



4 EU seeks comprehensive cooperation with Kuwait



11 W Africa nations rename common currency, sever its links to France



24 Thousands protest in Iraq as deadline for new PM looms



27 World champions Liverpool head home hungry for more



Kuwait, Saudi Arabia set to sign neutral zone deal

Oil production will resume in phases • Output to return to full capacity in few months

MPs demand probe into 'torture' death

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Five lawmakers yesterday demanded the formation of a three-MP panel to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death of a handicapped Kuwaiti citizen in police custody allegedly as a result of torture. MP Mohammad Al-Dallal, one of the signatories on a request to be filed in the Assembly tomorrow, said the lawmakers are also demanding that the committee should complete its work within one month.

Other signatories include MPs Osama Al-Shaheen, Abdullah Al-Kandari, Saleh Ashour and Mohammad Al-Hadiya. This is the second motion by lawmakers demanding a parliamentary probe into the death of Ahmad Al-Dhafiri in police custody. Interior Minister Anas Al-Saleh already announced he has ordered a swift investigation into the death of the special-needs citizen and promised to take legal action against the perpetrators based on the outcome of the probe.

The death recalls a similar incident in 2011 when Mohammad Al-Maimouni died in police detention following several days of torture. The case forced the then interior minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Khaled Al-Sabah to resign. Dallal said Kuwaiti law prevents the arrest and detention of any person in Kuwait without a warrant from the public prosecution, adding that reports suggest that Dhafiri was subjected to torture that caused his death.

The lawmaker said MPs have also filed a draft law calling that departments related to achieving justice like the forensic and criminal investigation departments must be moved from the interior ministry to the ministry of justice to make sure that justice conditions are guaranteed. Similar bills were filed and rejected by assemblies in the past, mainly because the government rejected the idea.

Dallal said the motion wants the proposed investigation panel to probe the reasons for arresting Dhafiri and all officials involved in his detention, in addition to investigating tools and methods used in police questioning and this includes any means that violate human rights. It also wants the committee to probe the outcome of the interior ministry's investigation into the case.

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed official oil sources said a high-ranking Saudi delegation headed by Saudi Oil Minister Prince Abdul Aziz bin Salman will arrive in Kuwait to sign an agreement on resuming oil production in the shared neutral zone jointly run by both countries. The sources expected the agreement will be signed tomorrow or on Wednesday.

The sources added that protocol arrangements are being made to sign a demarcation agreement and resume oil production at the Khafji and Wafra oilfields as soon as possible after a four-year suspension. The sources said that the green light for resumption of production would be made in Kuwait after signing the agreement and positively settling all political and technical concerns for the best of both countries' interests. "Oil production will resume in phases and is expected to



Khaled Al-Fadhel

reach the maximum capacity of 500,000 barrels per day within a few months," the sources said.

Earlier yesterday, Kuwaiti Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fadhel had hoped Kuwait and Saudi Arabia will resolve the neutral zone issue by the end of 2019. "We hope that by the end of the year things will be cleared out and things will go back to normal," Fadhel told reporters on the sidelines of a meeting of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries in Kuwait.

"Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have always been in agreement (regarding the neutral zone conflict)," Fadhel added. However, resuming oil production from the zone remains a political issue that needs to be discussed at higher levels, he added. In October, Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said negotiations between Kuwait and Riyadh on the neutral zone issue were "very positive" and an agreement has been reached.

The disagreement between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait started over the Wafra field, which is operated by Chevron Corp. Saudi Arabia extended the original 60-year concession of the field, giving the US company rights over Wafra until 2039. Kuwait was furious over the announcement and claims Riyadh never consulted it about the extension.

News in brief



Kuwaiti Ambassador to Palestine Aziz Al-Daihani meets Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. — KUNA

Kuwait appoints envoy to Palestine

RAMALLAH: Kuwait has appointed Aziz Al-Daihani as the country's first ambassador to the state of Palestine, with the diplomat submitting a copy of his credentials to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. "This is a message from Kuwait to the entire world that the state of Palestine is Arab territory and we stand by the Palestinian people," Daihani told KUNA. He highlighted Kuwait's historic ties with the Palestinians, saying his country will continue to support the "Palestinian cause". — KUNA

Holiday on Jan 1, 2: CSC

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission (CSC) announced that Wednesday, Jan 1, 2020 will be the New Year's holiday for all ministries and government bodies. In addition, Thursday, Jan 2 is also included within the holiday, and official work will resume on Sunday, Jan 5, noted the CSC, pointing out that for public interest, authorities of special nature will determine their holidays at a later date. — KUNA



Firemen free hand from mincer

KUWAIT: Firemen spent three hours trying to free the hand of a man from a meat mincer at Adan Hospital. A call was received at dawn about the incident, so the technical rescue team responded. The man was then handed to specialist doctors. — Hanan Al-Saadoun

Modi seeks to soothe Muslims as protests rage

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought yesterday to reassure India's Muslims as a wave of deadly protests against a new citizenship law put his Hindu nationalist government under pressure like never before. At least 25 people have died in almost two weeks of demonstrations and violence after Modi's government passed the law criticized as anti-Muslim. More protests took place yesterday.

Addressing party supporters in New Delhi - who cried "Modi! Modi!" at the mention of the law - the 69-year-old

said Muslims "don't need to worry at all" provided they are genuine Indians. "Muslims who are sons of the soil and whose ancestors are the children of mother India need not to worry," Modi told the crowd of thousands. Accusing the main opposition Congress party of condoning the recent violence by not condemning it, Modi said opponents were "spreading rumors that all Muslims will be sent to detention camps". "There are no detention centers. All these stories about detention centers are lies, lies and lies," he said.

Modi added that his government introduces reforms without any religious bias. "We have never asked anyone if they go to a temple or a mosque when it comes to implementing welfare schemes," he said. Modi's nationalist party plans to hold more than 200 news

Continued on Page 24



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during a rally yesterday. — AFP

Erdogan to increase military support to Libya if needed

ANKARA: Turkey will increase its military support to the internationally recognized government of Libya if necessary and will evaluate ground, air and marine options. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday, after the two signed a military cooperation accord last month. Turkey backs Fayeze Al-Serraj's Government of National Accord (GNA) in Libya, which has been torn by factional conflict since 2011, and has already sent military supplies to the GNA despite a United Nations arms embargo, according to a report by UN experts seen by Reuters last month.

Turkey has also said it could deploy troops to Libya if the GNA makes such a request. The GNA has been fighting a months-long offensive by Khalifa Haftar's forces based in the east of the country. Haftar's forces have received support from Russia, Egypt, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. Speaking in the northern province of Kocaeli, Erdogan said Turkey had recently provided "very serious" support to the GNA, adding Libya was a country Turkey would support "with its life".

"They are supporting an illegal warlord, who is the pawn of certain nations, instead of the UN-recognized government," Erdogan said, in an apparent reference to Haftar and the countries who support him. "If necessary, we will increase the military aspect of our support to Libya, and evaluate all our options, from the ground, air and sea," he said. Forces loyal to Haftar said on Saturday they had seized a Turkish ship to search its cargo, but Ankara has made no official comment on the claim. The Turkish ship, registered in

Grenada, was taken to the port of Ras Al-Helal near the eastern city of Derna "to search and verify its cargo", Ahmed Al-Mesmari, the spokesman for Haftar's forces, said in a statement.

Speaking before Erdogan, Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said Turkey will stand by Libya's government until peace, stability and security are established in the country. Last month, Turkey and the GNA signed an accord to boost military cooperation and a separate deal on maritime boundaries, which has enraged Greece. Ankara and Athens have been at odds over hydrocarbon resources off the coast of the divided island of Cyprus. While Greece has said the accord violates international law, Turkey has rejected those accusations, saying it aims to protect its rights in the eastern Mediterranean.

Yesterday, Erdogan said Turkey will "absolutely" not turn back from its agreements with Libya.

Continued on Page 24

Qatar claims success of World Cup test

DOHA: The man in charge of organizing the 2022 World Cup in Qatar has labelled this month's club equivalent a "great success" as a test event but admitted the Gulf state has plenty still to learn over the next three years leading up to the controversial tournament. Hassan Al-Thawadi, secretary general of the supreme committee for the World Cup, also insisted the tiny country will be able to handle an influx of huge numbers of supporters and sought to reassure fans used to western culture that they will be made to feel welcome.

"Our plans were previously theoretical

and today they are being applied on the ground. Overall I think the Club World Cup has been a great success as a test event," Thawadi told media in Doha ahead of Saturday's final between Liverpool and Flamengo. "There are three more years to go to learn, so I have no doubt that by 2022 we will be ready." Thawadi was speaking at Education City, one of eight proposed venues for 2022.

The 40,000-seat stadium - which will be partially dismantled after 2022 - was due to be inaugurated during the Club World Cup, but delays postponed its opening. In contrast, the city's sparkling new metro network has performed well after fully opening earlier this month. Crowds of exuberant fans of Flamengo, Esperance or Liverpool armed with free tickets have rubbed shoulders with Qataris and expat commuters on the plush system.

Continued on Page 24



DOHA: A general view taken on Dec 20, 2019 shows the skyline of the Qatari capital. — AFP

Local

Kuwait Amir receives delegations participating in OAPEC meeting

Sheikh Sabah congratulates Vice President of Kuwait Society of Lawyers



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with delegations taking part in the 103rd OAPEC meeting in Kuwait. —Amiri Diwan photos



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, along with delegations taking part in the 103rd OAPEC meeting in Kuwait. The reception was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace. His Highness also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Moreover, His Highness received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional

Court, Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a congratulatory cable to Abdul Rahman Abdullah Al-Tahous, Vice President of Kuwait Society of Lawyers for Career and Admission Affairs in the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his sincere congratulations on his appointment as a member of the International Bar Association (IBA), representing the State of Kuwait, wishing him best to carry out the duties. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Separately, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed his deepest sympathies yesterday over the lives lost when a man opened fire on headquarters of the FSB security service



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chief Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa.

in Moscow three days earlier. His Highness the Amir extended his condolences in a cable he sent to Russian President Vladimir Putin, saying he was distraught over the tragic loss of life caused by the rampage. His

Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Russian president, while

National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem sent condolence cables to Russia's State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin and Chairwoman of Russia's Federation Council Valentina Matviyenko. —KUNA

Crown Prince receives top state officials

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. His Highness also received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Moreover, His Highness received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah as well as Chairman of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court, Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa. His Highness then received Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, as well as Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. —KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Premier, Interior Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.



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

Kuwait PM receives OAPEC officials

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Kuwaiti Minister of Electricity and Water (MEW) Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, who was accompanied by Secretary General of Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) Abbas Ali Al-Naqi, along with heads of delegations participating in the 103rd meeting of the OAPEC, which was hosted by Kuwait. The meeting was attended by Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Dr Nimer Fahad Al-Sabah. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with delegations taking part in the 103rd OAPEC meeting in Kuwait. —KUNA

Local

Fossil fuel to form 75% of global energy in 2035: Kuwaiti minister

OPEC production cuts pave way for stable oil prices: Fadhel

KUWAIT: Fossil-based fuel will form 75 percent of global energy by 2035, according to expectations of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The remarks were made by Kuwait's Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel during the 103rd meeting of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in Kuwait yesterday. He noted the need for further cooperation to protect the stability of oil markets in the coming months. The meeting comes after a series of key international events in the oil and gas field, including the meeting of parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Madrid. It also comes after the recent OPEC Ministerial Meeting in Vienna, where members agreed on further reduction in oil output by 500,000 barrels a day starting next January, said Fadhel.



Kuwait's Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel attends the meeting.

talks are ongoing between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia pending an agreement on the resumption of oil output in a 'divided zone' between the two Gulf neighbors. OAPEC was established in 1968 and is divided into the Council of Ministers, Executive Bureau, General Secretariat and the Judicial Tribunal. Its members include Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Algeria.

New Secretary General

OAPEC's Council of Ministers announced in its meeting appointing Kuwaiti candidate Ali Bin Sabt as the new Secretary General of the organization. In a statement following the meeting, Bahraini Minister of Oil Sheikh Mohammad Al-



KUWAIT: Representatives of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) pose for a group photo during an OAPEC meeting in Kuwait yesterday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Khalifa said, it was approved to hold the next OAPEC Council of Ministers meeting in Kuwait December 13, 2020. Khalifa, who is also the chairperson of the current OAPEC 2019 session, stated that the minutes of the 102nd meeting of the Council of Ministers were approved in addition to adopting the estimated budget project for the organization general secretariat and judiciary for 2020. A new office had been appointed as the organization's auditor for the General Secretariat and the judiciary for the year 2020, he added.

Khalifa also said that it was decided to assign the executive office with submitting a plan to activate and develop the organization's role to be presented to the Council of Ministers meeting and for the General Secretariat to provide the required support to the executive office to carry out its tasks during the year 2020. The meeting also approved to extend Iraq's period for supervising on the Arab Oil Institute for training for a period of two years, starting from January 2020, he said. The People's Democratic Republic of Algeria will take

on the presidency of the next session of the Council of Ministers and the executive office of the organization for one year, starting from the first of January 2020. Khalifa said. The meeting also reviewed number of topics and studies carried out by the General Secretariat of the organization, as well as the role of the organization institutions, OAPEC award for scientific research in the fields of oil and gas, where the award first place was withheld, and the second place granted for research submitted by the Kingdom of Bahrain. — KUNA

Center to show solar eclipse at Planetarium

KUWAIT: Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center on Thursday will showcase the rare astronomical occurrence of the annular solar eclipse from the skies of Kuwait inside its Planetarium. Visitors will witness the stages of the eclipse, which is expected to last one hour and eight minutes, as of 7:48 am. The partial eclipse will cover 85 percent of the sun for the first time since 1999. Elsewhere in the region, annular eclipses will be observed in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. Over Kuwait, the occurrence will repeat itself on June 21, 2020, but to the lesser extent of 61 percent, with only two more coming



after that until 2029. The Planetarium forms part of the center's state-of-the-art Space Museum. — KUNA

SAB studied KD 721 million tenders in Nov

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti State Audit Bureau (SAB) said Sunday that in last November it studied 307 topics, including general and limited tenders, with an estimated value of about KD 720.7 million (\$2.3 billion). SAB expressed its opinion on 228 files valued at KD 632.3 million (\$2.08 billion) or 74.2 percent of the total subjects under discussion during that period, said Auditor of the Department of Advance Oversight for

Social Affairs Siham Al-Mutairi in a press statement. The prior examination of some of the files studied resulted in direct savings to the public treasury at an estimated value of KD 725,292 (\$2.3 million) last November, Mutairi added. She pointed out that the bureau exercises its prior control in accordance with the law of its establishment 30/1964 because this control is able to prevent any violations or damage. — KUNA

ABK supports World Disabled Day in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Kuwait Society for the Follow-up Issues of Disabled People (KSFIDP) marked World Disabled Day with a season of different activities and events held over a period of one month. Under the theme of 'Partners in Development,' the events began with a welcome and opening ceremony at Hope School for Special Needs, with a number of lectures, open

days, workshops and exhibitions taking place as part of the program. The whole season was sponsored by Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility program to support Kuwait's community. The closing ceremony was held at The Regency Hotel on December 16, 2019 where ABK was honored for its support.

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Local

EU seeks comprehensive, multi-dimensional cooperation with Kuwait: Ambassador

Kuwait increasingly important partner of EU, head of mission tells reporters

KUWAIT: The European Union considers the State of Kuwait as an increasingly important partner and aspires to have a comprehensive and multi-dimensional cooperation with the Gulf state covering political dialogue, economy and trade, in addition to sectorial and regional cooperation. This statement was made by Ambassador Cristian Tudor, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Kuwait, during a lunch with media representatives yesterday.

"The relations between the EU and Kuwait have been historically strong," Ambassador Tudor said. "Kuwait has played a key role in promoting region-to-region engagement between the EU and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) under the framework of the 1988 EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement. More recently, our bilateral relations have experienced a major impetus. Kuwait was the first country in the Gulf to sign a Co-operation Arrangement with the European External Action Service (EEAS) in July 2016, that provides a platform for regular political consultations covering common regional challenges in the Middle East and beyond. It also provides for sectorial consultations in the fields of energy including clean and renewable energy, security and counter-terrorism, development cooperation and other areas of mutual interest."

Ambassador Tudor also touched on the economic ties between the EU and Kuwait, which he described as an "important focus of the bilateral relationship as the EU is the third trade partner for Kuwait" according to 2018 statistics. "The two sides are engaged in regular dialogue on trade and investment and macroeconomic issues under the GCC framework," he said.

"The EU is keen to enhance this dialogue in support of Kuwait's 'Vision 2035' to diversify its economy, building up on the long-established ties that EU member states enjoy with Kuwait."

"EU's cooperation with Kuwait remains anchored around the GCC with a close partnership especially on the economic agenda and how we can mutually address our employment, trade and fiscal challenges," he further noted. "Kuwait's role last year as GCC Presidency and the efforts of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to try to resolve the Gulf rift were strongly supported by the EU. This year, Kuwait and the EU co-chaired the 3rd EU-GCC Business Forum with the strong support of

KDIPA, the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and the Supreme Council for Planning and Development."

EU and the Arab World

Meanwhile, Ambassador Tudor highlighted efforts taken this year to enhance cooperation between the EU and Arab states, which were crowned by hosting a joint summit in Egypt. "This year, an important milestone was reached in cooperation between the European Union and our Arab neighbors, with the first-ever EU-Arab League Summit in Sharm El Sheikh, held in 24-25 February, in which HH the Amir of Kuwait played a key role," he said. "Consensus was reached on important regional issues such as the Middle-East Peace Process but also on building further linkages between our peoples."

EU, Kuwait relations historically strong

"In a moment of regional and global tensions, Kuwait is a voice of wisdom and a force for peace. And this is what has made us natural partners in these difficult times." Those were the words of High Representative/Vice-President, Federica Mogherini at the opening of the Delegation of the EU to the State of Kuwait on July 14, 2019," he stated.

"Among the top Arab donors, Kuwait is also an important ally of the EU in the humanitarian field," he further noted. "The EU and Kuwait have demonstrated their readiness to cooperate on jointly tackling international challenges by co-chairing several important international events, such as the Brussels Conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region, the Kuwait International Conference on the reconstruction of Iraq or the International Conference on the Plight of the Rohingya."

People-to-people relations

The strong relationship between EU and Kuwait



Ambassador Cristian Tudor



KUWAIT: Journalists attend a lunch hosted by Ambassador Cristian Tudor, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Kuwait, yesterday. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shalkh

goes beyond the political and economic arenas, and expands to include the social field as well. "It is not exclusively government to government engagement - this is matched by people to people exchanges - business to business dialogue, education and parliamentary exchanges as well as cultural diplomacy," he said. "The visit of a delegation from the European Parliament last December that was hosted by the National Assembly should be followed by a return visit to Brussels by Kuwaiti parliamentarians."

"Also in December last year, the EU awarded the EU-GCC Human rights Chaillot Prize to LOYAC, the Kuwaiti non-profit organization working on professional development and personal growth of young people, in recognition of its work in empowering youth and in enriching civic and cultural life in Kuwait," he declared. "The EU also regularly supports cultural and educational activities in Kuwait, in partnership with local civil society organizations. In terms

of cultural diplomacy and people-to-people relations, the EU sponsorship of the 2nd and 3rd annual LAPA Festivals of Art and Dance is notable. A total of five workshops and seminars that the EU co-organized during the past year with the Kuwait Society for Human Rights, LOYAC and the Kuwait Women's Cultural and Social Society are proof positive of the strength of these relations."

"The Kuwaiti people and civil society in Kuwait are thus an integral part of the relations between the EU and Kuwait," he mentioned. "On a people-to-people level, the EU offers the opportunity to students, researchers and higher education and research institutions from Kuwait to participate in Erasmus+ and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, with special funding allocated to support candidates from the Gulf region." The ambassador concluded by hoping that 2020 will be remembered as "the best year yet in EU-Kuwait relations."

Ibn Sina Hospital hosts anesthesia specialist

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Anesthesiologist and Head of Anesthesia and Intensive Care Department at Ibn Sina Hospital Dr Hanan Al-Harby said the hospital seeks to add to its staff's experiences and become acquainted with the latest technologies, in order to give safe anesthesia during pediatric neurosurgery, which can be done by hosting international doctors.

Dr Harby was speaking on the sidelines of workshops and lectures organized in coordination with Anesthesia and Intensive Care Departments Council, and featuring Dr Michael Marzouq, Head of the Anesthesia and Intensive Care Unit at Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children, Orlando, Florida, who is also an associate professor at Central Florida University, Dr Marzouq prepared cases of highly sensitive and critical neurosurgeries, which were selected in cooperation

with the Neurosurgery department at Ibn Sina Hospital, Dr Harby said, adding that there are certain protocols to safeguard patients and avoid expected anesthesia risks according to international standards.

Dr Marzouq's visit is the first by a pediatric anesthesia doctor to the hospital, and will last four days during which there will be lectures and workshops in Ibn Sina hospital, she added. Furthermore, she explained that the workshops will deal with "local anesthesia," noting that there will be coordination with the council to organize a lecture for anesthesia departments in government and private sectors to see the latest developments and recommendations in the field of anesthesia in pediatric surgeries.

Dr Harby said anesthesia specialists at Ibn Sina specialized hospital are highly experienced and professional, as the hospital provides anesthesia service for all specialized delicate surgeries such as operations performed on infant, including those whose weight may be as low as 500 grams. It also serves neurosurgery patients as well as burn, plastic, eye and organ transplant patients. Dr Harby thanked the Health Ministry and Head of Anesthesia Department Council Dr Abdelrahman Al-Refae for his continued support in hosting international doctors to enhance the experience and knowledge of Kuwaiti and expat doctors.



Diabetes institute opens 1st Kuwait Obesity Academy

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, has recently inaugurated the Kuwait Obesity Academy. This Academy, in collaboration with the World Obesity Federation (WOF), is the first event in Kuwait offering a certification in "Obesity Management."

Kuwait hosted the biggest training session of its kind ever held by the WOF back in April 2019 chaired by the WOF President Professor Donna Ryan and Dr Ebaa Al Ozairi, Chief Medical Officer at DDI. The Strategic Centre for Obesity Professional Education (SCOPE) School program

generated unprecedented interest in Kuwait, attracting healthcare specialists from across the Gulf who shared new ideas and experiences to help tackle rising obesity levels in the region. Kuwait now is the first country in the Gulf to deliver structured training to graduate health care professionals from Ministry of Health in Obesity Management. This is a highly skilled course delivered within the span of three months with blended learning and observed training - from December 2019 until March 2020 directed by Dr Ebaa Al-Ozairi and has attracted world-renowned international speakers.

During the inauguration Dr Qais Al-Duwairi, Director-General of DDI, said, "DDI is proud of this achievement, as it is the primary institute in Kuwait for diabetes research, treatment and community awareness, and it continues to direct its efforts towards achieving its mission together with the World Obesity Federation by establishing the Kuwait Obesity Academy, which is dedicated to delivering the latest in the medical management of obesity."

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Local

Residents in Kuwait given free visas to attend Riyadh's 'MDL Beast' fest

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Saudi authorities issued an official resolution allowing all residents in Kuwait, Bahrain and UAE free visas to enter Saudi Arabia through various exits to attend an event, said the Saudi Al-Youm newspaper. The newspaper added that the decision was made to support the conclusion of the 'Riyadh Season' festival and attract more tourists to Saudi Arabia.

According to the decision, residents in the three GCC states were given three-day visas over the past weekend (December 19-21) to attend the MDL Beast music festival held for the first time in the world to conclude the Riyadh Festival, which attracted over 10 million visitors. Notably, Saudi Arabia is witnessing rapid growth in attracting tourists after it launched online or on-arrival visas for citizens of 49 countries for a fee of SR 300 plus SR 140 for health insurance per tourist to get a visa valid for 360 days, allowing a visitor a stay of 90 days per visit for a maximum total of 180 days a year.

Maternity hospital

The Ministry of Public Works (MPW) yesterday

said that 15 percent of the new maternity hospital project has been completed so far and that the total cost of the hospital will be KD 220 million. "KD 41 million has been spent so far and 45 percent of the total value - KD 100 million - will be spent on importing the needed medical and electromechanical equipment needed for the project," an MPW statement explained. The ministry added that the project's contract was signed in Oct 2016; construction began in Aug 2019 and is expected to conclude in July 2021.

Further, MPW explained that the new hospital would include 780 beds, 28 operation rooms, 60 delivery rooms, 240 premature baby care units, 28 follow-up units, 52 ICUs and 83 OPDs. It added that the hospital will include four buildings - the main one comprising of a basement and six floors, an 11-floor tower, a 15-floor tower and a 17-floor tower, in addition to a separate multilevel parking building for 1,219 vehicles. MPW elaborated that 80 percent of the patients rooms would overlook the Arabian Gulf 8 meters away from the hospital.

Replacement policy

Minister of Finance and Acting Minister of State for

Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said the Public Authority for Manpower operates according to regulations of labor law number 6/2010 and its amendments with regard to assessing employers' needs of labor. Aqeel added that the authority works on responding to employers' requests to bring and recruit expat labor according to the licenses they get from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) or any other government body. She stressed that the manpower authority is fully committed to implement the replacement policy in all government positions.

Responding to an inquiry about the growing unemployment rate in Kuwait, Aqeel denied this and stressed that around 3,600 citizens are registered for employment with the Civil Service Commission and that applicants sometimes reject the jobs offered and prefer waiting to be appointed in one of the ministries. Aqeel added that since they form 60 percent of the population, youth will be at the center of all future government planning, especially through the SME fund which encourages Kuwaiti youth to start their own businesses focusing on projects with high environmental returns such as waste recycling and other economic initiatives.

Call for studying 'effects' of electric vehicles

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Municipal Council member Humoud Al-Enezi urged Kuwait Municipality to study the expected effects of what he described as the "gradual shift of means of transportation from conventional cars to electric vehicles." The council member argued that many countries around the world have already set related plans to use electric-operated vehicles as a way to protect the environment.

Enezi added that with the relatively low electricity prices in Kuwait, this shift, including the construction of charging stations, would have low economic viability, which would hinder investment opportunities in this field. "This can be solved by providing automobile charging services at various co-ops and government bodies' parking spaces," he added. Furthermore, he noted that studies show that 70 percent of European electric vehicles are charged from household electricity, which is expected to overload the power grid in Kuwaiti residential areas.

In other news, the Municipal Council's legal and financial committee deferred discussing the cleanliness and waste movement project during its meeting yesterday, and approved a proposal made by deputy chairman Abdul Aziz Al-Mehri to amend clause one of article 11 of the ministerial resolution number 150/2006 pertaining the ads' chart. Meanwhile, the Ahmadi committee at the Municipal Council yesterday approved a Public Authority for Industry request to amend allocating site number 17 in Abdullah Port from automobile storage to a general storage area. The committee also approved a Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources request to allocate a site at Wafra's Block 5 to be used as a veterinary hospital for raising and treating horses.

Fire drill at Amiri Hospital

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate carried out a mock exercise at the new building of Amiri Hospital in Sharq. The scenario was about a fire on the fifth and eleventh floors of the new building, so two teams - one for rescue and the other for firefighting - were formed. Thick smoke filled the place, so the building was evacuated and ventilated. A person on the 11th floor was rescued, while the hazardous materials team dealt with the fire on the 5th floor in a medicine storeroom where hazardous material had "leaked". An "injured" person was handed to paramedics.

Live ammunition exercise

The relations and security information

department at the interior ministry said the coastguard will carry out a live ammunition exercise in Kuwait's territorial waters today and tomorrow (Dec 23-24, 2019) from 8 am until 3 pm. It warned seagoers from approaching the site during the abovementioned timings. The shooting will take place around Qarouh and Um Al-Maradem islands.

Municipality tour

Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said the emergency team in the Capital governorate carried out a field tour resulting in issuing five citations for displaying goods in front of the store. The team also dealt with seven complaints received through the hotline 18555555.



KUWAIT: Firefighters participate in a drill at the new building of Amiri Hospital.

OBITUARY

The torch has gone out of our lives, but the light he lit will remain in every heart



**OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES ON THE DEMISE OF OUR BELOVED CHAIRMAN
MR. THOMAS CHANDY (MLA)**

Funeral will be held Tuesday (24/12/2019) 2:00 pm at St. Paul's Mar Thoma Church Chennamkary, Alappuzha

- United Indian School, Kuwait
- Indian Public School, Kuwait
- United International Indian School, Kuwait
- Al-Alia International Indian School, Riyadh

- Oceanic General Trading & Contracting Company, Kuwait
- Hi-Dine Supermarket, Kuwait
- Hi-Dine Hotel, Kuwait
- Lake Palace Resort, Alappuzha, Kerala
- Altanta Travels (India) Pvt Ltd - Kochi, Kerala

Funeral web live link : www.sdimagingstudio.com/live

Facebook live link : www.facebook.com/sdimagingstudio



Afghanistan's Ghani on track for second term after narrow win

Undocumented migrants drive closer to American dream



DANA, Syria: An injured man sits alongside children in the back of a truck as part of a convoy of vehicles of people from the south of Idlib province fleeing bombardment by the government and its allies on the northwestern region, heading northwards through the town of Dana yesterday. —AFP

Idlib violence uproots displaced

Syria regime widens control over Idlib, fuelling exodus

MAARET AL-NUMAN, Syria: Thin mattresses, children's toys, a gas heater: Abu Ismail packed a pick-up truck with scant belongings before fleeing a northwest Syrian town nearly emptied of residents by recent regime attacks. "I don't know where I am going, if I will find a house for my family, or what will happen to us," the 42-year-old father of seven told AFP, plumes of smoke rising around him.

Tens of thousands of people like Abu Ismail have fled the Maaret Al-Numan region, located in jihadist-held Idlib province, since December 16, following an uptick in air strikes, according to the United Nations. Thousands more are still trying to leave violence-plagued southern Idlib towards safer areas further north but steady bombing has made the exit both dangerous and difficult, the UN says.

"I don't even wish this on our enemies," Abu Ismail said of the air strikes pummeling his hometown. The Damascus government, which controls nearly 70 per cent of Syria, has repeatedly vowed to take back Idlib from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a jihadist alliance led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

Despite a ceasefire announced in August, it has intensified attacks on southern Idlib in recent days, while ground clashes with jihadists and allied rebels have flared, leaving more than 170 dead on both sides. The escalation has left Maaret Al-Numan in tatters. Inside the town, mangled metal rods, shattered glass and chunks of rubble are strewn across the ground.

Bombed-out storefronts and crumbling buildings spill onto empty sidewalks.

Several health facilities have shut down, bakeries have closed and schools have mostly been suspended since late November, according to the UN's humanitarian agency OCHA.

'Happening all over again'
The Idlib region hosts some three million people, more than half of whom have been displaced by years of violence in other parts of Syria. Abu Ossama is one of them. The 29-year-old arrived in Maaret Al-Numan around two years ago after fleeing Homs province, now under the control of government forces. Along with his wife and four children, he is once again throwing furniture, clothes and appliances into a pick-up truck.

"The same sequence is happening all over again," he said. "We are heading towards the unknown, with no house, no shelter and no assistance." He spoke to AFP as rescue workers known as the White Helmets helped him empty his apartment in Maaret Al-Numan. The rescue group had also arranged a vehicle to drive the man and his family to safety. "We are leaving today under shelling, fearing the warplanes that never leave the sky," Abu Ossama said.

"We don't know what danger is waiting for us on the road." Many of those fleeing Maaret Al-Numan are heading to over-stretched camps further north, near the border with Turkey. Others are taking shelter in schools, reception halls and mosques in Idlib city and other urban centers far away from the fighting, according to OCHA. The mass displacement could not come at a worse time of year, as heavy winter rains flood squalid camps for the displaced.

'Die of hunger'
Russia and China on Friday vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have extended for a year cross-border aid deliveries to four million Syrians, many of them in the Idlib region. The move, slammed by the United States and aid groups, raised fears that UN-

funded assistance could stop entering opposition-held parts of Syria from January unless an alternative agreement is found.

Four million Syrians, including many in Idlib, directly benefit from the deliveries, among a total of 11 million receiving international aid inside the country eight years into its devastating war. "We only eat and drink when we receive help," said Hassan Abu Wael who has been living in a displacement camp in northern Idlib since he fled Maaret al-Numan two months ago.

"If aid stops reaching us because of Russia, while we live inside flooded camps, then we will bid farewell to this world." Nearby, 60-year-old Umm Abdo expressed a similar concern. "You want the people to die of hunger?" she asked rhetorically.

Meanwhile, Regime forces have seized dozens of towns and villages in northwest Syria from jihadists following days of violent clashes, fuelling an exodus of civilians, a war monitor said yesterday.

The fresh advances in Idlib province bring regime loyalists closer to capturing one of the largest urban centers in Syria's last major opposition bastion, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Residents of the southern Idlib town flooded out of the area fearing further advances, an AFP correspondent there said. The Observatory said more than 30,000 people had fled the flash-point area in southern Idlib in recent days.

Abu Akram, a resident, said rescue workers and local relief groups were struggling to get families out. "Everybody is working at full capacity but they can't handle such a large number of people," the father of five said after he couldn't find a vehicle to drive his own

family further north. The jihadist-dominated Idlib region hosts some three million people including many displaced by years of violence in other parts of Syria. The Damascus regime has repeatedly vowed to take back the area and bombardment has continued despite a ceasefire announced in August.

Heightened regime and Russian bombardment on the Maaret Al-Numan region since December 16 has forced tens of thousands of vulnerable people to flee their homes, according to the United Nations.

The UN has called for "immediate de-escalation" and warned of further mass displacement if the violence continues. "Nowhere is safe. If we stay inside our homes, or if we flee outside, we will die either way," said Abu Akram.

Damascus loyalists have since Thursday been locked in battles with jihadists and allied rebels, seizing a total of 25 towns and villages from their control, according to the Observatory.

Four days of fighting has killed 103 militants as well as 71 regime loyalists, bringing the total toll to more than 170 dead on both sides, added the monitor, which is based in Britain and relies on an extensive network inside Syria. The Idlib region is controlled by the country's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham. Pro-government forces launched a blistering offensive against the region in April, killing around 1,000 civilians and displacing more than 400,000 people from their homes.

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

Tanzania police 'breaking law' by holding activist

DAR ES SALAAM, Tanzania: A Tanzanian rights group accused the police yesterday of breaking the law by holding one of their activists, whose whereabouts remain unknown two days after he was detained. The Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) said five men forced Tito Magoti into an unmarked car in the commercial capital Dar es Salaam on Friday and they have not heard from him since.

Police have since confirmed that he is in custody but have not said where he is being held. They are legally allowed to hold suspects for only 24 hours before freeing or charging them. The group initially feared Magoti had been kidnapped—an increasingly common occurrence in Tanzania, once a beacon for democracy in East Africa that has regressed since the election of President John Magufuli in 2015.

He has presided over a crackdown on media and civil society that rights groups say has seriously undermined democratic freedoms in Tanzania. Colleagues from the LHRC said they had failed to find Magoti in several police stations or find any record of his arrest.

"There is a huge darkness around this. The police are not telling us where exactly Tito is. They are breaking the law by continuing to hide him," the centre's executive director Anna Henga told reporters Sunday.

She said the LHRC was considering legal action against the police. Dar es Salaam Police Commander Lazaro Mambosasa yesterday said police again confirmed they were holding Magoti, and three others, for questioning, but declined to disclose further details. "The public should know that we are holding Tito. The fact is, he was not abducted, as suggested by rumors on social media. We will issue a report tomorrow," he said.

In May, high-profile dissident Mdude Nyagali was snatched by four gunmen after leaving work and was dumped, seriously beaten, in a village two days later. In February 2018, opposition figure Daniel John was kidnapped in the middle of a political campaign, only to turn up dead with machete wounds to the head. Others have disappeared never to be found. Azory Gwanda, a journalist and government critic, vanished in 2017 while opposition activist Ben Saanane has not been seen since 2016. Their fate is still unknown.

Magufuli is expected to run for the presidency again in elections next year. His party won more than 99 percent of seats in local government polls last month described by the US and UK as irregular and lacking credibility. —AFP

Lebanon protesters spurn Diab's call for talks

BEIRUT: Prominent street leaders yesterday shunned an invitation by Lebanon's prime minister-designate to sit for talks over the formation of a new government, saying they are not ready to extend support. Debt-burdened Lebanon has been without a fully functioning government since former prime minister Saad Hariri resigned on October 29 in the face of nationwide protests.

Demonstrators are demanding an overhaul of the political establishment which they deem corrupt and inept, insisting on a government of independents and experts with no ties to the country's sectarian parties. Hassan Diab, an engineering professor designated on Thursday to form a desperately-needed government, had asked protesters to give him a "chance" to form a cabinet of independent experts within four to six weeks.

But the self-styled technocrat's call for consultations

with representatives of the popular movement on Sunday failed to draw prominent street leaders or groups. A small crowd of protesters rallied outside Diab's house and slammed visitors who claimed to represent the country's leaderless movement.

"You don't represent us," the protesters chanted. The few who heeded Diab's calls for talks included largely unknown individuals not recognized as representatives of the protest movement.

"Not a single group actually active on the ground met today with the prime minister-designate because they are not convinced" he can form a government of technocrats, said Wassef Harakeh, a prominent activist. "They want us to get mired in this game of consultations," he told AFP.

In the protest camp in central Beirut, crowds began gathering in the afternoon.

"The people that visited the prime minister-designate today do not represent the revolution," said Ali Haidar, a resident of Beirut's southern suburbs.

"These talks were a failure," he said from the protest camp. Diab held talks Saturday with parliamentary blocs on the formation of a government but met several challenges as key groups insisted that the cabinet must include established parties not just independent experts.



BEIRUT: Lebanese anti-government demonstrators chant slogans, outside the home of Lebanon's prime-minister designate, in the neighborhood of Tallet Al-Khayat in the Lebanese capital Beirut yesterday. —AFP

The complicated process of forming a government comes as Lebanon faces its worst economic crisis since the 1975-1990 civil war. The Lebanese pound, officially pegged to the US dollar, has lost around 30 percent of its value on the black market, while companies have been paying half-salaries for the past two months and laying off staff. —AFP

International

Rouhani welcomes Japan opt-out of US-led naval mission in Gulf

Iran denies parole for UK-Iranian, rights activist

DUBAI: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani on Saturday welcomed Japan's decision not to join a US-led naval mission in the Gulf and said he had discussions on ways of "breaking" US sanctions on a trip to Tokyo. Friction between Tehran and Washington has increased since last year when US President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with six nations and re-imposed sanctions on the country, crippling its economy.

Washington proposed the naval mission after several attacks in May and June on international merchant vessels, including Saudi tankers, in Gulf waters which the United States blamed on Iran. Tehran denies the accusations.

In July, Iranian forces seized a British tanker in the Gulf after British marines captured an Iranian vessel in the Strait of Gibraltar. Both ships were later released. "Japan has announced it will not take part in the Americans' plans for security in the (Gulf) region ... which is something we welcome," Rouhani said on state TV after returning from a visit to Malaysia and Japan.

"Japan is sending a surveillance vessel but not to the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz," he said. Rouhani said his discussions in Japan included ways of "breaking" the US sanctions.

"On breaking the sanctions, the Japanese had a new proposal and we also had a new proposal and we discussed this and it was decided to continue the consultations between the two countries on this issue," Rouhani said, without giving details. Following his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Rouhani tweeted on Friday: "I welcome any effort that could boost economic exchanges, especially in the energy sector, and increase oil exports."

A Japanese official who gave a briefing to reporters said crude oil purchases were not discussed at the summit meeting. Japan was a leading buyer of Iranian oil for decades before the US-led sanctions.

Japan, a US ally maintaining friendly ties with Iran, is looking to launch its own naval operation rather than joining the US-led mission to protect shipping in the region. The planned Japanese operation is set to cover high seas in the Gulf of Oman, the northern Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden, but not the Strait of Hormuz. According to a draft plan approved by parties in the ruling coalition, Japan will deploy a destroyer and a patrol aircraft for gathering information in the Gulf region - which has been the source of nearly 90 percent of Japan's crude oil imports.

A European operation to ensure safe shipping in the Gulf will get underway next month when a French warship starts patrolling there. The French government has pushed for a European security alternative after ruling out taking part in the US-led mission.

Parole denial

Iran's prosecutor general has denied conditional release for a jailed British-Iranian mother and a prominent human rights activist, a lawyer for the two said, according to state media. "We had requested conditional parole and furlough for both Nazanin Zaghari and Narges Mohammadi, and the prosecutor general has disagreed with both," Mahmoud Behzadrad said, quoted late Saturday by state news agency IRNA.

"Conditional parole is my clients' legal right," the lawyer added. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe was arrested in 2016 as she was leaving Iran after taking her then 22-month-old daughter to visit her family.

She had been working for Thomson Reuters Foundation-the media organization's philanthropic arm-and was sentenced to five years in jail for sedition. Mohammadi, 47, was the spokeswoman for the Centre of Human Rights Defenders in Iran and had campaigned against the death penalty.

Initially arrested in 2015, the mother-of-two was sentenced to a total of 10 years in prison for "forming



TEHRAN: Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif (left) listens to his Indian counterpart Subrahmanyan Jaishankar during bilateral talks in the capital Tehran yesterday. —AFP

and managing an illegal group" among other charges. The human rights activist reportedly suffers from a neurological disease that causes muscular paralysis.

She "must be examined... at least every six months but has not been for several months now," the lawyer said, noting that even the intelligence ministry, as the security body handling the case, had agreed to the leave. "Zaghari has been examined by a psychiatrist several times and is in a situation similar to Narges

Mohammadi," Behzadrad added.

The British-Iranian's daughter, Gabriela, returned to Britain in October after having stayed with relatives in Iran since her mother's detention, visiting her every week. The two women launched a three-day hunger strike in January and ended it after being allowed to resume medical treatment outside the prison, according to Zaghari-Ratcliffe's husband. —Reuters

Christmas in Lebanon not so merry as crisis bites

BEIRUT: Rafi Tabakian's clothing store in a Beirut suburb is usually buzzing with customers during the holiday season, but with Lebanon's economy in ruins, shoppers are in short supply.

"We've been in business for 30 years, and I've never seen anything like this," he said, adding that sales have dropped 80 percent in December even though he has cut his prices.

"Now we see customers entering, asking for the price, and then leaving. It's scary," Tabakian, who produces and sells clothes in the densely populated, commercial Burj Hammoud neighbourhood of the capital, told Reuters. Lebanon is suffering its worst economic crisis, rooted in decades of state corruption and waste, since the 1975-1990 civil war, leaving streets dimmer and shopping centers empty, with many stores and

restaurants void of customers. The economic woes have sparked huge protests against the ruling elite, banks are imposing capital controls, pressure has piled on the pegged Lebanese pound, and a hard currency crunch has pushed importers to hike prices.

Hotel bookings, flights and events have plunged during what is usually a busy commercial season for Lebanon, which has the Arab world's biggest proportion of Christians.

Many from Lebanon's large diaspora normally return home to streets packed with cars and decked out with lights. But Pierre Ashkar, the head of Lebanon's hotel association, said December bookings have plummeted from a usual 65-75 percent occupancy to 7-15 percent this year.

"Hotels have closed some parts of their buildings, are giving employees unpaid leave and removing services such as free shuttle transportation to the airport to minimize losses."

Some local councils have opted to either re-use old decorations or do without.

"We put up last year's decorations, without adding anything because these are exceptional circumstances," said



BEIRUT: Lebanese anti-government protesters erect a Christmas tree made of protest banners in Beirut's Martyr Square on Saturday. —AFP

Raymond Atieh, head of the Jdeideh municipality, north of Beirut.

"The holidays are coming, but they're coming with a pinch. People are angry... People are getting fired, paid half-salaries, or not working," Atieh added. Charbel Daccache, a priest in

Mount Lebanon's largely Christian town of Adma, said it was better to help feed the poor in tough times "than to decorate and throw glitter". "Some days are harsh, others are better but it's not the end. That's why I tell people, let it be a joyous time." —Reuters

US slams China, Russia veto on Syria aid as 'shameful'

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Saturday described as "shameful" Russia and China blocking a UN Security Council resolution that would have extended for a year cross-border humanitarian aid to four million Syrians.

"The Russian Federation's and China's veto yesterday of a Security Council resolution that allows for humanitarian aid to reach millions of Syrians is shameful," Pompeo said in a statement.

"To Russia and China, who have chosen to make a political statement by opposing this resolution, you have blood on your hands." Humanitarian aid currently flows into Syria through UN-designated checkpoints in Turkey and Iraq 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.

A competing Russian resolution would have granted a six-month extension while reducing the number of UN crossing points, but it failed to get the minimum nine votes.

'A state of shock'

Russia, an ally and major supporter of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, has used its veto 14 times

on Syrian issues since civil war broke out there in 2011. Russia's ambassador to the United Nations, Vassily Nebenzia, said the latest resolution was "obsolete" because the authorities in Damascus had "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 and Syria is heading into winter. Four million Syrians directly benefit from the cross-border aid shipments. "I am in a state of shock," Kelly Craft, the US ambassador, said after the Russian and Chinese vetoes. "I am deeply and profoundly disappointed."

British envoy Karen Pierce said the Russian veto showed "breath-taking hypocrisy" by Moscow. The resolution failed just as tens of thousands of civilians have been fleeing the northwestern Idlib region amid heavy bombardments by Assad's Russian-backed government, in the last bastion of the jihadist opposition. —AFP

Greek foreign minister visits east Libya

BENGHAZI: Greece's foreign minister visited eastern Libya's Benghazi yesterday, meeting representatives of strongman Khalifa Haftar's administration amid tensions with Turkey following Ankara's recent maritime agreement with Tripoli's unity government. Nikos Dendias landed briefly at Benghazi airport where he met the head of Libya's parallel eastern government Abdullah al-Thani and its foreign minister Abdulhadi Lahweej, an AFP photographer at the scene said.

Lahweej said they discussed the controversial maritime delimitation deal Ankara signed in November with Tripoli's UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA), which expand-

ed Turkey's claims over a large gas-rich area of the Mediterranean. Libya is split between bitterly opposed administrations in the east and west. Since April, forces loyal to eastern-based Haftar have been fighting to seize the capital Tripoli.

Athens says the deal between Ankara and the GNA violates international maritime law and the sovereign rights of Greece and other countries. On December 10, Greece urged the United Nations to condemn the maritime jurisdiction deal as "disruptive" to regional peace and stability.

On Saturday, Ankara's parliament also approved a military agreement with the GNA, opening the way for more direct Turkish involvement in Libya's conflict. Haftar in June ordered his forces to target Turkish interests in Libya. On Saturday evening, Haftar's forces announced they had seized a Turkish freighter registered in Grenada off the coast of eastern Libya. Dendias was headed to Egypt after his Libya visit, Greek media reported. —AFP



BENGHAZI: Libya's parallel eastern government foreign minister Abdulhadi Lahweej (2nd left) listens to Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias as he visits the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi yesterday. —AFP

Egypt reinstates info ministry in portfolio reshuffle

CAIRO: Egypt will reinstate the country's information ministry and President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has put the prime minister directly in charge of the government's investment portfolio, in a cabinet reshuffle approved by parliament yesterday.

Osama Haikal, who served as information minister from 2011 to 2012, will return as Ministry of State for Information Affairs, according to the plans announced by Sisi's office. Egypt had abolished its Information Ministry in 2014. It did not say what would be the main responsibilities of the ministry, which rights groups say was a symbol of censorship under the rule of Hosni Mubarak.

Sisi has already set up a new regulatory agency to oversee output from the entertainment and news industries, with the power to fine or suspend publications and broadcasters and give or revoke licences for foreign media. Human rights organizations and the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists have repeatedly criticized media freedoms in Egypt, which jailed the third most journalists of any country in the world this year, the CPJ said this month.

In the reshuffle, which had been rumored for weeks, Sisi left key portfolios like defense, interior, finance and foreign affairs unchanged but gave Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly direct oversight of the investment portfolio. It was not immediately clear if the portfolio will remain a ministry. Barring its oil sector, Egypt has struggled to attract foreign direct investment over the past several years. —Reuters

Chile police officer charged with reckless injury

SANTIAGO: Chilean prosecutors filed charges of reckless injury against a military policeman at a Santiago court as the death toll from anti-government demonstrations rose to 26.

Chile has been rocked for months by the most severe protests since the end of the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet nearly 30 years ago. There have been multiple complaints by international rights organizations about the police crackdown on the protests.

Prosecutors on Saturday identified military policeman Mauricio Carrillo as the driver of a vehicle that crushed 20-year-old Oscar Perez, who is being treated in hospital for a fractured pelvis. The judge said it could not be determined whether the driver acted intentionally. Jose Miguel Vivanco, Americas director for Human Rights Watch, said those responsible for excesses needed to be held to account.

"The material perpetrators and those in command of the operation must be fired and face criminal penalties," he said. "If that does not happen, the abuses will continue." The UN rights office earlier this month also accused the police and army of violating international norms and standards for crowd control and use of force. —AFP

International

Undocumented migrants drive closer to American dream

New law permits undocumented migrants to drive

NEW YORK: Driving a car in the United States—a country similar in size to Europe—is often a necessity, as well as being a key part of national culture for over a century. But for many of the more than 10 million undocumented immigrants living in America, the sense of freedom from getting behind the wheel is only now becoming an attainable dream.

Luis Jimenez, from Mexico, has been driving in upstate New York near the border with Canada for 13 years, but illegally because he doesn't have a license.

"The dream of all of us is to drive without fear of being stopped by the police, without fear of calling the immigration police and deporting us," says the 34-year-old undocumented migrant. That wish is about to come true for Jimenez, who works 12 hours a day, six days a week raising calves on a farm in Livingston county, 300 miles (480 kilometers) north of New York City.

Jimenez applied for a driving license in December after a new law permitting undocumented migrants to drive came into force. "It's a relief! The isolation is over," said Jimenez, president of the Agricultural Alliance, a group of rural immigrant workers who have fought for years for the right to drive.

Washington state in the north-west was the first to grant driver's licenses to undocumented immigrants in 1993. It was slowly followed by other states, most of which were under Democratic Party control. On Thursday, New Jersey governor Phil Murphy signed a law which made his state become the 14th to authorize the measure, following closely in the footsteps of New York. A similar law is due to take effect in Oregon in 2021 while moves are also afoot in at least six other states. They all require migrants to pass a driving test and are a lifeline in towns and rural areas where public transport is virtually nonexistent.

Opposition

Activists argue that states should quickly adopt the law because thousands of immigrants already drive without

permission, risking fines and deportation. They say it would increase road safety and allow undocumented migrants to obtain car insurance while deliver an economic boost to towns that grant permits.

However, many Republicans in the Donald Trump era are furious as his administration moves to crack down on immigrants. Interim US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) chief Mark Morgan is upset that New York's "green light bill," as it has been dubbed, blocks driver licensing officials from sharing data with immigration officials.

"The information we receive from NY state is vital to our missions and blocking federal law enforcement officers from accessing it creates a significant threat to both officer and public safety," he tweeted after the law entered force in New York last Saturday.

Opponents also say the law encourages illegal immigration and can facilitate identity and electoral fraud. Supporters, though, point out the a driving license for undocumented people is more limited in scope than ones for legal residents and citizens.

It cannot be used to vote or as a form of identification when boarding domestic flights, for example. "I oppose this legislation because it confers privileges on those who have knowingly violated our laws," said New Jersey state representative Erik Peterson (r) who voted against it.

'Free from fear'

In New York state, some Republican county clerks in charge of vehicle licensing lost a challenge to the law in court. This past week, hundreds of undocumented migrants have been lining up in New York to apply for their first licenses. "Here a car is a tool, it is not a luxury," Noe, a construction worker who refused to give his surname out of fear of the police, told AFP while waiting his turn at a center in Brooklyn. "Now I can go freely, to look for children at school, to run errands," he added.

The 40-year-old Honduran said he has been driving



NEW YORK: People wait at the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) office at Atlantic Center in the Brooklyn borough on Dec 18, 2019. — AFP

without a license and has received several fines of \$400 each. Another in line, 35-year-old Mexican Jose Hernandez, wants to leave his job delivering food on a bicycle and "get a better job" as a taxi or Uber driver.

Back upstate, six hours north of Manhattan, Jimenez dreams about taking a vacation for the first time in 15 years. "I've always wanted to take my children to the beach, to travel free from fear," he said. — AFP

Croatia votes in a three-horse presidential race

ZAGREB: Croatia went to the polls for a presidential vote on Sunday that could weaken the ruling conservatives just as the country takes the helm of the European Union's rotating presidency.

The pre-Christmas election, likely to be decided in a January 5 run-off, has evolved into a tight race between conservative incumbent Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic and front-running rivals on the right and the left. Voters braved heavy rain in the capital Zagreb to reach polling stations that opened at 7:00 am (0600 GMT), with voting set finish 12 hours later.

Grabar-Kitarovic has been president since 2015 with backing from HDZ, the center-right party that has led Croatia for most of its independence since 1991. The 51-year-old has often wavered between representing the party's moderates and pandering to its nationalist faction.

In her re-election bid, she is struggling to hold on to hardliners shifting to a right-wing folk-singer turned politician, Miroslav Skoro. Playing on an emotive symbol of the 1990s independence war, Grabar-Kitarovic held her final campaign rally on Friday in eastern Vukovar, the town whose bloody siege by Serb forces became a byword for Croatian suffering during the conflict.



ZAGREB: Croatian voters cast their ballot at a polling station during the Presidential elections yesterday in Zagreb. Croatia went to the polls for a presidential vote that could weaken the ruling conservatives just as the country takes the helm of the European Union's rotating presidency. — AFP

She told the crowd she believed those who fought and died in the war "don't regret being killed since Croatia is (now) here". The comments were seen as an effort to burnish her nationalist credentials in the battle with Skoro, who has been wooing the far-right with promises to deploy troops to halt migrants at the borders and pardon a convicted war criminal.

Running as an independent, the 57-year-old singer was polling in third place

in the run-up to election day. Meanwhile, the split on the right has carved out a space for leftist former premier Zoran Milanovic, 53, to gain traction. He was running neck-and-neck with Grabar-Kitarovic in the latest opinion polls. Prime minister from 2011 to 2016, Milanovic was previously derided for his arrogance but is trying to make a comeback with promise to make Croatia a "normal" country with an independent judiciary and respect for minorities.

Trump invites UK's Johnson to White House in new year

LONDON: US President Donald Trump has invited British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to visit him in the White House in the new year, British media reported yesterday. Trump's invitation was made after the British prime minister's election win this month, The Sunday Times newspaper reported. Britain wants to strike a new trade deal with the United States after it leaves the European Union at the end of January.

"Some potential dates have been floated in mid-January but nothing has yet been formally agreed. But it is clear that both sides want to make it happen sometime in early 2020," the Sunday Times quoted a source close to the White House as saying. Johnson is reluctant to make the visit before delivering Brexit on Jan. 31 and would prefer to go after a cabinet reshuffle scheduled in February, when he is expected to appoint cabinet office minister Michael Gove as his new trade negotiator, The Mail on Sunday reported.

That could allow Johnson to take Gove on the US visit ahead of talks of a post-Brexit trade deal, according to the report. Some Downing Street insiders, however, have concerns about a visit by Johnson due to fears the prime minister could be dragged into Trump's ongoing impeachment proceedings, the Sunday Times reported. Johnson won approval for his Brexit deal in the British parliament on Friday, the first step towards fulfilling his election pledge to deliver Britain's departure from the European Union by Jan. 31. As Britain prepares to leave the bloc, Johnson and Trump agreed in a phone call last Monday to pursue an "ambitious" UK-US free trade agreement. After Johnson's election win on Dec 12, Trump had said Britain and the United States were now free to strike a "massive" new trade deal after Brexit. "This deal has the potential to be far bigger and more lucrative than any deal that could be made with the EU," Trump had said in a tweet earlier this month. — Reuters

18 prisoners killed in clash at Honduras jail

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras: At least 18 inmates died and 16 were injured in overnight clashes between prisoners in Honduras after fighting erupted at a jail in the northern port town of Tela, prison officials said Saturday. The National Penitentiary Institute said 17 prisoners had died at the facility in Tela, about 120 miles (200 kilometers) from the capital Tegucigalpa, and another died in hospital, with local media describing the unrest as gang violence.

A prison spokesperson, Digna Aguilar, said authorities had to enter the area carefully "for fear of being among the victims" because several inmates carried firearms. That slowed the investigation. The combined national security force known as Fusina said that five 9 millimeter guns, as well as ammunition, had been seized from the inmates. Prison officials had originally reported only three deaths, but the toll quickly rose. Forensic workers placed the bodies in plastic bags and transported them to the judicial morgue of San Pedro Sula to be autopsied. An AFP photographer at the scene saw shocked relatives arriving to claim the bodies.

Earlier killings

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez, grappling with a recent wave of prison killings, had ordered the army and the police on Tuesday to take full control of the country's 27 prisons, which are badly overcrowded with some 21,000 inmates. But as of Friday, the military had yet to take complete control of the Tela detention center, according to Aguilar. On Saturday, top military officer General Tito Livio Moreno indicated that the military would be deployed in 18 penal centers identified as "high risk."

Hernandez announced the crackdown after the killings on December 14 of five members of feared gang Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) by a fellow detainee at the high-security prison in La Tolve, 25 miles east of Tegucigalpa. That came just a day after Pedro Idelfonso Armas, the warden of El Pozo—the country's main high-security prison, in the western city of Santa Barbara—was shot dead in the south of the country. The Ministry of Security had sus-



Relatives of inmates react after getting information about their loved ones in front of the penitentiary of Tela, Atlantida department, Honduras, on Saturday. — AFP

pected Armas shortly before that amid an investigation into his presence during the October 26 killing by prisoners of Magdaleno Meza, a drug kingpin whose confession and notebooks linked him to a brother of the president, Juan Antonio "Tony" Hernandez.

Meza's account books were entered as evidence in the New York trial of Hernandez, who was subsequently convicted on four counts of drug trafficking. He faces sentencing—possibly for life—in January. President Hernandez condemned the conviction of his younger brother, saying it was based on "the testimony of confessed assassins."

A video circulating on social media shows the 52-year-old Armas talking with Meza when prison guards opened a locked gate, allowing a dozen inmates to burst in and stab and fatally shoot the drug trafficker. In addition, a lawyer who had represented Meza and other members of the Valle Valle drug cartel, Jose Luis Pinto, was killed in an attack December 9 in a town northwest of Tegucigalpa. That killing remains under investigation.

Honduras has been plagued by drug trafficking, gangs, poverty and corruption. It suffers from one of the highest homicide rates in the world outside areas of armed conflict, having registered 41.2 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants in 2018. To fight this scourge, President Hernandez created a military police force financed by a new tax, and built special prisons for gang members. — AFP

Death toll in Europe from storm hits 9

MADRID: The death toll from storms that have battered Spain, Portugal and France rose to nine yesterday as the region braced for more violent winds and heavy rain. Storms Elsa and Fabien have flooded rivers, brought down power lines, uprooted trees and disrupted rail and air travel across the region, leaving more than 118,000 households without electricity. Two people have so far died in Portugal and seven have now been killed in Spain, the worst affected country, after a fisherman was swept off rocks into the sea in Catalonia.

The local government said three police officers and another fisherman had to be rescued after they tried to save the man in the resort town of Sant Feliu de Guixols, 100 km northeast of Barcelona. The deaths in Spain include a South Korean woman killed by debris falling from a building in Madrid and a Dutch man who drowned windsurfing in rough weather off the Andalusian coast.

As a weakened Storm Elsa moved over Britain on Saturday, Storm Fabien quickly moved in, bringing winds of 170 km per hour to Galicia in northwestern Spain, forcing the cancellation of 14 flights according to Spanish airport operator Aena. Some 8,000 households in Galicia were without power due to damage caused to power lines by the wind, local officials said.

Eight Madrid city parks remained shut on Saturday because of the strong winds. However, Spanish officials said on Sunday that Fabien was moving away quickly. Parks and cemeteries were also closed in Bordeaux in southwestern France on Saturday while the Arlette Gruss circus, which had set up in a big tent in the city's main square, cancelled three performances. France's weather office placed 15 regions in the southwest of the country on orange alert Saturday, as the storm battered its Atlantic coast.

The winds were as fast as 148 kph at Socoa, in the southwest near the border with Spain. Even on the northwest coast of Brittany, winds reached up to 120 kph. The region was still being buffeted by gusts of up to 90 km an hour yesterday. Across southwestern France, violent winds left 110,000 households without electricity, officials said yesterday.

France's SNCF rail network cancelled services between Bordeaux, Toulouse and Hendaye in the southwest because of the likelihood of winds blowing trees down on to the line. Officials on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica closed all the island's airports because of the approaching storm. Ferry services to the mainland have also been suspended. Roads into Corsica's city of Ajaccio were also closed to try to prevent people from getting caught in floods. — AFP



ANDERNOS-LES-BAINS, France: This picture taken yesterday shows a pier in this Arcachon basin city on the morning after the winter storm 'Fabien'. — AFP

International

Afghanistan's Ghani on track for second term after narrow win

Main opponent Abdullah vows to challenge tally

KABUL: Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani appeared to have secured a second term yesterday, narrowly scoring an outright win in preliminary polling results, but his main rival immediately vowed to challenge the tally.

After months of political limbo and bitter allegations of fraud and corruption in the September 28 poll, Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC) said Ghani had won 50.64 percent of the vote.

If it holds, the result is enough for Ghani to avoid a run-off. He easily beat his top challenger, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, who scored 39.52 percent. Candidates now have a few days to file any complaints before final results are announced, probably within weeks.

As soon as results were announced, Abdullah's office said in a statement he would contest them. "We would like to make it clear once again to our people, supporters, election commission and our international allies that our team will not accept the result of this fraudulent vote unless our legitimate demands are addressed," the statement read.

Abdullah lost to Ghani in 2014 in a divisive election that saw the US intervene to broker an awkward power-sharing deal between the two rivals. Ghani's office did not immediately comment, but the president was due to give an address at 5 pm (1230 GMT).

US ambassador to Afghanistan John Bass said it was vital the full electoral process plays out. "It's important for all Afghans to remember: these results are preliminary. Many steps remain before final election results are certified, to ensure the Afghan people have confidence in the results," Bass wrote on Twitter. Preliminary results were originally due October 19 but were repeatedly delayed amid technical issues and allegations of fraud from various candidates, particularly Abdullah.

Observers and candidates have blasted the IEC over its handling of the count and its repeated disregard of the electoral calendar. The Transparent Electoral Foundation

of Afghanistan, an independent watchdog, said the IEC needs to share all information about how it reached its numbers and break down data by polling center.

IEC chairwoman Hawa Alam Nuristani said her agency acted with "honesty, loyalty, responsibility and faithfulness". "We respected every single vote because we wanted democracy to endure," she said.

Complaints procedure

The protracted limbo between the vote and the preliminary result heaped additional uncertainty on Afghans who are already anxiously awaiting the outcome of talks between the US and the Taliban.

The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which provided support to electoral authorities, welcomed the announcement of preliminary results and called on the Electoral Complaints Commission to listen carefully to any grievances. "The ECC has an obligation to adjudicate any complaints it receives transparently and thoroughly so the election process may conclude in a credible manner," UNAMA head Tadamichi Yamamoto said.

ECC chairwoman Zuhra Bayan Shinwari said candidates and their supporters should wait for final results to be announced. "We are committed to reviewing all the complaints according to the law," she said.

The election was meant to be the cleanest yet in Afghanistan's young democracy, with a German firm supplying biometric machines to stop people from voting more than once.

But problems immediately emerged, with allegations of vote stuffing, illegal voting and other fraud coming almost as soon as the polls had closed. Nearly one million of the initial 2.7 million votes were purged owing to irregularities, meaning the election saw by far the lowest turnout of any Afghan poll. Ultimately, only 1.8 million votes were counted, a tiny number considering Afghanistan's estimated population of 37 million and a total of 9.6 million regis-



KABUL: Head of the Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) Hawa Alam Nuristani leaves after announcing the preliminary elections results in Kabul yesterday. — AFP

tered voters. Many people stayed away amid Taliban vows to attack polling stations, compounded by voter apathy and despair that any politician can ever improve the lot of the average Afghan.

Thirty-one percent of votes were cast by women, the IEC said. Abdullah has repeatedly cried foul over 300,000

votes the IEC counted even though his team claims many of these ballots were fake or had been cast outside of polling hours. His apparent loss to Ghani makes Abdullah a three-time loser and his future in government is uncertain as he has ruled out another power-sharing deal with the president. — AFP

Under pressure
Australia PM visits aggrieved firefighters

SYDNEY: Prime Minister Scott Morrison visited firefighters battling Australia's bushfire crisis yesterday as he apologized for a Hawaiian holiday that ended early after public outrage. Morrison toured the headquarters of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service—whose exhausted volunteers have been struggling to contain deadly, out-of-control-blazes for months on end—where he admitted he had erred in travelling overseas.

Morrison had departed for a family holiday amid record bushfires that have destroyed an area the size of Belgium and cloaked major cities from Brisbane to Sydney to Canberra to Melbourne in choking toxic fumes. "I get it that people would have been upset to know that I was holidaying with my family while their families were under great stress," he said.

"If you had your time over again and the benefit of hindsight we would have made different decisions."

News of his holiday prompted street protests and widespread criticism on social media, with Australians deploying the hashtag #WhereTheBloodyHellAreYa?

"I apologize," he said. "There have been lessons learned this week," adding that he believed it was time to move on from the controversy. "I'm sure Australians are fair-



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

minded and understand that when you make a promise to your kids, you try and keep it," the conservative leader said by way of explanation. The embattled prime minister again acknowledged some link between climate change and weather patterns that scientists say has fuelled the fire crisis, but he indicated there would be no change in pro-climate policies.

Heavy rain needed

Morrison also praised volunteer firefighters, who in the last 24 hours have faced catastrophic conditions brought by a record heatwave, gale-force winds and prolonged drought. Australia's firefighting force is overwhelmingly made up of volunteers who have been strained by the inten-

sity and the length of this year's fire season. Conditions eased markedly on Sunday, giving them time to try to contain massive blazes near Sydney that are only likely to be extinguished with heavy rainfall. Large scale back-burning is planned over the next few days before conditions are expected to worsen again in a week's time.

Rain is expected in some fire-hit areas of New South Wales tomorrow and Wednesday, a welcome Christmas gift for many. But firefighters are still measuring the toll of Saturday's destruction.

"We've seen widespread damage and destruction being reported across a number of these fire grounds," said New South Wales Rural Fire Services boss Shane Fitzsimmons, who earlier described

Saturday as "an awful day". "The devastation is shocking," said New South Wales premier Gladys Berejiklian. "We have got the devastating news that there's not much left in the town of Balmoral."

The state of South Australia has also been hit hard. 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.

State premier Steven Marshall said that 72 homes had been destroyed in the Adelaide Hills alone, according to public broadcaster ABC.

Public health emergency

Officials said two fires—already big enough to create their own thunderstorms—had joined to form another "megafire" to the southwest of Sydney. 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.

The fires have torched at least three million hectares (7.4 million acres) of land with at least 10 people killed and more than 800 homes destroyed. Leading doctors have warned of a public health emergency given the unprecedented toxic smoke choking Sydney, which again became a dense haze on Saturday. "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," doctor Kim Loo told AFP. "It probably won't be obvious for months, or even years," added Loo, who is also a member of advocacy group Doctors for the Environment. — AFP

Philippine troops rescue two abducted Indonesians

MANILA: Philippine troops rescued two abducted Indonesian sailors in a pre-dawn raid yesterday on an Islamist militant stronghold which left two dead, a military official said. A soldier and a militant of kidnap-for-ransom group Abu Sayyaf—which was behind some of the nation's worst attacks—were killed during a 30-minute gunfight in the mountainous town of Panamao on the southern island of Jolo. "During the firefights, the two victims managed to scamper away (from the militants) and we were able to rescue them," military commander Lieutenant General Cirilito Sobejana told AFP.

The pair were among three Indonesian sailors abducted by the militants in September off Malaysian waters near the southern tip of the Philippine island of Mindanao. Sobejana said a military operation was underway to rescue the other Indonesian captive.

"He could have escaped or militants could still have him, so we are expecting another firefight," Sobejana said. The rescue came a month after a British man and his wife were freed by soldiers and said they were threatened with beheading by militants if they did not deliver a ransom. In May, Dutch birdwatcher Ewald Horn was killed by his captors as he tried to escape during a rescue operation, the military said, after being held captive for seven years. The Abu Sayyaf group is also blamed by authorities for an Islamic State-claimed suicide bombing of Sunday mass at a Catholic cathedral in Jolo in January that killed 21 people. — AFP



DHAKA: People attend funeral prayers for Fazle Hasan Abed, the founder of the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), in Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

Thousands mourn Bangladeshi charity pioneer

DHAKA: Thousands gathered in Bangladesh yesterday for the funeral of Fazle Hasan Abed, founder of one of the world's largest NGOs and credited with lifting nearly 150 million people out of poverty.

The 83-year-old passed away on Friday in a Dhaka hospital while undergoing treatment for a brain tumour.

His body was brought to a stadium in Dhaka where at least 10,000 people attended the funeral, an AFP photographer from the venue said. Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus, top politicians, diplomats and businessmen paid

tribute to Abed, who founded BRAC in 1972. "Sir Abed's NGO helped me to start my business. It was him who pulled me up when I thought I am done," Abdur Rahman, a small business entrepreneur, told AFP as he came to say a final goodbye.

BRAC's micro-finance approach has been hailed as one factor behind the drop in the proportion of Bangladeshis living in extreme poverty from 80 percent to around 40 percent. The approach proved so successful that BRAC, which has more than 100,000 local employees worldwide — expanded elsewhere in Asia and even to Africa and has been lauded by world figures such as former US president Bill Clinton. The NGO has helped nearly 150 million people out of poverty according to the World Food Prize, which honored Abed as its Laureate in 2015. Abed also received a knighthood from Britain in 2010 for his work.

The accountant-turned-aid worker will be laid to rest in a Dhaka graveyard, BRAC spokesman Asif Saleh told reporters. — AFP

Miracle survivor to help close gaps in tsunami warning system

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia: Arif Munandar had been pronounced dead before he woke up in a body bag four days after a monstrous wave swept his village in Indonesia's northern Aceh province 15 years ago.

When a 9.1-magnitude quake opened a faultline deep beneath the Indian Ocean, it triggered a tsunami as high as 17.4 meters (57 feet), killing more than 230,000 people in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and nine other countries. Aceh province bore the brunt of the disaster. A total of 128,858 people were killed there, according to statistics compiled by the government and aid agencies. Another 37,087 are still listed as missing.

Munandar, who spent six years living in a relief camp before he was able to complete the rebuilding of his old house with government help, lost 24 family members, including his wife and three children. He has since remarried and has two children. Now, the 49-year-old works as a radio communication technician at Aceh's disaster mitigation agency, and considers it his personal mission to keep his village's tsunami warning system well-maintained.

"We need to provide information to the community in order to minimize the number of casualties when such a disaster happens again," said Munandar, stressing the need to anticipate the worst.

More than \$400 million has been spent across 28 countries on the early-warning system, comprising 101 sea-level gauges, 148 seismometers and nine buoys. "The Indian Ocean region is much safer against the tsunami threat than it was in 2004," said Srinivasa Tummala, head of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWMS) established in 2013.



Visitors stand in front of a cave in Lhoong, Aceh province yesterday. The cave is believed to be about 7,400 years old and holds deposits of previous tsunamis. — FP

However, a lack of sufficient tsunami buoys, other detection equipment, and real-time data-sharing, as well as the difficulty of maintaining the tsunami detection system, remain the biggest hurdles, he said.

Threats like the twin tsunamis triggered by underwater landslides in Indonesia's Palu and Banten province last year, which hit the shore in a shorter timeframe, also continue to challenge the early warning system, Tummala added. Experts are exploring new technologies such as mobile apps and a Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) network to enhance preparedness.

The focus of the tsunami warning mitigation system is now on community readiness, Tummala said, including carrying out regular drills. In the coastal Ban Nam Khem village, in southern Thailand, which lost more than half its population in the 2004 tsunami, the national anthem is played weekly on the tsunami warning tower as a form of test run for a nightmare they hope will never recur. "The tower shouldn't be used just for warnings about a tsunami," said village community leader Prayoon Chonkraichak. "It should be utilized for more purposes so that it's worth the budget, and more importantly, so people in the community can have more confidence in it." — Reuters

Analysis

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'Win-win' in UK as highly skilled refugees find work

In a deprived town in northern England, reeling from the death of its fishing industry, a handful of ambitious professionals have arrived with a mission - to improve residents' health. The Lincolnshire Refugee Doctor Project (LRDP) - which aims to help refugee doctors join Britain's National Health Service (NHS) through training, language courses and volunteer placements - welcomed its first cohort to Grimsby in October. "I'm yearning to work as a doctor," Ahmed Hashim, who arrived in Britain this year and is one of about seven refugees on the program, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone.

While a variety of social enterprises - or businesses that aim to do good - seek to find refugees jobs, from handicrafts to cafes, this project is one of a handful trying to get them into careers that match the qualifications they gained back home. For the refugees, it offers a chance to pursue the career they trained for. For the state-run NHS, it goes a small way to plugging almost 100,000 staff vacancies, exacerbated by funding shortages and poor working conditions.

When war broke out in Syria, Iraq-born Hashim, whose name has been changed to protect his identity, had to flee to Jordan as soon as he completed his medical degree in 2013, putting his childhood dream to become a doctor on hold. Hashim has yet to practice medicine but he is excited to be back in the classroom. "Even though I couldn't practice when I was in Jordan, I didn't see myself doing anything else - this what I do, this is what I trained for, this is my passion," he said.

Struggling to cope with record demand due to a growing and ageing population, as well as cuts to social care, the NHS, which provides care for free at the point of delivery, has seen droves of doctors and nurses quit, retire early or go part-time. Towns like Grimsby, with a population of about 88,000, struggle to compete for doctors, who often tend to favour working in bigger, busier city hospitals.

The program, during which the refugee doctors spend three days a week in the classroom with two days free to work or volunteer, is "a win-win for all," said Andrew Mowat, clinical program director of LRDP and a retired doctor. "They bring hugely different experiences of their journeys - professional journey and I also mean journey as a refugee," said Mowat, who estimates it will take the refugees up to two years to pass the General Medical Council's vetting tests to practice. "That means that they will be much more empathic towards patients, if they understand suffering and pain and distress."

Jobseekers

It is often hard for refugees in Britain to find work, particularly well-paid jobs that their skills qualify them for, according to research by the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society (COMPAS) at the University of Oxford. Recently arrived refugees, lacking the local contacts of other jobseekers, often rely on public agencies and job centres to find lower-paid work, the study found, and earn on average 284 pounds a week - about half that of UK-born workers.

"Being out of the labor market might also affect your way of perceiving yourself in society," said Zovanga Kone, a COMPAS researcher. "This could lead to more severe consequences, such as mental health problems." The struggle to find a job that matches his qualifications has made Usman Khalid, a refugee from Pakistan living in London, feel at times "sad and upset".

He has a Master's degree in business from Pakistan, is studying for a Master's in marketing and communications in Britain and has taken on various internships and contracts within the charity sector, but says it is very competitive. "Being not very familiar with the society and not growing up in the society is sometimes a bit of a challenge ... different jargon, different expressions ... the employer may think sometimes this person might not be suitable," he said. Khalid is among almost 240 refugee professionals who have registered with London-based Transitions, a decade-old social enterprise that works to find them skilled jobs in fields such as architecture, engineering and business services. In the past six months, it has found jobs or returner placements for 60 percent of its current pool of candidates, despite challenges like gaps on their resumes as a result of fleeing their homes.

"Typically they will have an 18 months' gap - sometimes much longer than that - and it's very difficult for them to explain to employers that they were in a lorry trucking across Europe," said Sheila Heard, founder of Transitions. "(Professional refugees) are left at the mercy of whatever recruiter or piece of software sees their Afghani Master's, which usually means that sets off alarm bells and it gets a rejection." Often employers are unaware that refugees have the right to work in Britain and that professional bodies will help assess qualifications from around the world, she said. — Reuters

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An undated handout photo released by IQE Group on Dec 20, 2019, shows a technician holding a wafer in a sterile room at IQE's plant. — AFP

Facing decline, Wales dreams of Silicon Valley

Wales is better known for its factory closures than high-tech achievements. But in Newport, a former bastion of the coal industry, a handful of semiconductor manufacturers dream of a new Silicon Valley. "We want to be this technology centre like Silicon Valley, where we can attract whatever the big names of tomorrow are," said Chris Meadows, corporate systems manager at British firm IQE. "Hopefully it will be whatever the 2030 version of Google is or a Facebook."

IQE is one of a small group of local companies, also including SPTS or Newport Wafer Fab, which have formed an alliance with universities to create a compound semiconductor "cluster" in south Wales. Meadows said his firm and SPTS began working together after they discovered they had the same customer in Taiwan, using them at different points in their supply chain. "We realized we can offer a better service if we partner," he said.

Silicon semiconductors are used extensively in electronic circuits, but new innovations require new enabling technology. Made from a combination of materials such as silicon and carbon (silicon carbide) or arsenic and gallium (gallium arsenide), compound semiconductors offer superior properties in terms of power, heat and shock resistance. They are more complex and more expensive than sil-

icon chips, but are more suitable for electric vehicles, laser devices or 5G telephony.

Secret recipe

In the sterile offices of IQE, the machines silently cut slices of semiconductors - "wafers" - as a few technicians in overalls and masks come by occasionally to check the screens. "That's where the magic happens. It's like with cooking - everybody can have an oven and a recipe but not everyone is a five-star chef," said Meadows. "Our knowhow, our edge comes from that particular way of working out and assembling wafers. It's our secret recipe."

Working together, firms in the Newport "cluster" can offer custom-made products for chips used in devices by clients such as Philips or Raytheon, and maintain control over the production line. "America, Europe, we've all kind of stepped back from manufacturing almost as if it is a dirty thing," Meadows said, noting that this has benefited Asia. But now "it's more about machinery and intellectual property" - and that brings high-skilled, well-paid jobs to a region that has suffered industrial decline.

Around 1,400 people work for the cluster, but it hopes to have 5,000 by 2023 thanks to the growth of a global market that last year was worth \$77 billion. The next step

for Newport is to produce their own integrated circuits, and that will bring more jobs. "We currently have three companies that we're working with, two in North America and one in China... they'll be assembling the electronic products using chips made within the cluster," Meadows said.

Example of collaboration

In the cluster, manufacturers delegate research and innovation to the universities of Cardiff or Swansea. The prototypes are managed by government organizations that invest in new technologies, the so-called catapults. Andy Sellars, chief business development officer at the compound semiconductor applications catapult, notes a project with McLaren worth around £20 million. There is in total "about £300 million of investment in this region on the next generation of semiconductor material", he added.

The cluster is a long way away from replacing the thousands of jobs lost in Wales over the last few decades with the closure of a string of factories, including Ford at Bridgend. "Is it enough to replace the lost jobs? No it's not," admitted Heather Myers, chief executive of the South Wales Chamber of Commerce. "But it is an answer showing that when you collaborate you can make an impact." — AFP

Why does Turkey seek a greater role in war-torn Libya?

Turkey's parliament approved a security and military cooperation deal with Libya's UN-recognized unity government based in Tripoli on Saturday. Oil-rich Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi eight years ago. The North African country has since become split between bitterly opposed administrations in the east and west - each backed by outside powers.

While Tripoli's Government of National Accord (GNA) in the west is supported by Turkey and Qatar, eastern-based strongman Khalifa Haftar has the backing of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said Ankara is ready to send troops into Libya if requested by Tripoli, but the current agreement would not allow Turkish combatant forces to go to Libya.

It would however allow military and police exchanges for training purposes and closer cooperation in fields including intelligence, counter-terrorism and defense exports. While the GNA is desperate to repel Haftar's forces from the outskirts of Tripoli, analysts say Ankara

has other geopolitical interests. Here are three questions and answers on the situation.

Why has the GNA called for help?

The GNA, with the support of armed groups from Misrata, 200 km east of Tripoli, has managed to hold off Haftar's troops, who have been trying to seize the capital since April. But while frontlines are stalemated, Haftar has dominated the skies with Chinese-made Wing Loong drones supplied by his main backer the UAE, according to the United Nations and analysts. Turkey has sent the GNA Bayraktar drones to counter those of Haftar's forces, but these were low-cost in comparison and many were destroyed, said defense analyst Arnaud Delalande.

Reports say that on the ground, pro-Haftar forces have recently received support from contractors with Wagner - a private military group believed to be controlled by an ally of Russian president Vladimir Putin. Russia has denied sending mercenaries to fight in Libya. "The GNA has started to see the risk" that Haftar is gaining the advantage, Delalande said.

What aid will Turkey give?

Turkey is likely to send the GNA air defense systems, including drone-jamming technology, Delalande said, alongside advisers and more modern drones. Such support could "rebalance forces" on a battlefield where Wagner has reportedly deployed anti-drone systems that have brought down an American drone and an Italian one, Delalande said. But Ankara is unlikely to

deploy troops or send fighter jets to carry out strikes, Delalande said.

Turkey does not have an air base close enough to Libya to carry out strikes discreetly, as Delalande said the UAE does from Egypt. Nonetheless, according to Libya expert Emad Badi, Turkish support for the GNA could be a "game-changer, depending on the form of military aid".

What's in it for Ankara?

"Turkey's alignment with the GNA is dictated by a mix of factors" both geopolitical and ideological, said Badi, an analyst with the Middle East Institute. Turkey is primarily interested in countering the influence of its regional rivals the UAE and Egypt, who support Haftar and oppose Islamist movements close to Ankara. But it also has economic and strategic interests in supporting the GNA.

Tripoli recently signed a maritime agreement with Ankara, expanding Turkey's claims over a large area of the Mediterranean. The discovery in recent years of vast gas reserves in the eastern Mediterranean has put Turkey at odds with littoral states Greece, Egypt, Israel and Cyprus. While the European Union has threatened Ankara with sanctions for illegally drilling off the coast of Cyprus, Turkey hopes its accord with Tripoli will help legitimate its exploration. Turkey, which has occupied the northern part of Cyprus since 1974, recently sent a military drone to the island, and has warned that it will block all gas exploration it does not approve of. — AFP

As US Congress delays on privacy, Calif law in focus

As US lawmakers head home without agreeing on consumer privacy legislation, a new California law is set to become the de facto national standard, potentially leaving consumers and businesses confused over rules for personal data collection and protection. The statute becomes effective Jan 1, covering most entities doing business in California, just months after enforcement began for Europe's General Data Protection Regulation, which affects many US online operations.

The new law stems from a widespread effort to rein in practices over handling on online consumer data after years of breaches and abuses that have made headlines. For much of the year, the US Congress debated efforts to draft a national privacy law that would avoid multiple standards but failed to come up with a bill before the clock ran out for 2019.

As a result, most companies with an online presence are rushing to comply with the California law even as other states consider their own protections and some in Congress pledge action when lawmakers return in 2020. "There's definitely going to be a lot of confusion in the short term with all the different laws," said Daniel Castro of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, a think tank in Washington often aligned with the tech sector. "What we're likely to see is a domino effect with other states copying California, and that's a big concern for

industry. You have firms that have already implemented GDPR and they have to do all these processes again."

'Do not sell' option

Still, some activists say the California law will lead to improvements on privacy, including giving consumers the right to access and delete data held by online services. The law known as the California Consumer Privacy Act "is the broadest, most impactful privacy law in recent memory," said John Verdi of the Future of Privacy Forum, a think tank focused on data protection. "The centerpiece of CCPA is a requirement that companies display a prominent link to say 'do not sell my data,'" he said. "It's always good to give people choices and this is a clear and prominent choice about data sale which is one of the practices that is most top of mind to consumers."

This "opt out" approach differs from GDPR which requires consent to collect and use data, according to Verdi. But many questions remain about how California authorities will handle enforcement, set to begin in mid-2020, notably which companies may face targeting and how officials define "selling". Verdi said a number of free services such as streaming music or online mapping might be based on data exchanges which could under some circumstances be interpreted as a "sale". The new law, he said "poses challenges to companies that offer data-driven services."

Cost of compliance, enforcement

Roslyn Layton, an American Enterprise Institute scholar who focuses on internet regulation, warned that the cost of CCPA compliance will be high, with estimates as high as \$55 billion, and that benefits may be elusive. She noted that a variety of US laws cover privacy for medical records, student data, banking and financial information and more, and that legislation should be based on the

degree of sensitivity of the data. "All data is not equal," she said. Layton said the large online platforms such as Facebook and Google will be ready to comply with CCPA but that the law could hurt small firms and organizations. "I wouldn't expect even 50 percent compliance," Layton said, adding that California authorities will face a complicated task trying to enforce its new law nationally on firms which may have customers in the western state.

Layton added that even though much of the ire around privacy has been directed at Facebook, the huge social network may not face penalties in California because it has already settled with federal authorities, paying a \$5 billion penalty. Pressure is mounting on Congress to step in with a national law that could "pre-empt" the various state laws with a single standard, according to Layton. "I think California wants to be saved from itself by Congress," she said. "If you look at their budget, it's not possible to enforce the law."

Looking ahead, California voters are to consider a ballot initiative in 2020 which would include even stronger privacy protections for "sensitive" categories of data such as geolocation and social security numbers. Michelle Richardson, director of privacy at the Center for Democracy and Technology said that despite the lack of action in Congress on legislation, lawmakers have been working behind the scenes to seek a consensus. "I think there will be significant work next year on a privacy bill," she said.

The House Energy and Commerce Committee said this month its staff has come up with a "bipartisan discussion draft" which could form the basis of a new law. "This draft seeks to protect consumers while also giving data collectors clear rules of the road," a committee spokesman said. "It reflects many months of hard work and close collaboration between Democratic and Republican Committee staff." — AFP

Business

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2019

12 Kuwait could attract passive inflows of around \$3.1bn after MSCI upgrade**13** KFH signs partnership with 'Entrepreneur Middle East'**14** Jazeera Airways takes delivery of fourth Airbus A320neo

ABIDJAN: French Economy and Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire (left) and the Minister of Economy of Benin Romuald Wadagni, sign the CFA currency reform agreement in presence of French President Emmanuel Macron and Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara at the Presidential Palace in Abidjan on Saturday as part of a three-day visit to West Africa. —AFP

W African nations rename their currency

Countries sever CFA franc's links to France, name common currency as Eco

ABIDJAN: Eight West African countries Saturday agreed to change the name of their common currency to Eco and severed the CFA franc's links to former colonial ruler France. The CFA franc was initially pegged to the French franc and has been linked to the euro for about two decades.

Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo currently use the currency. All the countries are former French colonies with the exception of Guinea-Bissau. The announcement was made Saturday during a visit by French President Emmanuel Macron to Ivory Coast, the world's top cocoa producer and France's former main colony in West Africa.

Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara, speaking in the country's economic capital Abidjan, announced "three major changes". These included "a change of name" of the currency, he said, adding that the others would be "stopping holding 50 percent of the

reserves in the French Treasury" and the "withdrawal of French governance" in any aspect related to the currency.

Macron hailed it as a "historic reform", adding: "The Eco will see the light of day in 2020."

The deal took six months in the making, a French source said. The CFA franc's value was moored to the euro after its introduction two decades ago, at a fixed rate of 655.96 CFA francs to one euro. The Bank of France holds half of the currency's total reserves, but France does not make money on its deposits stewardship, annually paying a ceiling interest rate of 0.75 percent to member states.

The arrangement guarantees unlimited convertibility of CFA francs into euros and facilitates inter-zone transfers. CFA notes and coins are printed and minted at a Bank of France facility in the southern town of Chamalières.

The CFA franc, created in 1945, was seen by many as a sign of French interference in its former African

colonies even after the countries became independent.

The Economic Community of West African States regional bloc, known as ECOWAS, earlier Saturday urged members to push on with efforts to establish a common currency, optimistically slated to launch next year. The bloc insists it is aiming to have the Eco in place in 2020, but almost none of the 15 countries in the group currently meet criteria to join.

Stumbling blocks

ECOWAS "urges member states to continue efforts to meet the convergence criteria", commission chief Jean-Claude Kassi Brou said after a summit of regional leaders in the Nigerian capital Abuja.

The key demands for entry are to have a deficit of less than 3 percent of gross domestic product, inflation of 10 percent or under and debts worth less than 70 percent of GDP. Economists say they understand the

thinking behind the currency plan but believe it is unrealistic and could even be dangerous for the region's economies which are dominated by one single country, Nigeria, which accounts for two-thirds of the region's economic output.

Nigeria's Finance Minister Zainab Ahmed told AFP "there's still more work that we need to do individually to meet the convergence criteria". ECOWAS was set up in 1975 and comprises Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo—representing a total population of around 385 million.

Eight of them currently use the CFA franc, moored to the single European currency and gathered in an organization called the West African Monetary Union, or WAMU. But the seven other ECOWAS countries have their own currencies, none of them freely convertible. —AFP

IBS joins hands with Harvard to present updated executive program

KUWAIT: Dr Mohammad Yusef Al-Hashel, Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS), announced that IBS will again work with Harvard Business School (HBS) to present a special and updated executive education program for banking and financial executives in the GCC region. Many aspects of the program have been restructured to reflect the latest trends in the evolving banking and financial services sector.

The program, which will be held during February 1 - 6, 2020, has been presented for the last consecutive ten years in different GCC countries and in 2020 it will be held in Sultanate of Oman.

Dr Al-Hashel pointed out that the program is a part of the Kafa'a initiative which was launched by the Central bank of Kuwait in September, 2019. The programs included in this initiative are sponsored by the local banks in Kuwait and organized and executed by the IBS.

The current Harvard program aims to develop executive leaders and staff in all sectors generally,

and in the banking and financial sectors specifically. He mentioned that the program was conducted for the first time in 2010 as an exclusive event for the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti banks. After the tremendous success of that first program and with the Harvard Business School showing interest in taking the program to the GCC level, the program continued to be run on an annual basis since then, alternately in one of the GCC states. In 2019, the program was conducted in Kuwait, which coincided with the tenth anniversary of the program.

The outstanding success of the program was an incentive to continue presenting and improving it to suit the rapid changes in the business field. The organizations that participated in the program included a number of banks and Gulf financial firms, in addition to the Central Bank of Kuwait and the local Kuwaiti banks.

Dr Al-Hashel explained that the title of the forthcoming 2020 program is "Leading Financial Services in a Rapidly Changing World", and it consists of two integrated themes: 'Financial Markets Strategy' and 'Leadership' and is aimed at upper middle executives levels, such as department heads.

Dr Al-Hashel affirmed that the program will adhere to Harvard Business School's high standards; thus ensuring that the participants and their banks and organizations will be provided with the same quality of learning experience for which the school is so well known. The Governor elaborated that new case studies have been selected by the school's faculty to be related to the banking and financial sectors in

addition to other sectors. In addition, participants carry out a number of interactive activities in groups throughout the duration of the program which will enhance their analytic skills. At the end of the program, participants will receive a Harvard Business School certificate, verifying that they have completed the program.

In conclusion, the Governor stressed that the development of the talented and qualified nationals in the Central Bank of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti banks will remain a top strategic priority considering the role of executives in developing their organizations. He elaborated that the Kafa'a Initiative was the platform for launching all the programs and projects intended at developing key-staff due to the importance of these in the continuous development of the financial and banking sectors in the GCC. He went on to explain that collaboration amongst the GCC countries in areas of common interest such as training and development has always been and will remain an item of top priority. He expressed his gratitude for members of the Kuwait and GCC Banking communities who have continued to support the Harvard Business School strategic programs over the years.



Dr Mohammad Yusef Al-Hashel

Fed-up French travellers face traffic chaos

PARIS: Travellers across France scrambled to begin their Christmas getaways with trains cancelled, roads jam-packed and nerves tested as a strike over a pension overhaul shows no signs of letting up. 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 the traffic would be "severely disrupted" over the festive period.

SNCF said its aim to allow 850,000 ticket holders to travel this weekend was being upheld—but only half of its usual services were running. "I'm upset, this strike is unbearable... The government must do something," said Jeffrey Nwutu Ebube, who was in the northern port town of Le Havre trying to find a way back home to the southern city of Toulouse, some 850 kilometers (530 miles) away.

Late Saturday, French President Emmanuel Macron, called on the strikers to embrace a "spirit of responsibility" and for "collective good sense to triumph". "I believe there are moments in the life of a nation when it is also good to call a truce to respect families and the lives of families," he said, speaking in Abidjan, the commercial capital of Ivory Coast, where he is on a visit.

'Everything is full'

Many stranded travellers have turned to car rental agencies or sharing platforms since the strike began on December 5, but the last-minute surge in demand meant vehicles were hard to come by. "We tried other ways, BlaBlaCar, etc. but everything is full, everything is taken," said Jerome Pelletier, a manager in the textile industry.

President Macron wants to forge the country's 42 separate pension regimes into a single points-based system which the government says will be fairer and more transparent. It would do away with schemes that offer early retirement and other advantages to mainly public-sector workers, not least train drivers who can retire as early as 52. While some unions support a single system, almost all reject a new "pivot age" of 64 — beyond the legal retirement age of 62 — which workers would have to reach to get a full pension. Macron will renounce the pension he will be entitled to as former president, the Elysee palace said Saturday. He will also not take his seat on the Constitutional Court, of which former presidents are members for life and receive an allowance of 13,500 euros (\$14,950) the Elysee added.

The unions are hoping for a repeat of 1995 when the government backed down on pension reform after three weeks of metro and rail stoppages just before Christmas. Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said on Thursday that talks had 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 headline CGT and Force Ouvrier unions said they would not let up. —AFP

Business

KFH signs partnership with 'Entrepreneur Middle East' to support youth's initiatives

Partnership is first of its kind in Kuwaiti banking sector

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has signed a strategic partnership agreement to sponsor the Entrepreneur platform for Kuwait with "Entrepreneur Middle East" published by Entrepreneur Magazine which specializes in business entrepreneurship and young people's initiatives.

The platform aims to publish new local youth initiatives and to highlight the successes of the Kuwait youths in enhancing the idea of entrepreneurship and initiatives. It also offers the "Innovators in Focus" program which includes interviews and articles targeting Kuwaiti initiators and introducing their ideas, projects and future aspirations.

Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media at KFH, Yusef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh said: "This partnership is the first of its kind in the Kuwaiti banking sector and it comes in the context of KFH's social responsibility and its keenness to support Kuwaiti youths, their creative ideas, initiatives and projects." He added that KFH's support of initiators and entrepreneurs reflects the private sector role in encouraging Kuwait youths and employing their talents as part of the state's economic diversification drive. He called for the youth initiatives to be highly recognized

by all relevant parties in Kuwait. Al-Ruwaieh pointed out that the platform publishes weekly interviews and articles on Kuwaiti youth's initiatives. He added that it is an important opportunity to broaden the role of the youths and their innovative projects, as part of the empowerment plan of Kuwaiti youths, by encouraging, supporting and embracing their projects and increasing their contributions in line with the strengthening of Kuwait economy and transforming the country into a local and international financial and commercial hub.

Al-Ruwaieh revealed that, in cooperation with Entrepreneur Magazine, an award will be instated to encourage initiators to develop their projects and ideas and in accordance with professional and methodical standards which would be used as criteria to determine their eligibility to the award. He pointed out that KFH is a leading institution with a rich tradition of embracing creative ideas and initiatives which would contribute to the empowerment of Kuwait youths and boost the private sector role in developing the national economy. He emphasized KFH's role as a leader in supporting and nurturing Kuwaiti youths to achieve these initiatives.

A pioneering partnership

Wissam Younane, CEO of BNC, publisher of Entrepreneur Middle East Magazine said: "This is a pioneering partnership in the region that brings together one of the outstanding banking institutions in the Middle East and our unique e-publishing platform as a specialized entrepreneur magazine in the region."

He noted the significance of the partnership with KFH and expressed the hope of providing vital service to the Kuwaiti youths through this outstanding partnership linking funding and consultation as major factors in the success of business entrepreneurship.

He added: "As a platform specialized in entrepreneurship and in possession of experience and reach, we will highlight the pioneering experiences of the Kuwait youths and endeavor to provide them with the widest reach. We will also publicize Kuwaiti youth's entrepreneurial experiences on our social media which enjoy vast following. Being a magazine that represents the most important mother brand in entrepreneurship, we will also launch in cooperation with KFH world class awards for startup ideas and businesses in Kuwait, support them with special forums and conferences to bring together



Yusef Abdullah Al-Ruwaieh (right) and Wissam Younane and Fahad Al-Saad

leading companies and experienced businessmen on the one hand, and the youth generation who aspire to realize pioneering ideas and seek to achieve wide reach and take their ideas and businesses to the world, on the other."

Mock skyscrapers, simulated rain at Singapore self-driving center

SINGAPORE: The road sweeper and a golf buggy move around the track with ease, jamming their brakes on when a pedestrian steps out and negotiating sharp turns.

Welcome to Singapore's self-drive test center, complete with traffic lights and mock skyscrapers, which is at the heart of the city's push to become a hub for autonomous technology. However, while authorities are keen to tap a global drive by auto giants and startups to develop vehicles, the industry must still prove it is safe

and persuade people to use the technology. The two-hectare (4.9-acre) site has a track with sharp turns, traffic lights, a slope, and a bus stop to simulate real driving conditions. Shipping containers are also stacked up to emulate how high rises could potentially block satellite signals to self-driving machines. The CETRAN center run by Nanyang Technological University (NTU), even has a rain-making machine that can simulate the frequent tropical downpours in the Southeast Asian city-state of 5.7 million people. "Before you are ready to go to the public roads, we test them here to see if they are actually ready," said Niels De Boer, program director at the center.

Negotiating turns, dodging pedestrians

All companies must put their autos through the center's testing and certification programs before they are allowed to hit public roads. The sweeper is being trialed as part of a government plan that could eventually see them deployed in the city, according to local media, while cars and buses are also being tested, and trials of delivery robots will soon take place. Orderly Singapore is seeking

to lure autonomous tech companies looking to trial their vehicles in Asia, where many other major cities are chaotic and traffic-clogged. The government has led the drive, as it seeks to attract more foreign firms and because it sees the technology as useful for public transport and delivery services. The first trials of an autonomous car on public roads took place in 2015.

In 2016, US software firm nuTonomy launched driverless taxi trials in public in Singapore, becoming the first company in the world to do so. Authorities aim to deploy autonomous public transport in three areas by 2022, and in October announced it was expanding the area where self-driving vehicles can be tested to 1,000 km (620 miles) of public roads.

Self-driving vehicles will mainly be used in the public transport network for tasks such as shuttling people to stations and stops from their homes or workplaces, said Subodh Mhaisalkar, an NTU professor involved in the autonomous vehicle program. De Boer from the CETRAN centre said authorities were working on ensuring the correct regulations, such as traffic laws, are in

place for self-driving vehicles.

Countries where private companies are taking the lead risk having "wonderful technology" but not being able to launch it in the market because of the absence of rules, he added. There are still many roadblocks ahead, however. Safety remains a major concern for the industry worldwide-in 2018, a self-driving Uber car was involved in a crash that killed a woman in Arizona.

All trials in Singapore still require a safety driver and most vehicles are not yet ready to cope with the regular tropical downpours. And the tiny country remains behind other markets, such as the US, where self-driving ride services are in various stages of deployment.

"It would be very difficult to lead in the whole industry simply because the nation is small," said Guoli Chen, associate professor of strategy at French business school INSEAD. The key challenge may be persuading members of the public to hop aboard self-driving vehicles, and experts say the technology will have to be introduced in stages. "It's a journey that may take 10 to 20 years, but I think it's inevitable," NTU's Mhaisalkar said. — AFP

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Business

Lexus sponsors Baytak building and construction exhibition 2019

Exhibition held at Hall #6 of Kuwait International Fair Mishref from Dec 18 to 23



KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons and Lexus have sponsored "Baytak" building and construction exhibition organized at Hall #6 of Kuwait International Fair Mishref from 18th till 23rd December. Baytak is one of the most important exhibitions in Kuwait attracting customers, owners of commercial blocks as well as elite construction related companies to showcase advanced construction equipment and materials within the context of a modern design world.

Baytak is being organized under the patronage of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with the

presence of Tariq Badr Salem Al-Mutawa, Member of the Chamber's Board of Directors and Eng Saqr Issa Al-Mannai, Assistant General Manager of the Chamber's Support Services. Over 60 exhibitors from top local and international companies specialized in construction supplies & designs were part of the event. Lexus participation in the event featured display of 2020 all-new RX cross-over and GX SUV.

Lexus experience amazing

A global luxury automotive brand with an unwavering commitment to bold, uncompromising design,



exceptional craftsmanship, and exhilarating performance, Lexus has developed its lineup to meet the needs of the next generation of global luxury guests.

RX - A reflection of passionate luxury

First launched in 1999, the Lexus RX has created the blueprint for luxury crossover utility vehicles and set the tone in the segment ever since. The 1999 Lexus RX 300 was the world's first luxury crossover, while the 2006 Lexus RX 400h was the world's first hybrid electric luxury crossover. The 2020 model's sleek new exterior retains a sporty and powerful feel,

while the character line that runs from the front to the rear has been improved, adding an exceptional flow and consistency to the overall appearance that emphasizes Lexus' new design language.

GX - Unrivaled

Versatility best describes the Lexus 2019 GX 460. This luxury SUV is engineered for all kinds of terrain including extreme off-road conditions. Along with the capability of handling rocky trails and city streets, the GX also displays exceptional craftsmanship.

Turkish Airlines' load factor was 82.3% in November 2019

KUWAIT: Turkish Airlines, which has recently announced the passenger and cargo traffic results for November 2019, recorded 82.3 percent load factor in that month.

According to the November 2019 Traffic Results;

- Total number of passengers carried increased by 3.7 percent to 5.7 million.
- Domestic load factor increased from 84 percent to over 85 percent and international load factor increased from 81 percent to around 82 percent, compared to the same month of the last year.
- International-to-international transfer passengers (transit passengers) increased by 6.3 percent and international passengers excluding international to international transit passengers increased by 11.5 percent compared to the same period of last year. The total number of international passengers increased by 8.5 percent in November compared to same month of last year.
- In November we realized increases in the number of passengers in Far East, Europe, Africa and North America by 11.5 percent, 8.9 percent, 8.2 percent and 6.8 percent, respectively.
- In November, cargo/mail volume increased by 9.5 percent compared to the same period of 2018. Main contributors to this growth in Cargo / mail volume are Far East with 14.8 percent, Europe with 10.1 percent and North America with 4.7 percent increase.

According to the January-November 2019 Traffic Results;

- During January-November 2019 the total number of passengers carried was around 68.8 million.
- During January-November 2019, total load factor reached 81.7 percent. International load factor reached 81.0 percent, domestic load factor reached 86.3 percent.
- International-to-international transfer passengers carried increased by 4.6 percent and International passengers excluding international to international transit passengers increased by 2.2 percent reaching 18 million passengers.
- Cargo/mail carried during this period increased by 9.5 percent and reach to 1.4 million tons.

Expressing his satisfaction of these successful traffic results of the flag carrier airline, Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee, M. Ilker Ayçi stated: "We emphasized several times that we had the capacity and capability of managing the inevitable adaptation process after our transfer to our new home with the understanding of our passengers. The sizeable increase on November along with our continuously increasing numbers during the past six months are the testament to that claim. We will continue this trend of increasing numbers in the following months as we will experience the joy of hosting our passengers with Turkish Airlines privilege."

Jazeera Airways takes delivery of 4th Airbus A320neo

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, took delivery of a new Airbus A320neo aircraft which landed at Kuwait International Airport on the evening of Friday, December 20.

This is the fourth A320neo to join the airline's fleet and the third to be delivered in 2019. With it, Jazeera Airways operates today a fleet of 13 Airbus aircraft, nine of the A320 model and four of the A320neo model. As its predecessors, the latest A320neo incorporates the CFM LEAP-1A engines, fuel-saving wingtip devices known as Sharklets, and significant reduction in engine noise and CO2 emissions below the current industry standard.

Jazeera Airways flies to 35 popular destinations across the Middle East, India and Europe comprising high-demand business, leisure, family and weekend destinations including London, Dubai, Bahrain, Doha, Beirut, Amman, Alexandria, Cairo, Sharm El Sheikh, Assiut, Luxor, Sohag, Jeddah, Riyadh, Taif, Najaf, Mashhad, Kochi, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, New Delhi, Lahore, Istanbul, Bodrum, Baku, Tbilisi, Osh, Kathmandu, Karachi and Al-Ain.

The Jazeera Terminal T5 provides passengers with the ease and comfort of traveling with 12 check-in counters, eight self-check-in kiosks, dedicated passport and security control procedures, duty free shops and restaurants, as well as free WiFi internet service available for passengers when boarding at the T5 gates. T5 also has a dedicated number at 176 and Help Team on-ground to respond to passengers' queries and guide them through the Terminal.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma draws

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly draws on Al-Najma Account and the draw on the "Salary and Cash on Top" campaign. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Saleh Al-Ruwaiei.

The results of the draw were as follows:

- 1- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 and was for the share of Abali Meelad Ragheb Ghabrial.
- 2- The "Salary & Cash on Top" prize of KD 1,000 and was for the share of Mneefah Motlaq Al-Mutairi.



account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Hussain Adel Abdulhameid Al-Saleh
2. Aikee Joseph Villanueva Maravilla
3. Nabeel Yousef Asaad Alabdullah
4. Hasan Aman Abbas Ali
5. Syed Jafar Kattinda Vide

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

As regarding "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees as well as the retirees and which is valid until 31 December 2019 and the mechanism of joining this campaign for

Yawmi Account offers Daily and quarterly draws, wherein the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

availing its benefits, the Bank explained that Kuwaiti employees with a salary of KD 500 & above whether newly recruited or in service can transfer their salary to the Bank and avail the benefits of this campaign by getting instant cash gift of KD 250 or an interest free loan 5 times the salary up to KD 10,000, add to this they will automatically enter the weekly draw on KD 1,000. As for the expatriate customers categorized under Premier Banking Account with a salary KD of 1,700 and above, they will get instant cash gift. The retirees with pension KD 1,000 & above will also get an instant cash gift of KD 150 when transferring their pension to the Bank and automatically enter the weekly draw on a prize of KD 1,000 and avail the benefits of this campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees working in private and public sector as well as the retirees. Further, the campaign provides customers with the opportunity to get additional benefits and take advantage of the advanced & unrivaled services and products the Bank provides to its customers to meet their needs and expectations.

What's On



Gulf Bank celebrates employees at annual HR gala

Gulf Bank hosted its annual HR Gala in celebration of the various efforts and accomplishments of its employees this year. During the course of the event, the Bank recognized several employees in the presence of the Bank's executive leadership, and celebrated graduates from the fifth cohort of Gulf Bank's AJYAL program.

Attendees of the 2019 HR Gala proudly celebrated Gulf Bank's close-knit culture and the spirit of connectedness that the Bank's senior leadership strives to create for their employees across all departments. Throughout the course of the event, the Bank recognized various team accomplishments in the fields of job performance, outstanding customer service, distinct commitment to high standards, and job integrity.

Gulf Bank's 2019 HR Gala also witnessed the graduation of the fifth cohort of AJYAL, Gulf Bank's flagship development program that targets Kuwaiti professionals. Senior leadership also presented a highly coveted award to various leaders across the Bank for nurturing Kuwaiti talent with the utmost care and attention. An award was also presented to a long-standing member



Salma Al-Hajjaj

of the executive leadership for inspiring a generation of upcoming leaders.

Commenting on the announcement, Ms Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, said: "We are committed to helping each other nurture and develop our talent in order to realize our full potential not only as individual leaders, but as a group. Tonight, we celebrate our results and recognize magnificent achievements across the Bank. In celebrating the accomplishments of our institution, it is more than vital ever to recognize the employees who embody the values of Gulf Bank. We would also like to recognize our staff who have volunteered as part of our community outreach program partnership with INJAZ, and thank them for the lasting difference they have made in the lives of our Kuwaiti youth."

cent achievements across the Bank. In celebrating the accomplishments of our institution, it is more than vital ever to recognize the employees who embody the values of Gulf Bank. We would also like to recognize our staff who have volunteered as part of our community outreach program partnership with INJAZ, and thank them for the lasting difference they have made in the lives of our Kuwaiti youth."



Ahmadi governorate organizes 'Greening and Environmental Awareness Day'



Under the auspices of Ahmadi Governor, Sheikh Fawwaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and in collaboration with Ahmadi educational governorate, EPA, PAAFRA and Burgan bank, Ahmadi governorate recently organized an awareness event titled "Greening & Environmental Awareness Day" at Noufal Ibn Al-Hareth Intermediate School in Reqqa.

The event included a specialized seminar to boost students' awareness concerning the environment protection law, how to prevent desertification and pollution. Participants then headed to the school yard where students planted some saplings provided by EPA.

In this regard, Ahmadi governorate's technical office manager, Ibrahim Al-Foudey said that the event was part of the governorate's

long term development project; "My Governorate is More Beautiful" that was launched by governor Al-Khaled in 2015.

On her part, EPA's inspection manager, Dalal Al-Najjar said that EPA implements the environment protection law number 4/2014 and its amendments to detect all environmental violations and hold those responsible for them legally accountable.



Safir Fintas Hotel celebrates the Holiday season with DJs & BBQ

Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel welcomes the holiday season with New Years Eve celebration planned in a special way. Completing its preparation of its Holiday Season celebration, Safir has designed promotions and packages to suite this festive season for all family and friends to enjoy.

Flavors Restaurant sets out a sumptuous international Dinner and Lunch Buffets on the 24th and 25th December. Consistent of Traditional Holiday dishes prepared by our Chefs to be admired by all tastes. Inspired by many cutlers around the world, from Turkey dishes to the finest desserts made for only for the holiday season.

For the dearest to ones heart, the kids who enjoy celebrating with their family and friends have there areas which have been sketched out at Safir Kids Club in addition to the Beach Garden to enjoy sand exercise their favorite hobbies in the beautiful and refreshing ambience.

In celebration of the up coming year, the Royal



Tent and the Beach Garden welcomes all with its Arabian Gulf view. Filled with surprises amongst a DJ, BBQ with a lavish international Buffet to farewell this year and salute the new one with a memorable night with friends and family.

For our Romantics and privacy lovers, you're in for an exclusive date in the individual tents overlooking the beach with set menus and special ornamentations suitable for such occasion.

Al Roshinah Kuwaiti Resultant keeps on offering



its deliciously distinctive dishes with its Kuwaiti ambience during this festive season from 12 pm.

Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel also sets special stay packages for families in the Rooms, Suites and apartments designed to for all family members consisting of activities for this festive season.

Celebrate this Festive Seasons with its holidays and New Year at Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel. To enjoy "a world of Arabian Hospitality".

TIES Centre

The TIES Center cordially invites you to our Tafseer class (Divine Wisdom from the Last Testament) tomorrow (Monday, December 23rd) at 7pm. In that class, we will focus on verses 11 and 12 of Surat Al-Mujadilah (She who Argued).

We will discuss the importance of religions gatherings in Islam, the etiquette for sitting in a gathering or assembly - among others - and learn why Allah (SWT) legislated charity before holding a private counsel with Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and its outcome.

We will also compare between an ignorant worshipper and an educated one, discuss the categories of knowledge, then shed some light on the significance of knowledge. Finally, we will learn how Umar bin Al-Khattab responded to his fellow Companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) when - during his tenure - they blamed him for inviting Abdullah bin Abbas (RA) - a young man - to the council of elders, and what their reaction was. Come and learn more about the Book of Allah (SWT) in a serene, friendly and encouraging environment.

Health & Science

Europe marks 40th anniversary of first Ariane rocket launch

PARIS: The first Ariane space rocket lifted off over the forests of French Guiana 40 years ago, enabling Europe to at last take its place as an independent player in the international race for space. Following a number of delays and technical setbacks, Ariane 1 finally left the launch pad in Kourou at 2:13 pm local time on December 24, 1979.

Its maiden flight was a so-called qualification flight, meaning it was not carrying any satellite to put into orbit. But at the launch, and "during the successive ignitions and separations of different parts of the rocket, there were cries of joy from spectators as the Ariane rose in the clear sky above Guiana," AFP's special correspondent wrote at the time.

The control room erupted with applause when the then head of France's CNES National Centre for Space Studies, Yves Sillard, declared the mission a success, "without even waiting for the orbiting diagnosis," the AFP article stated.

"It was a complete success. It triggered inexpressible joy," Sillard said in an interview with AFP four decades after. "There was laughter and tears," recalled the launch center's former head of operations, Guy Dubau, visibly moved even 40 years on.

The teams involved in the project had come a long way: just a few days earlier, on December 15, to everyone's dismay, the rocket failed to take off after ignition due to an unanticipated problem with setting parameters. "We had absolute confidence in these engines," says Dubau. The failure "dealt a body blow to the 150 people working in the launch center".

Europa fiasco

There were only nine days left to fix the problem. "We had to work around the clock. We even set up a small dormitory in the center," Dubau says. Then, in a final attempt on Christmas Eve, Ariane lifted off. "It was a miracle. Two hours more and we would have had to bin the rocket launcher," Dubau said.

Sillard said that if it had failed, "it could have dramatic consequences, and might have even led to the project being abandoned altogether." That was because Europe was still smarting from the fiasco of an earlier project. The Europa satellite launcher, developed in the 1960s, failed because of a lack of coordination between the participating countries and the absence of a single overall project manager.

The Europa program was abandoned in 1973, the same year that the European Space Agency (ESA) was set up. From then on, the management was entrusted to CNES, which contributed more than 60 percent to the new project.

The stakes were high: the United States had just launched its space shuttle program, claiming launch costs would be "five times cheaper than conventional launchers and that these would disappear," Sillard said. Ariane would prove the contrary. But the project was still plagued by an overall climate of skepticism.

Ariadne's thread

Under French stewardship, more than 50 companies from 10 different countries worked on developing a new launcher called Ariane, or Ariadne in

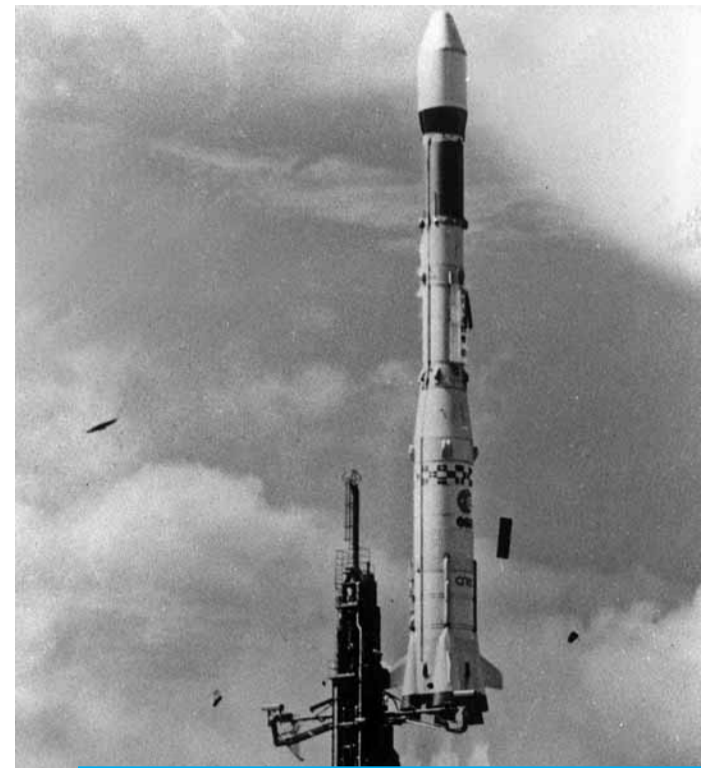
English, the name of a Greek mythological princess who left a thread to guide Theseus out of the minotaur's labyrinth.

In the same way, the new launcher project would "lead us out of the maze of European talks," said Gerard Brachet, a former CNES engineer who went on to head the organization. For the first time, Ariane 1 would break the US hold on satellite launches and Europe officially entered the space race. "This first successful launch lent us commercial credibility," Brachet said.

For the current president of CNES, Jean-Yves Le Gall, "if this launch hadn't taken place 40 years ago, we wouldn't have the European space industry that we have today." Overall, the Ariane project has been a success and there have been five generations of rockets to date, despite some setbacks, such as the explosion of the first Ariane 5 rocket in flight.

Between then and now, the load transported by the rockets has increased tenfold, says Stephane Israel, the president of Arianespace, the company responsible for marketing the launcher. But in recent years, Ariane has come to face much fiercer competition, particularly from American firm Space X with its reusable launcher.

Europe is fighting back with its Ariane 6, due to take off in 2020. With much more competitive manufacturing costs, the new generation launcher will have a re-ignitable engine enabling several charges to be placed in different orbits during the same mission. And a potentially reusable motor, Prometheus, is also in the pipeline. — AFP



KOUROU: In this file photograph taken on December 24, 1979, Europe's Ariane 1 rocket takes off on its first launch at Kourou Base in French Guiana. — AFP

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248 33 199

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Tel: 1886677

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- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
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- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
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- ◆ (IFSO) member .
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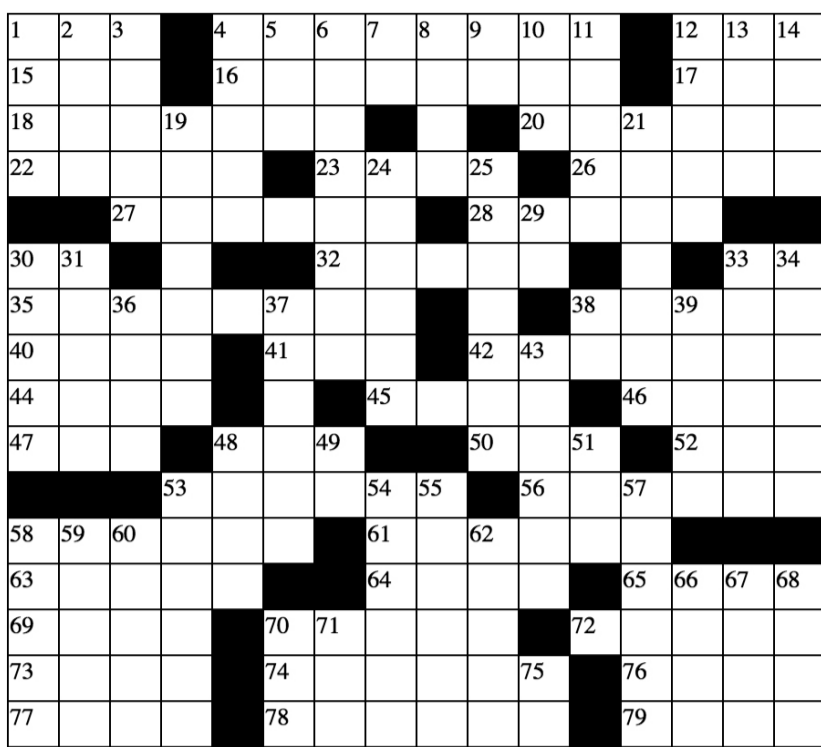
Scope of clinical Practice.

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- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

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Stars

CROSSWORD 2392



ACROSS

1. Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
4. A form of solitaire that involves gambling.
12. Goddess of fate.
15. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
16. Draw more money from than is available.
17. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
18. A male character in French pantomime.
20. A river in Germany.
22. The audible part of a transmitted signal.
23. A branch of the Tai languages.
26. Escape, either physically or mentally.
27. The branch of physics that studies the physical properties of light.
28. A wealthy man (who made his fortune in the Orient).
30. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
32. Wood of any of various alder trees.
35. A South African movie theater.
40. A nearly horizontal passage from the surface into a mine.
41. Liquid excretory product.
42. Language of the people of Cebu in the Philippines.
44. Mentally healthy.
45. The fleshy part of the human body that you sit on.
46. English illustrator of several of Dickens' novels (1815-1882).
47. Large northern deer with enormous flattened antlers in the male.
50. An American doctorate usually based on at least 3 years graduate study and a dissertation.
52. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
56. (prosody) Of or consisting of iambs.
58. An ancient country is southwestern Asia on the east coast of the Mediterranean.
61. Any of various herbaceous plants of the genus *Atriplex* that thrive in deserts and salt marshes.
63. Either of two large African antelopes of the genus *Taurotragus* having short spirally twisted horns in both sexes.
64. (comparative of 'little' usually used with mass nouns) Quantifier meaning not as great in amount or degree.
65. The sixth month of the civil year.
69. A branch of the Tai languages.
72. Especially a leaf of grass or the broad portion of a leaf as distinct from the petiole.
73. Turn sharply.
74. Edible viscera of a butchered animal.
76. A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
77. Posing no difficulty.
78. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
79. Edible starchy tuberous root of taro plants.

DOWN

1. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
2. Radioactive iodine test that measures the amount of radioactive iodine taken up by the thyroid gland.
3. Any system of principles or beliefs.
4. French painter of Italian landscapes (1796-1875).
5. 100 avos equal 1 pataca.
6. A commercial browser.
7. A radioactive element of the alkali-metal group discovered as a disintegration product of actinium.
8. Not in action or at work.
9. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
10. A local computer network for communication between computers.
11. A person of unquestioning obedience.
12. Capital of modern Macedonia.
13. Having been read.
14. A challenge to do something dangerous or foolhardy.
19. A quick reply to a question or remark (especially a witty or critical one).
21. A photograph taken at close range.
24. In a state of sleep.
25. A small flat triangular bone in front of the knee that protects the knee joint.
29. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
31. Or or relating to or caused by tides.
33. Grandson of Amaterasu and first ruler of Japan.
34. A selective-serotonin reuptake inhibitor commonly prescribed as an antidepressant (trade name Prozac).
36. Utter a high-pitched cry, characteristic of pigs.
37. Challenge the accuracy, probity, or propriety of.
38. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
39. Formerly a term of respect for important white Europeans in colonial India.
43. Motivation based on ideas of right and wrong.
48. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
49. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
51. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
53. Having many worn or threadbare spots in the nap.
54. Somewhat flattened cylindrical squid.
55. Manufactured in standard sizes to be shipped and assembled elsewhere.
57. (South African) An ear of corn.
59. Scale-like structure between the base of the wing and the halter of a two-winged fly.
60. A person who is abnormally small.
62. (Hindu) A manner of sitting (as in the practice of Yoga).
66. Any of a group of Indic languages spoken in Kashmir and eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan.
67. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
68. A city in western Nevada at the foot of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.
70. (folklore) A small grotesque supernatural creature that makes trouble for human beings.
71. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
75. A metallic element having four allotropes forms.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Sudden financial success could produce upheaval in your lifestyle. Therefore, rethink your current situation and consider the pursuit of cherished old dreams that you may have abandoned. Spiritual goals and interests may change. Old friends could be left behind and new friendships begun. It's important to remember that once you embark on this new path, there'll be no turning back.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You spend much of your life serving others. Now you may reevaluate your "duty" toward them. Perhaps someone is taking unfair advantage of your good nature. Perhaps you're finally experiencing desires that you feel you have to fulfill. Look objectively at your situation without feeling guilt, sorrow, or the fear of losing a friend. Your happiness matters, too!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You always see both sides of a situation clearly. Today you might judge possible future courses of action in view of the past. Prior values may be put to the test and former opinions revised. You could consider ending a relationship or entering a new one. This may take effort, but it will set the stage for future success.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Someone you've known for a long time may disappear from your life. This could leave you feeling disoriented and unfocused. Your ideas of truth, honor, ethics, and morality might require some revision in light of recent events. A change of profession might be looming on the horizon. On the positive side, you're in the process of transcending your limitations. Follow your heart.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Though communication is one of your strong points, today you might find it hard. You may feel introspective, but open, honest discussion could be what you need now. Your long-held ideas and values are changing, and you might require guidance to put your new beliefs to work. A search for truth is in your future, and you'll want some companions along the way.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Stress-related health complaints could force reevaluation of your current situation, particularly your job. You may take a good look at your skills and consider how they can be put to use in other fields. Communication from distant places may bring new opportunities to pursue old ambitions. Don't write them off right away. Change is in the wind. It isn't wise to try to stop it.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your inner child surfaces today. Memories of past good times bring out your playful side. You might want to try forms of amusement that you once enjoyed but have long since abandoned. Children provide inspiration and outlet for this energy. Tell them stories about your own childhood or read to them. Indulge your flights of fancy. You can always face reality tomorrow.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Renegotiating relationships may cause sorrow today. You may find that trying to fix one won't work. Past emotions that have created difficulties may resurface. Releasing them could bring the courage to move on. Bonds with others are like matter and energy. They can be changed, but they can't be created or destroyed. Whatever form it takes, a true bond will always be there.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today you might put aside your usual tendency to push ahead without a backward glance. You could reconsider past ideas and see them in an entirely new light. Circumstances may force reevaluation of your current job or lifestyle. Or you could contemplate a move. Contact with a sibling or neighbor may be restored. Today is all about adjustment.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today is about reevaluation. Dreams or ambitions that you may have abandoned could resurface. You could be forced to confront difficulties in your current situation. You might decide to call in a few favors from people you haven't heard from in ages. Old debts may need repaying. This is a great time to tie up loose ends, attain closure, and move on.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Happy and painful memories of childhood could come to mind today, bringing new understanding of how your early experiences affect your present situation. Unexpected insights could bring a new perspective on the present and future. You could realize that a personal or professional course isn't right for you. Don't let fear overwhelm your need for transition.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

While you may be comfortable with your environment, you could receive an unmistakable signal that it's time for change. This could involve a different job, allowing you to make use of skills and talents that have been lying fallow. Don't let small but necessary tasks make you abandon a new course of action. It represents a vital stage in your personal growth.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Songs From the Year 2002

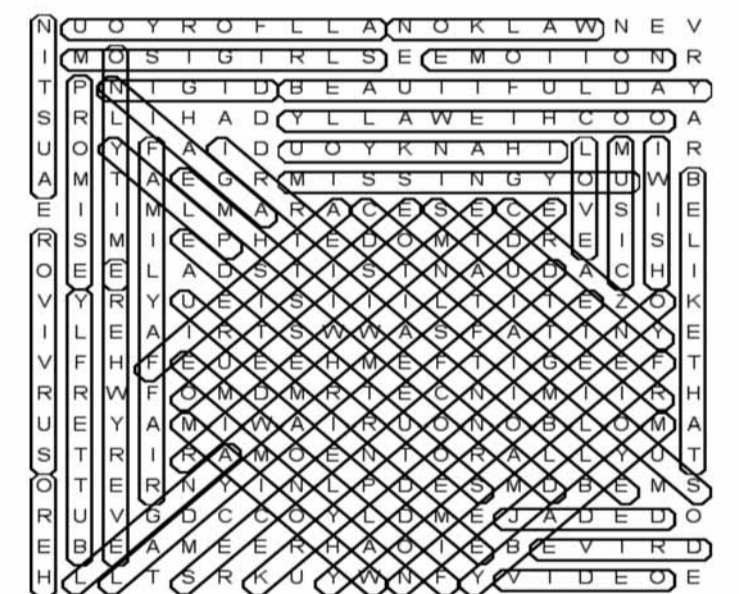
Find and circle all of the songs from 2002 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 21 letters spell an additional song title from 2002.



- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|------------|
| ADDICTIVE | ESCAPE | HEAVEN | NOTHIN' |
| AERIALS | EVERYDAY | HELLA GOOD | OH BOY |
| ALL MY LIFE | FOOLISH | HERE I AM | RAINY DAYZ |
| BABY | FOR YOU | HERO | SPIN |
| BLURRY | FULL MOON | HEY MA | STILL FLY |
| BY THE WAY | GIRL TALK | IN MY PLACE | THE MIDDLE |
| COMPLICATED | GIRLFRIEND | LOSE YOURSELF | TOXICITY |
| DAYS GO BY | HALFCRAZY | MOTIVATION | UH HUH |
| DILEMMA | HANDS CLEAN | MY LIST | WITHOUT ME |
| DISEASE | HAPPY | MY SACRIFICE | WORK IT |

Yesterday's Solution

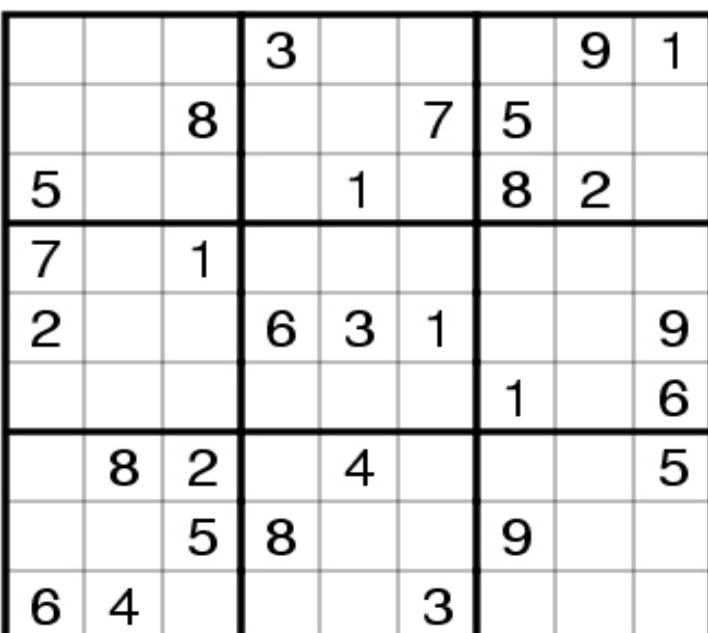
Songs From the Year 2001



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

The hidden song title is: NEVER HAD A DREAM COME TRUE

Daily SuDoku



medium

Yesterday's Solution



easy

Lifestyle

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2019



This photo shows a general view of an area where horse carriages are parked and wait for their passengers on the island of Buyukada off Istanbul on Nov 18, 2019. — AFP photos

Istanbul reins in carriage rides over 'dying horses'

It has been one of the classic excursions for tourists and locals in Istanbul: A boat trip to one of the car-free Princes' Islands followed by a ride in a horse-drawn carriage through pine forests and past elegant mansions and houses where Turkish writers lived. But its days may be numbered after the Istanbul authorities on Friday announced a three-month ban on the carriage rides following mounting alarm over the welfare of the horses.

Up to 400 are dying on the islands a year from overwork and lack of care, a parliament committee reported in October, and activists say the real number is twice as high. Citing disease, malnutrition and neglect, activists have called for the industry to be replaced with more humane - if less romantic - electric vehicles.

The horses are "merely seen as lifeless objects" and "no different from transport vehicles like buses", said Elif Erturk, of the "Don't Take Carriages, Horses Are Dying" initiative, which has organized protests and petitions. "There are horses injured because of overworking and maltreatment. They are not being treated and therefore they die," she said.

AFP journalists were given access last month to the newest stables built in 2006 on the largest of the islands, Buyukada, where horses were standing in their own manure and only makeshift panels separated their stalls. Near the stables, horse bones could be seen scattered on the ground. "The stables are disastrous, full of dirt and trash," Erturk said. "It is not possible for any living thing to survive there." There are no vets or animal hospitals on the islands, and AFP also saw horses with open wounds pulling carriages.

'Disastrous' conditions

The Istanbul governor's office has now taken notice, not only announcing the three-month ban but also saying that "illegal" stables would be demolished and new quarantine areas built to contain diseases. The authorities were rushing to respond after news that 81 horses were buried in pits this week on the biggest island. They died from glanders - a fatal respiratory disease - which has killed hundreds of horses since an outbreak began in 2017.

Despite the islands being under quarantine, activists say horses were still being brought by boat. "We have documented it with pictures," said Erturk. "Last year, 200 horses were brought to the island. Nobody heeds the ban." Around 1,000 horses are officially registered on the four main islands but the activists say another 1,000 have been kept illegally.

Sultan Guliyar, of the Turkish Society for the Protection of Animals, said horses were mostly smuggled in during the busy summer season. "In the winter, they are abandoned in the forests and most of them die," she said. Some were given basic shelters, she added, but often fell prey to wild dogs and electricity cables.



Newly elected mayor of Buyukada, Erdem Gul of the opposition CHP party, poses in his office.



Hidir Unal chairs a group representing the island's horse drivers.



Animals rights activist Elif Erturk runs a campaign called 'Don't Take Carriages, Horses Are Dying' in Istanbul.



A couple of carriages are parked on Buyukada.



Abandoned horses stand along a road on Buyukada.

'Going extinct'

Horse drivers refute that animals are kept in squalid conditions. "We have stable hands and we take good care of our horses," Osman Fidan, a carriage driver for 35 years, said. But newly elected mayor of the islands, Erdem Gul, whose opposition CHP party has long governed there, has acknowledged that the current system needed to change. "We cannot meet the animal lovers' demands, we cannot protect horses' rights, we cannot provide adequate veterinary services, our horse drivers are not compatible with the modern world," he told AFP last month. "If we cannot take good care of animals, this is cruelty."

Gul said he was working on a plan to sharply reduce the number of horses to just a few for nostalgic purposes but with improved living standards, and introduce instead electric vehicles. "The current system is not working, it is heading for extinction," he said.

'Sausages'

Carriage drivers are angry and worried about their future. "It is easy to say 'Let's remove the system', but what will happen to the 1,500 people who earn their living from this?" said Hidir Unal, who chairs a group representing the island horse drivers. Hasan Cetek, 59, who has been

doing the job since he was a teenager, defended his trade: "Who will look after those horses? If this is gone, they will all be sausages."

Gul said before the ban was announced that the municipality would ensure a formula was found to compensate them. A 90-minute boat trip from central Istanbul, the islands - nine in total but only four served by ferry - offer a scenic escape from the hectic city and its traffic. A carriage ride for up to four people - taking in 12 km of Buyukada - cost 180 lira (\$31) and was popular with tourists. Fidan, the carriage driver, said it was vital to life on the petrol-free islands. "Many are coming to ride the carriages," he said. "If horse-pulled carriages are removed, this island will be dead." — AFP



A horse carriage passes by a historic mansion in a street on Buyukada.



This photograph taken on Nov 18, 2019, shows horses in the newest stables, built in 2006, on the island of Buyukada.



A stablehand leads a horse on the island.

Museum explains the emojis of ancient Egypt



Curator Shirly Ben-Dor Evian presents the exhibition "Emoglyphs: Picture-Writing from Hieroglyphs to the Emoji" at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem on Dec 19, 2019. — AFP photos



A visitor looks at ancient Egyptian statues bearing hieroglyphs.

How does an academic explain the importance of ancient hieroglyphics to modern audiences glued to their phones? Through the cunning use of emojis. The Israel Museum in Jerusalem this week opened the "Emoglyphs" exhibition, comparing the pictograms of antiquity to those of today. "I usually find it very hard to explain how hieroglyphs are used as a script," the show's curator, Shirly Ben-Dor Evian, told AFP. "Then it occurred to me that some of the things can now be explained more easily because we are all writing with pictures now - it has become very widespread."

From the heart symbol to little monkeys and foaming glasses of beer, the pictograms of our own time have enlivened discussion on social media and online messaging since the late 1990s. Some emojis - from the Japanese word for a combination of an image and a written character - have hieroglyphic equivalents, said Ben-Dor Evian, who argues that the images are a language in their own right.

The exhibition, in a small gallery within the Israel Museum, welcomes visitors with a wall bearing similar pictograms from both eras. The modern purple-suited dancer emoji with his hand raised strikes a similar pose to an Egyptian in a loin cloth from 3,000 years ago. "There is a similar-



A visitor watches a video installation of a woman using emojis to talk.

ity in design and shapes, which is very interesting because there are thousands of years and very big cultural gaps between those two systems," Ben-Dor Evian said.

Images stronger than words

In the Egyptian system, hieroglyphs could designate an object or an idea in

so-called ideograms, indicate the sound of the word (phonograms) or serve as classifiers specifying the semantic category of the word. Emoji, on the other hand, are self-sufficient in designating an idea, a feeling or an object, and are not intended to be accumulated to form a sentence, noted Ben-Dor Evian. "When you use ideographic writing, the image

becomes more powerful than the word," she said.

She cites the example of the revolver emoji, replaced by Apple in 2016 with a fluorescent green water pistol. "Why did it change? The reason is, once you start using picture as writing, then it's much more powerful than writing the word 'gun'. It's much scarier." She says the modern use of pictograms is not so different from that in antiquity.

One difference is that the writer decides how emojis are used, while the ancient Egyptians had strict rules around the use of hieroglyphics, believing they were sacred. The exhibition, "Emoglyphs: Picture-Writing from Hieroglyphs to the Emoji," is open until late 2020 and includes previously undisplayed items from the museum's own collection and others on loan from abroad.

Among them is a necklace made of linen and papyrus and covered with gold, dating from around 100 BC, which bears the inscription of a scarab beetle, symbol of resurrection. It is reminiscent of today's ladybird emoji, said Ben-Dor Evian. "My goal as an Egyptologist is to show to people that something that is ancient is still relevant to their lives today," she said. — AFP



Ben-Dor Evian poses for a picture as she presents the exhibition.



A visitor takes pictures of ancient Egyptian plaques at the exhibition.



A video installation shows the image of a man with the emoji of a blue heart reflected on an ancient Egyptian plaque engraved with hieroglyphs.



A visitor watches a video installation of a woman using emojis to talk.

Egypt's 'history of humanity' monuments face climate change threat

It's a steamy November day in the southern Egyptian city of Luxor, and the tourists tramping through the ancient temples of Luxor and Karnak are sweating. But the city's famed 7,000-year-old antiquities are feeling the heat too. Increasingly high temperatures linked to climate change, as well as wilder weather, particularly heavy rains and flooding, are taking a growing toll on the ancient stonework, said Abdelhakim Elbadry, a restoration expert who works at Karnak temple.

"The changes appear noticeably, in the damage and cracks of the facades of many graves as well as the change of the color of the archaeological stones, as a result of high temperature and humidity," Elbadry told Thomson Reuters Foundation. Granite that was once rose-colored has faded to a pale pink or even light grey over the last 15 years, he said. "In every archaeological site here in Luxor, you can witness the changes," he said.

Climate change is making efforts to protect Egypt's famed but fragile archaeological sites even harder, preservation experts say. From the pyramids and Sphinx to the Citadel of Qaitbay and an ancient Roman amphitheatre near the Mediterranean Sea, the country's historic sites face growing threats from harsher weather and rising seas.

Egyptologist Zahi Hawass - the country's former Minister of State for Antiquities Affairs - said virtually all open-air archaeological sites in Egypt are in danger from stronger winds and humidity, higher temperatures and bigger floods. "I believe that in 100 years all these antiquities will be gone because of climate change," Hawass said, referring to expected serious deterioration of the monuments.

He said offices staffed by specialists should be set up near each of the country's archeological sites to record the changes taking place, try to find immediate solutions and to coordinate restoration of damage. He has called for a joint effort by Egypt and the European Union to try to mitigate the effects of climate change on Egyptian antiquities.

Monica Hanna, an archaeologist with the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport, said she believes many Egyptian historic sites near the Mediterranean Sea could see significant damage from rising sea levels linked to climate change within about 30 years. Alexandria, Egypt's second-largest city, faces some of the biggest risks. In remarks in Germany last year, Patricia Espinosa, head of the UN climate change secretariat, warned that climate change posed particularly severe threats to low-lying coastal cities such as Alexandria and Osaka in Japan. Climate impacts "are not going to get better, they are going to get worse," she warned.

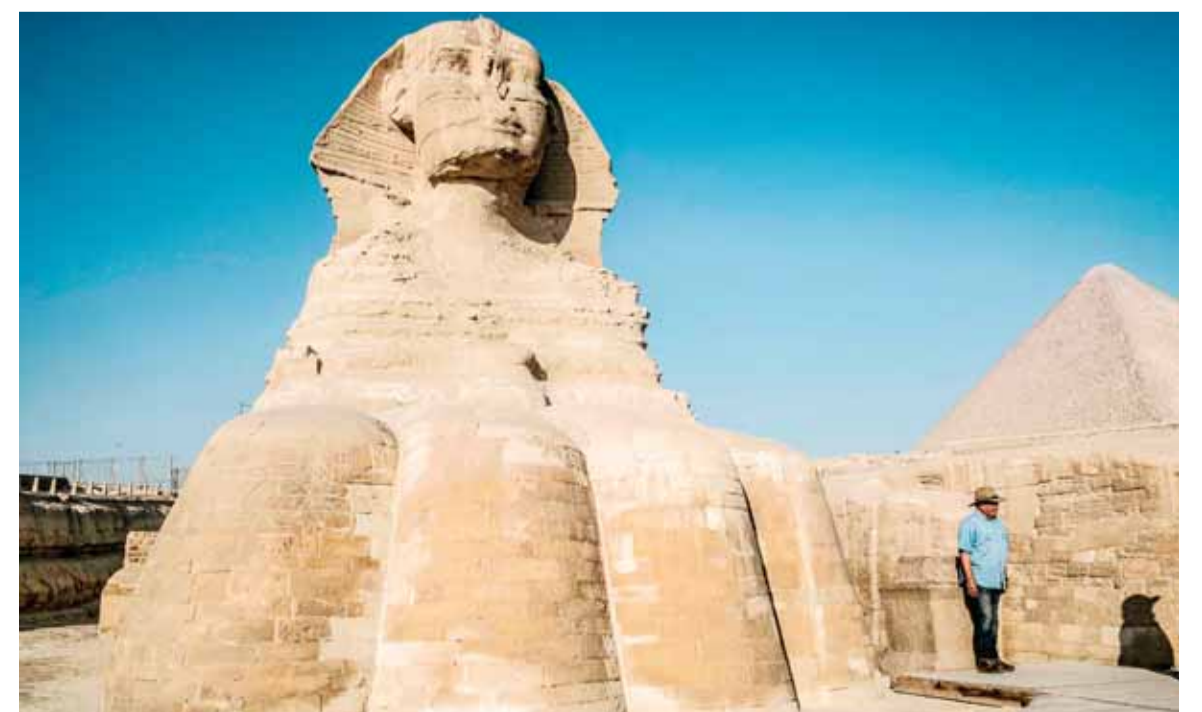
But a shifting climate also is just one of the threats to Egypt's antiquities, which also face pressure from everything from worsening air pollution to expanding settlements as the country's population grows, Hanna said. Air pollution can erode the limestone and sandstone blocks that make up many ancient structures, she said, and the construction of housing areas without proper sewage systems, in areas near historic sites, can cause "tremendous" damage. Egyptologist Hawass said visiting tourists also remain a threat to the structures they flock to admire. "The flashes of mobile phones, the breathing and touching the antiquities - all these have really harmful effects," he said.

Government action

Hussein Abdel Basir, director of the Antiquities Museum at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, said the government is taking some action to better protect its archaeological sites from climate threats. In Alexandria, the national government has earmarked \$14 million to protect the Citadel of Qaitbay from coastal erosion. "A total of 4,700 concrete blocks have been dropped in the water around the citadel in order to protect it from rising water," Abdel Basir said.

In addition to that effort, which started in late 2018, the government is putting in place projects to protect

beaches from higher waves and stop coastal erosion. Abdel Basir said about 230 foreign-led archeological missions operate in Egypt, and about 10 percent of those are carrying out work to reverse degradation seen in the country's famed antiquities. But that is still far too little to adequately deal with the growing climate change threats, he said. The endangered monuments are "the heritage of the world. It is not only Egypt's civilisation that is being threatened, it is the history of humanity," he said. — Reuters



Zahi Hawass, Egyptian archaeologist and former antiquities minister, stands before the Great Sphinx of Giza during a lecture with a tourist group on ancient Egyptian history, at the Giza Necropolis on the southeastern outskirts of the capital. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features



Tourists spend time at the beach in Hurghada. — AFP photos



Tourists play beach volleyball in Egypt's resort of Hurghada on the Red Sea coast.



A windsurfer lifts his sail on the water in Hurghada.

Egypt beach resorts fight global scourge of plastic trash

Combing the Red Sea beach at an Egyptian luxury resort, workers find bagfuls of plastic garbage - but the news isn't all bad, thanks to a new environmental initiative. Pointing at five bags filled with plastic bottles, straws, shopping bags and similar refuse, 20-year-old Wael said: "This isn't very much - six months ago the plastic waste here filled up trucks."

Like a growing number of coastal cities, the Egyptian resort of Hurghada this year decided to fight back against the mountains of plastic trash polluting the world's oceans. Environmentalists had long campaigned against the blight of polymer refuse floating on waves, washing up on beaches and harming coral reefs and marine wildlife. Divers recently rescued a shark by removing a plastic ring from around its neck, says local campaign group the Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association (HEPCA).

So in June the popular tourist resort and other cities of Egypt's Red Sea province prohibited single-use plastic products, enforcing the ban with stiff fines. Since then, disposable plastic shopping bags and throw-away utensils have been largely replaced with alternative products made from paper, other organic materials and biodegradable plastic. "Single-use plastics are no longer to be seen in the city," said Ahmed Al-Gharib, manager of a luxury hotel in central Hurghada.

HEPCA says that while the problem hasn't disappeared, a big difference can be seen at the city's waste sorting plant. The amount of plastic waste received there fell to 141 tons in November, down from 230 tons during the same month a year earlier.

'Cleaner than before'

The world currently produces more than 300 million tons of plastic annually. Scientists estimate there are at least five trillion pieces of the stuff floating in our oceans. The United Nations says only nine percent of plastic ever



An Egyptian hotel worker serving food items made of acrylic and wood as alternatives to plastic poses for a picture.

produced has been recycled. It is a global problem that requires many local solutions, including in Egypt where many tourists no longer accept single-use plastic and welcome the change.

Egypt's Red Sea province depends heavily on income from tourists, many of whom come to snorkel and scuba dive among its spectacular reefs - delicate ecosystems particularly threatened by both global warming and plastic pollution. Authorities are taking the new ban seriously,



fining a Hurghada shopping centre 20,000 Egyptian pounds (more than \$1,200) after seizing plastic bags there, local media reported in August.

HEPCA executive director Heba Shawky said such fines had helped bring more than 70 percent of

Hurghada's shops in line. Since the ban, the group and authorities have distributed tens of thousands of reusable bags to residents and businesses, to deter the use of single-use plastic bags. Fast-food chains and grocery stores have switched to wood-based or paper packaging.

And most hotels in and around Hurghada have given up disposable plastic cups and utensils. "We now use either acrylic or wooden cups and utensils" designed to be reused or to break down naturally, Gharib told AFP. Mohamed Musa, director of another resort's food and beverage department, said that plastic waste resulting from a single hotel meal-time had been cut from up to two tons to about 750 kg. "The entire city has become cleaner than before," he said. — AFP

Baghdad's 'Tahrir Beach', where the revolution takes a break

Close to Baghdad's protest hotspot of Tahrir Square, a sandy Tigris River bank offers some relief from the revolution: youths kick around footballs and smoke shisha pipes to booming hip-hop music. It is on this half-kilometre (500-yard) stretch where the post-Saddam generation celebrates its uprising on the beach, escaping the teargas and bullets for a fun and festive atmosphere. "Our leaders have deprived us of everything - our rights, our money, our dignity," says Ammar Saleh, 20. "Here we simply discover the taste of freedom."

Unemployed and penniless, another man here, Ali, is intoxicated by the wind of revolt that has swept through Iraq since early October in the biggest wave of street rallies since the 2003 US-led invasion. "We have nothing left to lose, we will not move as long as the thieves in power don't leave office!" he says with fervour, then returns to his football game. "Tahrir Beach", as its occupants call it, has maintained the carnival-like atmosphere of the protests before they were marred by bloodshed and fear. "This is where you find the magic of the early days of the movement," says journalist Ali, a regular visitor.

In the almost three months since the rallies started,



Iraqis dance and gesture as they wind down on the bank of the Tigris River in the capital Baghdad on Dec 21, 2019. — AFP photos

about 460 people have been killed and 25,000 wounded. The initially self-managed camps at Tahrir Square have become more strictly organized and the carefree spirit has gone. "There is less mobilization, leaders have changed, militiamen and spies have infiltrated the demonstrators," said Ali, who pointed also to the growing influence of supporters of Shiite populist leader Moqtada Sadr.

'We want joy'

Tahrir Beach lies on the east bank of the Tigris, between the Al-Sinek and Al-Jumhuriyah bridges, where

security forces guard access routes into the locked-down "Green Zone" government and embassies district. Along Rashid Street, centuries-old brick houses with elaborate wooden balconies, now mostly dilapidated, tell the story of the capital city's past glory. Bland modern buildings now mar the cityscape as do the concrete blast walls, covered with protest graffiti.

Red and yellow tuk-tuks - the three-wheeled taxis that have become a revolutionary emblem - pour their smiling passengers onto the stretch of river-front, to be greeted by rows of shisha water pipes. Everywhere there are

reminders of the "martyrs" who fell on the barricades: improvised mausoleums adorned with now wilted flowers, a construction helmet, a bloodied t-shirt. Black, red and white Iraqi flags flutter in the breeze, alongside the inevitable FC Barcelona logo.

"Dumping garbage is forbidden," reads a sign suggesting the civic-minded spirit of the "new Iraq", even if litter on the ground suggests not everyone is on board yet. Under Saddam Hussein and the civil war that followed it was unthinkable to wander around here, so close to the dictator's palaces and then the headquarters of the US occupation. "It was too dangerous! There were no people, just dogs at night," recalls Ayman, a former resident of the area. Now a new generation is reappropriating the river bank, as expressed in a slogan daubed on a wall: "We have cried so much, now we want joy."

Downward-facing dog

Indeed, even though it's a short walk to Tahrir Square, the violence seems far away. Three teenagers try to free a scooter stuck in the beach, the rear wheel spraying up sand. Youths with pulled-up pants play volleyball. A temperamental sound system spits out Iraqi techno and the rap hit "I Got Love", while a piece of linoleum serves as the stage for a hip-hop dance contest. Bandanas wrapped around their heads, two guys pumped up with testosterone twirl and spin to the crowd's applause.

The day before, a yoga class here produced photos of bulked-up and bearded men performing the one-legged downward-facing dog pose, sparking delight on social media. The crowd remains predominantly young and male - and poor. One young man, 26-year-old Sofiane, his arm deformed by polio, says he has "never received the slightest allowance" but expresses hope the demonstrations will "change everything". — AFP



Iraqis play volleyball on the bank of the Tigris.



Iraqis pass by a symbolic cemetery for anti-government protesters who died in ongoing rallies on the bank of the Tigris.



Iraqis enter a tent camp erected by anti-government demonstrators on the bank of the Tigris.

Modest Maradona museum pays tribute to patron saint of Naples



Vignati poses on Nov 20, 2019 in his 'Maradona museum' in Naples. — AFP photos



An altar and paraphernalia dedicated to Diego Maradona are pictured at the 'Maradona corner' at the top of the Quartieri Spagnoli on Nov 20, 2019 in Naples.



An altar and paraphernalia dedicated to Diego Maradona are pictured at the 'Maradona corner'.

For some Diego Maradona is the greatest footballer of the 20th century, for others - mainly English - he is the cheating possessor of the hand of God. In Italy, however, he is and always will be the patron saint of Naples. And just as saints have their altars so Maradona has his museum, an extraordinary treasure trove of artefacts that includes the left boot with which the Argentine scored twice against Belgium in the semi-finals of the 1986 World Cup.

You can also find his first contract with Napoli and even the sofa from his Naples apartment where singer Julio Iglesias once sat. It's all here in the cellar museum. Maradona arrived at Napoli as a world record \$10.48 million signing from Barcelona in July 1984. His time in Catalonia had been difficult and Naples was a bolt-hole. He was to stay seven years, captaining the team to their first-ever Serie A title in 1986-7. They did it again three years later and during Maradona's stay the Neapolitans also won the Coppa Italia, UEFA Cup and Italian Super Cup.

It was a golden age which Naples have never come close to repeating, so it is no surprise to find a museum that commemorates



A 1990 mural representing Diego Maradona is pictured at the top of the Quartieri Spagnoli.

such a rich epoch. Massimo Vignati's museum, though, is one of a kind. It does not appear on any map of Naples, nor is it in travel guides, and entry is free. And yet, this basement of a typical building in Secondigliano, a tough neighbourhood in the north of the city, breathes all things Diego.

It is a delightful melange of Maradona mania with photos, pennants, balls, armbands

and shirts, some washed or signed, others not. Some items equate almost to holy relics - the bench on which Maradona changed at the San Paolo stadium and the K-Way jacket which features in the memorable footage of him ball-juggling to the sound of Opus' "Live is Life" during an incredible warm-up before facing Bayern Munich in 1989.

Family guy

This astonishing hoard also testifies to the unique bond between the Argentine genius and a family which was at the heart of his seven-year stay in Naples. "I was fortunate that for 37 years my dad was the caretaker of the San Paolo stadium and the Napoli changing rooms. And my mother was Maradona's housekeeper and cook," Vignati told AFP. His sister babysat Diego's daughters Dalma and Giannina while Massimo, as a child and then adolescent, rubbed shoulders with the city's idol on a daily basis.

"We were with Diego from Monday to Sunday," says Vignati, looking at the photos of a time when the Argentine's apartment on the heights of Posillipo, an upscale district of the city, was like his second home. "He and his wife gave us all these things because they knew we were a lot of children, five boys and six girls. "I was a ballboy during Maradona's seven seasons. On Mondays, I went to play five-a-side, I did not go to school. And on Tuesdays, sometimes he took me to the Napoli training session ... "Diego, let's go in the Ferrari!"

For a long time, the wonders now on display in the Vignati cellar were locked away at the San Paolo. "My father had two rooms," says Vignati, whose second son is called Diego. "One for all these memories and one for drinking a good Neapolitan coffee. "After his death, I brought everything here. But the club knows that this place exists. If they make a museum, I will always be ready. I hope everything can go back to the stadium, it was my father's dream." — AFP



Tiles with inscriptions about Diego Maradona are pictured at the Quartieri Spagnoli.



The 'Maradona corner' at the Quartieri Spagnoli.



A copy of the 1984 contract for the transfer of Diego Maradona from Barcelona to Naples is pictured at the Maradona museum.



An undated handout photograph released by Buckingham Palace on Saturday shows (from left) Britain's Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, Prince George of Cambridge, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles, Prince of Wales preparing special Christmas puddings in the Music Room at Buckingham Palace in London, as part of the launch of The Royal British Legion's Together at Christmas initiative. — AFP

Queen Elizabeth mixes puddings, and sends message of continuity

At the end of a difficult year, Queen Elizabeth has posed for photographs with her son Prince Charles, grandson Prince William and great-grandson Prince George in an apparent message about the continuity of the British royal family. Buckingham Palace released photographs on Saturday of the Queen and the three immediate members of the line of succession as they prepared traditional Christmas puddings. Prince George, 6, is the focus of attention for his older relatives as he stirs pudding mixture in a bowl.

The palace said the four generations of royals represented a cross-section of people helped by a charity

for serving and former members of the armed forces - the Royal British Legion - which the queen has supported since 1952. The family scene struck a happy note for Queen Elizabeth, 93, after a difficult year.

Over the past 12 months, her husband Prince Philip got a police warning for his involvement in a car crash, grandsons Princes William and Harry publicly fell out and her second son Prince Andrew became more entangled in the furore over his links to disgraced US financier Jeffrey Epstein. On Friday, 98-year-old Philip was taken to hospital for treatment of an existing condition, Buckingham Palace said. — Reuters

French New Wave icon Anna Karina buried in Paris



A man stands prior to the funeral of the French-Danish actress Anna Karina on Saturday at the Pere Lachaise cemetery in Paris. — AFP photos

A small group of family and friends of the Danish-French actress Anna Karina, a star of the French Wave cinema in the 1960s, attended her funeral in Paris on Saturday. Among those attending the private ceremony in the Pere Lachaise cemetery were Jane Birkin, another star from the 1960s, and Oscar-winning actor Marion Cotillard. French Culture Minister Franck Riester was also present. Although Karina also worked as a model and a singer, she is best known for her starring roles in the films made by her ex-husband, director Jean-Luc Godard, such as "Pierrot Le Fou". She died on Dec 14 at the age of 79. — AFP



Pallbearers carry the coffin of Karina followed by her widower Dennis Berry (left) at the Chapelle de l'Est of the Pere Lachaise cemetery.

Classifieds

Monday, December 23, 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 and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Cold with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING			SFC. CHART	
No Current Warnings			22/12/2019 0000 UTC	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.		
KUWAIT CITY	21 °C	11 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	06 °C		
ABDALY	20 °C	06 °C		
BUBYAN	19 °C	09 °C		
JAHRA	21 °C	09 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C		
SALMIYAH	19 °C	14 °C		
AHMADI	19 °C	13 °C		
NUWAISIB	24 °C	09 °C		
WAFRA	23 °C	06 °C		
SALMY	19 °C	07 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	12/23	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	21 °C	06 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Tuesday	12/24	Fair	22 °C	07 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 26 km/h
Wednesday	12/25	Fair and Clouds will increase gradually with a chance for scattered rain later on	22 °C	08 °C	SE	12 - 40 km/h
Thursday	12/26	Fair and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	23 °C	09 °C	SE-NW	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:13
Sunrise	06:38
Zuhr	11:46
Asr	14:36
Sunset	16:54
Isha	18:17

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	06 °C
MAX. RH	95 %
MIN. RH	33 %
MAX. Wind	NW 18 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

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

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

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

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

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

I, Aboobacker Siddhique Abdu Salam, Illathail house, Kallur 679562, Kerala holder of Indian Passport No. J2019956 issued at Embassy of India, Kuwait, civil ID No. 292052901289 hereby change my name as Abdu

For Rent
Adaliya area
 • Ground floor,
 Basement
 duplex
 • Parkings
 • Garden
99648910

Salam Aboobacker Siddhique with immediate effect. **(C 5478) 17-12-2019**

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

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

EMERGENCY 112

Automated enquiry about the CiviID card is
1889988
 For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL HOTLINE 128

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw) **DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION**

Arrival Flights on Monday 23/12/2019					Departure Flights on Monday 23/12/2019				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
PIA	239	Sialkot	00:05	RBG	553	Alexandria	14:05	AXB	890
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	MEA	405
AIC	989	Mumbai	00:10	UAE	877	Dubai	14:10	JZR	115
JZR	716	Sohag	00:35	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	QTR	1075
JZR	254	Amman	00:45	KAC	752	ELQ	14:20	MSR	611
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	KAC	781
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC	672	Dubai	14:40	JZR	123
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	774	Riyadh	14:40	KAC	105
KAC	102	London	00:55	KAC	742	Jeddah	14:45	UAE	872
KAC	504	Beirut	01:05	KAC	364	Dammam	14:45	RBG	554
DLH	625	Dammam	01:30	KAC	118	Colombo	14:50	QTR	1079
RJA	642	Amman	01:40	KAC	286	New York	14:50	KNE	382
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	618	Dhaka	14:55	FDB	060
IGO	1759	Delhi	01:55	KNE	529	Doha	15:00	GFA	222
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:55	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:10	UAE	878
UAE	853	Dubai	02:15	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KAC	775
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:25	KAC	673
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	222	Riyadh	15:30	KAC	677
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	KAC	677
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	412	Bangkok	15:40	KAC	417
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	562	Amman	15:40	DLH	625
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	IGO	1765
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50	ETH	621
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:55	UAE	854
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	JZR	152	Mashhad	16:00	KLM	446
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25	THY	765
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:30	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35	QTR	1087
KAC	302	Mumbai	04:40	JZR	116	Doha	16:40	OMA	644
JZR	702	Asyut	04:50	FDB	051	Dubai	16:45	ETD	306
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	KAC	546	Cairo	16:45	MSR	613
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	KAC	502	Beirut	16:45	KAC	621
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	516	Tehran	16:50	JZR	707
KAC	358	Kochi	05:10	SAW	705	Dammam	17:00	IGO	1752
KAC	784	Jeddah	05:20	FEQ	341	Sohag	17:00	QTR	1077
KAC	382	Delhi	05:20	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:25	OHY	351
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	JZR	101
JZR	654	OSS	05:25	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45	THY	771
JZR	112	Doha	05:35	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	JZR	121
JZR	502	Lahore	05:35	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15	JZR	113
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:45	JZR	302	Istanbul	18:15	RJA	643
UAE	873	Dubai	05:50	JZR	124	Dubai	18:20	FDB	070
JZR	216	Jeddah	05:50	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30	GFA	212
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:55	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30	UAE	874
KAC	402	Mumbai	06:05	JZR	306	Istanbul	18:55	KAC	413
KAC	344	Chennai	06:10	RJA	640	Amman	19:10	KAC	167
KAC	544	Cairo	07:00	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:20	RBG	214
BAW	157	London	07:05	ABY	123	Beirut	19:20	IGO	1767
KAC	678	Dubai	07:05	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	KAC	173
RBG	213	Sohag	07:10	QTR	1090	Doha	19:35	FDB	054
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	JZR	1090	Doha	19:35	JZR	001
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15	KAC	744	Dammam	19:45	KAC	787
JZR	120	Dubai	07:35	KAC	782	Jeddah	19:50	KAC	501
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR	104	Bahrain	19:55	KAC	539
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KNE	381	Taif	20:00	JZR	731
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:25	FDB	057	Dubai	20:00	BAW	156
KAC	622	Doha	08:30	JZR	540	KTM	20:00	KAC	545
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	776	Riyadh	20:00	QTR	1085
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	KAC	671
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:55	QTR	1088	Doha	20:30	KAC	101
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	KAC	616	Bahrain	20:30	KAC	671
KAC	334	Trivandrum	09:00	KAC	174	Munich	20:45	KAC	101
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:55	KAC	561
KAC	384	Delhi	09:30	KAC	674	Dubai	20:55	ABY	126
KAC	304	Mumbai	09:30	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20	JZR	151
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	JZR	151
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	IRA	666
QTR	8511	Doha	09:40	UAE	859	Dubai	21:30	KAC	613
JZR	1070	Doha	09:45	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	KAC	787
JZR	114	Doha	10:20	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	KAC	501
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	168	Paris	22:00	KAC	539
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:50	JZR	104	Bahrain	19:55	JZR	731
JZR	708	Luxor	10:55	KNE	381	Taif	20:00	BAW	156
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	FDB	057	Dubai	20:00	KAC	545
JZR	122	Dubai	11:15	JZR	540	KTM	20:00	QTR	1085
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KAC	776	Riyadh	20:05	KAC	671
KAC	352	Kochi	11:35	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	KAC	101
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	QTR	1088	Doha	20:30	KAC	101
MSR	610	Cairo	12:25	KAC	616	Bahrain	20:30	KAC	101
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	174	Munich	20:45	KAC	561
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:55	ABY	126
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:50	KAC	674	Dubai	20:55	JZR	151
				KAC	624	Frankfurt	20:55	ETD	302
				KAC	674	Dubai	20:55	KAC	11

Thousands protest in Iraq as deadline for new PM looms

BAGHDAD: Thousands took to the streets in Iraq's capital and across the south yesterday to protest against Iran's kingmaking influence as the latest deadline for choosing a new prime minister loomed. Anti-government rallies have rocked Baghdad and the Shiite-majority south since Oct 1, with demonstrators calling for a complete overhaul of a regime they deem corrupt, inefficient and overly beholden to Tehran. "The revolution continues!" shouted one demonstrator at a protest encampment in central Diwaniyah.

Protesters blocked off public buildings one by one in the southern Iraqi city, and put up banners reading "The country is under construction - please excuse the disruption". Sunday marks the latest deadline -already pushed back twice by President Barham Saleh - for parliament to choose a new premier to replace Adel Abdel Mahdi, who tendered his administration's resignation last month.

Parliament speaker Mohammed al-Halbussi yesterday travelled to Arbil, capital of the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq, to discuss who could become the next premier, the presidency there said. Officials say Iran wants to install Qusay Al-Suhail, who served as higher education minister in the government of Adel Mahdi. "This is exactly what we oppose - Iranian control over our country," said 24-year-old student Houeida, speaking to AFP in Baghdad's Tahrir Square, the epicentre of the protests.

The demonstrators categorically reject Suhail's candidacy, along with anyone from the wider political establishment that has been in place since dictator Saddam Hussein was deposed in 2003. "Hundreds of martyrs have fallen and they are still not listening to our claims," said 21-year-old student Mouataz, in Tahrir Square. "We want a prime minister with integrity, but they bring back

a corrupt man in their image whom they will allow to continue robbing us," he added.

In a bid to secure the necessary parliamentary majority for a new premier, Shiite powerhouse Iran enlisted the services of a Lebanese Hezbollah official to negotiate with Sunni and Kurdish parties. The post of prime minister is by convention held by a Shiite in Iraq's post-2003 political system. In a Twitter plea to Saleh, one opposition Sunni lawmaker called Sunday for the president to "violate the constitution rather than plunge the country into bloody chaos by choosing a figure people have already rejected".

Some in parliament - the most fragmented in Iraq's history - argue that Saleh should use Article 81 of the Constitution, which authorizes the president to step in as prime minister himself if there is no agreement among lawmakers on a candidate. In a sign of the protesters' unprecedented influence, top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who is said to have made and unmade every premier in the post-Saddam era, has been notably absent from the maneuverings this time around.

The protest movement has been hit by intimidation, including assassinations perpetrated by militias, according to the UN. Around 460 people have been killed since Oct 1, and some 25,000 have been wounded. Yet the protesters appeared to regain some confidence yesterday. Overnight, demonstrators in Diwaniyah and Basra, another southern city, had declared a "general strike". They burnt tyres to block roads linking southern cities to Baghdad, an AFP correspondent said.

The road to Umm Qasr port - vital for imports - near Basra was among those blocked. In Karbala and Najaf, two Shiite holy cities, striking students closed schools and gathered in their thousands, AFP correspondents said. In Nasiriyah, protesters blocked bridges and sever-



BAGHDAD: Protesters march with a giant Iraqi flag during an anti-government demonstration in the capital's central Tahrir Square yesterday. — AFP

al roads while all public buildings remained closed. Protesters are demanding the fall of Saleh and Halbussi, accusing them of procrastinating. "Iraq must become

Iraqi again, and if the president does not help us, we will force him out too," asserted student Houeida, buoyed by the renewed momentum in Tahrir Square. — AFP

Cuba gets first prime minister in over 40 years

HAVANA: Cuba's first prime minister in more than four decades - long-serving tourism minister Manuel Marrero - took office Saturday as the country resurrected a post last held by Fidel Castro. The appointment of Marrero, 56, as head of government is part of a process of decentralization and generational change from the revolutionary old guard that is aimed at extending and protecting Communist Party rule. "This proposal was duly approved by the political bureau of the Communist Party of Cuba," President Miguel Diaz-Canel said, presenting it to the country's National Assembly, which unanimously signed off.

Immediately after his presentation, Marrero received a handshake from former president Raul Castro, the leader of the Communist Party. Marrero "is not coming to the job to transform, but rather to implement and manage. The president is the one who leads," said Cuba specialist Arturo Lopez-Levy of Holy Names University in California.

Marrero served as tourism minister from 2004, late in revolutionary hero Fidel Castro's administration, continuing in the post under Fidel's brother Raul and the current president, Diaz-Canel. He began his career in government in 1999 as vice president of the powerful Gaviota Hotel Group belonging to the armed forces, becoming its president a year later - a post he held until 2004. "Throughout his career... (Marrero) has been characterized by his modesty, honesty, work capacity, political sensitivity and loyalty to the party and the revolution," Diaz-Canel said. The new premier "has led the tourism industry in a commendable fashion, which constitutes one of the main lines of development of the national economy," he added.

That is precisely why Marrero "who has all this wide-ranging experience in tourism and working with investors," is the pick, according to Lopez-Levy. "It underscores the priority that this area holds in the country's development strategy," he said. The position of prime minister was last held by Fidel Castro in 1976. But the post was abolished when Castro transitioned to the presidency, taking over from Osvaldo Dorticos after the country's constitution was restructured.

Castro was a unique prime minister "given the weight of his persona", Lopez-Levy said. "Ultimate



Manuel Marrero Cruz

power in the country was in Fidel's hands during his time as prime minister from 1959-76, even though Dorticos was president and head of state, he said. The appointment of a prime minister may signify a separation of powers but Lopez-Levy insisted that in Cuba it represents more of a "separation of functions" given the communist concept of political unity and the fact that the country is a one-party state.

Cuba's constitution required that the candidate come from the 605-member National Assembly, be at least 35, "be a Cuban citizen by birth and hold no other nationality". The premier has the power to hire and fire state employees as well as overall control of provincial governors, another position restored under the new constitution. Diaz-Canel also took aim at the United States on Saturday, at a time of high tensions between the superpower and the island nation. He said that 2019 was "a year full of challenges, tension and aggression" by Washington. The United States carried out a "brutal, insane" tightening of its long-running embargo, but "we are alive", Diaz-Canel said. — AFP

The law gives religious minority members - Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists - from three neighboring Islamic countries an easier path to citizenship, but not if they are Muslim. Islamic groups, the opposition and others at home and abroad fear this forms part of Modi's aim to marginalise India's 200 million Muslims and remold the country as a Hindu nation, something he denies.

Authorities have imposed emergency laws, blocked Internet access - a common tactic in India - and shut down shops in sensitive areas across the country in an attempt to contain the unrest. More than 7,500 people have either been detained under emergency laws or arrested for rioting, according to state officials, with 5,000 in Uttar Pradesh state alone where 17 people have been killed. Some 500 people have also been injured in Uttar Pradesh including 263 police, while two people were shot dead in the southern state of Karnataka and six died in Assam in the northeast last week.

In Assam, opponents of the legislation fear it will enable large numbers of Bengali-speaking immigrants, many of whom are Hindu, to settle there. But elsewhere, opponents say the law has made religion a test for citizenship ahead of a nationwide register that Modi wants to carry out by 2024 to remove all "infiltrators". The US State Department this week urged New Delhi to "protect the rights of its religious minorities in keeping with India's constitution and democratic values". Modi's government, re-elected in May, has defended the law saying it is meant to help "persecuted" minorities from Muslim-majority Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. — Agencies

Boeing spacecraft lands in New Mexico after aborted mission

WASHINGTON: Boeing's new Starliner unmanned spacecraft returned to Earth yesterday, landing in the New Mexico desert in the United States six days early after a clock problem scuppered a rendezvous with the International Space Station. NASA hailed the aborted flight as a success, despite its failure to reach the ISS on what was meant to be a final dress rehearsal before a crewed mission. Images broadcast by NASA showed the spacecraft touching down, cushioned by airbags, after a pre-dawn descent slowed by three large parachutes.

"We had some challenges, but a lot of things did in fact go right," NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine told reporters, describing the landing as an "absolute bullseye". "We did not make it to the International Space Station. We did not dock, but the spacecraft flew exceptionally well. We've got a lot of data to review."

The Starliner capsule was launched Friday from Cape Canaveral in Florida, but shortly after separating from its Atlas V launch rocket, its thrusters failed to activate as planned, preventing it from reaching a high enough orbit. The space station orbits at an altitude of about 400 km above sea level. As the craft had burned too much propellant, Boeing and NASA were forced to guide the Starliner back to Earth.

"Maybe it's acceptable to go next step - fly the crew flight test, but we have to go through the data first," Steve Stich, deputy manager of NASA's Commercial Crew Program, said. "We tested a majority of the core system of the vehicle... We had a little issue with the timer in the beginning."

The test flight was a key part of NASA's plans to end US dependence on Russia for space rides. Its flight

troubles also dealt a fresh reputational blow to Boeing, which faces a safety crisis in its commercial air division. The company is reeling from two fatal crashes of its 737 Max airliner. The crashes, in October 2018 in Indonesia and in March 2019 in Ethiopia, claimed a total 346 lives. Boeing plans to suspend production of the plane in January.

The Starliner was able to establish a communications link with the ISS, and to test its docking mechanism, solar panels, batteries, thrusters and heat regulation system. Its heat shield protected the capsule during re-entry, when temperatures outside the vehicle rose to over 1,600 degrees Celsius due to friction. Before its descent, the Starliner was orbiting at an altitude of 250 km and traveling at over 28,000 kilometers an hour.

In a test in November, only two of the three parachutes opened, although they proved sufficient for the landing. NASA said the Starliner had landed in excellent condition and would now be refurbished ahead of a decision on whether to carry out another test flight or to trust that the vehicle was safe to carry astronauts. The capsule has been named "Calypso" after French marine explorer Jacques Cousteau's ship, NASA added.

Starliner's first crewed flight had been scheduled for early 2020. That development was much-anticipated as NASA has been forced to rely on Russian Soyuz rockets to transport its astronauts to the space station since the Space Shuttle program was shuttered in 2011 after 30 years. Under former president Barack Obama, NASA opted for a shift in how it operates. Instead of owning the hardware, it hired private companies to take over, awarding Boeing and SpaceX billions of dollars to develop "Made in the USA" solutions. The Crew Dragon, developed by SpaceX, is expected to be ready for launch next year.

NASA has committed to pay \$8 billion to Boeing and SpaceX, which in return are to deliver six trips carrying four astronauts each from now to 2024. Starliner carried a test dummy called "Rosie" after "Rosie the Riveter", the star of a campaign aimed at recruiting women to munitions factory jobs during World War II. — AFP

Qatar claims success of...

Continued from Page 1

While the metro, and the streets above, have hardly been overcrowded, it may be a different story in the city come the World Cup, with organizers expecting at least 1.2 million supporters in Doha in 2022. "We are building the capacity necessary so that by 2022 we have that in place, we are improving our efficiency in terms of transportation, ensuring there is enough fan engagement events, and so on, spread throughout the country, so there is no congestion in one place," said Thawadi.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino - who inherited the decision to hand the tournament to Qatar from predecessor Sepp Blatter - is upbeat about preparations, with Qatar also staging the recent Gulf Cup and hosting next year's Club World Cup. "These are small events but important events," he said, adding: "The state of advancement of the work here is unique."

Elsewhere, traffic remains congested on Doha's roads, and authorities have announced plans to resurrect the Sharq Crossing, a mega-project that will use bridges and tunnels to link the airport, financial district and tourist attractions, bypassing the often gridlocked

coast road. Organizers have tested a 5,000-capacity fan zone where supporters have been able to enjoy a drink in a country where alcohol is not readily available.

There has also been concern about how LGBT fans will be welcomed, although Paul Amann, of Liverpool's LGBT supporters' club, Kop Outs, told AFP he was "satisfied their approach is to provide an 'everyone is welcome' ethos that does include respect, albeit through privacy". Thawadi stuck to that theme as he insisted all fans would be welcome, but admitted: "Public displays of affection, regardless of sexual orientation, are not part of our culture and we ask people to respect that fact."

This Club World Cup has also confirmed that fans need not worry about temperatures after the highly controversial decision to move the competition from its usual June-July slot to the end of the year - after hosting rights had been awarded. On the day of Liverpool's semi-final against Monterrey, exactly three years before the World Cup final, the cool and damp conditions were a marked contrast with what was first feared.

But as Qatar learns about how to be a good host, with the many issues surrounding the awarding of the tournament in the first place, it will struggle to win people over. "The organization has been good but it is not a football country and the World Cup, with all respect, should be in a country that loves football," said Flamengo coach Jorge Jesus. — AFP

Erdogan to increase military support...

Continued from Page 1

"Nobody should come to us with attempts to exclude us, trap us in our own shores or steal our economic interests," Erdogan said. "We have no intention of starting conflicts with anyone for no reason, or robbing anyone of their rights," he said. "Those who oppose us have no sense of rights, law, justice, ethics or

mercy," Erdogan said, referring to Greece, Israel and Egypt, who have opposed the maritime accord.

In an interview with Greek daily To Vima yesterday, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said the accord with Libya was in line with international law, adding Ankara may consider granting exploration licenses in areas determined by Turkey and Libya. "It would be the exercise of our sovereign rights in our continental shelf in the region," Cavusoglu said. "The exercise of our sovereign rights also and naturally includes our right to deploy research vessels in the area," he was cited as saying. In a first reaction from the United States on the agreement, a senior US State Department official said the maritime accord was "unhelpful" and "provocative". — Agencies

Modi seeks to soothe Muslims...

Continued from Page 1

conferences to counter the protests as anger grows over what critics say is an attack on the country's secular constitution. Modi also said that there had been "no discussion" about a nationwide "register of citizens", which many Muslims in India fear is targeted mainly at them.

Home Minister Amit Shah, Modi's close ally, has said repeatedly that such an exercise will take place, including in parliament aimed at removing all "infiltrators" from India. This year such a register in Assam state left off 1.9 million people unable to prove they or their forebears were there before 1971. They now face possible statelessness. Assam has six functional detention centers holding more than 1,000 people in the northeastern state, and plans another 11. The Home Ministry in June issued a "2019 Model Detention Manual" to states, asking them to set up camps in major entry points.

The demonstrations have been largely peaceful but protesters have also hurled rocks and torched vehicles, while heavy-handed police tactics including the storming of a Delhi university a week ago have fuelled anger. Tens of thousands of protesters gathered late Saturday in the southern city of Hyderabad. Other protests took place yesterday, including in Jaipur and Mumbai. Another in favor of the law was held in Bangalore.

Sports

Patriots and Texans win to capture NFL division crowns

WASHINGTON: Reigning Super Bowl champion New England and the Houston Texans clinched NFL division titles with victories Saturday, Houston sealing a playoff berth and the Patriots moving closer to a first-round bye. New England held off a late Buffalo fightback for a 24-17 home triumph to secure an 11th consecutive AFC East division title while the Texans forced five turnovers in a 23-20 victory at Tampa Bay to claim the AFC South crown.

And the San Francisco 49ers edged the Los Angeles Rams 34-31 on Robbie Gould's game-ending 33-yard field goal to boost their chances at a first-round bye. The result also clinched a playoff spot for Minnesota by eliminating the Rams from the hunt.

Tom Brady, the 42-year-old Patriots quarterback with a record six Super Bowl titles, completed 26-of-33 passes for 271 yards and a touchdown and also ignited two fourth-quarter scoring drives to rally New England past the Bills, who fell to 3-32 all-time against Brady.

"Amazing accomplishment and great win," Brady said. "That's a damn good football team we beat. Give credit to our guys. We came back in the fourth quarter. Our defense has been playing great all year. Another hard-fought game. I'm glad we won."

The Patriots (12-3) would secure a first-round playoff bye with a home victory next week over Miami (3-11). "This was a playoff game. Next week is a playoff game," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said. "We'll keep building this thing and keep rolling. We're in the playoffs now."

An offensive pass interference call wiped out a 33-yard Brady touchdown pass to Ben Watson early in the third quarter, forcing the Patriots to settle for a 51-yard Nick Folk field goal and a 13-10 lead.

Buffalo seized the lead on the next drive when John Brown raced past New England's defenders, caught a Josh Allen pass and raced untouched into the end zone

to complete a 53-yard touchdown play as the Bills grabbed a 17-13 advantage.

It was Buffalo's longest play from scrimmage all season. In response, Brady drove the Patriots 77 yards in 11 plays but was stopped two yards from the goal line on a third-down run and the Patriots settled for a 20-yard Folk field goal to pull within 17-16 with 10:47 to go.

New England forced a Buffalo punt and Brady drove the Patriots 59 yards in seven plays, Rex Burkhead's 1-yard touchdown run putting the hosts back in front with 5:06 remaining.

Brady flipped a 2-point conversion pass to Julian Edelman to boost New England's lead to the final margin. The Bills drove to the Patriots 8-yard line in the final minutes but New England's defenders made two sacks and forced an incomplete pass, setting up a final desperate toss into the end zone that J.C. Jackson batted away to seal New England's win.

Buffalo's Stephen Hauschka kicked a 35-yard field goal to open the scoring but the Patriots seized the lead on Brady's 8-yard touchdown pass to Matt LaCosse.

Brady directed the longest drive surrendered by the Bills this year on a 17-play, 81-yard march that lasted nearly nine minutes and ended on a 36-yard Folk field goal for a 10-3 New England lead.

Buffalo drove 59 yards in 32 seconds with Allen flipping a 1-yard touchdown pass to Dion Dawkins that put Buffalo level 10-10 at half-time.

TEXANS REACH PLAYOFFS

The Texans (10-5) earned a fourth playoff berth in five seasons as Deshaun Watson threw for 184 yards and ran for 37 more. Ka'imi Fairbairn kicked three field goals and Bradley Roby returned an interception for a touchdown.

Houston won for the fourth time in five games, a run that included a win over the Patriots. Houston joined



FOXBOROUGH: Devin Singletary #26 of the Buffalo Bills is tackled by John Simon #55 and Patrick Chung #23 of the New England Patriots at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough, Massachusetts. Reigning Super Bowl champion New England and the Houston Texans clinched NFL division titles with victories, Houston sealing a playoff berth and the Patriots moving closer to a first-round bye. — AFP

New England, Buffalo, Baltimore and Kansas City in the American Conference playoffs with Pittsburgh and Tennessee, both 8-6, fighting for the final spot.

The playoff-bound 49ers improved to 12-3 after Jimmy Garoppolo threw a 46-yard pass to Emmanuel Sanders with 35 seconds remaining to set up Gould's

game-winning field goal.

"It was just a battle," Garoppolo said. "It was a fun game." San Francisco, Seattle, New Orleans, Green Bay and Minnesota have sealed National Conference playoff berths with either Dallas or Philadelphia set to win the NFC East division for the last spot. — AFP

World Junior Water Polo Championships recognize Zain's official sponsorship

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, concluded its official sponsorship of the FINA World Men's Junior (U20s) Water Polo Championships 2019. The tournament, hosted by Kuwait, was organized by the Kuwait Swimming Association and the Public Authority for Sport under official supervision from the International Swimming Federation (FINA). The event took place at HH Sheikh Nasser Al Mohammad Olympic Swimming Pools Complex at Al Naser Sports Club under the patronage of Speaker of the Kuwaiti National Assembly Marzouq Al Ghanim.

Zain took part in the tournament's concluding ceremony, which witnessed the attendance of the Head of the Kuwait and Asian swimming bodies Sheikh Khalid Al Bader Al Sabah, Head of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah, Deputy General Manager for Competitive Sports Affairs at the Public Authority of Sport Dr Saqer Al Mulla, Head and members of the Kuwaiti and International swimming federations, as well as delegations from the participating countries.

Zain strongly believes in the important role played by the private sector in developing the youth and sports sectors in Kuwait. The company makes this concept a reality by sponsoring and supporting various major sporting events in Kuwait, including this international tournament, as well as sponsoring and encouraging many Kuwaiti athletes who represent Kuwait in local, regional, and international arenas. Throughout the championship, Zain offered free 5G Internet coverage at HH Sheikh Nasser Al Mohammad Olympic Swimming Pools Complex. The high-speed connection was used by the young participants, their parents and families, the official



Sheikh Khalid Al Bader Al Sabah recognizes Zain's support to the tournament.

delegations, organizing committees, as well as the attending crowds. Zain was keen on offering its latest and most advanced services to serve Kuwait's guests and contribute to making this international event a success, reflecting Kuwait's leading position in the international sport scene.

Zain's support to the tournament comes in line with its keenness on encouraging the various efforts that contribute to developing the Kuwaiti youth and sports sectors. The company puts the support of Kuwaiti sports at the forefront of its priorities under the umbrella of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy. Zain's support of Kuwaiti champions, many of whom are aquatic athletes, results in many achievements that

the company is proud of one year after another. The State of Kuwait hosted the FINA World Men's Junior (U20s) Water Polo Championships 2019, organized by the Kuwait Swimming Association and the Public Authority for Sport under official supervision from the International Swimming Federation (FINA). The tournament featured 830 players and administrators, as well as 280 delegates and players' parents. The Greek team won the first-place title.

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

Sjostrom pips Dressel for first ISL MVP crown

LAS VEGAS: Sarah Sjostrom dominated Cate Campbell in the final round of the freestyle skins race to lock up International Swimming League's first season Most Valuable Player award as the glitzy new series concluded on Saturday.

The Swedish Olympian's storming finish helped boost her Energy Standard outfit to the team title in the fast-paced professional league, designed to shake up swimming and expand the profile of a sport whose biggest moments traditionally come at the Olympics and World Championship.

And it saw her scoop the \$50,000 season MVP with 243.5 points, just 3.5 points ahead of US star Caeleb Dressel. "I'm very happy I was able to take this title," said Sjostrom, who said the star-studded lineup and frantic all-finals format of the series made for a pressure-filled campaign.

"I was racing some of my biggest competitors in almost every race I had," she said. "I'm not used to that tough racing that often so it was very good experience to race with that much pressure so often."

"I felt like I was swimming the world championships four times this season." Sjostrom said the fact that ISL pitted men against women for the major season award was a drawing factor for her in an age when equality of pay in all

walks of life, including sports, is a hot topic.

"I think this is one of the best parts about the ISL that we race against the men," she said. Dressel, meanwhile, said he had no problem seeing a woman capture the crown. "I don't see that as any honor lost," he said. "Yeah I got beat by a girl today — and I'm all right with that."

Dressel, whose record eight medals at this year's world championships included six golds, won the men's skins race ahead of France's Florent Manaudou and locked up the meet MVP award, worth \$10,000.

Dressel, racing for Cali Condors, also won the 100m free and 50m fly on Saturday as he took his tally of individual wins this weekend to five. That included a 50m free triumph in which he broke Manaudou's short course world record on Friday. While Manaudou couldn't avenge the loss of his world record in the skins race, the French swimmer's runner-up finish put Energy Standard over the top for the team season prize ahead of the London Roar — who had led the standings most of the day.

The 14 men and 14 women of Energy Standard, who share a \$100,000 team jackpot after their win at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas, where they celebrated by plunging together into the event center pool after finishing with 453.5 points to the 444 of London Roar.

Cali Condors were third and LA Current fourth. Japan's Daiya Seto, making his series debut this week for Energy Standard, proved a key addition for his new team. He followed up his world record 400m individual medley win with victories in the 200m IM and the 200m butterfly.

London had surged to the top of the table with six race wins. That included Briton Adam Peaty's 100m breaststroke victory in a blistering



LAS VEGAS: of Sweden, swimming for the Energy Standard team celebrates after winning the Women's 50m Freestyle Skins race during the International Swimming League (ISL) Championship Finale at the Mandalay Bay Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP

55.92sec and Aussie Emma McKeon's 100m free win over Sjostrom.

Energy Standard general manager James Gibson said the team recruited its swimmers with an eye toward the big points events of the skins races and relays, and that paid off. He noted that overall Energy Standard might not be the best on paper, but said his swimmers' resiliency was key.

"If you look on paper we were not the strongest team," Gibson said. "We won when it mattered, the triple points, the skins and the relays. "Today we were 37 points behind at one point and we won."

Manaudou said that's what made the ISL — and sport in general — so exciting. "This is why we are watching sport," he said. "There is a team on paper — but it can be different in the water." — AFP



Abdelaziz Al-Shatti with officials at the Arab Fencing Championship.

Kuwait wins gold in Arab Fencing championship

KUWAIT: Kuwait won its first gold medal in the Arab Fencing Championship in the men's and women's open category, as fencer Abdelaziz Al-Shatti won first place in the epee category during the launch of the championship which will last until Wednesday.

The championship is being held at the Kuwait Fencing Federation hall in Daeya with 10 countries participating: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE, Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar, Yemen, Palestine in addition to Kuwait.

Al-Shatti defeated Saudi Arabia's Zakariya Al-Dawood 15-12 in the final match, while the bronze medal went to both Iraq's Abbas Mohsen and UAE's Abdallah Al-Hamaadi.

In the women category Syria's Najlaa Al-Sharqi won the individual Sabre

beating Lebanon's Rita Abu Judeh, meanwhile, Iraq's Ghadeer Munther and Narjis Ahmad shared the bronze medal.

Manager of Kuwait's national teams Abdelkareem Al-Shamlan expressed his pleasure towards the large participation in the championship which is considered the strongest Arab field of competition.

He lauded Al-Shatti's gold medal, and hoped for more to Kuwait during the coming days, especially that local fencing has a pioneering status in Arabia and Asia. He said the championship is a good preparation for Kuwaiti fencers who the KFF rely on to reach the Tokyo 2020 finals, those are Abdelaziz Al-Shatti, Yousuf Al-Shamlan and Yasser Ali Nasser, and they will participate in world cup rounds, and will collect qualifying points from it.

Charlo stops Harrison to reclaim super welterweight title

LOS ANGELES: Jermell Charlo stopped Tony Harrison in the 11th round to reclaim the World Boxing Council super welterweight title on Saturday in a championship rematch in suburban Los Angeles. Charlo knocked down Harrison in the second round and twice more in the 11th before referee Jack Reiss stopped the bout two minutes and 28 seconds into the 11th of 12 scheduled rounds in Ontario, California. Charlo improved to 33-1 with his 17th victory inside the distance while Harrison fell to 28-3. The showdown of 29-year-old Americans was the first fight for Harrison since he took a unanimous decision over Charlo last December in New York, the only loss of Charlo's career.

"I got that belt back," Charlo said. "I waited until the 11th but I didn't leave it up to the judges." Charlo was leading on the scorecards of two of the three judges in the 11th when he landed a left hook on the champion's chin, staggering Harrison, who wobbled backwards into the ropes and onto his rear.

Charlo landed five punches in a row, a left hook and solid right, sending down Harrison again. Charlo climbed the far ropes to celebrate but Harrison rose and

Reiss let him continue. "I thought it was over," Charlo said. "I'm not the referee. He came to fight. He did what he had to do. He had a lot of pressure on him."

Once fighting resumed, Charlo landed another five punches while wobbly Harrison could only cover up, prompting Reiss to end it. "I ain't going to question whatever he saw," Harrison said. "I started getting a little lax. I got caught between hooks. No excuses. He earned it. I got caught slipping in between. Don't trade your offense for defense."

Harrison wants a third fight between the rivals to settle who is best. "I would love to do it one more time," Harrison said. "I feel like I let (my hometown of Detroit) down. I think I let me down. It's 1-1. Hopefully we do it again."

Charlo said he wants to become the division's first undisputed champion since 2004, which would put him in the path of reigning World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation champion Julian Williams, an American who defends his title next month. "We can kick it again," Charlo said of Harrison's third-fight hopes. "But I'm off to bigger and better things. "I'm down for whatever makes history." —AFP

Sports

Kohli stars as India hold nerve to win ODI series

India next host Sri Lanka for three-match Twenty20 series from January 5

CUTTACK: Skipper Virat Kohli smashed 85 to help India pull off a nervous chase of 316 to win the third one-day international by four wickets against West Indies and clinch the series yesterday.

India relied on a key 58-run sixth-wicket stand between Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja, unbeaten on 39 off 31 balls, to achieve their target with eight balls to spare in Cuttack.

Paceman Keemo Paul claimed three wickets, including that of Kohli in the 47th over, before Jadeja and Shardul Thakur, 17 not out, took the team home and win the series 2-1.

Rohit Sharma, who made 63, and KL Rahul, on 77, lay the foundation of the team's chase with their opening partnership of 122 after the West Indies posted 315 for five. West Indies skipper Kieron Pollard and Nicholas Pooran put together 135 runs for the fifth wicket to lift their side from 144 for four to a fighting total. Pollard remained unbeaten on 74 off 51 deliveries after Pooran hit an attacking 89 to pulverise the Indian bowling in the last 10 overs that got West Indies 118 runs. In response Kohli, who made India bowl first after winning the toss, batted with conviction despite wickets falling from the other end to make the second-ranked ODI side finish the year on a high.

Jason Holder got Sharma caught behind and Alzarri Joseph sent Rahul trudging back to the pavilion after

his second successive score of 50 plus. He made 102 in India's series-levelling second ODI.

But Kohli kept up the attack during his 81-ball knock despite wickets falling at the other end before chopping a wide delivery on the off side onto his stumps.

Thakur then hit two fours and a six in his six-ball cameo to bring the packed house back to life as he celebrated the win with Jadeja.

India paceman Navdeep Saini claimed two wickets after being handed his ODI cap by Kohli. The 27-year-old Saini got his maiden ODI wicket after sending the dangerous Shimron Hetmyer back to the pavilion for 37. Hetmyer's wicket ended a 62-run third-wicket stand with Roston Chase who was bowled by a toe-crushing yorker from Saini for 38 to hurt the West Indies.

But Pooran counter attacked and completed his second successive fifty with a six off left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, who went wicketless after coming into the game with 99 scalps.

He hit 10 fours and three sixes in his knock that lasted 64 balls before falling to Shardul Thakur with a mistimed hit to deep point. Pant dropped three catches to give Chase (on nought), Hetmyer (on nine) and Pooran (on 52) extended stays at the wicket. India will next host Sri Lanka for a three-match Twenty20 series starting January 5. Australia will also travel to India for three ODI matches starting January 14. — AFP



CUTTACK: India's cricketers celebrate after winning the third one day international cricket match of a three-match series between India and West Indies to win the series 2-1 at the Barabati Stadium in Cuttack yesterday. — AFP

Pakistan close in on series win despite Oshada ton

KARACHI: Sri Lanka opener Oshada Fernando struck a maiden century to delay Pakistan's victory quest after the home team's top four all scored hundreds in the second Test in Karachi yesterday.

Set a daunting 476 runs to win, Sri Lanka were tottering at 97 for five before Oshada and Niroshan Dickwella halted the slide with a resolute 104-run stand for the sixth wicket.

But the last three overs of the day saw Dickwella fall for 65 — bowled while attempting a reverse sweep off spinner Haris Sohail — and Dilruwan Perera caught behind off Naseem Shah for five.

The 16-year-old Naseem had the best figures of 3-31. At the close, Sri Lanka were 212 for seven with Oshada (102 not out) at the crease and with the visitors needing an unlikely 264 runs for victory.

Pakistan need just three wickets on Monday to win the series — their first at home since the 2009 attack on the Sri Lanka side resulted in international cricket being suspended in the country.

Pakistan earlier declared their second innings at lunch on 555 for three after Azhar returned to form with 118 and Babar Azam struck 100 not out.

It was a dismal batting show by the Sri Lankans on a National Stadium pitch where the home batsmen flourished. Skipper Dimuth Karunaratne went for 16, Kusal Mendis for a duck and Angelo Mathews for 19 before tea.

Pace spearhead Mohammad Abbas had Karunaratne caught behind in the tenth over of the innings before Naseem had Mendis snapped up in the slips.

It became 70 for three when Mathews, Sri Lanka's most experienced batsman, edged a short delivery from Shaheen Shah Afridi to wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan.

After tea, young Naseem accounted for Dinesh Chandimal (two) and leg-spinner Yasir Shah dismissed Dhananjaya de Silva (nought) to leave Sri Lanka struggling at 97 for five.

In the morning Pakistan batsmen played the Sri Lankan bowling. It was only the second time in a Test innings that the top four all scored centuries after openers Abid Ali (174) and Shan Masood (135) grabbed theirs on Saturday. India against Bangladesh at Dhaka in 2007 was the other occasion. Azhar, who had a lean 2019, completed his 16th century before he was stumped off spinner Lasith Embuldeniya after 11 boundaries in his 157-



KARACHI: Sri Lanka's Niroshan Dickwella (L) is bowled out by Pakistan's Haris Sohail (unseen) as wicketkeeper Mohammad Rizwan (R) look on during the fourth day of the second Test cricket match between Pakistan and Sri Lanka at the National Cricket Stadium in Karachi yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

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

Pakistan 1st innings 191 (Asad Shafiq 63, Babar Azam 60; L. Kumara 4-49; L. Embuldeniya 4-71)	Embuldeniya 50-4-193-1 (1w), Perera 21-1-94-0 (1w), De Silva 7-0-19-0
Sri Lanka 1st innings 271 (D. Chandimal 74, D. Perera 48; Shaheen Shah Afridi 5-77, Mohammad Abbas 4-55)	
Pakistan 2nd innings	Sri Lanka 2nd innings
Shan Masood c Oshada b Kumara 135	D. Karunaratne c Rizwan b Abbas 16
Abid Ali lbw b Kumara 174	O. Fernando not out 102
Azhar Ali st Dickwella b Embuldeniya 118	K. Mendis c Azam b Naseem 0
Babar Azam not out 100	A. Mathews c Rizwan b Shaheen 19
Mohammad Rizwan not out 21	D. Chandimal lbw b Naseem 2
Extras (lb5, w2) 7	D. de Silva b Yasir 0
Total (for 3 wkts declared, 131 overs) 555	N. Dickwella b Sohail 65
Did not bat: Haris Sohail, Asad Shafiq, Yasir Shah, Mohammad Abbas, Naseem Shah, Shaheen Shah Afridi	D. Perera c Rizwan b Naseem 5
Fall of wickets: 1-278 (Masood), 2-355 (Abid), 3-503 (Azhar)	Extras: (lb 3) 3
Bowling: Fernando 24-2-105-0, Kumara 29-5-139-2,	Total: (for seven wkts: 60.1 overs) 212
	Still to bat: V. Fernando, L. Kumara, L. Embuldeniya
	Fall of wickets: 1-39 (Karunaratne), 2-40 (Mendis), 3-70 (Mathews), 4-96 (Chandimal), 5-97 (De Silva), 6-201 (Dickwella), 7-212 (Perera)
	Bowling: Shaheen 14-3-51-1, Abbas 12-2-33-1, Naseem 11.1-3-31-3, Yasir 19-2-84-1, Sohail 4-0-10-1.

ball innings.

Azam's fourth century — and third in the last four Tests — had seven boundaries and a six off 131 balls. Earlier, when Pakistan resumed at 395 for two, Azhar smashed three boundaries off pace bowler Vishwa Fernando

and then took two runs to complete his first century in 12 months.

Azhar added 148 for the third wicket with Azam as Sri Lankan bowlers toiled hard for wickets. Lahiru Kumara finished with two for 139. — AFP

Capitals sink Lightning late for season sweep

WASHINGTON: Dmitry Orlov scored the tiebreaking goal late in the third period, and Nic Dowd added an empty-netter as the Washington Capitals defeated the visiting Tampa Bay Lightning 3-1 Saturday night. The game was tied 1-1 when two penalties forced Washington to play two men short for 86 seconds. But the Capitals killed off those penalties, and Orlov broke the deadlock less than a minute later with a slap shot from just inside the left point for a 2-1 lead with 6:03 remaining. Washington was called for another penalty a few minutes later, and Tampa Bay coach Jon Cooper pulled goalie Curtis McElhinney with just under four minutes left. That gave the Lightning a 6-on-4 advantage, but Dowd scored a short-handed empty-netter with 2:23 left. The victory let the Capitals sweep the three-game season series with Tampa Bay.

JETS 6, WILD 0

Connor Hellebuyck made 31 saves, and Blake Wheeler became the leading points-scorer in franchise history as Winnipeg shut out Minnesota. Wheeler earned a goal and an assist, giving him 616 points in his career with the Jets/Atlanta Thrashers franchise. Ilya Kovalchuk held the previous record with 615 points. After recording only an .867 save percentage and a 1-3-0 record over his previous four games, Hellebuyck was terrific. Patrik Laine scored his 12th and 13th goals for the forward's second multi-goal game of the season, both against the Wild. Josh Morrissey had three assists as the Jets reached the six-goal plateau for the second time this season.

PREDATORS 4, BRUINS 3 (OT)

Ryan Ellis scored with 55 seconds remaining in overtime, and visiting Nashville edged struggling Boston. Roman Josi had two goals, and Filip Forsberg also scored as the Predators won for the third time in four games. Ryan Johansen had three assists, and Pekka Rinne stopped 29 shots in net. Patrice Bergeron scored twice, including the tying goal with 1:05 left in the third period, and Par Lindholm also tallied. Jaroslav Halak made 25 saves for the Bruins, who have lost eight of their last nine (1-4-4).

PANTHERS 4, HURRICANES 2

Chris Driedger, making just his third NHL start, stopped 42 shots to lead Florida to a win over Carolina in Raleigh, N.C. It was Florida's first win at Carolina since Dec. 18, 2015. Panthers winger Noel Acciari, coming off two straight hat tricks, scored one goal and has 12 for the season. Evgenii Dadonov, Brian Boyle and Jonathan Huberdeau also scored for the Panthers, who won their third straight game. Carolina, which had its three-game win streak snapped, got goals from Nino Niederreiter and Lucas Wallmark. Hurricanes goalie Petr Mrazek made 18 saves.

BLACKHAWKS 5, AVALANCHE 3

Patrick Kane and Kirby Dach scored 28 seconds apart to start a third-period rally. Dominik Kubalik scored a go-ahead goal late in the third, and visiting Chicago beat Colorado in Denver. Jonathan Toews had a goal and two assists, Connor Murphy scored an empty-net goal and Robin Lehner had 28 saves for the Blackhawks. Kubalik and Kane also had assists. Matt Calvert scored twice, Ryan Graves had a goal and an assist and Tyson Jost had two assists for the Avalanche, who blew a late lead before losing in regulation for the second straight game. Philipp Grubauer stopped 27 shots.

BLUES 5, SHARKS 2

Alex Pietrangolo's tie-breaking goal midway through the third period was the game-winner, and Jaden Schwartz scored once in a

three-point game as visiting St. Louis beat San Jose. Pietrangolo added another goal on an empty-netter. Goaltender Jake Allen made 34 saves for the Western Conference-leading Blues, who have won five straight games. Goalie Martin Jones stopped 23 shots for the Sharks, who have dropped two straight games and have just one win in their last nine outings (1-7-1).

SABRES 3, KINGS 2

Rasmus Ristolainen, Marco Scandella and Victor Olofsson scored goals, and Buffalo defeated Los Angeles for its fifth straight home win. Sam Reinhart had two assists and Linus Ullmark made 25 saves for the Sabres, who were coming off an 0-2-1 road trip. Jack Eichel had an assist to extend his point streak — the longest active streak in the NHL — to 18 games. Adrian Kempe and Dustin Brown scored, and Jonathan Quick made 25 saves for the Kings, whose six-game point streak (4-0-2) came to an end in the finale of their season-long six-game road trip.

CANUCKS 4, PENGUINS 1

Elias Pettersson and J.T. Miller each had a goal and an assist as Vancouver defeated visiting Pittsburgh. Jake Virtanen and Brock Boeser also scored for the Canucks, who won their second in a row. Goaltender Jacob Markstrom made 28 saves. Jake Guentzel scored for the Penguins, who had their four-game winning streak snapped. Goalie Matt Murray, starting for the first time in six games, stopped 10 of Vancouver's season-low 14 shots. Pittsburgh failed to put a shot on net in the first period before peppering 20 in the second.

OILERS 4, CANADIENS 3

Riley Sheahan scored the game-winner, while a trio of teammates collected a goal and an assist each Edmonton's win over Montreal. Sheahan put the Oilers ahead for the third and final time at the 7:48 mark of the third period, when he converted a give-and-go during a two-on-one rush with Josh Archibald for his third goal of the season and second in as many games. Goaltender Mikko Koskinen made 23 saves for the Oilers, who ended a two-game losing skid. Archibald, Connor McDavid and Leon Draisaitl all netted a pair of points in the win.

FLYERS 5, SENATORS 4 (SO)

Sean Couturier scored the only goal in the shootout as Philadelphia beat host Ottawa. Goalie Brian Elliott, who made 30 saves, denied Tyler Ennis, Anthony Duclair and Vladislav Namestnikov to move to 6-0-2 against the Senators, who selected him in the 2003 draft. James van Riemsdyk notched two goals, Jakub Voracek collected a goal and an assist, and Kevin Hayes scored for the Flyers, who have won nine of 13. Ennis collected two goals and an assist, for Ottawa, which played its third straight overtime game (1-0-2).

DUCKS 6, ISLANDERS 5

Jakob Silfverberg's backhanded goal in the bottom of the shootout's third round helped Anaheim sweep the season series from New York in a win in Uniondale, N.Y. After teammate Max Comtois and New York's Josh Bailey scored, Silfverberg lifted the game-winner over goalie Semyon Varlamov. Adam Henrique recorded a goal and an assist. Comtois, Sam Carrick, Silfverberg and Cam Fowler had markers, and Hampus Lindholm collected two assists. John Gibson, who shut out the Islanders on Nov. 25, made 28 saves. New York's Nick Leddy had a goal and two assists, and Mathew Barzal, Brock Nelson, Ryan Pulock and Anders Lee each contributed a goal and a helper. Jordan Eberle and Derick Brassard each notched two assists. — Reuters

Race against time for ill English bowling trio

JOHANNESBURG: England bowlers Jofra Archer, Stuart Broad and Jack Leach did not make use of a last opportunity for a bowl in their warm-up match yesterday, suggesting it could be a close call for their participation in the first test against South Africa.

The trio have been battling with flu since arriving in South Africa last week, missing the opening two-day warm-up against an Invitation XI and now the second warm-up against South Africa A, which was downgraded from first class status to allow them to possibly play, even on only the last of the three day match.

But they did not take up the chance and are now in a race against time to be fit for the first test at Centurion, which starts on Boxing Day. "It's a

tricky one, it's going to have to be managed very well, but we are on it," said England captain Joe Root after the match against South Africa A at Willowmoore Park in Benoni, on the outskirts of Johannesburg, was drawn yesterday.

"We are trying to make sure we give them the best chance possible. It's not ideal but when these things happen we just have to get on with it.

"I'm sure they'll do everything possible over the next couple of days to make sure they are ready and that's all you can ask." "When it comes to it, we have to make some very shrewd decisions. We should not take anything off the table and we'll evaluate things sensibly when we are in a position to do so," Root told reporters.

"The next three days are crucial. We've managed the illnesses as best we can." The three bowlers were among several squad members bedridden for most of last week, kept apart from the rest of the squad for fear of the bug spreading, but did have a brief net session on Saturday.

It opened up the possibility that they might bowl on Sunday but the trio did not arrive at the ground with the rest of the squad, pitching only later for another net session. The return of James Anderson after injury tempers any blow and Root said he was pleased with bowling contribution from Chris Woakes, Sam Curran, Matt Parkinson and Ben Stokes over the weekend. "The guys who have played in the game have stood up well and taken that on," Root added. — Reuters

Sports

Liverpool head home hungry for more after being crowned world champions

Firmino's extra-time goal secures 1-0 victory over Flamengo

DOHA: Liverpool have made winning trophies a habit in 2019 and Jurgen Klopp's side return to England and to their push for the Premier League title galvanised after being crowned world champions in Qatar on Saturday.

It is an honour the Anfield side had never before claimed but which is now theirs after Roberto Firmino's extra-time goal secured a 1-0 victory over Flamengo in a hard-fought Club World Cup final in Doha.

The latest piece of silverware is Liverpool's third in little over six months, after they won the Champions League in June and began this season by winning the UEFA Supercup on penalties against Chelsea. "The year 2019 for the club has been outstanding," said defender Virgil van Dijk.

"But we shouldn't be satisfied with it. We should keep going, keep striving for more, and keep wanting more trophies." Van Dijk returned against Flamengo after illness kept him out of the 2-1 semi-final victory against Monterrey and that determination to be back playing summed up Liverpool's attitude towards the competition.

The Club World Cup is not held in the highest regard in Europe, coming in the middle of a busy club season. That is in contrast to South America, with Flamengo's huge support in Doha showing just how much Saturday's game meant to them.

"It might have been different had we got beat, then maybe some people would have said we were wasting our time or whatever," acknowledged Andy Robertson. "But for us even if we did lose it was all worthwhile because we had a chance to win a trophy that the club had never won before."

He added that "2019 has been incredible, we have won three trophies and hopefully in 2020 there is a couple more for us." Liverpool will continue their defence of the Champions League with a last-16 tie against Atletico Madrid in February, and host local rivals Everton in the FA Cup third round on January 5.

However, the Premier League is the one they really have in their sights as they seek a first English title since 1990. As well as the trophies in 2019, Klopp's team have not lost a league game since their very first outing of the year, at Manchester City. They have won 25 and drawn one of their last 26 in the Premier League.

There was more good news for them on Saturday as nearest rivals Leicester City lost 3-1 at Manchester City, leaving Liverpool 10 points clear at the top with a game in hand. Klopp's squad have little time for celebrations, however, as they return to England to prepare to visit Leicester on Thursday.

But while a week in Qatar might have seemed like an unwanted distraction for some in a busy schedule, Klopp was keen to point out that his team have still played the same number of games as their challengers.

"If we hadn't played here tonight we would have played at West Ham, so the same number of games, the same situation, and the difference is the climate, even if it was not as warm as probably Europeans would have expected at the moment," said the German. "It is still something we have to adapt to. But that is the only thing that is special, so it's all good, and we need to make sure that we come home safely, and recover in the plane already, and then prepare the Leicester game."

With several players already out, however, the



DOHA: Liverpool's players lift the trophy following the 2019 FIFA Club World Cup Final football match between England's Liverpool and Brazil's Flamengo at the Khalifa International Stadium in the Qatari capital Doha. — AFP

downside was seeing Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain go off hurt in the second half against Flamengo, and the midfielder may be set for another spell on the sidelines.

"When he was landing he got a kick and rolled

over. It is far away from being perfect, but we will see if the ligament is only stretched, or ruptured partly," Klopp said. "It's a big shadow again but that's how it is in contact sport." — AFP

Mbappe double keeps PSG's cushion over Marseille

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe scored twice as Paris Saint-Germain maintained their seven-point lead at the top of Ligue 1 with a 4-1 victory over Amiens on Saturday. World Cup winner Mbappe, who celebrated his 21st birthday on Friday, netted either side of Neymar's effort before Mauro Icardi added a late fourth at the Parc de Princes. Steven Mendoza claimed a consolation effort for the visitors who dropped into the relegation zone. "Kylian and Neymar are really good together, they've

gained confidence. Neymar pushes Kylian and Kylian pushes Neymar," PSG coach Thomas Tuchel said.

"We played like a team. Now the challenge is to keep this attitude," he added. Second-placed Marseille remain behind their bitter rivals going into the two-week winter break with a 3-1 win over Nimes.

Tuchel recalled Neymar, the world's most expensive player, to the squad after resting him for the midweek League Cup victory over second-tier Le Mans. Amiens boss Luka Elsner chose against giving striker Alexis Blin a start despite his injury time match-winner in Wednesday's cup success over Angers.

Mbappe opened the scoring after 12 minutes to claim his 40th goal of the calendar year, chipping over goalkeeper Regis Gurnier after a sweeping counter-attack move. Neymar scored a second, his fourth in as many league matches, two minutes into the second half before captain Thiago Silva left the field with an ankle

injury after 58 minutes.

Mbappe clinched his double on 65 minutes firing past Gurnier's near-post. Colombia winger Mendoza netted his fifth of the season with 20 minutes to play before Icardi made sure of the rout after 84 minutes.

Elsewhere, captain Dmitri Payet starred in Marseille's convincing victory over Nimes. The 38-time France international was inches away from claiming the opener before Sofiane Alakouch turned a cross into his own net. He was involved in the build-up to Dario Benedetto's second effort before celebrating his second goal in four matches by donning a Santa Claus hat. "We'll make the most of the holidays because we've deserved them. We will rest well before attacking January and February which will be tough," Payet told Canal+. Rennes rose to third edging Bordeaux 1-0 thanks to Mbaye Niang's effort as Lille dropped to fourth after a 5-1 hammering at Monaco.

Bucks blast Knicks

NEW YORK: Giannis Antetokounmpo totaled 22 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for his third triple-double of the season, and the Milwaukee Bucks never trailed to match the best 30-game start in team history with a 123-102 victory over the host New York Knicks at Madison Square Garden on Saturday night. The Bucks won for the 20th time in 21 games and improved to 26-4, matching the start by the 1971-72 team that won 63 games with Hall of Famers Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and Oscar Robertson. Listed as probable due to back soreness, Antetokounmpo produced his 17th career triple-double and first in 23 career games against the Knicks. His latest big game helped the Bucks to their 10th win in the last 11 meetings with New York.

HOUSTON ROCKETS 139 - PHOENIX SUNS 125

James Harden drained nine 3-pointers while recording 47 points, six rebounds and seven assists to lead Houston over host Phoenix. Russell Westbrook added 30 points and 10 assists as the Rockets defeated the Suns for the 13th straight time. Houston shot 58.6 percent from the field, including 19 of 41 from 3-point range. Harden hit 15 of 27 shots and was 9 of 19 from behind the arc. Kelly Oubre Jr. scored 26 points for the Suns, who lost their sixth in a row and 14th in their past 18. Devin Booker added 19 points, nine assists and six rebounds. Center Deandre Ayton (ankle) and point guard Ricky Rubio (illness) sat out for the Suns.

LA CLIPPERS 134 - SAN ANTONIO SPURS 109

Kawhi Leonard was booed loudly every time he touched the ball but still poured in 26 points, leading six Los Angeles players in double-figure scoring as the visitors routed San Antonio. Leonard was traded from the Spurs to Toronto before last season, then signed with the Clippers this past offseason. He added nine assists and seven rebounds. Montrezl Harrell had 21 points, with Lou Williams scoring 20 for the Clippers.

UTAH JAZZ 114 - CHARLOTTE HORNETS 107

Bojan Bogdanovic scored 26 points as Utah used a strong late-game kick to defeat the host Charlotte, pushing its winning streak to five games. Utah has won its first two stops of a three-game road trip. The Jazz outscored Charlotte 58-43 in the second half. Donovan Mitchell added 20 points for Utah, and Rudy Gobert had 17 points and 19 rebounds. Bogdanovic hit four 3-point baskets and went 8-for-8 on free throws. The Jazz were 19 of 20 as a team from the foul line.

BROOKLYN NETS 122 - ATLANTA HAWKS 112

Spencer Dinwiddie scored 39 points as Brooklyn overcame an 18-point deficit and stormed back in the fourth quarter to beat Atlanta in New York. The Nets improved to 12-6 without Kyrie Irving (right shoulder impingement) and overcame a 47-point showing from Atlanta star Trae Young, who came within two of his career-high. Dinwiddie shot 13-of-27 in producing his sixth 30-point game of the season and 11th of his career. He scored 16 points in the fourth quarter when the Nets outscored Atlanta 37-14. — Reuters



MILAN: Inter Milan's Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku (L) and Genoa's Argentinian defender Cristian Romero go for the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Inter Milan vs Genoa at the San Siro stadium in Milan. — AFP

Esposito breaks 60-year record as Inter go top with 4-goal stroll

MILAN: Sebastiano Esposito became Inter Milan's youngest scorer in more than 60 years on Saturday when he hit the target in a 4-0 romp against Genoa, helping his side return to the top of Serie A. The 17-year-old put away a second-half penalty which made him the youngest Inter scorer since Mario Corso in 1958. Romelu Lukaku scored twice with Roberto Gagliardini adding another as Inter moved level with champions Juventus at the top on 42 points. Juve had taken top spot on Wednesday with a 2-1 win over Sampdoria before heading to Saudi Arabia where they face Lazio in the Italian Super Cup.

However, Inter are now in pole position courtesy of goal difference. "I just saw my mum in the stands and the goal is for her," a tearful Esposito, who is 17 years and 172 days old, told Sky Sport Italia.

"I didn't sleep at all last night (after he was told he would start the game). I spent the whole night thinking about what would happen today." The teenager also hailed Lukaku who gave him the ball to take the penalty even though he could have finished the game with a hat-trick.

"Romelu is a fantastic person as well as being an

extraordinary player. He told me, just go out there, make a decision and hit the ball." Genoa, now without a Serie A win at Inter since 1994, end the year at the bottom of the table after a 10th defeat this season.

Lukaku opened the scoring after 31 minutes, heading in a cross from Antonio Candreva. Within a minute it was 2-0 when Lukaku teed-up Gagliardini whose shot was deflected off Cristian Romero and into the goal.

Esposito added his name to the scoresheet from the spot in the 64th minute when Kevin Agudelo fouled Gagliardini. Lukaku's gesture to his teenage teammate was rewarded when he hit a long-range drive which went in off the underside of the crossbar for his second of the night and his team's fourth seven minutes later.

"I saw him in pre-season training and he just looked like a little child, even his face seems so young," said Inter coach Antonio Conte of Esposito. "He has really grown in the last couple of months and he has a great future ahead of him." Gagliardini suffered their first away defeat of the season, losing 2-1 at Udinese as their Champions League hopes suffered a blow. Rolando Maran's side have now won just once in their last five games, claiming only a single point in their three most recent outings.

Argentine Rodrigo de Paul gave Udinese a first-half lead before Joao Pedro levelled for Cagliari in the 84th minute. However, Ivory Coast international Seko Fofana restored Udinese's advantage just a minute later to wrap up the three points.

SPAL claimed their first league win in two months when they edged Torino 2-1, a victory which allowed them to move off the bottom of Serie A and into 19th spot. Earlier on Saturday, Fiorentina fired coach Vincenzo Montella with the club struggling in 15th in Serie A. — AFP

Bayern make Flick head coach until 'at least' end of season

BERLIN: Bayern Munich yesterday confirmed interim boss Hansi Flick will remain head coach "until at least" the end of the season after winning eight of his 10 games in charge.

"FC Bayern and Hansi Flick have agreed" that he "will remain head coach... at least until the end of the current season," the club said in a statement. "A continuation of Hansi Flick as head coach beyond that is a conceivable option for FC Bayern."

The 54-year-old, an assistant with the Germany team that won the 2014 World Cup, took charge after Niko Kovac was sacked in early November.

Saturday's 2-0 home win over Wolfsburg kept Bayern third in the Bundesliga heading into the four-week winter break, four points behind leaders RB Leipzig. Under Flick Bayern reached the last 16 of the Champions League and became the first German club to win all six matches in the group stage.

"FC Bayern is very satisfied with the work of Hansi Flick," said club chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. "Under him as head coach, the sporting development is outstanding, both in terms of the quality of our game and the results achieved."

"In the Champions League group stage, we set a new record. I am convinced that FC Bayern will continue next year where it left off in the last few games, namely playing attractive and successful football."

Flick got off to a flying start by winning his first four games at a canter last month with Bayern scoring 16 goals and conceding none.

However back-to-back league defeats, both by a 2-1 margin, at home to Bayer Leverkusen and away to Borussia Moenchengladbach dampened the mood before Bayern won their last three games of 2019.

Several key Bayern players, most noticeably Thomas Mueller and Philippe Coutinho, who has rebooted his career on loan from Barcelona, have flourished under Flick.

"Hansi deserves our trust," said sports director Hasan Salihamidzic. "The fact that our players have presented themselves so convincingly in the past few weeks shows that we are on the right track with Hansi Flick."

"I am convinced that we can achieve our sporting goals with him, whether in the Bundesliga, German Cup or the Champions League." Bayern face Chelsea in the last 16 in Europe in a repeat of the 2012 final won by the Blues.

After the Christmas break Flick will take his squad to Doha from January 4-10 for a training camp before their first league game of 2020, against Hertha Berlin on January 19.

"I am happy that FC Bayern continue to place their trust in me as head coach," said Flick. "I really enjoy working with the team and the coaching staff. "Now we're recharging the batteries again and then we will try to bring as many victories and titles to Munich as possible."

There was more good news for Bayern on Saturday night as top scorer Robert Lewandowski, who has 19 goals in 17 league games, successfully underwent a groin operation. The Poland star is expected to take part in the winter camp. — AFP

25 Patriots and Texans win to capture NFL division crowns



26 Kohli stars as India hold nerve to win ODI series



27 Liverpool head home hungry for more after being crowned world champions



Racism scars Chelsea win at Spurs

LONDON: Frank Lampard out-witted Jose Mourinho as Chelsea powered to a 2-0 win at Tottenham yesterday that featured a double from Willian, a red card for Son Heung-min and allegations of racist abuse.

Billed as a showdown between Mourinho and Lampard, an explosive London derby showed the student is more than a match for the man who served as his mentor during their time together at Chelsea.

Blues boss Lampard pulled a tactical masterstroke as he cleverly changed his team's formation, leaving Tottenham manager Mourinho unable to respond as Willian opened the scoring with a blistering strike and increased Chelsea's lead with a penalty before half-time. Tottenham's South Korean star Son was sent off for a needless kick at Antonio Rudiger in the second half as Chelsea swept to a sweet victory over their former manager.

With top four rivals Manchester United losing at Watford earlier in the day, it will be a happy festive period for Lampard's fourth placed side, who sit six points clear of seventh placed Tottenham after ending a run of four defeats from their last five Premier League games. There was little Christmas cheer for Tottenham, who may have to answer for the behaviour of their fans amid claims Rudiger was racially abused and an object was thrown at Chelsea keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga.

A fan was seen directing a 'monkey ges-

ture' at Rudiger and three announcements over the tannoy that "racist behaviour from spectators is interfering with the game" painted a bleak picture of the latest racist incident to scar European football this term.

Lampard had already beaten Mourinho last season when his Derby met the Portuguese coach's Manchester United in the League Cup and once again he proved too smart for his old boss. After a hug and handshake between Lampard and Mourinho, there was a poignant minute's applause for Tottenham and England World Cup winner Martin Peters, who died aged 76 on Saturday.

Those shows of respect marked the end of the civilities as Tottenham fans booed Marcos Alonso vociferously and chanted about his involvement in a fatal car crash in Spain several years ago. Chelsea had the perfect response to the cruel taunts as they completely dominated possession in the early stages and took the lead in the 12th minute.

With Tottenham too slow to mark up, Willian took a short corner to Mateo Kovacic and when the Brazilian received the return pass, he adroitly side-stepped Serge Aurier before curling a superb finish into the far corner of Paulo Gazzaniga's net.

There was an extra edge about Willian's celebrations given the abuse of Alonso as he sprinted to pose in front of the Tottenham fans. Aware of Chelsea's frailties at the back,

Lampard had switched to a five-man defence and dropped Jorginho in a move that allowed N'Golo Kante to return to his preferred deep-lying midfield role.

The tactical tweak worked a treat and Tottenham's only decent chance of the entire match was wasted by Harry Kane, who fired over from Moussa Sissoko's cross.

With the supply lines to Kane shut down, Lampard's team deservedly doubled their lead in first half stoppage-time.

To the chagrin of Tottenham's fans, Alonso was the catalyst as he chased a long ball into the penalty area and was clattered by Gazzaniga's desperate rush off his line.

After a VAR review, the spot-kick was awarded, with Willian calmly slotting past Gazzaniga for his fifth goal of an exceptional campaign for the winger. That made it an alarming 14 goals conceded in all competitions by Tottenham since Mourinho replaced Mauricio Pochettino. Any hopes of a Tottenham comeback were quashed in the 62nd minute by Son's needless clash with Rudiger. Falling to the turf after a collision with the Chelsea defender, Son responded by kicking both feet at Rudiger.

A lengthy VAR review led to Son's dismissal for violent conduct, sparking an ugly end to the clash as Tottenham fans appeared to tarnish their club with sick racist taunts at Rudiger. — AFP



LONDON: Chelsea's Brazilian midfielder Willian (C) vies with Tottenham Hotspur's Ivorian defender Serge Aurier (R) during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, yesterday.—AFP

Lazio down Juventus for Super Cup win

RIYADH: Lazio won the Italian Super Cup for a fifth time yesterday, defeating Cristiano Ronaldo's Juventus 3-1 in a game played in the Saudi Arabia capital of Riyadh.

Lazio, the only team to have defeated Juve in Serie A this season, were in front through Luis Alberto after

just 16 minutes. Paulo Dybala levelled just before the break but Bosnian international Senad Lulic restored Lazio's advantage in the 73rd minute. Danilo Cataldi added a third in the fourth minute of stoppage time from a free kick after Juve's Uruguayan midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur had been sent off. — AFP



RIYADH: Lazio players celebrate after winning the Supercoppa Italiana final football match between Juventus and Lazio at the King Saud University Stadium in the Saudi capital yesterday. — AFP

De Gea howler gifts Watford shock win over Man United

WATFORD: A terrible blunder from Manchester United goalkeeper David de Gea helped Premier League basement side Watford to a 2-0 victory yesterday for their first home win of the season and maiden victory under coach Nigel Pearson.

The Spain keeper, who had conceded a soft goal in last week's 1-1 draw with Everton, allowed the weakest of shots from Ismaila Sarr through his hands in the 50th minute, putting Watford in front for the first time in a home game this season. Senegalese winger Sarr was then tripped by United's usually reliable Aaron Wan-Bissaka and earned the penalty from which Troy Deeney doubled Watford's lead in the 54th minute, sending De Gea the wrong way and blasting into the net.

United, who have failed to build on the momentum from back-to-back wins over Tottenham Hotspur and

champions Manchester City earlier this month, produced yet another limp display and failed to hit the target in the first half. United's fifth Premier League defeat of the season leaves them eighth on 25 points after 18 games, while Watford are still bottom but level on 12 points with 19th-placed Norwich City.

United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer wrote off De Gea's costly error as a rare error but was scathing about his side's performance. "It was a mistake, it happens in football and it is what we train for every day to make sure they don't happen again. David has been very good lately. It is just one of those things that happen," he told reporters.

"We started the game slow. The first half was very, very poor from both sides, it was too slow, like a testimonial. You have to earn every point on the pitch and today we didn't deserve that."

Jesse Lingard missed United's best chance when he attempted to lob Watford keeper Ben Foster when through on goal and hit the roof of the net.

Club record signing Paul Pogba made his first appearance since facing Arsenal on Sept. 30 by coming on in the second half but failed to lift his side, who barely managed to trouble Foster until a late siege which also proved ineffective. — Reuters

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