would end his career early after missing out on the Olympics.

"Be sure that in 2020, they will continue to see me at the top of a wave," he added. Slater needed a victory at the Pipeline Masters on Oahu's North Shore to secure the title but lost in the semi-finals, leaving him ranked eighth in the world but one spot behind 2016 and 2017 world champion Florence, who took the second US men's team spot behind already qualified Kolohe Andino. —AFP

## 'Legend' Abid, Masood give Pakistan edge over Sri Lanka

**KARACHI:** Abid Ali and Shan Masood became only the third opening pair for Pakistan to hit centuries in the same innings as Pakistan turned the tables on Sri Lanka in the second and final Test in Karachi yesterday.

Abid, nicknamed "legend" in Pakistan's dressing room, hit 174 for his second hundred in as many Tests — becoming the first Pakistani and ninth batsmen overall to score two centuries in his first two Tests.

When the third day's play ended Pakistan were in a strong position with 395-2, having an overall lead of 315 after conceding an 80-run lead in the first innings. Skipper Azhar Ali was unbeaten on 57 — his first fifty in 14 innings — and Babar Azam on 22 not out.

It was a day for the batsmen as Pakistan added 338 runs after resuming at 57-0 on a National Stadium pitch which dried up to help batting. Masood blasted 135 for his second century in his 19th Test as the duo put on 278 for the opening wicket, just 20 short of equalling the highest opening stand for Pakistan of 298.

Amir Sohail and Ijaz Ahmed had set that record against the West Indies at the same venue in 1997. Masood batted for nearly five hours for his 135, which included three sixes and seven fours. Abid struck 21 boundaries and a six in his 398-minute stay at the crease. Abid, 32, completed his century with a sweep off spinner Lasith Embuldeniya for two to follow his 109 in the drawn first Test in Rawalpindi — his debut. The Rawalpindi century made Abid the first batsman ever to score hundreds in both Test and one-day debuts.

He had scored 112 in his first ODI, against Australia in Dubai earlier this year. Abid said team management calling him "legend" adds to his responsibility. "The management calls me legend, thanks to them," said Abid. "But it adds to my responsibility to perform well.



**KARACHI:** Pakistan's captain Azhar Ali (L front) plays a shot as Sri Lanka's wicketkeeper Niroshan Dickwella (R) and Dhananjaya de Silva (L back) look on during the third day of the second Test cricket match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at the National Cricket Stadium in Karachi yesterday. —AFP

This time we were under pressure because of the lead we conceded, but I am happy that we are now in a good position."

It was pacer Lahiru Kumara (2-88) who broke the opening stand when he had Masood caught hooking just five minutes from tea before he trapped Abid with the second new ball. Abid's successive hundreds have put him in an elite company.

India's Mohammad Azharuddin scored three hundreds in his first three Test after making his debut against England at home in December 1984. William Ponsford, Doug Walters and Greg Blewett of Australia, Sourav Ganguly and Rohit Sharma of India, Alvin

Kallicharran of the West Indies and Jimmy Neesham of New Zealand are the others who hit two consecutive centuries in their first two Tests.

Before lunch, Abid survived a confident leg-before shout off paceman Kumara on 61 but the tourists lost the referral with the replays showing the ball would have missed the stumps.

Masood, playing his 19th Test, completed 1,000 Test runs when he reached 46. The current series — part of the ongoing World Test championship — is the first in Pakistan since a militant attack on the Sri Lankan team bus in 2009 which suspended international cricket in the country. —AFP

## Mavericks manhandle Sixers

**PHILADELPHIA:** Tim Hardaway Jr. made seven 3-pointers and scored 27 points to lift the visiting Dallas Mavericks past the Philadelphia 76ers, 117-98, on Friday. Kristaps Porzingis added 22 points and a career-high 18 rebounds to go along with three blocked shots as the Mavericks improved to 11-2 on the road. The Mavericks won handily

despite playing without injured guard Luka Doncic. Joel Embiid led the Sixers with 33 points and 17 rebounds for his 19th double-double, but they dropped their third in a row. It was also the Sixers' second consecutive home loss after opening the season with 14 straight wins. Ben Simmons had 12 points, eight assists and six rebounds for Philadelphia.

**GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 106 - NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 102**  
D'Angelo Russell broke a tie by sinking a long jumper with 32.9 seconds remaining before Draymond Green and Damian Lee buried four clutch free throws, allowing Golden State to end a five-game losing streak by beating New Orleans in

San Francisco. Russell's key hoop occurred just 5 1/2 seconds after Brandon Ingram had dropped in a pair of free throws that allowed the Pelicans, who trailed by as many as 20 points in the first half, to draw even at 100-all. After Jrue Holiday misfired on a jumper with 29.8 seconds remaining, the Pelicans fouled Green, whose two foul shots created a four-point Golden State lead with 14.3 seconds to go.

**BOSTON CELTICS 114 - DETROIT PISTONS 93**  
Jaylen Brown and Jayson Tatum scored 26 points apiece to lead host Boston to its second straight win, a rout of Detroit, which has lost four of five. Rookie Grant Williams chipped in a season-high 18 points off the bench, and Enes Kanter had 18 rebounds for the Celtics. Kemba Walker was held to

two points on 0-for-6 shooting but had 11 assists. Andre Drummond had 12 points and 11 rebounds and Thon Maker scored 15 points for the Pistons, who played without Blake Griffin, Luke Kennard and Christian Wood — all with knee injuries.

**INDIANA PACERS 119 - SACRAMENTO KINGS 105**  
T.J. Warren scored 23 points on 10-for-16 shooting to help host Indiana cruise over Sacramento as Myles Turner added 17 points and Indiana won its fifth straight game and its 13th in the last 16. Domantas Sabonis contributed 15 points, nine rebounds and six assists. T.J. McConnell recorded 15 points on 7-for-8 shooting and added eight assists while Malcolm Brogdon and Doug McDermott had 13 points apiece. Richaun Holmes

scored 20 points on 9-for-10 shooting and collected nine rebounds for the Kings. Marvin Bagley III added 17 points, and rookie Justin James matched his season high of 14 points.

**OKLAHOMA CITY THUNDER 126 - PHOENIX SUNS 108**

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored a career-high 32 points to lead host Oklahoma City past Phoenix, and the Thunder didn't need a big comeback this time. In each of the first two games of their current five-game homestand, Oklahoma City came back from a big deficit to win. Monday against Chicago, it was a 26-point deficit. Two days later against Memphis, Oklahoma City trailed by 24 before coming back to win. —Reuters



Sports

# No sabbatical, Pochettino says he is ready to return to management

## Mauricio does not rule out a return to Spurs at some stage in his career

DOHA: Former Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino says he is ready to return to management quickly, showing no interest in an extended break from the game. The Argentine, who led Spurs to the Champions League final last season and remains one of the most sought-after coaches in the game, was sacked by the north London club last month and replaced by Jose Mourinho.

Yet talking in an interview of his "love" for Tottenham, he did not rule out a return to Spurs at some stage in his career and said there was no club that he would not talk to — even Arsenal. In his first comments to journalists since his exit from Spurs, Pochettino said that after spending time with his parents and family in Argentina he is now getting prepared for whatever his next challenge will be.

"After five and a half years in Tottenham it is a weird time for us but at the same time very relaxed, very happy when you look backwards and of course obviously in life you need to move on," he said.

Pochettino told a small group of reporters in Qatar ahead of the Club World Cup final between Liverpool and Flamengo that he was recharging his batteries and aims to "be ready if something arrives and of course (I am) open to listen". Asked about a possible return to the Premier League, Pochettino said: "Of course I love the Premier League, I love the English fans, I think it is one of the best leagues in the world and I think for any manager it is so exciting to be involved in the Premier League."

"But we will see, there is not only Premier League, there are different leagues in the world, different clubs that can be exciting, to give you a challenge that is maybe different. "Now, it is true that we haven't had time to think too much of the future, we have been thinking only of ourselves, to recover and be ready, because that is the key point, to be ready when some-

thing happens and to be more prepared to give to a club that is interested in you, the best of you," he said.

Tottenham's arch rivals Arsenal sacked their Spanish manager Unai Emery last month, prompting some media speculation about whether Pochettino could be a target for them.

The Gunners, however, appointed Mikel Arteta on Friday, a man to whom Pochettino said he felt like a "big brother".

Pochettino, who once said he could never work for Barcelona having been with their local rivals Espanyol, did not directly answer whether he had received any approach from Arsenal, or any other club.

Yet he said he was not going to rule out talking to any club and suggested he would have listened to the Gunners. His exit from Spurs, along with his long-time assistant Jesus Perez, has not, however, diminished his affection for the club and he did not rule out the possibility of one day returning, noting that Zinedine Zidane had left Real Madrid and then gone back to the club.

"I don't know. You look what happened with Zidane and Real Madrid there are plenty of examples, the most important thing is that when a relationship finishes it finishes in a very good way," he said, with Perez standing nearby.

"Managers sometimes leave a club and go back, but now it is not in my hands." While his departure from Spurs, after a poor start to the season, clearly hurt Pochettino, he said he was pleased to see the team's form change for the better under Mourinho.

"Of course, I love Tottenham, I love the fans, I love the players, I love the club, the staff," he said. "When you leave a club, always you want them to win games because that means that the team is alive, that it is prepared to compete."

"For different reasons you split, but we are people that always want the best. I am happy that they are



File photo shows Mauricio Pochettino with Spurs Chairman Daniel Levy.

winning games because that love is never going to change. You accept that in football it can happen but I am happy to see the team winning games."

While the 47-year-old is enjoying his time away

from the pressure of the game, he said he is already preparing for the next step in his career. "You have to be ready to start if you believe it is the right moment," he said. —Reuters

## Montella sacked by Fiorentina

MILAN: Fiorentina sacked coach Vincenzo Montella yesterday as the club's new owners finally lost patience after a 4-1 home defeat by AS Roma the previous evening extended their winless league run to seven matches.

The 43-year-old's second stint at the Serie A club lasted only eight months and produced a modest record of six wins, seven draws and 14 defeats in 27 matches in all competitions. Two of those wins were in the Coppa Italia against lower-division sides.

Fiorentina said in a statement that "the decision was taken following a long and detailed analysis of the team's performances and results." "Given the need to rediscover the necessary grit and determination on the pitch and produce an immediate turnaround, the owners and management decided that a change of coach was the best option," it added.

Montella, previously in charge for three seasons between 2012 and 2015, returned in April but his team lost five of their first six games under his leadership and

only escaped relegation with a 0-0 draw at home to Genoa in their final match of last season.

The team began the new season with new hope after American billionaire Rocco Commisso bought the club in June in a deal reported by Reuters to be valued at 160 million euros (\$177.25 million). The new owners immediately strengthened the squad, signing Brazilian forward Pedro, Chilean midfielder Erick Pulgar, Liverpool teenager Bobby Duncan as well as veteran French winger Franck Ribery, who joined after nine seasons at Bayern Munich, and also managed to hold on to forward Federico Chiesa.

Yet, apart from a run of three successive wins in late September and early October, the team failed to click and Montella was not helped by the absence of Ribery, who was given a three-match suspension for pushing a linesman and then had to undergo ankle surgery.

Montella became the eighth coach to lose his job in Serie A this season.

"The club would like to thank Vincenzo Montella for his efforts and commitment in recent months and we wish him every success in the next chapter of his career," said the statement. Fiorentina, twice Serie A champions, have not won a major trophy since being re-founded in 2002 following bankruptcy. —Reuters



Vincenzo Montella

## I have to earn new deal, insists Pep Guardiola

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola insists he still has to earn a new contract at Manchester City despite winning five major trophies in the past two seasons. City are keen for Guardiola to commit to a deal beyond the current one that ends in 2021.

But, in the midst of a frustrating season that sees City trailing Premier League leaders Liverpool by 14 points, the 48-year-old says there is no rush to agree an extension, partly because performance will be a factor in his future.

"I have one more year and always I have to deserve to extend my contract," Guardiola told reporters on Friday. "Managers, we have to get results. At this club you have to win. In football, we spoke about this, the situation changed a lot, managers today, even in this country, they change a lot."

"In just four or five months, how many managers have been sacked? So that's why we have to be patient and do our job. "We still have a lot of time. So we have patience, we have an incredible relationship with the board, with the people who decide, and we will take the decision that is best for the club."

"I think in football one-and-a-half years is a long time for the managers, a lot of time, so we have to see altogether how it works, how it's going on." Guardiola spent four years as Barcelona boss and three years with Bayern Munich before joining City in 2016.

He will have been at the Etihad Stadium for five years if he finishes his current City deal. Some pundits believe that will mark the end of his reign, but Guardiola disagrees.

"I said many times how incredible, what a good time I have here, and I would like to stay as long as possible," Guardiola said. "So that is my desire. But I will only be sure if it's the best for the club that they want me to stay longer."

"So it will be five years with one club, in this competition, this league, it has many years, so that's why it's important to be sure the decision is perfect for both sides. "That's why there's no rush, it's not finishing in three or four months. The club is working perfectly in all departments, so it's not a problem, honestly."

City face Leicester, looking for the win to close the gap on the second-placed visitors to one point. Guardiola will be without his assistant Mikel Arteta following the Spaniard's decision to take charge at Arsenal on Friday.

Rodolfo Borrell will step up to be the temporary assistant for Guardiola, although he has also been linked with joining Arteta. "Yes he'll step up. From now on he wants to stay with me. We've not had any approach for him. We'll continue like this until the summer," Guardiola said.

City winger Riyad Mahrez will be hoping for a starting spot against former club Leicester and has fond memories of his time with the Foxes after their title triumph in 2016. "My first title with Leicester is one of the medals that means the most to me, as well as the Africa Cup of Nations which was for my country and so there is a lot of emotion," he said. "But with Leicester it was an unbelievable achievement, and no one thought we were going to make it. What we achieved together was unbelievable and so that club means a lot to me."

"I am not surprised by them, they are a good team. They have good players and Jamie Vardy is scoring a lot of goals." City came back to overhaul Liverpool in last season's title race and Mahrez added: "We know we are capable of doing that again." —AFP

## Roma stay close to leaders with 4-1 win at Fiorentina

MILAN: AS Roma kept in touch with the leading pack in Serie A with a 4-1 victory at Fiorentina whose winless run was extended to seven league games on Friday. Early goals from Edin Dzeko and Aleksandar Kolarov plus late strikes by Lorenzo Pellegrini and Nicolo Zaniolo secured the points for the visitors. Roma, fourth with 35 points, moved within a point of third-placed Lazio, who do not play in Serie A this weekend because of their Supercup match against Juventus in Saudi Arabia on Sunday. Fiorentina, taken over by American billionaire Rocco Commisso during the close season, are 14th with 17 points, only four clear of the relegation zone.

Roma, beaten 7-1 on their previous visit to the Artemio Franchi stadium in a cup match in January, went ahead with a well-worked goal after 19 minutes. Lorenzo Pellegrini set Nicolo Zaniolo away on the right and he crossed into the area for Dzeko to net from close range.

Two minutes later, Kolarov extended Roma's lead by scoring from his third free kick of the season, curling a left-foot shot over the wall. Milan Badelj pulled one back in the 34th but Roma's Pellegrini restored a two-goal lead by turning in Dzeko's pass from the edge of the area in the 73rd. Zaniolo finished off a counter-attack for the fourth with two minutes left. —Reuters

## Arsenal's Little dreaming big as she targets Olympic selection

LONDON: FA Women's Super League champions Arsenal may have a title defence to worry about as well as a Champions League quarter-final clash in the New Year, but captain Kim Little is looking beyond both to a potential place in the Team GB Olympic squad.

The Scotland midfielder, who was selected in the women's team that reached the quarter-finals of the 2012 London Games, was a key part of Arsenal's first title win in seven years last season, notching eight goals and six assists.

But it is Olympic glory that is on her mind going into the New Year, as the four home nations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) agreed to allow a united women's team to play in the 2020 Tokyo Games.

"I think for anyone who can be involved or potentially selected it's something we've thought about, naturally," Little, 29, told Reuters at Visa Europe's headquarters in London. "It's such a momentous occasion to play in or be a part of an Olympics, especially having been part of one in 2012. It's something I think about and I'm conscious of."

"But I know to get there I need to work extremely hard and push myself as much as I can to be playing at the best level to be given a chance." Team GB's place at the Games was secured when England finished as one of the top three European teams at the World Cup, reaching the semi-finals. Lionesses manager Phil Neville will take charge of the British squad.

### TWO FRONTS

Before that, though, the pressure is on Little and her Arsenal team mates to maintain their form on two fronts. The champions lead the league at the

winter break on 27 points, three ahead of Manchester City and four in front of Chelsea.

It is an intense battle between the three teams, while Arsenal also have the challenge of being the sole English representative in the Champions League, coming up against Paris St Germain in the quarter-finals in March-April.

The Londoners were the first British team to win the UEFA Women's Cup, the precursor to the Champions League, but no British side has won the competition in its current format. The champions are Olympique Lyonnais who have won the trophy a record six times, with German sides VfL Wolfsburg, twice, and Turbine Potsdam also triumphing since the rebrand in 2009-10. Little said it was time English sides closed the gap.

"I think that should be an aim for all English clubs that are in the Champions League. Obviously this year it's us. We've made it to the quarter-finals and I can't wait to be a part of that," she said.

"But, yes, I think that's the next step for English teams to close that gap towards teams like Lyon and Wolfsburg and obviously the Spanish teams and other French teams... make the semi-finals or final and win it on a consistent basis and that's what our aim is."

What pains Little is that she could not inspire Scotland at this year's Women's World Cup in France, as the debutants failed to win a match and finished bottom of their group. They showed flashes of quality in defeats by England and Japan, but succumbed to a last-minute penalty against Argentina to draw 3-3 in their final match and missed out on progressing as a best third-place finisher.

"In terms of performances it was extremely disappointing and I think we didn't reach our potential," Little said. "I think with the team we had we should have gone further but we'll learn from that and we can always do better but... it was a such great thing to be a part of and such a big thing for us, the national team, playing in our first World Cup."

"To show women and young girls in Scotland... seeing that and knowing that they have every opportunity to be a footballer. Just go into anything to achieve and be the best they can." —Reuters



### Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Watford v Manchester United	17:00	beIN Sports HD 2
Tottenham Hotspur v Chelsea	19:30	beIN Sports HD 2
SPANISH LEAGUE		
CD Leganes v RCD Espanyol	14:00	beIN Sports HD 3
Osasuna v Real Sociedad	16:00	beIN Sports HD 1
Real Betis v Atletico de Madrid	18:00	beIN Sports HD 3
Levante v Celta de Vigo	20:30	beIN Sports HD 3
Real Madrid v Athletic de Bilbao	23:00	beIN Sports HD 3



## 25 Acciari scores 2nd straight hat trick as Panthers bomb Stars



## 26 Greece defeat Serbia to clinch FINA World Junior Water Polo Championship



## 27 No sabbatical, Pochettino says he is ready to return to management



LIVERPOOL: Arsenal's Brazilian defender David Luiz (L) vies with Everton's English striker Dominic Calvert-Lewin during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Arsenal at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. — AFP

# Carlo, Mikel suffer Everton's Arsenal stalemate

## Southampton claim crucial win

LONDON: Carlo Ancelotti and Mikel Arteta got a glimpse of the problems that lie ahead in their new jobs as they watched Everton and Arsenal share a dreadful 0-0 draw, while Southampton beat Aston Villa 3-1 in yesterday's Premier League relegation showdown.

Former Napoli boss Ancelotti was confirmed as Everton's new manager on the morning of the match, 24 hours after Arteta left his role as Manchester City assistant coach to take charge of Arsenal. Both bosses were in the Goodison Park stands with Duncan Ferguson and Freddie Ljungberg in temporary charge of Everton and Arsenal for the final time.

And the lack of confidence of two sides struggling at the wrong end of the table was obvious in a match completely devoid of quality. A point leaves Arsenal 11th and the Gunners have now won just once in their last 13 games in all competitions.

Everton move up to 15th, but are only four points clear of the relegation zone. Ferguson's role in Everton's impressive victory over Chelsea and draw at Manchester United in their last two league games was enough to ensure the Scot a role in Ancelotti's backroom staff. "What a fantastic performance we put in. I couldn't have asked for any more from them, they've been incredible for me," Ferguson said.

On Ancelotti, Ferguson added: "A guy of that pedigree coming here, I can't wait to start working under him." Ljungberg, meanwhile, looks set to remain on the Gunners' coaching staff and the Swede said: "I've been told by the club that they want me to stay. 'I was very happy. We put a very young side on the pitch and gave them a chance.'"

At Villa Park, Southampton climbed out of the relegation zone at the expense of Dean Smith's struggling

hosts, who have now lost their last four league games.

Danny Ings struck for Southampton in the 21st minute, the in-form striker pouncing after Shane Long's shot was saved to net his 12th goal of the season and his sixth in his last seven games.

Jack Stephens' doubled Southampton's lead 10 minutes later with a header from James Ward-Prowse's corner. Ings wrapped up Southampton's first win in three games when he punished Marvelous Nakamba's poor defending in the 51st minute.

Jack Grealish's fine 75th minute strike was no consolation for Villa, who sit three points behind Southampton. Despite having two goals ruled out after VAR reviews, Sheffield United climbed to within one point of the top four as Oli McBurnie's 23rd minute strike clinched a 1-0 win at Brighton.

Either side of McBurnie's cool finish, John Egan and

Jack O'Connell's disallowed efforts gave fifth placed United a league-leading four goals over-turned by VAR this season. Wolves moved into sixth place as they fought back for a 2-1 win at second bottom Norwich.

Canaries midfielder Todd Cantwell opened the scoring in the 17th minute, but Romain Saiss equalised with a 60th minute header from Joao Moutinho's cross. Mexico forward Raul Jimenez completed Wolves' comeback in the 81st minute with a tap-in for his 16th goal of the season in all competitions.

Miguel Almiron bagged his first Premier League goal at the 27th attempt to seal Newcastle's 1-0 win against Crystal Palace, before the Paraguayan earned a buzz-killing booking for taking off his shirt to celebrate the 83rd minute strike at St James' Park. Jay Rodriguez's 89th minute goal handed Burnley a 1-0 win with their first shot on target at Bournemouth. — AFP

## Ancelotti appointed Everton manager

LONDON: Everton appointed Carlo Ancelotti as the club's new manager yesterday, with the experienced Italian taking charge at Goodison Park on a four-and-a-half year deal. Ancelotti, 60, will attend yesterday's Premier League clash with Arsenal, but will not take charge until the Boxing Day visit of Burnley.

The three-time Champions League winning coach was sacked by Napoli earlier this month but comes with a trophy-laden CV from spells at a clutch of Europe's top clubs, including Juventus, AC Milan, Chelsea, Paris Saint-Germain, Real Madrid and Bayern Munich.

His arrival is a coup for the Toffees, who are languishing in 16th place in the Premier League, just three

points above the relegation zone. "This is a great club with a rich history and a very passionate fan base," Ancelotti said in a club statement.

"There is a clear vision from the owner and the board to deliver success and trophies. "That is something that appeals to me as a manager and I am thrilled at the prospect of being able to work with everybody at the club to help make that vision a reality."

Caretaker manager Duncan Ferguson, who will take charge against Arsenal, will be part of Ancelotti's coaching staff after impressing in beating Chelsea and drawing at Manchester United in his two previous Premier League games. "I have seen from the performances in the last two weeks that the players are capable of so much," added Ancelotti.

"The work Duncan has done is a great credit to him. Strong organisation, strong discipline and the right motivation are some of the key ingredients in football and I'm pleased that he will be part of my backroom team moving forward."

Ancelotti is used to dining at European football's top table, but his immediate task will be to guarantee survival before trying to fulfil the ambitions of Everton's majority shareholder Farhad Moshiri. The British-Iranian businessman has ploughed in hundreds of millions of pounds over the past three years.

However, that investment has not reaped much reward on the pitch as Everton have finished seventh, eighth and eighth in the three full seasons since Moshiri's takeover. "It is a pleasure to now welcome Carlo Ancelotti to Everton. He is one of the finest managers in world football and a proven winner, having achieved a remarkable level of success in each of Europe's major leagues," said Everton director of football Marcel Brands.

"He is the perfect appointment for us. He embraces our vision for the club and we are sure that his enthusiasm to take the helm at Goodison together with his tactical abilities and well-renowned man-management will make him successful in this role." — AFP



Carlo Ancelotti