

Friday Times

ISSUE NO: 18021

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— Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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Labor suicides



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

Despite official statements that usually reject and condemn the crime of human trafficking and exploitation of poor people for money by bringing them from their countries under false work contracts, this devastating offense still occurs. Recently, it ended with the death of a poor Egyptian man. He came to work in Kuwait to start a new life, but ended it here.

The worker threw himself from the tenth floor trying to escape from security men who surrounded the residence where he lived with a number of workers in Ahmadi governorate, after a complaint was filed against them by the manager of the company that brought them to Kuwait. His death revealed all secrets!

Investigations disclosed that the officials of the company involved in trade and contracting took up to \$5,000 to bring Arab expatriates to Kuwait and left them without actual work. Later, the workers found themselves in a big problem, after they had paid this large sum of money to get a job. Some of them had sold everything they owned. They had no idea that the offer was fake and there was no job for them at all. When they demanded the company abide by the contracts they signed with them, the company abandoned them and told them to go back to their country. But what about the money that these poor people paid?!

Local dailies said the authorities will refer officials of this company to the judiciary to face charges related to human trafficking. Also, the manpower authority has opened an investigation into the death of the Egyptian who jumped from the tenth floor. A number of his friends were called in for questioning and they confirmed that the company had taken money ranging between KD 1,500 and KD 1,700 in exchange for work contracts that later turned out to be fake and left them without real jobs.

Egyptian expats form the largest Arab community in Kuwait, which has a population of more than four million people, in which the proportion of expats is more than twice the number of citizens. This is why rules regarding labor must be tightened and no manipulation should be allowed.

I believe that it is not only about a worker who committed suicide or a company that stole money from workers. I am surprised why the society does not reject these practices that are harmful to us and as a country, by not allowing such things to happen from the onset and making sure that no company exploits its influence to earn money at the expense of the poor.

March witnessed a gathering by a number of Arab workers in front of their country's embassy in Kuwait to ask it to intervene to resolve their problems after they fell victim to fraud by a company that did not adhere to the contracts they agreed on and did not pay them their wages.

I hope the ministry of social affairs and public authority for manpower have an official and immediate stand to close the file of the company until the investigation is completed, and the name of any company that acts in such a manner should be announced publicly. Also, the number of workers who came through this company and the reasons for the dispute should be revealed as a lesson and warning to possible newcomers. This issue will need the authorities in Kuwait to take a decisive stance.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



KUWAIT: A maintenance man climbs the sphere of Kuwait Towers to perform maintenance work. — Photo by Mohammad Al-Hajeri (KUNA)

Events for the (paying) public



IN MY VIEW

By Nawara Fattahova

nawara@kuwaittimes.net

It is disappointing that many of the activities or events that we used to attend or visit for free - even those that one has to pay for in other countries such as museums - are no longer gratis. For instance, fairs or exhibitions were always free of charge, but now there are some that require entrance fees, although the visitor will not get any service for this payment.

Most of these fairs are about shopping, so there is nothing to see and nothing that entertains. In some of these fairs and bazaars, the only thing to do is shop and eat and yet we are asked to pay an entrance fee? So we are now paying to be allowed the privilege of buying things?

Events that aim to promote a subculture like cosplay or sporting events often require a registration fee but if the purpose is to grow the community, how can this happen when it has become too expensive just to take part? Why does everything have to be turned into a for profit business? I enjoy taking part in walkathons but not when they cost more than a weekend holiday.

Many of these activities were once organized by public institutions or else as CSR initiatives but more and more

are actual profit generating activities.

Sports events, particularly marathons, walkathons and others, were also known to be free of charge to enter. Many of these races were organized by private and even public institutions. The purpose was to encourage people to practice sport after various ailments spread in the society related to a sedentary lifestyle, such as obesity, diabetes and many others.

Participation was always free of charge, but it seems that after these events got successful and highly attended by the public, organizers started to hold these races for a registration fee. They defend the charges by saying most or part of the revenues from entry fees is donated to charity.

People are still participating in these sports activities even after fees were introduced, which encouraged even more new entities to organize similar activities, as they can make good profits. Maybe more activities that are currently free will soon become paid-for events, as it seems most people don't mind paying!

Ready for the Beach ??



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Early morning partial solar eclipse in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Kuwait witnessed a partial solar eclipse with 80 percent of the sun's disk covered by the moon. The eclipse started round 06:40 am and ended at around 07:48 am yesterday. Kuwait witnessed several partial solar eclipses in 1914, 1922, 1976 and 1999. A total eclipse was witnessed in Kuwait on February 25, 1952 in the era of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. According to predictions, the next total eclipse in Kuwait is expected on March 20, 2034. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



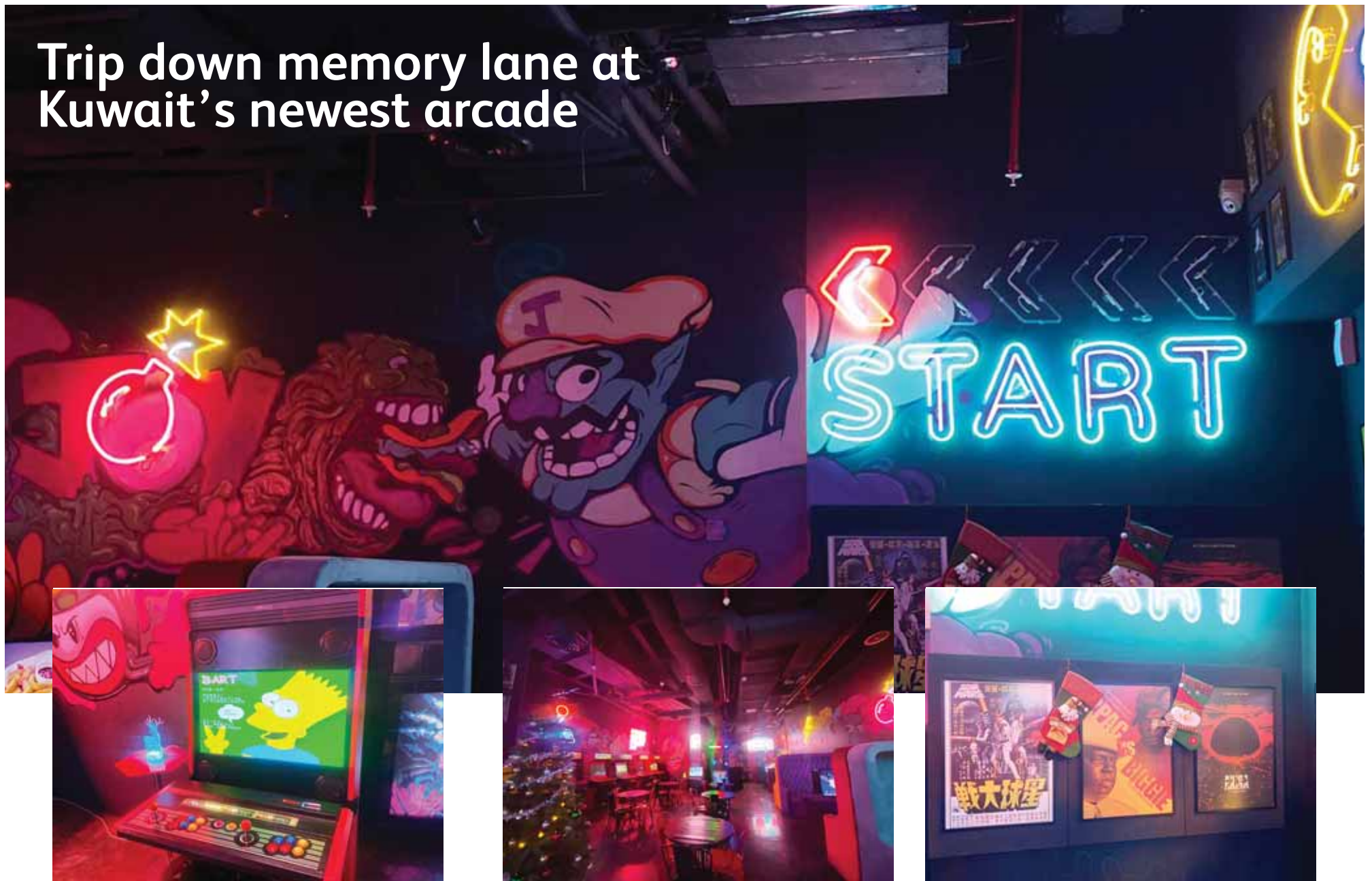
Local

Friday, December 27, 2019



Local

Trip down memory lane at Kuwait's newest arcade



By Faten Omar

Recently, a videogame arcade opened in the basement of Symphony Mall in Salmiya. Going to this place brought back memories from my childhood. Every game I played resulted in happy moments that I could not resist. It was like a time machine that took me back to my childhood to enjoy the fun moments I had when I was a happy child.

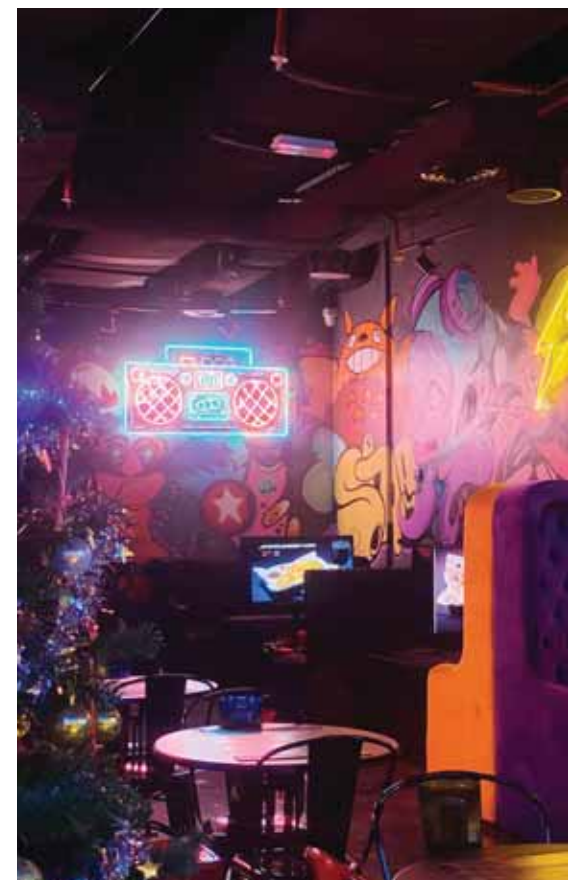
When I was a kid, arcades were a magical place to go to. I remember the first arcade I went to when I was nine. I entered the place by mistake, but the owner let me play for free. My love for gaming started in the arcades. The joystick was my weapon to fight the villains. Bad people should die to save the day and free the princess! What about being a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle? I was Raphael by the way - I loved the color red. Raphael wields a pair of sai, fights bad guys, eats pizza all the time and helps his brothers, who refuse to be such a character. I think April O'Neil was

the reason I became a journalist.

To be honest, pinball machines frustrated me. I have never been able to get them right, and they still make me giddy. The flashbacks were very powerful from just being able to play Street Fighter again. I think we all had a crush on one of the game's main characters.

Many arcade games got converted to home formats, but you could never relive the experience you got playing in an arcade. The graphics, sound and overall experience could not be topped. The tragic replacement of arcades since the '90s was a shame. Home games will never replicate the feeling and experience you get playing in arcades with your friends.

So it felt great when I entered an arcade again, seeing the machines lined up, hearing the sounds and the engines revving. People were trying to win the NBA Jam Tournament and to get the highest score in Pac-Man while eating all the dots, as well as playing Crash Team Racing and Tekken. The place is a haven for old-style gamers.



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Local

Kuwait Foreign Minister holds ceremony in honor of veteran ex-chief diplomat

KUWAIT: In honor and with presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah held a reception at the Grand Sabah Al-Ahmad Hall at the Foreign Ministry Diwan yesterday. Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah was also present.

His Highness the Prime Minister, in a statement during the ceremony, boastfully underlined doctrine of the "veteran Kuwaiti (diplomatic) school, bases of which had been laid and care for by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," a veteran ex foreign minister in his own right. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled recalled memories of his work over the past eight years as foreign minister and the previous long years when he served as representative of the Kuwaiti diplomacy abroad.

His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled lauded the relentless efforts that had been exerted by his fellows and personnel of the Foreign Ministry during Kuwait's hosting of regional and international conferences. He also commended the efforts by the State of Kuwait Permanent Representatives at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in the 2018-2019 period. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed deep appreciation for the devotion and giving by all officials of this veteran institution, capped by making Kuwait occupy an eminent international status. These efforts have "literally translated the notion that the Kuwaiti diplomacy is the first defense line for our dear country," he said, expressing hope to see more of such effort and giving that have become in the history records. He boasted of the high-esteem Kuwaiti diplomacy and the fact that Kuwait turned into a destination of security and safety.

His Highness emphasized significance of the role played by the Foreign Ministry, particularly during the delicate phase in the region and the grave and critical circumstances that warrant unity of the ranks and efforts for placing the homeland interest above any other consideration. He stressed on the necessity of shouldering the great responsibility that has been assigned to the Foreign Ministry and its political leaders for staying abreast of the rapid events in the region, as well as the necessity to change the mode of dealing with these developments and changes via addressing a message of moderation, the one synonymous with the innate traits of the people of Kuwait, that have turned into the basis of its foreign ministry, foundations of which had been laid by His Highness the Amir.

Deep gratitude

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad expressed deep gratitude on behalf of the ministry staff for earning His Highness the Amir confidence to assume the post, boastfully and passionately underlining His Highness' service for 41 years at the Foreign Ministry; where the department policy has been distinguished with competence, wisdom, sharp foresightedness and unlimited giving. Moreover, he prayed to Allah Almighty to guide His Highness to pursue the march of serving the State of Kuwait under the sagacious leadership of His Highness the Amir, backed by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Addressing His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Ahmad said all the ministers who had served at the department had earned praise from observers — since the era of the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, noting the significant contributions by His Highness the Amir, who at



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (center) receives a memento from Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah (left) as Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah looks on. — KUNA

the times he held the foreign affairs portfolio, and the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem and Dr Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, an ex foreign minister. He also underscored the contributions by the ministers of State, who had worked hard with faithfulness and sincerity, namely Saud Al-Osaimi, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Majed Al-Shahin and Rashed Abdulaziz Al-Rashed — who had worked to foment the innate traits of the ancestors. Amid multiple and thorny changes across the world, the Foreign Ministry has succeeded under Your Highness' leadership in preserving the Kuwaiti diplomatic identity, where "we have earned admiration and respect and

eminent status among the states."

"This has not come from nowhere for your giving at the Foreign Ministry played a very crucial role in cementing these bases as well as for interaction with the current changes at the regional and international levels," he said. The foreign minister affirmed that he, along with the ministry personnel, promise to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister to pursue the march of giving, its mode message, defend interests of the dear homeland and proud people. After the ceremony conclusion, His Highness the Prime Minister departed the venue amid warm tributes and pleasantries from the attendees. — KUNA

Kuwait PM hosts commerce minister, KDIPA's chief



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Nasser Al-Roudhan, Director General of KDIPA, President of the Permanent Committee for Streamlining Business Environment and Enhancing Competitiveness Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, as well as members of the commission and personnel. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday at Seif Palace Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Nasser Al-Roudhan, Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), President of the Permanent Committee for

Streamlining Business Environment and Enhancing Competitiveness Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, members of the commission and personnel, on the occasion of including Kuwait in the list of the ten States with top improvement in ease of doing business and global competition according to the

2020 report by the World Bank (WB). His Highness the Prime Minister lauded the great role by the former prime minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the former Cabinet members for devoting attention to the business improvement committee and their close follow up on the civil

servants' performance that have led to placing Kuwait among these ten countries. International reports have reflected efforts exerted by the committee members whose work added to the significant steps for boosting competition, the economy and the investments, His Highness added. — KUNA

Local

Tensions loom over expats' hiring in Kuwaiti oil sector

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A new topic of tension could emerge between the government and National Assembly over recruitments in Kuwaiti oil companies which some lawmakers believe have favored expatriate candidates over similarly qualified Kuwaiti jobseekers. According to sources familiar with the situation, the information, which are set to be investigated by a special committee, indicate that many expats have been appointed in some oil companies instead of citizens who already hold the same degrees and qualifications as the foreigners hired. "Those appointments were made through agreements with contractors who fill in vacant positions with expat, which is against the government's policy to nationalize jobs in various oil sectors," the sources added, noting that the investigation committee formed by the parliament would finish its report soon. Further, the source said that Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) CEO Hashem Hashem has been cooperating with lawmakers investigating the matter, noting that "all the unlawful appointments and violations were made before

he started his tenure and took the responsibility" in December 2018.

The sources also pointed out that the recommendations to be made by the investigating committee would have to be implemented in order to avoid filing a grilling against Oil Minister Khaled Al-Fahdel, or even against His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah. "All illegal expat appointments will be terminated, and the government will be graced to dismiss expats and replace them with citizens holding the same degrees," the sources explained, noting that terminations would start with expats in administrative positions. In this regard, MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaie said that the investigation committee set a meeting to be held on January 6, 2020 with oil syndicates union to discuss the matter.

Meanwhile, the Civil Service Commission (CSC) submitted a report to the Cabinet in which it strictly rejected demands made by some state departments for pay hikes. Stressing that such demands are 'unjustified,' the CSC explained that approving them would "only overburden the state's treasury which is already suffering from inflation in payrolls."



KUWAIT: An archive photo showing Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's building in Kuwait City. — KUNA

In this regard, informed sources said that the Cabinet is expected to comply with the report because its agenda already focuses on appointing citizens in the private sector. The sources also explained that allowances given to employees in some government bodies are not financial privileges and that they are only small bonuses

for the special tasks they execute in some state departments. Further, the sources said that the government would soon launch a plan to employ 10,000 citizens in the private sector during the fiscal year 2020-2021, which requires not passing any new pay raises for public sector employees in the foreseeable future.

KISR earns US patent for mixing elements

KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) announced that the Nanotechnology Program of the Institute of Energy and Building Research in the Institute has obtained a patent for mixing magnesium with nickel. The Kuwaiti Institute has earned the patent from the United States Patent and Trademark Office, KISR said in a statement yesterday. Magnesium was mixed with nickel, which is used as a catalyst to stimulate the chemical reaction, using cold coating technology, the statement said, adding that this innovation is the first of its kind in this field. Magnesium is considered one of the most attractive elements in storing hydrogen gas, due to its presence in nature in large quantities and being relatively inexpensive and for its high storage capacity and easy to prepare, the statement added. The patent registered under research team of Dr Mohammad Al-Iskandarani, engineers Fahad Al-Ajmi and Mohammad Bunyan. This innovation came in the framework of institute's interest in diversifying energy sources, especially new and renewable ones, indicating that magnesium carries a promising hope for solving storing hydrogen gas problem, which is a source of concern for many scientific research parties globally. — KUNA

Two passengers arrested with drugs at airport

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Customs inspectors at Terminal 1 (T1) of Kuwait International Airport arrested two people - an Arab man and an African woman - with possession of hashish and qat that were found hidden in their luggage yesterday. This comes following six similar smuggling cases the customs department has foiled recently. The Arab man arrived from his home country with possession of around 360 grams of hashish, while the African woman arrived from a third-party country with possession of four kilograms of qat, said sources familiar with the case. Both were arrested and referred to relevant authorities, the sources added.

Fire drills

In other news, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS) yesterday conducted a drill at Chrystal Tower in Sharq, in which firemen from Sharq, Al-Hilali, the capital fire stations took part. The drill's scenario involved dealing with a fire on the 50th floor with the presence of an injury on the 22nd floor, evacuating the entire building, rescuing the injured and tackling the blaze that had supposedly started in a central air conditioning unit.

Meanwhile, KFS held a meeting yesterday to discuss preparations for the 6th Shamel (comprehensive) drill, it said, noting that this year's drill would focus on dealing with earthquakes and natural disasters. The meeting was headed by KFS deputy director for firefighting affairs Maj Gen Jamal Al-Blaihes, who expressed utmost trust in various government bodies taking part in the drill. The head of the Shamel drill team and Farwaniya fire chief, Col Moath Al-Hammadi, and his deputy, Col Ahmad Al-Habdan, explained the drill's phases and scenarios to various participants.



The qat found with the African woman.



KUWAIT: Hashish found with the Arab man.



Fire personnel coordinate during a meeting to prepare for the 6th Shamel drill.



'Babies-for-sale'
scheme shocks Armenia

Trump on quest for foreign wins — and drama — in election year

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ANKARA: A hand out image made available by the Turkish Presidential Press Service shows Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaking to members of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Ankara yesterday. — AFP

Turkey's Erdogan paves the way for troop deployment in Libya

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday opened the way for direct Turkish military intervention in Libya, announcing a parliamentary vote in early January on sending troops to support the UN-backed Tripoli government against strongman Khalifa Haftar.

Sending Turkish troops will complicate the situation in an already fragile country torn by internal dissent since the ouster and killing of dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011. "We will present the motion to send troops (to Libya) as soon as parliament resumes" on January 7, Erdogan said in a speech in Ankara. "God willing, we will pass it in parliament on January 8-9 and thus respond to an invitation" from the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA), he said.

Erdogan's comments come after the Turkish parliament on Saturday ratified a security and military cooperation deal with the GNA of Fayeze al-Sarraj. That agreement,

which came into force on Thursday, allows Ankara to send military and security personnel to Libya for training purposes, according to Turkish officials.

But a separate motion is needed to send boots on the ground. The Turkish parliament in October passed another motion to deploy troops in Iraq and Syria for another year. "We have given and will give all forms of support to the Tripoli government which is fighting against a putschist general backed by Arab countries and Europeans," Erdogan said.

The Turkish leader has in recent weeks vowed to increase military support to the GNA if needed as it battles Haftar, who launched an offensive in April to seize the capital. Erdogan on Wednesday paid an unannounced visit to Tunisia with his defense minister and spy chief to discuss ways of reaching a ceasefire in Libya.

Ankara has also signed a separate maritime jurisdiction agreement with the GNA-

which has drawn international criticism especially from Greece, as part of its efforts to establish itself as a key player in the exploitation of hydrocarbons in the eastern Mediterranean.

'Helping a warlord'

Pro-GNA militias and Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army are vying for control of the North African country. Turkey and Qatar back the GNA, while Haftar has received support from Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Russia—all of whom have tense relations with Turkey.

Erdogan has said Haftar's forces are backed by Russian security company Wagner but Moscow has denied this. "They are helping a warlord. We are responding to an invitation from the legitimate government of Libya," Erdogan said yesterday. "That is our difference."

Asked about Ankara's plans to send

troops to Libya, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it was "unlikely that the interference of third parties in this situation could contribute to a settlement." He added: "But any attempt by third countries to contribute directly to solving the problem and to help the parties to the conflict find a solution is always welcome."

Ankara is likely to send an elite joint contingent to Libya, Can Kasapoglu, director of security and defense research program at the EDAM think-tank in Istanbul, wrote in a policy paper this week. The initial group could include special forces along with military intelligence and liaison officers, he commented.

"Since 2016, the Turkish Armed Forces have gained a considerable level of experience in such efforts thanks to the Syrian campaigns." The Turkish military has launched three incursions into Syria as part of a campaign against Syrian Kurdish forces. — AFP

International

Israel's indicted Netanyahu faces party leadership challenge

JERUSALEM: Israel's embattled premier Benjamin Netanyahu faced off against longtime rival Gideon Saar for the Likud party leadership yesterday, in a contest that could threaten his grip on power. A defeat for Netanyahu, 70, would be a shock, but even a relatively close result could weaken his influence over the conservative party he has dominated for 20 years.

In power as premier for a decade, Netanyahu early next year faces a third general election within 12 months and has been indicted in a multi-pronged corruption probe.

But to lead Likud into the next national poll, he must overcome the internal party challenge.

Polls in that party race opened across the country at 09:00am (0700 GMT), with Likud's roughly 116,000 eligible voters having until 11:00pm to choose between Netanyahu and Saar. Results are expected early Friday morning.

At a polling station in the Kiryat Moshe neighbourhood of Jerusalem, Rami David said he voted for Saar because "he would give Likud a new image." Saar, 53, has been a senior figure in the Likud for a decade and held multiple ministries. He is seen as slightly to the right of Netanyahu and has called for an even more hawkish policy towards the Palestinians. Nathan Moati, 26, backed Netanyahu and didn't think supporters were concerned by the indictment. "The most important thing is to vote overwhelmingly — we need to have 80/20 (for Netanyahu)."

Saar and Netanyahu have spent recent days criss-crossing the country, with Saar seeking to portray himself as a more electable leader.

The campaign's most dramatic moment came Wednesday evening when Netanyahu was rushed off stage while campaigning in Ashkelon

in southern Israel near Gaza, after what the army called a "projectile" was fired from the Palestinian enclave.

Corruption, election

Stephan Miller, a pollster who has worked on multiple Israeli campaigns, said whatever the result "Netanyahu can only lose." No matter how much support Saar receives, "it will be the first time in 10 years that a group of voters on the right explicitly express their desire to get rid of Netanyahu," he said. "If that is more than a third of the party, Netanyahu will be significantly damaged." The winner of Thursday's vote will lead Likud into Israel's third national poll within 12 months. The general elections in April and September saw Netanyahu deadlocked with centrist challenger Benny Gantz, neither of them able to command a majority in Israel's proportional parliament. Last month, Netanyahu was indicted for fraud, bribery and breach of trust in three corruption cases, allegations he strongly denies.

The primaries were called shortly after, the first internal challenge to Netanyahu since 2014.

A series of polls in recent weeks have indicated a Saar-led Likud might win fewer seats in a third election than under Netanyahu, but the overall rightwing bloc might be larger — potentially yielding a viable governing coalition.

Saar has not attacked Netanyahu personally, even hinting he would support him becoming Israel's president. A source close to Saar insisted his camp was hopeful of an upset.

"More and more, the Likud rank and file are understanding the choice is between Netanyahu and being in opposition versus Saar and being in government," the source said.



JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lights a Hanukkah candle alongside the Rabbi of the Western Wall Shmuel Rabinovitch (L) and US ambassador to Israel David Friedman at the Western Wall, Judaism's holiest prayer site, in the Old City of Jerusalem. — AFP

Determined to fight on

Netanyahu has sought to paint himself as an irreplaceable leader fighting a "witch hunt" by the police, the legal establishment and the media.

Other party figures seen as potential future leadership candidates — including parliamentary speaker Yuli Edelstein — have so far chosen not to support either candidate, despite pressure. Ofer Zalberg, an Israeli political analyst at the International Crisis Group think tank, said it would have been unthinkable a few years ago for senior party officials not to back Netanyahu

publicly. Major Likud players "already sense there is a changing of the guard. They are hoping that the contest between Saar and Netanyahu will create the conditions for a third party to take home the spoils," he said.

Netanyahu's downfall has been predicted multiple times since he became premier for a second time in 2009, but he has defied expectations and appears determined to fight on.

Under Israeli law, a prime minister is only forced to step down once convicted with all appeals exhausted. — AFP

Iraq protesters torch buildings, block roads over PM pick

NASIRIYAH: Iraqi anti-government protesters blocked roads and bridges in Baghdad and the country's south yesterday after torching several buildings overnight.

The demonstrators oppose the entire political class and have vented their anger against leaders who are negotiating to nominate an establishment insider as the next prime minister.

"The government is hostage to corrupt parties and sectarian divisions", said one activist, Sattar Jabbar, 25, in the southern city of Nasiriyah. Smoke and flames from burning tyres in Nasiriyah, Basra and Diwaniyah blocked major roads and bridges across the Euphrates all night, AFP correspondents said, before some of these road-blocks were lifted in the morning.

In Nasiriyah, demonstrators set the provincial government building ablaze

overnight for a second time since the protests began, and protesters also torched the new headquarters of a pro-Iran militia in Diwaniyah.

Iraq has been rocked by protests since October 1, prompting Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi to resign last month.

After dwindling, the street campaign has gained new vigour in recent days to rally against widespread corruption and a political system seen as beholden to neighbouring Iran. Government offices and schools remain closed across almost all of Iraq's south.

Pro-Iranian factions have for several weeks touted outgoing higher education minister Qusay al-Suhail for the post of prime minister, but his nomination was opposed by President Barham Saleh.

Those factions are now lobbying for Assaad al-Aidani, the governor of Basra — another unpopular choice with demonstrators. "We don't want Assaad the Iranian!" shouted protesters in Kut, a southern city.

The protesters want a technocratic premier who has had no involvement in the political system set up after the US-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein in 2003. Around 460 people have been killed and 25,000 wounded in nearly three months of clashes between protesters and security forces. — AFP

Beirut floodwaters sweep away Jewish graves

BEIRUT: Flooding at Beirut's only Jewish cemetery has swept away entire graves after heavy rainfall hit the Lebanese capital. The floodwater destroyed a retaining wall at the graveyard in the Ras al-Nabaa district overnight into yesterday, dragging sarcophagi and large chunks of rubble onto the pavement below.

Nagi Georges Zeidan, an expert on Lebanon's tiny Jewish community and a volunteer at the graveyard, said at least four graves were damaged, all in part of the cemetery for people buried in the 1940s.

Zeidan said the skeletons of the deceased remained concealed but have yet to be removed from beneath the rubble. He urged authorities to intervene to make sure they are preserved.

The cemetery has 3,407 graves, according to Zeidan, who keeps a record of all the names of the deceased. It is owned by the Lebanese Jewish Community Council and dates back to the 1820s, he added.

Lebanon was once home to thousands of Jews but they left steadily for Israel, Brazil, Europe and the United States after the State of Israel was established. According to Zeidan, only 29 Jews remain in Lebanon.

A handful of buildings that were once syna-



BEIRUT: A man inspects graves damaged during bad weather in a winter storm at the Jewish cemetery in the Lebanese capital Beirut yesterday. — AFP

gogues still stand, including one in the northern city of Tripoli that has been turned into a fabric dye shop, and one in the southern city of Sidon. A severe downpour overnight led to floods across Lebanon, blocking roads and damaging homes. — AFP

International

Russian police detain top opposition leader Navalny

MOSCOW: Russian police yesterday detained top opposition leader Alexei Navalny as they conducted fresh searches at his Moscow-based anti-corruption foundation, a spokeswoman said. "Alexei has been forcibly detained and led away," his spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh said on Twitter.

"He did not put up resistance," she said, adding that searches at the FBK anti-corruption foundation were currently under way.

Yarmysh suggested that the authorities chose to raid the offices yesterday because Navalny was scheduled to address supporters in a weekly YouTube programme in the evening.

Navalny's staff released a video showing how law enforcement agents tried to break into the FBK offices using a saw, with sparks flying around. "New Year's fireworks," Navalny's ally Nikolai Lyaskin quipped on Twitter. Another video showed men clad in black uniforms and sporting masks and helmets searching the FBK office premises.

In a separate development, Russia's top opposition newspaper Novaya Gazeta said yesterday that authorities had searched the Moscow apartment of its special correspondent Yulia Polukhina.

After the raid, the mother of two children had been taken away to "an unknown destination,"

the newspaper said in a statement. "So far this looks like an abduction," Novaya Gazeta said.

It added that the searches were linked to Novaya Gazeta publications including those concerning "illegal armed groups" operating in the war-torn eastern Ukraine where Kiev is battling against pro-Kremlin separatists.

Authorities have been steadily ramping up pressure on Navalny and his allies in recent years with regular searches and short jail terms for President Vladimir Putin's top opponent and his allies.

The 43-year-old Navalny helped organise major protests against the government this summer when tens of thousands took to the streets of Moscow to demand fair elections. A number of people received jail terms for taking part in those protests.

On Wednesday Navalny said that one of his allies had been forcibly conscripted and sent to serve at a remote Arctic base, in a move his supporters also said amounted to kidnapping. Ruslan Shaveddinov, a project manager at Navalny's FBK foundation, went missing Monday after police broke into his Moscow flat and his phone's SIM card was disabled.

He resurfaced Tuesday at a secret air defence base on the remote Novaya Zemlya archipelago in the Arctic Ocean. — AFP



MOSCOW: Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny stands near law enforcement agents in a hallway of a business centre, which houses the office of his Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK), in Moscow yesterday. Russian police conducted fresh searches at Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's anti-corruption foundation, with his team calling the raid a new bid to disrupt their work. — AFP

EU chief writes 'love letter' to Britain over Brexit

LONDON: A top Brussels official has written a "love letter" to Britain expressing his grief at its decision to leave the European Union — and stressing it was always welcome back.

"I know you now. And I love you. For who you are and what you gave me. I'm like an old lover. I know your strengths and weaknesses," European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans wrote in yesterday's edition of The Guardian newspaper.

"You have decided to leave. It breaks my heart, but I respect that decision," he added in a missive titled "My love letter to Britain: family ties

can never really be severed". The Dutchman's letter concluded with the words: "We're not going away and you will always be welcome to come back." The prospects of Prime Minister Boris Johnson reversing his decision to take Britain out of the European Union on January 31 are close to nil.

Johnson won a thumping majority in this month's general election on a promise to "get Brexit done" after more than three years of indecision and delays. Britons voted by a 52 to 48 percent margin to leave the other 27 EU member states in a 2016 referendum. Most opinion polls indicate a slight majority in favour of remaining in the European Union today.

But parties supporting a second Brexit referendum that could reverse the first one got drubbed in this month's vote. Johnson has further indicated that he has no plans to extend the post-Brexit transition period beyond the end of next year. — AFP

Honest German returns bag with 16,000 euros

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: A 63-year-old man in Germany had a very Merry Christmas indeed after an honest finder returned the backpack he had forgotten under a tree — filled with presents and 16,000 euros (\$17,700) in cash.

The 51-year-old finder alerted police after stumbling upon the bag near the centre of the western city of Krefeld shortly before midnight on Christmas Eve. Officers were able to quickly

identify the owner and reunite him with the backpack and its precious contents. The man who found the bag "refused a finder's fee, because it was Christmas," Krefeld police wrote on Facebook. "There really are people who do good deeds over Christmas," they added.

In Germany, anyone who returns a found object is entitled to a finder's fee based on the value of the item. In this case, the finder would have been 490 euros richer if he had accepted the reward. The police's Facebook post sharing the feelgood story attracted over a 1,000 likes and nearly 180 comments, although some expressed surprise that anyone would walk around with so much cash. A Krefeld police spokesman told AFP yesterday that while it was "unusual", the backpack's owner had said "he felt safer" carrying his money on him. — AFP

Italy education minister resigns over lack of funds for ministry

ROME: Italian Education Minister Lorenzo Fioramonti told Reuters on Wednesday he had resigned after failing to obtain from the government billions of euros he said were needed to improve the country's schools and universities. The resignation is a blow to the embattled government, whose ruling parties are at odds on issues ranging from euro zone reform to migrant rights.

It also underscores the problems of the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement, Fioramonti's party, which is trying to reorganise amid widespread internal dissatisfaction with its leader Luigi Di Maio. Fioramonti told Reuters he had tendered his "irrevocable resignation" to Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte in a letter on Dec. 23.

This month three 5-Star senators jumped ship to join the right-wing League in opposition. Fioramonti said shortly after the government of 5-Star and the centre-left Democratic Party was formed in September that he would quit unless education spending was raised by 3 billion euros (\$3.3 billion) in the 2020 budget.

Few believed him, even as the budget continued its passage through parliament and it became clear the government had little inten-

tion of hiking taxes or cutting spending to find the funds he demanded. The budget was approved on Monday ahead of a Dec. 31 deadline. "It shouldn't be a surprise to anyone that a minister keeps his word," Fioramonti told Reuters in an interview on Wednesday. Fioramonti said he would still support the government in parliament, where he is a lower house deputy.

Italy spends 3.6% of gross domestic product on primary to university education, compared with an average of 5% among 32 countries in a report by the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development. As a proportion of public spending, Italy came bottom in the OECD.

Fioramonti, a former economics professor at South Africa's Pretoria University, has been one of Italy's most outspoken ministers during his three months in office. His proposals for new taxes on airline tickets, plastic and sugary foods to raise funds for education were attacked by critics who said Italians were already over-taxed.

A vocal supporter of green policies, Fioramonti made headlines when he announced Italy would next year become the first country to make it compulsory for schoolchildren to study climate change and sustainable development.

Earlier this month he said Italian energy giant ENI should halt oil exploration and focus on renewable energy. "I have sometimes felt I could have had more support from my own party over my proposals on the environment," Fioramonti said.

"5-Star was born 10 years ago with a strongly green platform, but it seems to have got lost along the way." — Reuters

International

2019: A look back at a year of turmoil

PARIS: The year 2019 saw an explosion of demonstrations across the world as people demanded an overhaul of entrenched political systems and action on climate change. Here is a look back at these and other events that marked the year.

Protests sweep Latin America

On January 23, Venezuela's opposition chief Juan Guaidó declares himself interim president, escalating a long-running political and economic crisis. He is recognised by more than 50 countries, including the United States. But the army backs President Nicolás Maduro and he remains in his post.

In mid-September major demonstrations erupt in Haiti after fuel shortages, demanding the resignation of President Jovenel Moïse. Violence claims more than 40 lives. A metro ticket hike in Chile's capital mid-October is the trigger for protests that claim more than 20 lives before a referendum on reforms is agreed.

Bolivia is gripped by three weeks of demonstrations after President Evo Morales claims to win a fourth term on October 20. Dozens are killed. Morales resigns on November 10 and flees into exile as the government works on new elections. Ecuador is paralysed by nearly two weeks of protests in October and in Colombia strikes and demonstrations against the right-wing government begin mid-November.

North Africa/Mideast fury

On February 22, unprecedented protests break out in Algeria against a fifth term for frail President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, in power for 20 years. He loses the army's backing and resigns on April 2. But demonstrations continue, demanding an overhaul of the entire political establishment and rejecting new president Abdelmadjid Tebboune, elected on December 12 in polls marked by record abstention.

In Sudan, the military on April 11 ends Omar al-Bashir's three decades in power, a key demand in four months of nationwide protests. Demonstrations continue until a hard-won agreement in August sets up a joint governing council to oversee a transition to civilian rule. More than 250 people are killed, according to protesters.

In Iraq, mass demonstrations erupt on October 1 against unemployment, corruption and poor public services, degenerating into violence that claims more than 460 lives. On December 1, parliament accepts the government's resignation. In Lebanon, rolling mass protests start on October 17, triggered by plans for a messaging app tax and turning against the political elite. They continue even after Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigns on October 29, with protesters rejecting new premier-designate Hassan Diab, an engineering professor backed by Hezbollah chosen on December 19 to form a government.

Iran sees an explosion of riots on November 15 after a fuel price hike. Authorities crush the unrest but Amnesty International says more than 304 people were killed, most shot by security forces, a toll denied by the authorities.

IS leader killed

After a five-year offensive to seize vast Islamic State (IS) territory in Iraq and Syria, the jihadists were driven out of their last bastion in March by Kurdish-led forces. On October 27, President Donald Trump announces that IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was killed in a US special forces raid in Syria, blowing himself up as he was pursued.



MEXICO CITY: File picture taken on November 27, 2019 Bolivia's exiled ex-President Evo Morales gestures as he delivers a speech at the Mexican Journalists Club, in Mexico City, on November 27, 2019. Bolivia's attorney general's office ordered the arrest of exiled former president Evo Morales on December 18. — AFP

Boeing MAX grounded

A March 10 Ethiopian Airlines crash leads to the global grounding of Boeing 737 MAX planes. It follows a Lion Air crash involving the same model six months earlier, with 346 lives lost in the two incidents. Boeing faces investigations and lawsuits, and is forced to upgrade its systems, in a crisis that costs it billions of dollars. In mid-December production of the plane is suspended. On December 23, Boeing chief Dennis Muilenburg resigns.

Brexit saga

Britain's March 29, 2019, deadline for leaving the European Union following a 2016 referendum is postponed three times, with the British parliament unable to agree to the divorce terms negotiated by Prime Minister Theresa May with Brussels, nor a second accord negotiated by her successor Boris Johnson. After widely winning early elections on December 12, Johnson gets support at the first reading by the lower house for his accord. He seeks final adoption on January 9, and to leave the EU on January 31, 2020.

First black hole photo

On April 10, astronomers unveil the first photograph of a black hole, a phenomenon they were convinced existed even if it had never been seen before. Drawn from mountains of data captured two years earlier by telescopes across the world, it shows a supermassive black hole 50 million lightyears away.

Notre Dame burns

On April 15, flames destroy the spire and roof of Paris's beloved Notre-Dame cathedral, but firefighters manage to save the gothic building, while many of its arts, relics and other treasures are rescued. Amid a global outpouring of emotion, nearly one billion euros (\$1.1 billion) is pledged for its reconstruction, which will take years. For the first time since 1803, Notre-Dame does not celebrate Christmas mass.

Iran escalation

On May 8, Tehran announces its first step back from the 2015 nuclear accord — exactly a year after the United States quit the deal and reimposed sanctions. Over the next months Iran re-engages components of its nuclear programme that it had halted, including uranium enrichment. Tensions mount when Washington blames Tehran for a series of attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf from mid-May. On September 14, Iran is again blamed when major Saudi oil facilities are attacked by Yemen's Huthi



WASHINGTON: This combination of pictures created on December 23, 2019 shows US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (L) and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R) sparred on December 23, 2019 over the ground rules for President Donald Trump's trial in the Senate on charges of abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. — AFP

rebels, which it supports. It denies involvement.

In six months Tehran has surpassed the stock of enriched uranium, the level of enrichment and heavy water reserves fixed by the accord and modernised its centrifuges.

Hong Kong erupts

In June the start of the biggest crisis in the former British colony of Hong Kong since it returned to Chinese rule in 1997, with almost-daily pro-democracy protests. Demonstrations are initially sparked by a now-abandoned attempt to allow extraditions to the Chinese mainland but develop into a popular revolt against Beijing's rule. On November 24, pro-democracy campaigners win a landslide victory in local elections.

Hottest month ever

July temperatures were the hottest ever recorded, US and European Union authorities announce in August. Temperature records rise in Europe and the North Pole, and in August, Iceland loses its first glacier to climate change.

Fires ravage Brazil's Amazon and Australia, while Venice is swamped by flooding not seen in decades. The extreme weather raises climate concerns, and rallies for action, initiated by Swedish teen activist Greta Thunberg, spread worldwide.

US disengagement

On August 2, the US officially quits the Cold War-era Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces treaty (INF) with Russia. Trump's "America First" regime also strikes out alone by pursuing trade wars with China and the EU. It also withdraws from the Paris accord on climate change and its troops from northeastern Syria.

Trump impeachment bid

On September 24, the Democrats in Congress launch an impeachment enquiry into Trump after claims he pressured Ukraine to investigate Joe Biden, a rival in his 2020 reelection bid.

Trump is impeached in a historic rebuke by the Democratic-controlled House of Representatives on two counts of abuse of office and obstruction of Congress, but conviction is unlikely to pass the Republican-controlled Senate in a trial expected to begin in January.

Turkey moves into Syria

On October 9, Turkey launches an offensive into northern Syria to push back from the border Kurdish fighters it considers "terrorists".

Two days earlier Trump had announced the withdrawal of US troops in the area, leading to charges that Washington had abandoned Kurdish allies who were vital in the battle against Islamic State jihadists.

Turkey halts its operation on October 23 after the US and Russia agree in separate deals to ensure the fighters leave the border region.

Big Tech tackled

On July 24, US regulators fine Facebook a record \$5 billion for data protection violations amid mounting concerns about the dominance of it and other internet giants Apple, Amazon and Google. Criticised for failing to protect consumers as well as over tax and advertising issues, the tech titans come under pressure to reform, with threats of investigation, fines and even dismantlement.

Social crisis in France

France is confronted from December 5 by a three-week standoff between French transport workers and the government over pension reforms, which causes havoc to Christmas travel.

Workers at the national SNCF and Parisian RATP rail and public transport companies walk off the job to protest at the government's plan to meld France's 42 pension schemes into a single points-based one, which would see some public employees lose certain privileges, including early retirement. — AFP

International

Fire in Minneapolis leaves 250 homeless on Christmas Day

MINNEAPOLIS: Fire swept a hotel apartment building that provides transitional housing for the poor in downtown Minneapolis early on Wednesday, leaving about 250 people homeless on Christmas morning, city officials said.

No deaths or serious injuries were reported in the four-alarm blaze. Three residents with minor injuries were taken to a hospital for evaluation, and several others were treated at the scene for smoke inhalation, officials said.

The fire erupted before dawn on the second floor of the three-story Francis Drake Hotel before spreading to the third floor and attic area of the brick building, city Fire Chief John Fruetel told re-

porters outside the complex. The cause was unknown, Fruetel said, adding that he expected it would take fire crews until Thursday to fully extinguish the blaze.

Television news footage showed flames leaping through the roof amid thick smoke as firefighters poured streams of water onto the burning structure. "I would estimate that the building is going to be a total loss," assistant fire chief Bryan Tyner told Minnesota Public Radio News.

With temperatures hovering just above freezing, the city immediately brought in transit buses to provide emergency shelter and warmth for displaced residents, Mayor Jacob Frey told a news

briefing, adding that municipal agencies were working with the American Red Cross and other authorities to provide food, longer-term shelter, clothing and other needs for the evacuees.

"These are people's lives, this is their home. They're concerned about everything from a wallet or a phone so they can get in touch with a loved one on Christmas, to where are their babies going to get formula," Frey said, choking up with emotion.

The Francis Drake, which opened in 1926 as a luxury hotel later converted to residential units, provides overflow shelter space for homeless families, as well as temporary lodging for individuals

who lack permanent housing in Minnesota's largest city, municipal and county officials said.

Drake Hotel resident Jason Vandenoorn said he was awakened by his wife when fire alarms sounded and he ventured out of their unit to see "a guy coming down the hallway, just pounding on the doors, saying, 'There's a fire, we [have got to] get out of here.'"

Gazing out to another wing of the building, "I saw flames shooting at least about 10, 15 feet (3, 4.5 meters) up," he told CBS affiliate WCCO-TV. Vandenoorn said he then ran back to his room and told his wife, "'Yeah, we [have got to] go now.' ... It was bad." — Reuters

Mexican migrants caravan heads south for Christmas

JALPAN DE SERRA, Mexico: Poor Central American migrants who form caravans to fend off predatory gangs as they cross Mexico's interior en route to the United States have made global headlines and drawn the ire of President Donald Trump.

But last week in the Texan border city of Laredo a caravan of about 1,500 families made up of Mexican migrants and Americans of Mexican origin set out in the opposite direction — for their Christmas holidays. Driving large cars laden with clothes, perfumes and other Christmas presents, the Mexicans, all with US legal

status, bore scant resemblance to the Central American migrants trudging north on foot, except for their shared fear of criminal gangs.

"There's a lot of extortion, corruption, many people have been attacked," said Jesus Mendoza, a 35-year-old painter who obtained US legal residency in August and returned to Mexico for the first time this year since 2001. About half of the 12 million Mexicans living in the United States have legal residency, and Mexico's Senate expected more than 3 million to return home this year. But doing so by car poses a challenge as Mexico's northern border regions have been racked by a tide of drug-fueled violence that led to a record 29,000 murders last year. With three young children and a wife he met on Facebook, Mendoza was going back to a Mexico different to the one he left behind as a teenager before the country embarked on a so-called war on drugs in 2006 and violence spiraled. — AFP

Woman, two children found dead in Boston on Christmas Day

BOSTON: A woman and two young children were found dead on Christmas Day on a downtown Boston sidewalk at the base of a high-rise parking structure, authorities said, apparently after plunging from the roof level of the garage.

Boston Police Commissioner William Gross said on Wednesday detectives had few details about what happened to the three victims, whom he said were found unconscious on the pavement and pronounced "non-viable" at a local hospital. Asked during a solemn news conference whether the three may have jumped to their deaths, Gross answered, "I have no way of knowing that, and we definitely won't jump to conclusions or try to speculate." But aerial footage of the scene aired by local television stations showed police investigators huddled on the rooftop around a black sport utility vehicle left parked with three of its doors open beside the wall enclosing the top level of the structure. The area around the SUV was cordoned off with yellow crime-scene tape.

The Renaissance Park Garage, where the deaths occurred, lies adjacent to a transit

station near the Northeastern University campus. Gross said the cause and manner of death would be determined by the medical examiner and the case was being handled as a "death investigation," headed by Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins, who also spoke to reporters.

She and Gross both said the tragedy seemed all the more grim for having involved two small children on Christmas Day. "As a mother, it was incredibly hard, this scene in particular, where there were two young children who lost their lives today," Rollins said. Authorities appealed to anyone who may have witnessed what transpired or have any other useful information to contact investigators through a tip line.

The identities, ages and relationships of the three victims had yet to be ascertained, according to Gross, but he said the ages of two children were believed to be "five and under." Rollins said the victims' vehicle was found at the parking structure, with one child seat facing forward and the other backward. "We're going to do everything we can" to solve the case, she said. — Reuters



VALPARAISO: Aerial view of burnt houses after a forest fire at the Rocuant hill in Valparaiso, Chile, on December 25, 2019. — AFP

Chile forest fire leaves families homeless at Christmas

VALPARAISO: Dozens of families found themselves homeless over Christmas after a forest fire in the Chilean tourist port city of Valparaiso burned through two hillside neighborhoods. The blaze broke out Tuesday on Rocuant and San Roque hills and continued to burn on Wednesday, though with less intensity. About 245 homes were "affected" by the fire in a matter of hours.

There were no deaths from the fire that had

burned 150 hectares (370 acres), though 12 volunteer firefighters were injured. Valparaiso governor Jorge Martinez said that although the fire "cannot yet be considered controlled," it is "quite confined" and "does not generate a risk for the population."

The blaze started in grassy and wooded areas and rapidly advanced to populated neighborhoods in Valparaiso, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) northwest of Santiago. "We were preparing for parties when the fire started. It all happened so quickly, we weren't able to get anything out," said Fabian Olguin, 28, who lives on Rocuant hill.

"Horrible, terrible to see the homes of my neighbors on fire, my home... Unfortunately we are all homeless," a tearful Silvia Puga said. The cause of the fire, and that of a smaller blaze, was under investigation. "There are indications that this fire could be intentional," Blumel said. — AFP

Trump on quest for foreign wins — and drama — in election year



In this file photo taken on June 30, 2019 US President Donald Trump steps into the northern side of the Military Demarcation Line that divides North and South Korea, as North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un looks on, in the Joint Security Area (JSA) of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized zone (DMZ).



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on November 24, 2019 US President Donald Trump (L), Vice President Mike Pence (2nd L) and First Lady Melania Trump (R) stand with Conan, the military dog that was involved with the death of ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, at the White House in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has shattered norms and niceties on the world stage in his nearly three years in office. Entering an election year, Trump is unlikely to slow down as he seeks what has largely eluded him — a headline-grabbing victory.

Trump closes 2019 with a stain as the third president in US history to be impeached yet also with perhaps his two biggest achievements on the international stage — the US commando raid that killed the leader of the Islamic State group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and a new trade pact with Canada and Mexico. But the year was also full of tosses and turns for the tycoon turned president.

On his ambition to end the war in Afghanistan, he startled Washington by inviting the Taliban to talks, then declaring the talks dead, and finally resuming them. On North Korea, where Trump has hoped to broker a landmark accord, a highly anticipated summit with leader Kim Jong Un ended in stalemate. Trump later jump-started talks with a hastily arranged new meeting, but he ends the year with North Korea firing rockets and threatening a “Christmas gift” unless the United States offers concessions.

His efforts on Venezuela have had less whiplash but also little to show, with the United States leading Western and Latin American powers in January in declaring the illegitimacy of leftist leader Nicolas Maduro — who remains in power despite concerted US support for the opposition and sanctions.

On one especially tumultuous issue, the trade war with China, tensions eased at year's end with a “phase one” mini-deal in which Trump backed off on some tariffs and Beijing pledged to buy more US goods. But the underlying feud remains unsolved between the world's two largest economies, with the United States expected to press hard in 2020 on key concerns such as China's state subsidies.

In a rare issue that has drawn criticism from

his Republican allies, Trump also sent mixed messages on Turkey, ordering a US troop withdrawal from Syria that paved the way for Ankara to attack US-allied Kurdish fighters before Trump pressured the NATO ally with sanctions.

Beyond the hotspots, Trump may have broken the most ground with his style, hobnobbing with some of the world's most autocratic leaders even as he clashes with many close allies, as seen in his testy exchanges at the December NATO summit. He has torn through the international consensus by withdrawing from the Paris climate accord and a European-backed denuclearization pact with Iran, and by unabashedly seeking to boost Israel's right-wing leader, Benjamin Netanyahu.

In a mirror of his domestic agenda in which slashing immigration is a top priority, Trump has cast himself as the unique leader who stands up to the long-accepted status quo. Heading on his NATO trip, Trump's first words were not on the security challenges of Russia, Syria or Afghanistan but of allies he says contribute less than their fair share.

Eyeing successes

The 2020 White House campaign opens under the shadow of Trump's impeachment on December 18, when House Democrats voted overwhelmingly that Trump abused his power by pressuring Ukraine to dig up dirt on domestic rival Joe Biden. Democratic presidential candidates have meanwhile focused on health care and other domestic issues.

But Brian Katulis, a senior fellow at the left-leaning Center for American Progress, called foreign policy the “sleeping issue” of the election with the theatrical Trump likely to find a way to put it at the forefront. “This is a reality TV presidency. Even if he doesn't achieve major successes, he will claim that he has,” he said. “He will use other countries and their leaders as props in his re-election campaign.”



In this file photo taken on November 28, 2019 US President Donald Trump speaks to the troops during a surprise Thanksgiving day visit at Bagram Air Field, in Afghanistan.

Nile Gardiner, a former aide to British prime minister Margaret Thatcher who is now at Heritage Foundation, a conservative Washington think-tank, argued that Trump had achieved “significant successes.”

“We have seen 99 percent of ISIS territory taken away in Iraq and Syria. There's still a job to be done but this is a very, very big-scale achievement,” he said. “Trump's foreign policy is forward-looking and not isolationist,” Gardiner said, adding that European leaders “are preparing for the very strong possibility of Trump's re-election.”

Gardiner argued that Trump had also “significantly weakened” Iran, where anti-government protests erupted in November in the wake of sweeping US sanctions. Critics say the hard line has been counterproductive by reducing Iran's compliance with the 2015 nuclear accord and encouraging the clerical regime to hit back in the region.

‘Expect the unexpected’

Just as he was being impeached, Trump

achieved a major legislative victory when the Democratic-led House overwhelmingly backed his successor to the North American Free Trade Agreement. The new United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement found rare common points between Trump and liberal Democrats generally opposed to free trade deals through measures such as strengthening labor standards in Mexico.

In hotspots such as Iran and North Korea, Trump will at least make the case that he has taken a different approach than his predecessors, Katulis said. “It's hard to point to the actual successes of Trump foreign policy. It is really a world in disarray,” Katulis said. “But facts be damned — he will make a case that America's burden is less in the world, others have been doing more.”

Trump's core narrative is that “foreigners have been taking advantage of America” — and he will be eager to make national security a wedge issue in domestic politics, Katulis said. “With Trump, you can expect the unexpected.” — AFP

International

‘Babies-for-sale’ scheme shocks Armenia



YEREVAN, Armenia: A nanny walks with children at the 'Mankan Tun' orphanage in Yerevan, Armenia, on December 23, 2019. —AFP Photos



A nanny plays with a baby at the 'Mankan Tun' orphanage in Yerevan, Armenia, on December 23, 2019.

YEREVAN, Armenia: Syuzan Patvakanyan has been searching for her daughter ever since doctors in post-Soviet Armenia forced her to give her up as a baby nearly two decades ago. Now 35, she shared her story as the authorities this month detained the country's chief obstetrician-gynaecologist, the head of an orphanage and other officials as part of a probe into an alleged black-market adoption scheme believed to have been operating for years.

Patvakanyan accused the detained chief gynaecologist, Razmik Abramyan, and other doctors of pressuring her to give up her baby. She was just a teenager when she "fell madly in love" with a man five years her senior, she said.

After the 16-year-old gave birth to a little girl, doctors threatened to report the baby's father to police for having sex with a minor and coerced Patvakanyan into signing a consent form to hand over their daughter Stella. "I cried, I didn't want to do it," Patvakanyan said in an interview, tears streaming down her face. She signed the papers under pressure but three days later she returned to the maternity ward to take Stella home.

The baby girl was no longer there however. The doctors claimed she had been sent to an orphanage in the country's second largest city of Gyumri. But the young mum could not locate her

there either. "We realized that the swaddled baby had been sold right out of the hospital," the distraught woman said. Patvakanyan appears to be one of dozens of women caught up in an underground baby-selling network that is now the subject of an official investigation in the impoverished ex-Soviet country.

In December, investigators said they had detained Abramyan, as well as the heads of a maternity ward and an orphanage in the capital Yerevan. The chief gynaecologist was released several days later, sparking public outrage.

According to his lawyer, Abramyan dismisses the claims as "unfounded and absurd" and insists he had nothing to do with the adoptions. The lawyer, Samvel Dilbandyan, confirmed Abramyan had helped to deliver Stella, but could not be expected to remember every birth he was involved in. "It's been 20 years, how can he remember her?" Dilbandyan said.

'More powerful than drugs mafia'

Armenia's pro-reform leader Nikol Pashinyan has ordered a thorough investigation into the alleged scheme, which he said is believed to have been operating 'for many years.' "How could such a scheme exist in Armenia?" Pashinyan asked at a government meeting this month.

Marat Kostanyan, a lawyer who has represented Patvakanyan since 2013, claims the network was vast and involved high-ranking officials and police, as well as staff at maternity wards and orphanages. "The mafia selling children is more powerful than the drugs mafia," Kostanyan said. "This criminal network has turned the country into a hatchery to produce babies." Despite all his efforts, there has been little progress in Patvakanyan's case, the lawyer said. "As far as I know, no one has managed to achieve justice and get their babies back," he said.

Separately, Armenia's security service said in November it had exposed a criminal network that helped Italians adopt more than 30 babies in recent years. It said that between 2016 and 2018 several young women who had wanted to terminate their pregnancies were instead forced to carry the babies to term and then give them up for adoption. "In some cases, the frightened mothers were told their newborn babies were sick," the security service said.

Deputy labor minister Zhanna Andreasyan said officials had started looking more closely into adoptions after noticing that four times as many children went to foreigners rather than to locals. All adoptions have since been suspended while the investigation is ongoing.

Armenia, a South Caucasus country of fewer than three million people, has also pledged to abolish orphanages by 2023, instead reuniting children with their biological parents or finding new homes for them. In a 2017 report, Human Rights Watch said that thousands of Armenian children were "needlessly" separated from their parents due to disability or poverty and placed in institutions. More than 90 percent of children in residential institutions in the country have at least one living parent, it said. According to Armenia's labour ministry, fewer than 650 children currently live in orphanages. More than 70 percent of these have disabilities, according to UNICEF.

'I will never stop'

Patvakanyan said she still hopes to find her daughter. "I love my Stella very much, I miss her very much, I see her in my dreams. She comes to me and says: 'Mum, I live nearby, don't cry so hard'." She said she would not marry or have another child until she gets her daughter back.

Patvakanyan has bought a small plot of land where she wants to grow a garden for her long-lost child. She buys her gifts. She intently studies the faces of strangers. "I'll never stop searching for her," she said, weeping. "I will look for her even when my hair turns white." —AFP



Susan Patvakanyan 35, cries as she speaks with a lawyer in the town of Charentsavan, on December 3, 2019.



A nanny holds a baby at the 'Mankan Tun' orphanage in Yerevan, Armenia.

Typhoon Phanfone kills at least 16 in Philippines

MANILA: A typhoon that swept across remote villages and popular tourist areas of the central Philippines on Christmas day claimed at least 16 lives, authorities said yesterday. Typhoon Phanfone, with gusts reaching 200 kilometers (125 miles) an hour, tore roofs off houses and toppled electric posts as it ripped through the central Philippines on Wednesday.

Videos from the typhoon's path showed fallen trees and strong winds pummeling flimsy houses. Local disaster officials cut felled trees to clear blocked roads. At least 16 people were killed in villages and towns in the Visayas, the central third of the Philippines, according to disaster agency officials. Phanfone also hit Boracay, Coron and other holiday destinations that are famed for their white-sand beaches and popular with foreign tourists.

Mobile phone and internet access on Boracay was cut during the storm and the networks remained down yesterday, making assessment of the damage there difficult. "Still, communication lines are down. Electricity is still down," Jonathan Pablito, police chief of Malay town in Alkan province, which is on an island neighbouring Boracay, told AFP.

Pablito said ferry services between Boracay and Aklan — the main way to travel to and from the holiday island — were still not operating yesterday, even though the storm had passed. "We have no news from coast guard if ships were allowed to sail. Since the 24th... all those going to the island and com-

ing from the island weren't able to cross."

The airport at Kalibo town in Aklan, which services Boracay, was badly damaged, according to a Korean tourist who was stranded there and provided images to AFP. "Roads remain blocked, but some efforts have been made to clear away the damage. It's pretty bad," Jung Byung-joon said via Instagram messenger. "Everything within 100 meters of the airport looks broken. There are a lot of frustrated people at the airport as flights have been cancelled. Taxis are still running but it's windy and still raining so no one wants to leave the airport, including me."

Another Korean tourist stuck at the damaged airport said she had been unable to make contact with her friend on Boracay yesterday. "I tried to call my friend in Boracay today and wasn't able to get through. Maybe something isn't working," Dahae Gong told AFP via Instagram. "I don't know when I will be able to go home."

Memories of monster storm

Still, there was no indication of any major damage or otherwise on Boracay. Though much weaker, Phanfone tracked a similar path as Super Typhoon Haiyan — the country's deadliest storm on record which left more than 7,300 people dead or missing in 2013.

"It's like the younger sibling of Haiyan. It's less destructive, but it followed a similar path," Cindy Ferrer, an information officer at the Western Visayas region's disaster bureau, told AFP. In San Jose town in Occidental Min-



GUIUAN: Residents construct a makeshift shelter after their house was destroyed at the height of Typhoon Phanfone in Guiuan town in Eastern Samar province yesterday. —AFP

doro, a video uploaded by the local government showed overturned fishing vessels and ruined shanties on the coast due to the storm.

Tens of thousands of people in the mostly Catholic nation were forced to evacuate their homes on Wednesday, ruining Christmas celebrations. Many others were not able to return to their families, with ferries and plane services suspended.

Among those killed was a police officer electrocuted by a toppled post while patrolling. The Philippines is the first major landmass facing the Pacific typhoon belt, and is hit by an average of about 20 major storms a year. Many of the storms are deadly, and they typically wipe out harvests, homes and infrastructure, keeping millions of people perennially poor. —AFP

Japan hangs Chinese man over murder of family of four

TOKYO: Japan yesterday hanged a Chinese man convicted of the murder of a family of four whose bodies were found handcuffed and weighted down with dumbbells in a bay, the justice minister said. Masako Mori said she ordered the execution of Wei Wei "after careful consideration", over robbery and multiple murders carried out with two other students in 2003. "It is an extremely cruel and brutal case in which the happily living family members, including an eight-year-old and 11-year-old, were all murdered because of truly selfish reasons," she said.

Wei, a 40-year-old former language student in Japan, had pleaded guilty to the four murder counts, but had contended he was not a central figure in the case. The trio robbed the home of Japanese businessman Shinjiro Matsumoto, 41, in Fukuoka in June 2003 and strangled him

with a tie. His 40-year-old wife Chika was drowned in a bathtub and the children strangled or smothered.

The victims' bodies were found dumped in Hakata Bay in Fukuoka, handcuffed and weighted down. The other two suspects fled to China but were arrested there. One of the two was executed in 2005, according to Jiji Press, the year a Chinese court gave him a death sentence and his associate a life sentence. A relative of the Fukuoka family told public broadcaster NHK that "the only feeling that remains is sadness."

"We were finally be able to think of happy times when the four were alive after many years have passed since the incident, but today's execution only brought back painful memories," he told NHK. According to the Asahi Shimbun daily, the first execution of a foreigner since the ministry began announcing the names of those executed was in 2009. A Chinese man was hanged for killing three Chinese people he lived with near Tokyo and for injuring three others, the Asahi said.

Japan last executed inmates in August, when two men were hanged after being convicted of murder. Japan in 2018 hanged 15 people of which 13 belonged to the Aum Shinrikyo cult that carried out the fatal 1995 sarin attack on the Tokyo subway and other crimes. —AFP

Aung San Suu Kyi party official killed in Myanmar's Rakhine

YANGON: An official from Aung San Suu Kyi's political party was killed in Rakhine state after planning a show of support for the leader's defense of Myanmar against genocide allegations at The Hague, a spokesman said yesterday.

The National League for Democracy's Ye Thein, party chairman in Buthidaung township, had been held for weeks by the Arakan Army, insurgents fighting for more autonomy for ethnic Rakhine Buddhists. The rebels said he was killed in military attacks on Christmas day but the claim could not be verified and NLD spokesman Myo Nyunt said the group bore responsibility.

Ye Thein was detained on December 11 ahead of demonstrations backing Suu Kyi's high-profile opening statements at the UN's top court the same day. "We, all members of NLD, are very sorry for the loss," Myo Nyunt

told AFP. "His gathering to support her was righteous and it was not a crime."

The Arakan Army has carried out a series of daring kidnappings, bombings and raids against the army and local officials in Rakhine state. Myanmar's military has hit back hard, deploying thousands of additional soldiers to the western state and carrying out what Amnesty International called enforced disappearances, torture and extrajudicial executions.

The clashes are taking place in the same area where the military drove around 740,000 Rohingya Muslims over the border to Bangladesh in a bloody 2017 campaign. The small African, mainly Muslim state of Gambia opened arguments against Buddhist-majority Myanmar at the International Court of Justice on December 10 accusing it of breaching the 1948 UN genocide convention in its operations against the Rohingya.

Backed by the 57-nation Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Canada and the Netherlands, Gambia sought emergency measures to prevent further violence against the Rohingya, pending a fuller case that could take years.

The Arakan Army said ahead of the hearings that it endorsed the case in a rare display of solidarity with Rohingya who are seen in Myanmar as non-citizens. Suu Kyi stunned observers when she agreed to lead a team to The Hague in mid-December to represent Myanmar. —AFP

International

I'm still scared - Asia remembers tsunami that killed 230,000



Sixty-five-year-old tsunami survivor Nurhayati (right) prays to mark the 15th anniversary when an earthquake and resulting tsunami killed at least 170,000 people in the country and thousands of others in neighboring countries, at a cemetery containing mass graves in Siron, Aceh province yesterday.



SIRON, Indonesia: People visit to mark the 15th anniversary when an earthquake and resulting tsunami killed at least 170,000 people in the country and thousands of others in neighboring countries, at a cemetery containing mass graves in Siron, Aceh province yesterday. — AFP photos

PHANG NGA, Thailand: Communities across Asia commemorated the more than 230,000 victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami yesterday, the 15th anniversary of one of the world's most deadly disasters. On the morning after Christmas Day in 2004, a 9.1 magnitude quake off northern Sumatra island triggered a tsunami with waves as high as 17.4 meters (57 feet) that swept over vulnerable coastal areas of Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand and nine other countries.

"It still haunts me ... I can remember it all the time," said Suwannee Maliwan, 28, who lost both parents and five other relatives when

the tsunami hit the Thai province of Phang Nga. "Sometimes I dream that a wave is coming. I'm still scared," she said. "Sometimes I want to move somewhere else, but it's not possible because I was born here, my mom and dad passed away here."

Memorials were scheduled in the Indonesian province of Aceh, where entire villages were flattened and more than 125,000 people perished in the giant waves. Since then, the area has been largely rebuilt, with some 25,600 residential, commercial, government and school buildings constructed inside a high-risk zone, that had suffered virtually total

devastation in 2004. In Thailand, where more than 5,300 people were killed, including tourists visiting resort islands in the Andaman Sea, officials held a memorial ceremony and called for more awareness and preparedness for disasters.

"The government wants to lift safety standards... and build awareness across all sectors in preparing and protecting people against disasters," Deputy Interior Minister, Nipon Bunyamane, said at an opening ceremony. He said Dec 26 had been designated national accident prevention day.

Officials later laid wreaths at a memorial

center in Phang Nga province to pay tribute to King Maha Vajiralongkorn's nephew, Bhumi Jensen, who was last seen jet-skiing off the coast when the tsunami hit. An interfaith service for Muslim, Christian and Buddhist victims was also scheduled.

Survivors from Ban Nam Khem, the worst hit Thai village, will hold a candlelight vigil in the evening. At least 1,400 people were killed when waves struck the fishing village. In India, where more than 10,000 people died in the tsunami, survivors also were to hold memorial ceremonies. More than 35,000 people died in Sri Lanka. — Reuters

Death toll in Indonesia bus plunge rises to 35

JAKARTA: At least 35 people were killed when a bus plunged into a ravine in Indonesia, officials said in a new toll yesterday, making it one of the most deadly bus accidents in recent years. A rescue team in Indonesia's island of Sumatra yesterday continued the search for a third day to find more bodies after seven new victims were found in a river late on Wednesday.

According to a passenger manifest, the regional bus left Bengkulu province for Pagar Alam with 27 on board but some survivors told police there were around 50 people inside when the accident happened on Monday just before midnight.

Spokesman for a local rescue team in South Sumatra Taufan, who only goes by one name like many Indonesians, said Thursday that of the 35 people killed, 16 were male and 19 female. "The rescue team is searching the river 6 kilometers

towards the north using rafting," Taufan said yesterday. The team has evacuated at least 13 survivors and the search is still ongoing to find more bodies over fears that some might have been carried away in the river. At least eight of the passengers killed were children, local police chief Dolly Gumara said Wednesday.

Traffic accidents are common in the Southeast Asian archipelago, where vehicles are often old and poorly maintained and road rules regularly flouted. In September, at least 21 people died when a bus plunged into a ravine in West Java's Sukabumi region.

Several months earlier, 12 people were killed and dozens more injured when a passenger tried to wrest control of a bus steering wheel following an argument with the driver on the same toll road in West Java as Thursday's accident. The bus smashed into two cars, causing a truck to roll. — AFP

China's northeast cornbelt likely to be hit by fall armyworm

BEIJING: China warned earlier this week that a destructive pest that has threatened the country's grain output is expected to hit more crops across wider areas in 2020, including the key corn-growing region in the northeast.

Fall armyworm, first detected in China's southwestern province of Yunnan in January this year, is expected to spread to the corn belt in the northeast next year, a government institute said in a report on Monday, citing the pest's reproduction patterns and high mobility.

"It is expected that in 2020, fall armyworm will be very severe and the situation will be extremely grave," according to the report by the National Agriculture Technology Extension Service Center (NATESC), an institute under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

The pest infested 16.88 million mu (1.13 million hectare) of land in 26 provinces and regions in 2019, NATESC said in the report. Fall armyworms, which feast in large numbers on the leaves and stems of

many plant species, including sorghum, corn and sugarcane, can't be eradicated and can infest and damage hundreds of hectares of crops in a single night.

China is the world's second-biggest corn consumer and producer. While 98.1 percent of the land infested by fall armyworm in 2019 was corn field not in the northeast, 19 other crops including wheat, ginger, sugarcane and sorghum were also hit, NATESC said in the report, published on its website.

Beijing warned earlier this year that armyworm was a severe threat to the country's food security and in May launched a campaign to "snatch grain from the insect's mouth." With its arrival expected in the north early next year, the report warned of an increasing risk that armyworm will hit corn during its budding period, devastating young crops. In the absence of corn, the pest will turn to wheat in neighboring areas.

Larva of the pest has already been found in 9,120 mu of wheat field in China since late September, in provinces including Shandong, Henan and Jiangsu, major growers of the grain in China, the world's top consumer and producer of wheat, according to the report.

First found in the Americas, fall armyworm has spread through Asia since it was detected in southern India late last year. NATESC urged local authorities to inspect winter crops in their region, and include fall armyworm as a regular and major target for monitoring. — Reuters

Lifestyle

Friday Times

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Meet America's baby mayor

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Mayor Charlie McMillan, the youngest mayor in America in the unincorporated Grimes County community of Whitehall, gets washed off in the sink after getting some of his breakfast on himself in Whitehall, Texas on Dec 20, 2019. — AFP photos

America's baby mayor, a face of the anti-abortion movement

The mayor's breakfast is ready," Chad McMillan sings out from the living room of his Texas ranch. On the menu this morning: a warm bottle of milk and a jar of puree. Charlie McMillan is no ordinary city official - he's only seven months old and a new face of the anti-abortion movement in America. The chubby baby became honorary mayor of his Texas community in October with a sweet slogan: "Make America Kind Again."

A twist on US President Donald Trump's catchphrase of making the country great again, Charlie's "agenda" includes patriotism, adoption and "life" - referring to the issue of abortion that tends to polarize Americans. The infant mayor's emergence comes amid mounting anxiety among abortion rights advocates who fear the 46-year-old *Roe v Wade* Supreme Court decision that effectively legalized abortion is under threat.

"One of his campaign platforms focuses on the brave and courageous choice that... his birth mother made for life," said Charlie's adoptive mother Nancy Jane McMillan. "She was in the midst of a crisis pregnancy and chose not to terminate the pregnancy but to carry him, and we were the incredibly blessed recipients of that brave and courageous choice."

Charlie's parents bought the honorary mayor title at an auction in October as part of a fundraiser for firefighters in their community of Whitehall, about an hour northwest of Houston. The appointment, which does not involve any actual duties, was "just something fun that we were doing," McMillan said. But then the 43-year-old real estate agent realized the influence that "Mayor Charlie" had on the people of Whitehall.

"Just a little bit of kindness goes such a long way, and in



Charlie gets fed by his parents Chad and Nancy Jane McMillan before going to a basketball game dressed up as a rattlesnake.

Lifestyle | Feature



Charlie sits on a couch at his home.



Charlie is fed his breakfast by his mother Nancy Jane.



Charlie is held by his father Chad McMillan on the back of a goat at their home.

this time of political and cultural divisiveness in the United States, it's neat to see how a baby, a seven-month-old, with a campaign promise to make America kind again, can, we believe, impact change." Charlie's parents are on the development board of the Houston Pregnancy Help Center, a Christian organization that steers women with unplanned pregnancies away from abortion.

Not a Democrat, not a Republican

The inauguration of the country's littlest mayor took place on Dec 15, with a big party featuring hot dogs, country music and a ceremony for the tuxedo-clad baby. Local business owner Frank Pokluda said he gave Charlie the oath of office, "and naturally he nodded each time so he was well aware of what he was doing". "Look at the joy this child has brought to this community... there's people out there who'd love to have these kids so I think it's a great thing," he added.

Advocates for women's reproductive rights argue that access to abortion is vital for gender equality and the reduction of poverty and many other societal ills. Outlawing terminations simply drives patients underground, they argue, where operations are unregulated and potentially deadly. Chad McMillan, 51, hopes his son can provide a much-needed respite from the political battles that have divided the country.

"We hope that Charlie, who isn't a Republican, who isn't a Democrat, who isn't an independent, who loves people, can allow everybody to take a breath," said the Baptist pastor and missionary, who voted for Trump in 2016. That could prove difficult with the Supreme Court to rule in the first half of 2020 on a Louisiana law that critics say would force the closure of most of the state's abortion clinics.

Several states this year tightened abortion access, making the procedure illegal when fetal heartbeat is detected, although courts struck down several such laws. Trump campaigned on a pledge to appoint only opponents of abortion to the Supreme Court. He has named two of the court's nine justices, leaving the bench with a 5-4 conservative majority. Abortion opponents are counting on the new justices to help overturn Roe v Wade, or at least allow states to restrict access to the procedure. —AFP



Charlie is held by feed manager Martin Garcia at Whitehall Groceries.



Charlie gets dressed for the day.



Charlie is held by Susie Swank as she talks to Bobbi Berger and Priscilla Otto during Swank's birthday party at her home in Navasota, Texas on Dec 20, 2019.



New hotel encapsulates Milan tourist renaissance

A picture shows sleeping pods at the new “Ostelzzz” capsule hotel in Milan on Oct 28, 2019. —AFP photos



The CEO of Ostelzzz, Gianmaria Leto, poses at the new “Ostelzzz” capsule hotel.

Cheap and cheerful capsule hotels are forever expanding from their Japanese cradle, including now in Milan where the tiny, stacked rooms are helping the Italian city cope with exploding tourist numbers. With no-fuss convenience for both the city and transport links, digital connectivity and a social side among their chief selling points, the capsule hotels target the Generation Y crowd. Some people, though, just stay out of sheer curiosity.

Croatian tourist Dragan Kupresanin, 31, said he wanted to try the room because “it looked like something new, futuristic style... those kind of boxes that you sleep in”. After sleeping like a log at Ostelzzz, down a quiet street in the centre of Italy’s economic capital, he’s ready for more. “I really liked it. This kind of hotel should be developed, many people avoid youth hostels because of the privacy problem (with bunk beds etc) but here you have it,” he said.

In the size of one standard hotel room, eight capsules - each measuring 1.45 by 1.45 by two metres (4.5 x 4.5 x 6.5 feet) - are stacked on top of each other, four above and four below, with an enclosed toilet space in the room and showers down the corridor.

Inside the capsule is a mattress with duvet and pillow, two charging plugs for mobile phone or laptop, a lockable cupboard for luggage and a bedside table. All this for between €19 a night (\$21), including breakfast, and €150 during Milan’s world-famous Design Week.

Japanese origin

The first capsule hotels were born in Osaka, Japan in 1979, travel blogger Agnese Sabatini told AFP. The tiny rooms took off thanks to commuters who had drunk too much or just missed the last train home. Since then, the concept has taken off around the world, first in airports, from Paris to Moscow and Bangkok, and then in cities like Singapore, Seoul or Mumbai.

Nevertheless, in Europe, capsule hotels are rare outside of airports. There is for example the City Hub in Amsterdam and the Lucerne capsule hotel which opened in Switzerland at the end of 2018. Milan is the first Italian city to have a capsule hotel, but the company behind it, ZZZleopardGo, is expanding. Capsule hotels will be open at six airports, including Milan and Warsaw, by year’s end, with Vienna and four in Brazil



Guests walk out the “Ostelzzz” capsule hotel.



A guest uses an automated check-in desk at the “Ostelzzz” capsule hotel.

to swiftly follow, making it the biggest such company in the world, says chief executive officer Gianmaria Leto.

On top of adding five or six airports a year, “our objective is to create one or two (capsule) hotels a year over the next five years in main European cities,” said Leto, 32. With the ambitious expansion plan, the Italian company said it expects its annual turnover to grow to €10 million (\$11 million) in five years, compared to one million in 2019.

Claustrophobia?

Sabatini says that “the only negative aspect of a capsule hotel is the feeling of being closed in, of claustrophobia, that some people get”. Otherwise, it’s a win-win-win: “privacy, low cost, and all within reach of the city,” said the writer of the “I’ll B right back” blog. “Small spaces aren’t a problem for young people,” she said. “What they want is technology, like automated check-in, sockets to charge their electronics,” but also communal areas to meet new people, she added.

Milan has seen a tourist boom since the city’s Expo 2015, thanks to its fashion and design weeks, as well as its Duomo (cathedral), museums and vibrant nightlife. The city went from 4.2 million visitors in 2011, to 6.8 million in 2018, of which 65 percent were foreigners. Last September saw 700,000 visitors, up 18 percent year-on-year, many of them youngsters. “Four years ago there were just three youth hostels, now there are 26, there’s exceptional growth,” said ZZZleapandGo chief operating officer Fabio Rochetti.

The hotel, which can also be booked via the Airbnb website, attracts a varied clientele, and not just visitors to the city. Some 25 percent are workers or students like Monica Vici, 22, who lives at the Ostelzzz capsule hotel pending finding an apartment. After or before her classes, she sits at her laptop in the sleek, stylized communal area, while, nearby, people come and go to the hotel’s 24-hour bar. “You have privacy in the bedroom, but there’s also a kitchen, you meet lots of people,” she said. The staff, all under 40, are “very attentive”, said the Rome native.

Not all guests fall into the millennial category. The hotel had an 86-year-old guest, and boasts a family room with four inter-connected capsules. English language teacher Patricia Ann Wells, 48, stays here three nights a week and is equally smitten. “I like it here because of the friendly environment. It’s like being at home,” she said. —AFP



A picture shows a corridor with a bathroom and sleeping pods at the “Ostelzzz” capsule hotel.



Guest sit in the breakfast area at the “Ostelzzz” capsule hotel.



A woman dials a private pin code to access a sleeping pod.



Guest sit a communal area.

'Ring of fire' eclipse wows across Asia



This composite image shows the moon as it moves in front of the sun in a rare "ring of fire" solar eclipse as seen from Tanjung Piai in Malaysia. — AFP photos

Skywatchers from Saudi Arabia and Oman to India and Singapore were treated to a rare "ring of fire" solar eclipse yesterday. Annular eclipses occur when the Moon is not close enough to the Earth to completely obscure the Sun, leaving a thin ring of the solar disc visible. While these types of eclipses occur every year or two, they are only visible from a narrow band of Earth each time and it can be decades before the same pattern is repeated.

Depending on weather conditions, this year's



A girl uses solar filter glasses to watch the solar eclipse in Tanjung Piai in Malaysia.

astronomical phenomenon was set to be visible from the Middle East across southern India and Southeast Asia before ending over the northern Pacific. Hundreds of amateur astronomers, photographers and set up by Singapore's harbor for what some described as a "once in a lifetime" event. "The next one will happen in about 40 years I think," said Jason Teng, 37, who took the day off work to photograph the eclipse.

The amateur astronomer used a special solar filter on his telescope as there is no safe period to observe an annular solar eclipse. Alexander Alin 45, a geophysicist from Germany, travels around the world following eclipses. "It's only two minutes, but it's so intense that you talk about it with your friends, family for the next month," Alin said.

Eclipse stops play

In southern India, people gathered on the beaches in Tamil Nadu to watch the event. The eclipse even affected cricket, with play delayed by two hours in a first-class match between Mumbai and Rajkot. The eastern state of Odisha declared a public holiday, with all government offices, courts, schools and colleges closed.

But in New Delhi, cloud and pollution blocked the view and Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted his disappointment, although only a partial eclipse would have been visible that far



The moon moves in front of the sun in a rare "ring of fire" solar eclipse as seen from Balut Island, Sarangani province in the southern Philippine island of Mindanao yesterday.



A girl watches the solar eclipse through a foot x-ray in Islamabad.



The moon totally covers the sun in a rare “ring of fire” solar eclipse as seen from the south Indian city of Dindigul in Tamil Nadu state.



People pray during a rare “ring of fire” solar eclipse in Surabaya in Indonesia.

north. “Like many Indians I was enthusiastic about solareclipse2019,” Modi said. “Unfortunately, I could not see the Sun due to cloud cover but I did catch glimpses of the eclipse in Kozhikode and other parts on live stream.”

In Indonesia, hundreds of people gathered outside Jakarta Planetarium to watch the event using protective glasses supplied by the planetarium, hoping for clear skies at the time of maximum eclipse. “I could see the eclipse this morning and now am very excited to see the peak though now it is cloudy,” said Chandra Ayu Dewi, 39, who arrived at 7:00 am with her children.

Outside the narrow band where the “Ring of fire” effect can be observed, skywatchers would see a partial solar eclipse. The next annual eclipse in June 2020 will be visible to a narrow band from Africa to northern Asia. The following one in June 2021 will only be seen in the Arctic and parts of Canada, Greenland and the remote Russian far east. — AFP



School students use solar filter glasses to view the solar eclipse at a school in Mumbai.



The moon begins to cover the sun as a star on top of a Christmas tree is seen in the foreground in Bangkok.

Egg-standing test goes viral as solar eclipse crosses Asia

Can you make an egg stand on its narrow side during a solar eclipse? According to a popular scientific theory, an egg will support itself that way when the moon obscures the sun and during the spring equinox, due to increased gravity. While the theory has been debunked, that did not stop Malaysian and Indonesian social media users from putting it to the test

yesterday, as thousands of skywatchers gathered across parts of Asia to witness a rare annular solar eclipse.

Videos shared online showed dozens of users succeeding in getting eggs to balance on different surfaces including on gravel, a window pane, and a plate during the ‘ring-of-fire’ eclipse. Hakeem Maarof, a Malaysian father of two, filmed eggs standing on end on a stone pavement and on the road after remembering being told about the theory by a friend. “It’s more of an experiment for my kids,” Hakeem, who posted the footage of Facebook, told Reuters.

Dr Chong Hon Yew, a retired physicist from the Malaysian Science University, said there was no evidence to back up the theory. “You can do the same experiment tomorrow, before or after eclipse - it’s easy to do it,” Chong said. “But it’s a fun trick to do (during an eclipse) to get young kids interested in science and astronomy.” — Reuters



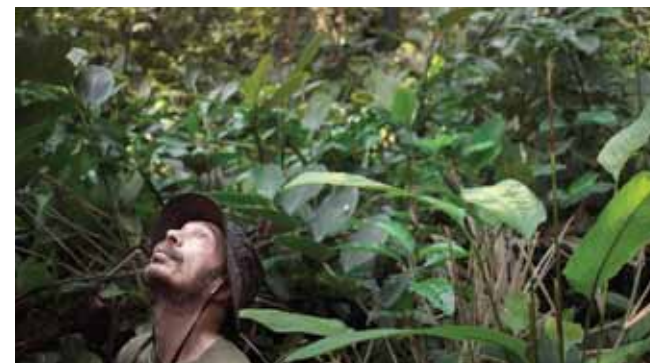
Monks wearing solar filter glasses watch the “ring of fire” solar eclipse at the Gaden monastery in a Tibetan colony in Teginkoppa, 50 km south of Dharwad in India’s southern Karnataka state.



An expedition member notes the characteristics of a butterfly in a notebook, near Mogoumba, on Dec, 6, 2019. — AFP photos



Bayaka Pygmy trackers drink water from a liana during a forest exploration trek.



Jean, the expedition's dronist, flies a drone over the leaves of the toxic liana *strophanthus gratus*, to try to find the caterpillar of *Antimachus*.

In an African forest, enduring mystery of a **giant butterfly**



Christophe, a naturalist draftsman and Nicolas, one of the expedition's entomologists, work on a butterfly drawing in the base camp near Mogoumba.



Nicolas looks for the *Antimachus* caterpillar among the leaves of a clearing.

Suspended from branches high above the ground, Nicolas Moulin looked through his binoculars over a seemingly endless sea of emerald green. Somewhere beneath the forest canopy was the African giant swallowtail: The largest butterfly to appear by day on the African continent, virtually unrecorded in scientific annals but known to be venomous. The species, known in Latin as *Papilio antimachus*, was discovered in 1782.

Its black-streaked orange-brown wings

are extraordinary. They reach up to 25 cm across, making it one of the largest butterflies in the world. But, just as remarkable, nobody has ever been able to study the creature in its state as caterpillar or chrysalis - keys to understanding its life cycle and longevity. Seeking to unlock the mystery, a privately-financed French expedition of about 20 people set up camp in the far south of the Central African Republic, on the banks of the Lobaye river, which winds like a copper snake through primary forest.

"This is a place for poachers - the male (butterflies) come to ingest mineral salts on the bank and are captured," Moulin said from his perch 40 m above the ground. Collages created from the wings of butterflies are a prized art form in the CAR and provide a living for many hunters. Abroad, a giant swallowtail specimen can sell for €1,500 (\$1,700). The males flutter close to the ground but the females live right up in the forest canopy. There, they feast on flowers exposed to



View from the top of a tree equipped to be climbed for butterfly observation from the top.

Lifestyle | Feature

Friday, December 27, 2019



An entomologist climbs to the top of a tree to try to observe the caterpillar of the Antimachus butterfly.



Nicolas scans the canopy of the forest, corded in a 40-metre-high tree.

direct sunlight and are hardly ever seen.

"This species, like many others, is becoming increasingly rare," said the expedition's senior scientist, entomologist Philippe Annoyer. But how rare is the big question. *P. antimachus* is so elusive that there is insufficient data to determine its conservation status. "The details we have date from the 1960s and consist of half a page in a scientific journal," said Annoyer.

Poisonous

The researchers speculate that the giant butterfly most likely gets its venom when its caterpillar ingests the leaves of *Strophanthus gratus* - a thick, woody liana that winds among the treetops and bears flagrant flowers. The team planned to pinpoint the flowers in the forest canopy with the help of a drone. Then, it was hoped, they could set up a sophisticated network of ropes enabling people to move around the heights to explore the whole length of the liana.

That way, they might find a *P. antimachus* caterpillar, according to this scheme... even though nobody knew quite what these caterpillars looked like. The uncertainties were no deterrent to scientists whose faces light up at the sight of a rare fern or a praying mantis. The team was given three weeks to study in ideal terrain.

Hope to breed species

The challenge was rugged but Annoyer, a Frenchman born in Ivory Coast, was in his element. An entomologist who might almost be an ancient bushman, with chiselled features and a thick beard, he has been studying the butterflies of central African forests for more than 30 years. For three decades, Annoyer has also sought to alert the general public to the extinction of these exquisite species, largely in vain.

He hopes that in unveiling the crucial early stages of the life cycle of this African giant, this will encourage people to breed the butterfly. "The idea is that the local population will be able to provide insects to collectors and (local) artists, and this will brake butterfly hunting," he says. But after three weeks of trekking, climbing and making inquiries in surrounding villages, the team had still found no trace of the caterpillar or the chrysalis.

Strange silence

Around the camp, the forest fell strangely quiet. There were no rodents on the ground nor primates or birds in the branches. But wire snares left by hunters were everywhere. Each hollow in the stream was deepened by a hole dug by artisanal gold or diamond miners engaged in the main form of subsistence for many

local inhabitants. The armed groups that control two-thirds of the territory in a country long riven by violent upheaval have never taken root in this forested region - but its economic prospects are as barren as for the rest of the poor, landlocked CAR.

The passing days brought their share of disappointments to the expeditionary team, heightening the frustrations. In one traumatic setback, army ants found their way into a cage holding one of the few specimens of male African giant swallowtails captured in the expedition. The ants devoured the butterfly in moments, leaving just one wing and a flimsy leg to take back to the laboratory. The last best hopes now lie with botany samples, which may help to identify the plant that female butterflies use to lay their eggs. But even if this does not work out, the expedition will at least have enabled a first-hand look at the state of forests in this impoverished conflict-ravaged land. — AFP



An entomologist climbs to the top of a tree to try to observe the caterpillar of the Antimachus butterfly.



A Bayaka pygmy sits on a tree branch.

Legendary Berlin dance hall faces uncertain future



A picture taken on Dec 8, 2019 shows a view of the main dance floor at Berlin dance hall Claerchens Ballhaus. — AFP photos



Kiesow poses with a vintage Claerchen sign.

The dance floor of Claerchens Ballhaus has seen it all: From its first tangos in 1913 to balls for war widows to the Cuban rumba banned by the Nazis. The legendary Berlin institution with a 106-year history has even seen the Macarena and, more recently, was used as a set for a Quentin Tarantino film. Now Claerchens Ballhaus is facing an uncertain future. After a blow-out New Year's feast, the dance hall will close from January 1 for a

Kiesow holds up a photograph featuring dance hall founder Fritz Buehler, his wife Clara (later Claerchen) and daughter Margarete, in the Spiegelsaal.



A waiter plies his trade at Berlin dance hall Claerchens Ballhaus.



German author and historian Marion Kiesow addresses the audience in the Spiegelsaal (Mirror Hall), as she conducts a guided tour in Berlin dance hall Claerchen's Ballhaus.

Lifestyle | Feature

Friday, December 27, 2019



A view of the main dance floor at Berlin dance hall Claerchens Ballhaus.

“complete renovation” under new ownership and nobody knows when it will open again.

Under the disco ball, where septuagenarians in high heels rub shoulders with hipsters in checked shirts, there is a lot of concern, because a growing number of nightclubs have closed in Berlin in recent years due to the sharp rise in property prices. The managers who have run the old-fashioned dance hall for the past 15 years have not had their contract renewed by the new owner, along with all the staff.

Like ‘a death’

But Yoram Roth, the Berlin-born property investor who bought

it last year, is keen to play down any concerns. “My clear aim is to protect Claerchens Ballhaus,” Roth, who also owns photo galleries and restaurants in New York and Copenhagen, told AFP. Roth, who plans to rent out the dance hall as a venue for corporate events and weddings, said the work would start with an overhaul of the fire alarm system. But he could not specify when it will open again.

Marion Kiesow, a regular and the author of a book about Claerchens Ballhaus, said the main concern among patrons was that it would stop being “a popular and accessible place to go to in a chic area”. Kiesow, a graphic designer, said she still “could not believe” that the dance hall was closing down. “It’s like when you hear about a death and you can’t come to terms with it,” she said.



View of the facade of Claerchens Ballhaus.



A picture taken on Dec 8, 2019 shows a view of the so-called “Spiegelsaal” (Mirror Hall) at Berlin dance hall Claerchens Ballhaus.



An ornate sculpture decorates the balcony in the “Spiegelsaal”.

Disappearing nightlife

The area around Claerchens Ballhaus - the historic heart of Berlin - has been transformed over the past decade by investors drawn by the property boom. Art galleries, a Michelin-starred restaurant and lofts surround it and Claerchens Ballhaus, with its peeling facade and reasonable prices, has become an anomaly. Many Berlin nightlife institutions have been forced to close in recent years and many more are under threat.

The latest on the list are the KitKatClub, known for its leather and latex nights, and the Sage Club, a fixture of Berlin’s techno scene for two decades. Tagesspiegel, one of the capital’s local papers, said that “few cities in the world have such a rich tradition of transgressive and experimental nightlife”.

Claerchens Ballhaus has had its share of tradition-defying antics during its long history. The dance hall opened under Emperor Wilhelm II on September 13, 1913 and survived two world wars. It was there when the Berlin Wall went up and when it fell, was used in Tarantino’s “Inglourious Basterds” and visited by Prince William and Kate in 2017. Up a flight of creaky stairs from the dance floor is a hall with scuffed walls and giant mirrors that Kiesow said were cracked by bombs falling during World War II. In the summer, tables are put outside, lights are hung from the trees and the courtyard is crisscrossed by waiters carrying Wiener schnitzels from the kitchens.

Lonely hearts

The dance hall was named after its first owner Clara Buehler, who ran it for more than half a century before her death in 1971 in the half of a divided city that then belonged to communist East Germany. “Claerchen” is a German diminutive for Clara. The dance hall has also become known as a place where lonely hearts can find love at weekday evening waltz lessons or bigger orchestra nights at weekends.

The cloakroom was run for 50 years by another Claerchens Ballhaus legend - Guenter Schmidtke, who had cautionary words for girls looking for love. The white moustachioed gentleman, who retired at the age of 81 in 2015, would tell the new arrivals: “You won’t only find prince charmings in there!” — AFP

Lifestyle | Feature



A streetcar travels a street in Toronto on Dec 7, 2019. — AFP photos



Streetcars sit at a station in Toronto.

Toronto's old streetcars, a symbol of city, leave the rails

Toronto, Canada's biggest city, is known for a few things: the iconic CN Tower, the ice Hockey Hall of Fame, great food from around the world and its historic streetcars. But by year's end, the trolleys will be retired and replaced with sleek new trams - a decision that has been met with a mix of sentimental sadness and scorn. "I like these streetcars because they have a history in Toronto," says 37-year-old Kenneth, riding at the back of one of the old trams on line 511, running along Bathurst Street. "They're an icon."

Toronto's original 19th century trolley cars were pulled by horses, before the cars were powered by electricity in the 1920s. The historic tall, narrow, red and white streetcars, formally known as Canadian Light Rail Vehicles (CLRV), were commissioned in the late 1970s. To board, riders must climb three big steps. To request a stop, one pulls down on a yellow cord pinned to windows running the length of the trolley car.

Toronto is one of the rare major cities in North America, along with San Francisco, to have maintained major tramway networks. Lines still exist in a handful of cities including Cleveland and New Orleans. The Toronto system serves an average of 65 million riders a year.

'Weird and unique'

Streetcars were once the main form of public transit in the continent's cities, but after World War II, cars and buses took over, and hundreds of kilometers of tracks were ripped out. After years of debate at city hall and under pressure from activists, Toronto decided in 1972 to maintain its network, which is now composed of 11 lines running through the heart of downtown. The old-time

streetcars are now celebrated and an emblem of the city, appearing on t-shirts and posters in souvenir shops and on toy shelves.

"Toronto can be a little bit plain sometimes, and streetcars are one thing that has made us kind of different," Mark Fiorillo, who has lived in the city his entire life, says with a hint of nostalgia. "No other streetcar looked like that: like beasts or tanks," he said. "They were quite cool." Fiorillo heads up a charity called City-Fund, that focuses on getting Toronto residents to be more engaged in their city.

With the support of the city's transit commission, Fiorillo launched an art project called "A Streetcar Named Toronto" - a nod to the Tennessee Williams play. One of the old hulking trolley cars was splashed in brightly colored paint and is one of a handful still in circulation. The final day of service will be Dec 29. Most of the rest of the streetcars have already been replaced by new trams built by Bombardier.

In 2009, the Montreal-based company won a contract from the city for more than Can\$1 billion (US\$750 million) to provide 204 new streetcars. After several delays, the company accelerated assembly work and promised to complete the order by the end of December. Nearly all of them have been delivered.

More passengers

For Scott Haskill, manager of project development at the transit commission, the old trams - which were ageing and not adapted to those with disabilities - had "come to the end of their natural life". The new Flexy Outlook streetcars, with softer curved features that echo new Bombardier models already in use in Berlin and Brussels, have low floors and no steps. They are also longer



A new model streetcar carries passengers.

and wider and can hold more passengers, Haskill told AFP. "We needed bigger streetcars because the routes are so busy and we needed more capacity," he explained.

Not everyone is sad to see the old streetcars go. "I don't care," says Bernadette Beaupres, a 61-year-old commuter who rides public transit an hour each day and describes the experience as "absolutely horrible". Because the streetcars share space with cars and bicycles in a greater metropolitan area that is home to six million residents, they contribute to, as well as suffer from, gridlock.

The new trams are "fancy looking", Beaupres admits as she steps off a new streetcar on Queen Street, which runs almost the entire length of the city. "But we're such a congested city that the streetcars are actually very slow," she said, adding that if one breaks down, 10 more will get stuck behind it on the track. Toronto failed to invest enough in its public transit system in the 1980s and 1990s and is now trying to catch up, with help from Ontario province and the federal government, said Haskill.

According to the city's transit commission, most of the old streetcars are headed to the scrap heap. A few will be added to its collection, which includes models dating back to 1923 and 1951. Others will be displayed at specialized museums such as the Illinois Railway Museum near Chicago. And a handful are still available to hire for parties or weddings. — AFP



A streetcar is seen in traffic against the electric grid above it.



Two streetcars, an old model (left) and a newer one, pass each other in Toronto.



Comic

Word Search

Sports

Find and circle all of the Sports that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Vince Lombardi quotation.

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

- | | | | |
|------------|----------|---------------|------------|
| ARCHERY | CROQUET | JAI ALAI | SOCCER |
| BADMINTON | CYCLING | LACROSSE | SOFTBALL |
| BASEBALL | DARTS | POLO | SQUASH |
| BASKETBALL | FENCING | RACQUETBALL | SURFING |
| BILLIARDS | FISHING | RUGBY | SWIMMING |
| BOCCIE | FOOTBALL | RUNNING | TENNIS |
| BOWLING | GOLF | SKATEBOARDING | VOLLEYBALL |
| BOXING | HANDBALL | SKATING | WRESTLING |
| CRICKET | HOCKEY | SKIING | |

Yesterday's Solution

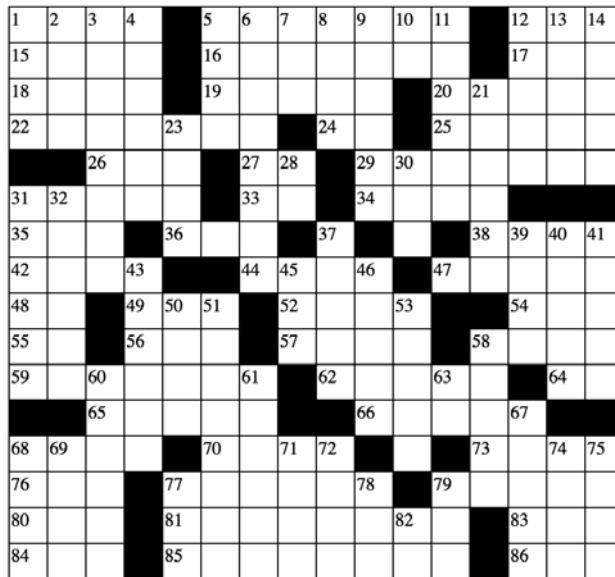
Spiders 2

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

- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| ANT MIMIC | FILMY DOME | JOHNSON JUMPER | SPITTING |
| ARROWHEAD | FLOWER | JUMPING | STEALTHY GROUND |
| BANDED GARDEN | GHOST | LADYBIRD MIMIC | STRIPED LYNX |
| BIRD DROPPING | GIANT HOUSE | NURSERY WEB | TENT WEB |
| BOLAS | GOLDENROD CRAB | ORBWEAVER | TURRET |
| BOLD JUMPER | GRAY CROSS | PARSON | TWIG |
| BROWN RECLUSE | GREEN LYNX | PIRATE | WESTERN LYNX |
| BROWN WIDOW | HAMMOCK | REDBACK | WHIP |
| BUTTON | HERCULES BABOON | RUNNING | WOODHOUSE |
| CELLAR | HOBO | SAC | ZEBRA |
| ENAMEL | JEWEL | SOWBUG KILLER | |

The hidden message is: SPIDERS HAVE AS FEW AS ZERO AND AS MANY AS EIGHT EYES

Crossword 2396



ACROSS

- The act of catching an object with the hands.
- Scandinavian liquor usually flavored with caraway seeds.
- 3 to 30 gigahertz.
- An enclosure made of wire or metal bars in which birds or animals are kept.
- Only extant member of the order Rhynchocephalia of large spiny lizard-like diapsid reptiles of coastal islands off New Zealand.
- A close friend who accompanies his buddies in their activities.
- A city in northern India.
- A city in northeastern Ohio.
- A Bantu language spoken in southern coastal Tanzania.
- Childcare during the day while parents work.
- A silvery-white metallic element of the platinum group that resembles platinum.
- Someone who bakes commercially.
- An American doctorate usually based on at least 3 years graduate study and a dissertation.
- A soft gray ductile metallic element used in alloys.
- The academic world.
- A republic in eastern Africa.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- A cord that is drawn through eyelets or around hooks in order to draw together two edges (as of a shoe or garment).
- American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).

- A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
- A sudden short attack.
- Old World wild swine having a narrow body and prominent tusks from which most domestic swine come.
- Made from residue of grapes or apples after pressing.
- A city in southern Finland.
- A public promotion of some product or service.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
- A radical labor movement in the United States founded in nd dedicated to the overthrow of capitalism.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- Top part of an apron.
- A French abbot.
- A city and port in northern Jutland.
- A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
- The lofty nest of a bird of prey (such as a hawk or eagle).
- Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
- A small ball with a hole through the middle.
- Living quarters at a college or university where students live.
- A Gaelic-speaking Celt in Ireland or Scotland or the Isle of Man.
- The month following July and preceding

- September.
- A strong emotion.
- The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- A prominent rock or pile of rocks on a hill.
- A disorder of the glands of the body.
- (Greek mythology) The winged goddess of the dawn in ancient mythology.

DOWN

- Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
- Kamarupan languages spoken in northeastern India and western Burma.
- A vigil before certain feasts (as e.g. Easter).
- (informal) Very good.
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- A famous waterfall in Venezuela.
- A unit of electrical power in an AC circuit equal to the power dissipated when 1 volt produces a current of 1 ampere.
- On, to, or at the top.
- Someone who willfully destroys or defaces property.
- A heavy brittle metallic element of the platinum group.
- An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
- English explorer who with Sir Richard Burton was the first European to explore Lake Tanganyika.
- Living quarters reserved for wives and concubines and female relatives in a Muslim household.
- A shape that spreads outward.
- Waterproof hip boots (sometimes extending to the chest) worn by anglers.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- Date used in reckoning dates before the supposed year Christ was born.
- Someone who is morally reprehensible.
- Submerged freshwater perennials.
- English biochemist (born in Germany) who discovered the Krebs cycle (1900-1981).
- The capital of Western Samoa.
- A resident of Iowa.
- Searching for underground water or minerals by using a dowsing rod.
- Furnished or strengthened with ribs.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- A cliché that seeks power usually through intrigue.
- French couturier whose first collection in 1947 created a style (tight bodice and narrow waist and flowing pleated skirt) that became known as the New Look (1905-1957).
- (used of texts) Shortened by condensing or rewriting.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- God of wealth and love.
- (South African) A camp defended by a circular formation of wagons.
- Christian martyr.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- The iridescent internal layer of a mollusk shell.
- The basic monetary unit of most members of the European Union (introduced in 1999).
- One of a pair of long straps (usually connected to the bit or the headpiece) used to control a horse.
- A written proposal or reminder.
- The persistence of a sound after its source has stopped.
- A mountainous landlocked communist state in southeastern Asia.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- A potent estrogen used in medicine and in feed for livestock and poultry.
- Acute delirium caused by alcohol poisoning.
- A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

very hard

Yesterday's Solution

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

medium

TV Listings

MOVIES HD ACTION

00:05 We Still Kill The Old Way
01:50 Project Almanac
03:45 X-Men: Apocalypse
06:20 Inception
08:50 A Good Day To Die Hard
10:30 Project Almanac
12:20 Independents' Day
14:00 Inception
16:30 Boering II
18:15 The Patriot
21:00 Stratton
22:40 Mechanic: Resurrection
00:40 Abducted

MOVIES HD THRILLER

02:25 The House Sitter
02:00 Metro
03:35 Sacrifice
05:15 Escape
06:50 Metro
08:25 Sacrifice
10:05 Escape
11:40 The House Sitter
13:10 The Tower
15:15 The Call Up
16:50 Poltergeist
18:30 The Hollow Point
20:15 The Game
22:30 Sea Of Love
sor Branestawn

MOVIES HD FIRST

01:25 Morgan
03:05 McLaren
04:45 The Mummy
06:45 Tommy's Honor
08:50 McLaren
10:30 Disneynature: Born In China
12:00 The Mummy
13:55 Max 2: White House Hero
15:30 Trolls
17:10 A Monster Calls
19:05 Deepwater Horizon
21:00 Home Again
22:45 Green Room

MOVIES COMEDY HD

01:15 Lies & Alibis
02:50 Sam
04:40 The Family Fang
06:30 Boris And Natasha: The Movie
08:00 The Borrowers
09:35 The Family Fang
11:30 Breaking The Bank
13:25 Boris And Natasha: The Movie
15:00 Ghost Town
16:50 Aquamarine
18:35 Daddy's Home
20:15 The Hot Chick
22:05 Deuce Bigalow: European Gigolo
23:30 The Bronze

MOVIES FESTIVAL

01:00 Amores Perros
03:45 Akeelah And The Bee
05:45 Worlds Apart
08:10 Lawrence Of Arabia
11:36 Chitty Chitty Bang Bang
14:01 Yosemite
15:45 Waiting For Superman
17:50 The Dressmaker
19:50 To Kill A Mockingbird
22:05 The Kite Runner

MOVIES KIDS

00:00 Elias And The Royal Yacht
01:30 A.R.C.H.I.E.
03:05 Felix All Around The World
04:40 Nur And The Dragon's Temple
06:00 Last Wizard

07:30 Quest For A Heart
09:00 Ploddy Police Car
10:25 Beyond Beyond
11:55 Mia And The Migoo
13:35 A.R.C.H.I.E.
15:10 Felix All Around The World
16:45 Free Birds
18:10 Beyond Beyond
19:40 Micropolis
21:15 Moomins And The Comet Chase
22:45 Free Birds
14:20 Ethel & Ernest
16:00 Swan Princess: Rolly Undercover
17:25 Two Buddies And A Badger
18:50 Ivan The Incredible
20:20 Azur & Asmar: The Prince's Quest
22:05 Swan Princess: Rolly Undercover
23:30 Funny Little Cars

MOVIES HD

00:45 Freedom Writers
02:50 Ice Age: Collision Course
04:35 My All American
06:45 Ghostbusters
08:50 Suicide Squad
10:55 Avatar
13:35 A.I. Artificial Intelligence
16:05 Sneakers
18:10 Fantastic Four
20:00 Birdman
22:05 The Revenant



00:30 Jackass: The Movie
01:55 Prophecy V: Forsaken
03:10 Hollywood On Set
03:35 Hollywood On Set
04:00 Hollywood On Set
04:25 Hollywood On Set
04:55 Hollywood On Set
05:20 Hollywood On Set
05:50 Hollywood On Set
06:15 Hollywood On Set
06:45 Hollywood On Set
07:20 Aaliyah: The Princess Of R&B
08:50 Deadly Secrets By The Lake
10:20 She's All That
11:55 Days Of Our Lives S12
12:32 Days Of Our Lives S12
13:09 Days Of Our Lives S12
13:46 Days Of Our Lives S12
14:23 Days Of Our Lives S12
15:00 He Said, She Said
16:55 First Knight
19:05 Bounce
20:52 Legends Of The Fall
23:00 Hellraiser VI: Hellseeker
00:00 Committed



01:30 Employee Of The Month
03:00 Hostage
05:00 Heartlands
06:30 Bad Santa
08:00 The Good Dinosaur
09:45 Hesh
11:30 The Blair Witch Project
13:00 On The Road
15:00 Employee Of The Month
16:30 Nine
18:30 Committed
20:00 Cinderella
21:45 Jindabyne
23:45 Kinky Boots

SUNDANCE TV

00:00 Hap And Leonard: Mucho Mojo
01:00 Promises & Lies: The Story Of UB40
02:00 Janet King
03:00 Hap And Leonard: Mucho Mojo
04:00 Hap And Leonard: Mucho Mojo

05:00 Life Itself
07:00 23 Kilometres
08:25 Iris
09:45 Miss Firecracker
11:30 Back To Your Arms
13:05 Big Star: Nothing Can Hurt Me
15:00 Cameraman: Life/Works Of Jack Cardiff
16:30 23 Kilometres
17:55 Iris
19:15 Miss Firecracker
21:00 Close Up With THR
22:00 The Cooler
23:40 The Player

SERIES HD COMEDY

00:15 The Drew Carey Show
00:40 The Drew Carey Show
01:05 Seinfeld
01:30 Seinfeld
01:55 Mr. Sunshine
02:20 Malcolm In The Middle
02:45 Powerless
03:10 Late Night With Seth Meyers
04:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
04:50 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
05:40 Malcolm In The Middle
06:05 Mr. Sunshine
06:30 Powerless
06:55 Angie Tribeca
07:20 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:10 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
09:50 The Simpsons
10:15 The Last Man On Earth
10:40 Malcolm In The Middle
11:05 Mr. Sunshine
11:30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
12:20 Powerless
12:45 Angie Tribeca
13:10 The Drew Carey Show
13:35 The Drew Carey Show
14:00 Seinfeld
14:25 Seinfeld
14:50 Malcolm In The Middle
15:15 The Simpsons
15:40 The Last Man On Earth
16:05 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
17:00 Powerless
17:30 Angie Tribeca
18:00 The Drew Carey Show
18:30 The Drew Carey Show
19:00 Seinfeld
19:30 Seinfeld
20:00 Grown-ish
20:30 Fresh Off The Boat
21:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
22:00 You're The Worst
22:30 Difficult People
23:00 The Detour
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers

SERIES HD FIRST

00:40 Lethal Weapon
01:30 S.W.A.T.
02:20 Outlander
03:20 The Unit
04:10 Time After Time
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 The View
08:00 S.W.A.T.
09:00 The Unit
10:00 Time After Time
11:00 APB
12:00 Lethal Weapon
13:00 The View
14:00 Time After Time
15:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Unit
18:00 APB
19:00 Survivor: Ghost Island
21:00 Once Upon A Time
22:00 This Is Us
23:00 APB
23:50 Empire

FIRST HD Home of HBO

00:05 Quarry
01:00 Spawn

01:30 Spawn
02:00 American Crime Story: The Assassination Of Versace
03:00 The Chi
04:00 Katt Williams: Priceless: Afterlife
05:05 12th & Delaware
06:30 The Tears Of Sichuan Province
07:15 El Diablo
09:10 61*
11:20 Grey Gardens
13:10 Frequently Asked Questions About Time Travel
14:45 An American Girl: Chrissa Stands Strong
16:20 Einstein And Eddington
18:00 Shots Fired
18:50 Herblock: The Black & The White
20:25 Top Ten Monks
21:00 House Of Cards
22:00 Homeland
23:00 Whitney Cummings: I'm Your Girlfriend

SERIES HD

00:00 Outlander
01:00 APB
01:50 Empire
02:40 Lethal Weapon
03:30 S.W.A.T.
04:20 Outlander
05:20 The Unit
06:10 Time After Time
07:00 Good Morning America
09:00 The View
10:00 S.W.A.T.
11:00 The Unit
12:00 Time After Time
13:00 APB
14:00 Lethal Weapon
15:00 The View
16:00 Time After Time
17:00 Live Good Morning America
19:00 The Unit
20:00 APB
21:00 Survivor: Ghost Island
23:00 WWE Experience

Syfy HD

00:35 13/13/13
02:10 Channel Zero: No-End House
02:55 Channel Zero: No-End House
03:40 Night Of The Witch
05:15 Killjoys
06:00 Stargate SG-1
06:50 Stargate SG-1
07:40 Stargate SG-1
08:30 Stargate SG-1
09:20 Stargate SG-1
10:10 Stargate SG-1
11:00 Smallville
11:50 Smallville
12:40 Smallville
13:30 Smallville
14:20 Smallville
15:10 Pokemon IV: 4ever
16:40 Pokemon Heroes
18:05 Saga: Curse Of The Shadow
20:10 Face Off
21:00 Scott Pilgrim vs. The World
23:00 Hellboy II: The Golden Army

STAR WORLD HD

00:00 Mistresses
01:00 Mistresses
02:00 Grey's Anatomy
03:00 Married At First Sight
04:00 Cougar Town
04:30 Cougar Town
05:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
05:30 Mom vs. Matchmaker
06:00 Mistresses
07:00 Mistresses
08:00 Grey's Anatomy
09:00 Married At First Sight
10:00 Cougar Town
10:30 Cougar Town
11:00 Mom vs. Matchmaker
11:30 Mom vs. Matchmaker
12:00 Mistresses

13:00 Mistresses
14:00 Grey's Anatomy
15:00 Devious Maids
16:00 Cougar Town
16:30 Cougar Town
17:00 Cedar Cove
18:00 Devious Maids
19:00 Devious Maids
20:00 Project Runway All Stars
22:00 Fashion Star
23:00 Making Mr. Right



02:00 Say Yes To The Dress
01:05 90 Days To Wed
01:50 90 Days To Wed: Before The 90 Days
02:35 Oprah: Where Are They Now? Sister Wives
03:20 Sister Wives
04:05 Toddlers & Tiaras: Coach Wars
04:50 Separated At Birth
05:35 Say Yes To The Dress
06:00 Sister Wives
06:45 Sister Wives
07:30 Big & Little
08:15 Say Yes To The Dress
09:00 Cake Boss
09:25 Say Yes To The Dress UK
09:47 Say Yes To The Dress UK
10:10 Say Yes To The Dress UK
10:32 Say Yes To The Dress UK
10:55 Say Yes To The Dress UK
11:17 Say Yes To The Dress UK
11:40 Say Yes To The Dress UK
12:02 Say Yes To The Dress UK
12:25 Say Yes To The Dress UK
12:47 Say Yes To The Dress UK
13:10 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
13:55 Oprah: Where Are They Now?
14:40 Cake Boss
15:02 Cake Boss
15:25 Cake Boss
15:47 Cake Boss
16:10 Cake Boss
16:35 Cake Boss
17:00 This Is Life With Carissa Cupido
17:50 Cake Boss
18:20 Cake Boss
18:50 Kate Plus 8
19:40 Cake Boss
20:10 Say Yes To The Dress
20:35 Say Yes To The Dress
21:00 Kate Plus 8
21:50 Little People, Big World
23:30 Return To Amish

BBC FIRST

00:45 The Coroner
01:40 Holby City
02:35 Doctors
03:10 EastEnders
03:40 EastEnders
04:10 Benidorm
05:05 Doctor Who
06:00 Doctors
06:30 Casualty
07:25 Holby City
08:20 Doctor Who
09:10 Doctors
09:40 Doctors
10:10 EastEnders
10:40 The Coroner
11:25 Casualty
12:20 Holby City
13:15 Doctor Who
14:05 EastEnders
14:35 EastEnders
15:05 Casualty
16:00 Doctors
16:30 Doctors
17:00 Doctors
17:30 Doctors
18:00 Doctors
18:35 Friday Night Dinner
19:05 The Coroner
19:55 Father Brown
20:50 Death In Paradise
21:50 Poldark
22:50 Doctors
23:20 Friday Night Dinner
23:45 Agatha Raisin

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:05 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
00:30 Chris Ramsey Stand Up Central
00:55 Tosh.0
01:20 Tosh.0
01:45 Tosh.0
02:10 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:23 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
03:50 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
04:15 Ridiculousness Arabia
04:40 Workaholics
05:05 Workaholics
05:30 Workaholics
05:55 Workaholics
06:20 Workaholics
06:50 The Jim Gaffigan Show
07:15 The Jim Gaffigan Show
07:40 The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:05 The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:30 The Jim Gaffigan Show
08:55 The Dude Perfect Show
09:20 The Dude Perfect Show
09:45 Brotherhood
10:10 Brotherhood
10:35 Brotherhood
11:00 Kroll Show
11:25 Kroll Show
11:50 Kroll Show
12:15 Kroll Show
12:40 Kroll Show
13:05 Disaster Date
13:30 Disaster Date
13:55 Lip Sync Battle UK
14:20 Lip Sync Battle UK
14:45 Ridiculousness Arabia
15:10 Ridiculousness Arabia
15:35 Brotherhood
16:00 Brotherhood
16:30 Lip Sync Battle
16:55 Lip Sync Battle
17:20 Disaster Date
17:45 Friends
18:08 Friends
18:31 Friends
18:54 Friends
19:17 Friends
19:40 Workaholics
20:05 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
20:35 Ridiculousness Arabia
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
22:00 Nate Bargatze: Full Time Magic
22:45 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
23:15 Ridiculousness Arabia
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:10 The Chase
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Couples Come Dine With Me
03:25 It's Not Rocket Science
04:20 The Jonathan Ross Show
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 The Chase
07:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
08:05 Cannonball
09:00 The Jonathan Ross Show
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
11:00 The Chase
11:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 The Chase
15:10 Couples Come Dine With Me
16:00 Dancing On Ice
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

During this phase, you will see yourself more sensitive than usual, and your creative imagination will be of paramount. It is advisable that you avoid over-reacting. A little control of impulses and emotional tides could be handy. You will be busy, and there would be occasions of short travels. You will be inclined towards the arts or at least will appreciate the creative arts. The domestic environment will require your attention, and you will try to establish peace at home. This period will allow you to develop a relationship only if you are ready to make necessary compromises and finding a middle ground with meaningful dialogue. The expenses will go beyond the earnings and will disrupt your financial plans. Unforeseen expenditure may occur. Short-term investments are unlikely to provide tremendous benefits. This will encourage you to put in better efforts. You may get better exposure to showcase your abilities.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This period would be all about accomplishing goals and realisation of ambitions. With a more focused and practical approach, you would be able to progress rapidly at the career front. Also, be prepared to get new assignments and responsibilities, which would be the result of the pleasant relations with higher-ups, and the increase of trust on you. Recognition and success would now come at a faster pace, and this will inspire you to perform even better. Your creative pursuits will now yield instant results, and the ideas will get converted into action in an even faster manner, and this would be because of the better executive abilities. You may learn to understand the dynamics of your relationship better. During the later parts of this week, your thoughts and ideas will be accepted by others more easily, and you may also be appreciated for the way you drive across your point during important financial dealings.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

During this phase, the focus will shift towards security in career and matters related to finance. This may be a monetarily rewarding period so that you can expect good returns for most of your efforts. If you have been waiting to present your views about a particular issue or subject to your higher-ups, then this can be a favourable period. This can be an excellent time to hone your speaking and observation skills. Your creativity may find an outlet through your speech. But, you are advised to be a bit more open to the views of others, because, in your enthusiasm, you may tend to miss others' perspective. At this time, you will want to branch out but do not get too emotionally charged. You may be going against authority or making some poor decisions.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

During this phase, there would be an increase in your confidence and self-belief. With the incredible ability to take on challenging situations, you would be in an assertive mode. Due to the support of the high level of energy and stamina, you wouldn't mind putting in the extra efforts at the workplace. Moreover, due to this very surge of energy, you would be able to look at things with a more enthusiastic perspective. Your health would also be in your favour so that you can go ahead with those strenuous and time-consuming tasks right now. This time indicates a battle of egos over the most trivial issues.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

During this phase, there would be an increase in your confidence and self-belief. With the incredible ability to take on challenging situations, you would be in an assertive mode. Due to the support of the high level of energy and stamina, you wouldn't mind putting in the extra efforts at the workplace. Moreover, due to this very surge of energy, you would be able to look at things with a more enthusiastic perspective. Your health would also be in your favour so that you can go ahead with those strenuous and time-consuming tasks right now. This time indicates a battle of egos over the most trivial issues. You may require to control your temperament to take your relationship to the next level. During this phase, you would be beaming with confidence and optimism, and you would prefer to not stop at anything.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This will be a very productive and rewarding phase if you put in the required efforts and grab the opportunities with optimism. There will be a sense of happiness and contentment from within, and this feeling will stem from the fact that you are up to the task. Though relations with seniors and higher-ups would be good, you will have to be careful that in your enthusiasm, you do no rub someone on the wrong side. If you are currently not involved with anyone, you may get attracted to someone during the later parts of this week. Also, you may like to share your feelings and start an important relationship. This period is ideal for taking the benefit from investments in mutual funds and other such safe, long-term investments. A sense of insecurity shall prevail. At the later part of this week, health would remain fine. Your profound character and bodily grandeur will be noticed at this time.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This period would be all about converting the internal happiness and ideas into creative expression. In this phase, instead of emphasising on self-development, you may start giving more importance to joint efforts and absorbing the ideas from around you. The more you express yourself and exhibit your talents, the higher the chances of attracting gains and opportunities would be. You are likely to meet interesting new people, and you will be more open to people who are different from yourself. Try not to dig up old issues and do not create new issues; otherwise, your full energy will be wasted in that, and financial upliftment will remain aside. You may experience a mixed trend on the career front. For some, the movement of Mercury may bring in worries and troubles from enemies. In this way, this week may end with some satisfaction.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This phase would require you to look within and give importance to self-introspection. Things may not work out exactly as per your plans, but there may be some opportunities wrapped within problems, so your instinct and attitude will also matter. Relationships with people at the workplace may not be very amicable, and there may be some misunderstandings, so you need to be careful. Your communication may be under a cloud in this period, and there are chances of you erring on the messages that you want to convey, so choose your words carefully. If you are not aware of the practical problems and the equation of your relationship, the disruptions in your love life may make you very uncomfortable during the later part of the phase. Do not be unmindful while signing new contracts.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

During this period, it would be better to reduce the pace at which you take up things, as there will be a need to analyse your situation and the realities. A reckless and impractical approach may prove to be very costly for you. Professionally, this may not be the brightest of periods, but your persistence and resilience may definitely pay off in the near future. Gains from foreign contacts or projects are foreseen, and there are also high chances of travelling abroad for matters related to work. Be very careful in your written communication. There can be some heated arguments or unnecessary discussions. If your partner does not respond to you, you need to keep patience. The more alert you are, the more you will benefit during this phase. The second half of this phase will be a hectic period, and on some occasions, you may feel exhausted.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

In this phase, there are chances of increased interactions with seniors at the workplace. The concept of maintaining a low profile may not always work, and you will have to exhibit your strengths and talents at the right moments, and this will help you to attract lucrative opportunities. Also, your communicational skill would decide how well you would be able to make the best use of the situations. It would be better to avoid unnecessary and futile arguments and discussions, and instead, it would be better to focus on the more important areas at the workplace. You need to stay balanced and composed and must not allow your frustration to get out of control. Yet investments done in this phase can be rewarding in future. Furthering your professional aims and aspirations will be featured now.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

In this phase, you may be required to contribute your ideas and suggestions for a particular project or task. This may be a comparatively busy period, and on some occasions, you may feel exhausted due to the pressure of the deadlines and various pending assignments. Though you will be able to multi-task, it would be better if you take one thing at a time and focus on the basics, or otherwise, there are higher chances of confusion and delays. Due to the encouragement of your seniors, you would be able to complete some pending tasks and complicated projects. You may find your partner acting shady, or there will be some self-doubt, confusions, insecurities or miscommunication during this phase. Though you will be interested in multiple areas, it would be advisable to stay connected to the fundamental areas.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

If you have been planning to present some special ideas to your seniors during important meetings or even during normal interactions, then this would be the ideal time, as you would be able to express yourself well and your communication would also be very effective. If you are able to apply your skills and talents well, then you will be able to earn through multiple sources, and there are chances of you grabbing important projects and assignments in this phase. Moreover, this would be a good time to hold team meetings and gatherings, as there are higher chances of better ideas and strategies being discussed. You will begin to face some harsh realities during this phase.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antigua	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Bruncei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Nigar	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Toga	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

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- o Dermatology board certified.
- o Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- o Member of American cosmetic dermatology Society.
- o Referee reviewer of International journal of Dermatology.

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Email: drfahad@beautybeyond.com.kw
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Department: Heart & Vasoukar Center

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- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complicated)
- ◆ VATS Procedure (Treatment of Pleural through Pleuroscopy)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
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- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Substitutes & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
- ◆ Transanal minimally invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

- ◆ American Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of American College of Surgery
- ◆ Canadian Board of General Surgery
- ◆ Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- ◆ American Board of Colo - Rectal Surgery
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Surgery Department
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Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency



Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368 Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED
Consultant of General Surgery Laproscopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates – Training

- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228 Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

Classifieds

Friday, December 27, 2019

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Shazeen Mahamad Shaif Alaji, (Indian Passport No. N1869413 issued in Kuwait) D/O Alaji Mahamad Shaif Kasam hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as, given name: Shazeen Mahamad Shaif, surname: Alji and Father's name Mahamad Shaif Kasam Alji for all purposes.

I, Nuwair Mahamad Shaif Alaji (Indian Passport No. T2416290 issued in Kuwait) S/O Alaji Mahamad Shaif Kasam hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as, given name: Nuwair Mahamad Shaif, surname: Alji and Father's name Mahamad Shaif Kasam Alji for all purposes. (C 5698)

I, Chalamala Venkta Reddy, S/O Chalamala Narasareddy (old name) D No 7/21 C3, Gangireddypalem, Rajampet town and Mandal, YSR Kadapa Dist (A.P) have changed my name as Chalamala Venkata Krishna Reddy, S/O Chalamala Narasareddy (new name). 26-12-2019

I, Fernandes Joseph Lawrence, holder of Indian Passport No J4441403, having permanent address at Janata Colony, House No. GSG 58, Worli Village, Mumbai

400-030, Maharashtra, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: Joseph Lawrence and Surname: Fernandes. (C 5697)

I, Abdul Majeed Abdul Sattar, holder of Indian Passport No. S4690318 do hereby change my name to given name: Abdul Sattar, Surname: Abdul Majeed for all purpose. I also undertake of effect the change in all my other public documents. (C 5696)

I, Thodeentavida Aslam Edam, with given name as Thodeentavida and Surname as Aslam Edam, son of Moidu, holder of Indian Passport No. P0723755, issued at Kuwait on 19/07/2016, Civil ID No. 269020301865, permanent resident of AT House, Panoor P.O, Via Telichery, Dt. Kannur, Kerala, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given name: Aslam, Surname: Edam Thodeentavida. (C 5482) 24-12-2019

SHARING ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation for Filipino ONLY Farwaniya block 4, near Big Jamiya, available on December 25, Contact 55571873. 24-12-2019

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate freshening at times southerly wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Cold with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h.

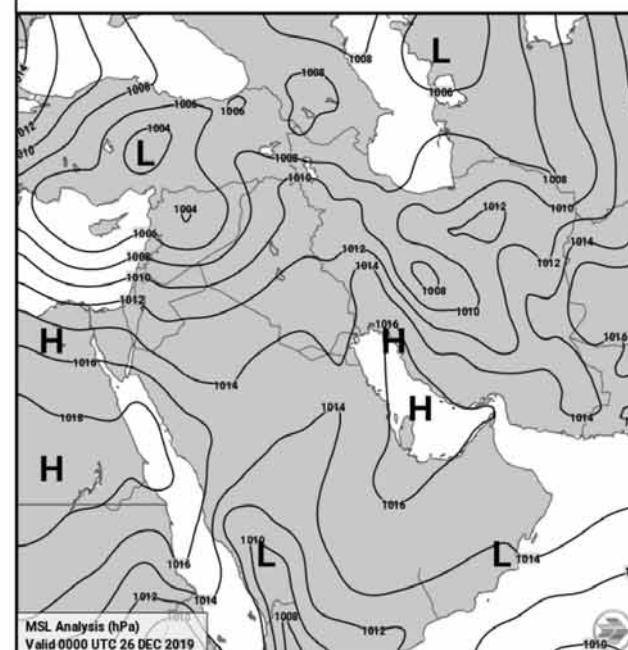
WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	23 °C	17 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23 °C	14 °C
ABDALY	23 °C	15 °C
BUBYAN	21 °C	17 °C
JAHRA	22 °C	13 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	22 °C	18 °C
AHMADI	22 °C	15 °C
NUWAISIB	23 °C	11 °C
WAFRA	23 °C	11 °C
SALMY	23 °C	12 °C

SFC. CHART

26/12/2019 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	12/27	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	25 °C	10 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h
Saturday	12/28	Fair	21 °C	08 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 28 km/h
Sunday	12/29	Fair	21 °C	07 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Monday	12/30	Fair and Partly cloudy	22 °C	07 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 26 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:15
Sunrise	06:40
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	14:38
Sunset	16:57
Isha	18:19

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	05 °C
MAX. RH	96 %
MIN. RH	21 %
MAX. Wind	S 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Airlines

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

Business

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2019

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BEIJING: People walk past the restaurant Real Kung Fu, or Zhen Gongfu in Mandarin, run by fast food chain Kungfu Catering Management, yesterday. —AFP

Bruce Lee's daughter sues fast food chain

Restaurant argues logo of martial arts star has long been authorized

SHANGHAI: A company run by Bruce Lee's daughter is suing a Chinese fast food chain for allegedly using an image of the late martial arts film star without permission. Shannon Lee's Bruce Lee Enterprises accuses restaurant chain Kungfu Catering Management of having used her father's image for 15 years in a logo without paying intellectual property rights. The food chain responded yesterday by saying the logo had long been authorized by Chinese authorities.

"We're confused that we are prosecuted many years later. We're actively studying the case and preparing to respond," the company said in a statement posted on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform. According to the Chinese Internet portal sina.com, Shannon Lee asked the food chain to immediately stop using her father's image, clarify for 90 consecutive days that it has nothing to do with Bruce Lee, and pay compensation of 210 million yuan (US\$30 million).

The Guangzhou-based restaurant chain known as Real Kung Fu (Zhen Gongfu in Mandarin) was founded in 1990. Since 2004 its logo has featured image of a dark-haired man in a kung fu pose who looks like Bruce Lee. The founder of the chain said it has more than 600 stores across the country, with a total asset value of over five billion yuan, according to Chinese media. It ranked among the top 10 fast-food companies in China last year on a list issued by China Cuisine Association.

Bruce Lee Enterprises in Los Angeles handles merchandising and licensing of Bruce Lee's image and aims to keep the martial artist's energy alive, its official website showed. Shannon Lee, who has taken over the company from her mother, has been involved in the preservation of her father's legacy for around two decades. —AFP

Bursa achievements push Kuwait close to 2035 vision

KUWAIT: Kuwait's stock exchange has made a number of notable accomplishments this year, pushing the country ever closer to ultimately becoming a regional financial hub, as envisaged in the 2035 national development plan. Chief among these achievements is the Kuwaiti bourse's shift to "emerging market" status on investment research firm Morgan Stanley's (MSCI) rankings starting in May of next year, a move likely to create a positive ripple effect on the economy.

According to analysts, all signs indicate that Kuwait's stock exchange will attract foreign investment worth \$3.3 billion in the coming year, the bulk of which will come from some of the world's most reputable companies. The improvement on MSCI rankings, the third promotion in as many years, is

the result of two factors, one being the modification of account structures and making them available to foreign investors. To make sure that progress remains on an upward trajectory, Kuwait's capital market regulator has sent a team of specialists on a visit to asset management firms in some of the world's most renowned cities, including New York, London and Dubai. The initiative is a measure aiming to familiarize these companies with the bountiful investment opportunities available in Kuwait, part of a strategy on the bourse's part to introduce effective financial practices. As a platform for knowledge exchange, Kuwait's stock exchange has reached out to other bourses around the world in an effort to get some insight into the latest developments in the financial realm. —KUNA

Winter-hit Syrians turn to pistachio shells for heat

Rising cost of heating fuel has made warm homes a luxury



KHIRBET AL-JOZ, Syria: Children walk along a mud path at a camp for displaced Syrians in the northwestern Idlib province near the border with Turkey on Dec 12, 2019. —AFP photos



Abu Walid warms his living room with a pistachio-powered heater.

TAL AL-KARAMA, Syria: Abu Walid emptied a container of pistachio shells into the top of a heater in his living room in violence-plagued northwest Syria, where millions are bracing for a harsh winter. His three children huddled around the hand-made stove, the 35-year-old adjusted the heat with a dial regulating the number of shells burned per minute. "Because of a shortage in fuel, we started looking for alternatives," Abu Walid told AFP. "So we resorted to heaters powered by pistachio shells," he said, sitting cross-legged on a divan in his home in jihadist-dominated Idlib province.

Pistachio power

In recent months, Syria has suffered a fuel crisis that has seen a spike in the price of heating oil and long queues for much-demanded cooking gas in government-held parts of the country. The crisis, which officials blame on Western sanctions targeting the Damascus regime, is even more acute in opposition-held areas, where tighter supply has caused prices to soar. Outside Abu Walid's apartment, dozens of sacks of pistachio shells are stacked high. "They are cheaper than fuel, which is not currently available," he said. "They also don't emit smoke or odor," he added, explaining why they are better to burn than wood.

Syria's last major opposition bastion is home to some three million people, nearly half of whom have been displaced from other parts of the country. Despite an August ceasefire agreement and growing calls for de-escalation, regime forces and their Russian backers have heightened bombardment since mid-December, fuelling an exodus of tens of thousands of civilians. The mass displacement could not come at a worse time as winter floods hit over-crowded displacement camps.

The rising cost of heating fuel has made warm homes a luxury in a province where unemployment is high and public serv-

Business

Friday, December 27, 2019



Hussein Berro, a 51-year-old displaced Syrian, sits with his children inside their tent at the camp in Khirbet Al-Joz.



TAL AL-KARAMA, Syria: Sacks of pistachio shells are seen outside Abu Walid's apartment in this village in Idlib.

ices are non-existent. But business is booming for Sadeeq Alwan. Earlier this year, the man fled the southern Idlib town of Khan Sheikhun, before government forces recaptured the area. He moved to the town of Dana, north of Idlib city, where he opened a small workshop specialized in building pistachio-powered heaters.

Floods and mud

The heater consists of a combustion chamber with a separate hopper that feeds the fire with empty pistachio shells. Alwan initially thought his clients would mainly be other displaced Syrians from Khan Sheikhun who were used to such jerry-rigged furnaces, he said. But now, his 15 employees are barely keeping up with demand. "I thought we would only build around 500 heaters," Alwan said. "But until now we have built around 2,500."

Alwan attributes the popularity of his stoves, which cost about \$130, to their cost-effectiveness. Pistachios are ubiquitous in the region and shells are sold cheaply as a by-product of processing. One ton - imported

from Turkey - can last a whole winter and costs \$175, Alwan said. Heating fuel, on the other hand, costs about \$130 per gallon (3.79 litres), which might only last a month.

Even though they are a relatively cheap source of heat, pistachio-powered furnaces are not an item most families in Idlib can afford. In squalid camps for the displaced, residents survive mostly on aid and barely have enough money to buy food and clothes to keep warm. Such is the case in a camp in the village of Khirbet Al-Joz.

The settlement near the Turkish border is home to thousands of people who escaped battles between regime forces and jihadists in the northern countryside of neighboring Latakia province. Hussein Berro is one of them. Sitting inside his tent, the 51-year-old said life in the camps is especially difficult in winter, when tents flood and roads sink into the mire. "I wish I could return home but it's not safe," he said, five years after fleeing his home in Latakia. "I would prefer heavy rain and floods over a building collapsing over our heads." —AFP



A Syrian laborer works at a workshop specialized in building pistachio-powered heaters.



AL-DANA, Syria: Pistachio-powered heaters are displayed for sale along a street in this town in Idlib on Dec 18, 2019.



A sack of pistachio shells is seen at a workshop specialized in building pistachio-powered heaters.



A Syrian laborer works at a workshop specialized in building pistachio-powered heaters.

Business

‘More churros, less cops!’: New York food vendors feel the heat

Women sellers are particularly vulnerable



A street vendor sells tamales at Junction Blvd in Queens borough.



NEW YORK: Sabina Morales Hernandez sells produce at her street stand on Junction Blvd in the Queens borough on Nov 27, 2019. — AFP photos

NEW YORK: For two decades, Guadalupe Galicia has been waking up every day at 4:00 am to make tamales and rice pudding to sell on the streets of New York. She is one of thousands of vendors, many of whom are undocumented migrants, who hawk yummy treats in the Big Apple, but they are facing a litany of problems, from weather to assaults to arrests to even deportation. “One of their biggest fears is the police, and that’s why they are extra vulnerable,” Julie Torres Moskowitz, from the Street Vendors Project (SVP) support group, told AFP.

New York is known for hot dogs, pizza, bagels and pretzels, but the food scene is way more diverse. From Venezuelan arepas and Ecuadorian baked piglet to Middle Eastern falafel sandwiches and Tibetan momos, the city has it all. Galicia, an undocumented migrant from Mexico and single mother of six children, sells tamales stuffed with all sorts of fillings for \$2.25 each in the Bushwick area of Brooklyn. “We are only making enough money to support our children,” says the 40-year-old, who also sells champurrado - a hot, thick Mexican drink made with chocolate, corn flour and spices.

Icy weather, risk of deportation

Inclement weather is a problem - temperatures regularly drop below freezing during the winter months - but so are assaults, robberies, fines, confiscations and arrests, according to SVP. The women vendors are particularly vulnerable, they say. Arrests can result in deportation if a vendor’s papers are not in order, which they often aren’t, the group says. Moskowitz, who sits on SVP’s advisory board, says some attacks and thefts go unreported because of fear of dealing with the police.

To sell street food, vendors require a license that costs about \$50 and a permit for the cart that costs another \$200. It’s very hard to obtain a permit, though: Although there are more than 10,000 vendors, the number of permits has been capped at 2,900 since 1983 - meaning many operate at their own risk. There are some 2,000 additional permits for temporary workers but that isn’t enough for everyone. The result is a black market in permits, with owners subletting theirs for \$25,000, often through intermediaries, several vendors told AFP. Fake permit scams happen all the time, they say.

‘Vulnerable’

Outside Manhattan, in Brooklyn, Queens and The Bronx, street

food is mostly sold by women. SVP says they endure more harassment from aggressive customers than their male counterparts. They also are more likely to be fined by police, the group says. Most of the female food sellers, like Galicia, are the main breadwinners in their families. The early hours suit them so they can take care of their children after school, Moskowitz says.

In November, a video of a policeman handcuffing an Ecuadorian woman selling churros in the subway, where the sale of food is prohibited, went viral on social media, prompting outrage. Afterwards, graffiti that read “more churros, less cops!” appeared on the subway. It was also in protest at Governor Andrew Cuomo’s decision to hire 500 more police officers to monitor the subway.

For years, Galicia worked without a license. She estimates that she has paid about \$12,000 in fines. Several times, her food was confiscated. “The city has to give us work permits because we are also paying sales taxes,” she complained. The fines can sometimes be up to \$2,500. “There are only two options: leave the family without eating or pay the ticket,” says Sabina Morales, a 62-year-old undocumented Mexican woman who sells fruit and vegetables in Queens.

Jessica Ramos, a Democratic member of New York’s state senate, has introduced a bill that will eliminate the cap. A less ambi-

tious bill is also going through the city council that would raise the number of permits to 4,000 within a decade. “These people are trying to make a living in an honest way,” said Ramos, who was raised in the Queens neighborhood of Jackson Heights - a street food paradise where more than 100 languages are spoken.

‘Poverty crime’

Real estate developers, supermarkets and restaurants are among opponents of increasing the number of permits, says Ramos. They denounce what they perceive as unfair competition caused by the vendors’ low prices. But Ramos says there is room for everybody. “There are times when we want to sit in a restaurant, and there are times when we only have five dollars for dinner tonight and we are running towards the house,” she said.

Democratic Brooklyn councilor Rafael Espinal, in whose district the churros vendor was arrested, says police should focus on tackling violent crimes, not “poverty crimes” such as selling street food. A couple of years ago, Morales bought a permit for \$15,000, but it turned out to be fake and she lost all of her savings. “We must end the black market so that we can all work,” said Morales, who raised six children while working outdoors. “That’s why we come to this country - to work, to get ahead, to improve the life of our family.” — AFP



NEW YORK: Guadalupe Galicia, 40, from Mexico, sells her tamales and arroz con leche on the corner of Knickerbocker Ave and Dekalb Ave in the Brooklyn borough on Dec 9, 2019.



A street vendor moved her stand in Queens borough.

Business

Big shortcoming: Grumpy 2020 for global growth

Experts say lurch back to crisis improbable

PARIS: US political clouds coupled with wider climate and digital transformations point to a tricky 2020 for the world economy, although experts say a lurch back to crisis is improbable. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development said last month that activity had been hobbled by weaker trade and investment in the past two years, as US President Donald Trump pursued a trade war with China. The OECD expects global growth to dip in the coming year to 2.9 percent, its lowest level since the world recession of 2009.

Trump appears to have struck a truce with China for now, under a “phase one” pact announced this month, but pre-existing tariffs remain in place and it will take time to demobilize their effects. More broadly, the OECD contrasted proactive actions taken by central banks with the policy foot-dragging by governments in the face of climate change and the march of technology. Industrialists and investors are having to correct their climate strategies even as Trump sits firm in his policy of denial. Oil giant Saudi Aramco recently had to trim back the volume of its gigantic share offering. The International Monetary Fund was a little more optimistic in its latest World Economic Outlook, forecasting 2020 growth of 3.4 percent but warning nevertheless of a “synchronized slowdown and uncertain recovery”.

At a time of populism and protests around the world, politics will remain an economic wild card next year. Trump heads into the November presidential election under an impeachment cloud, and Britain’s Brexit divorce from the Eu-

ropean Union will likely be sealed next month, following Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s election triumph. The rise of technological giants sitting on mountains of data is meanwhile challenging the distribution of wealth between governments and big business, and has the potential to reshape the world of work as artificial intelligence exploits that data.

The online arena has emerged as another front for Trump’s trade wars, after he threatened tariffs on France over its digital tax imposed on the likes of Amazon, Facebook and Google. Europe is threatening a collective response.

Between heaven and hell

Ludovic Subran, chief economist of German insurance giant Allianz, sees a global “purgatory of growth” coming up. Any systemic shock next year “will probably not be born in finance, but will be exogenous, for example a big regulatory shock on personal data, or in relation to the climate”, he said. If Trump survives the impeachment process and wins a second term, he could “double the bet against China” at the risk of military confrontation, Subran added.

Trump and his potential challengers on the Democratic left are united in their hostility to the free-trade and liberalisation agendas that, they argue, hollowed out industrial America over the past decades. The mistrust is felt well beyond the United States. “We’re not worried about how to overcome a cyclical crisis, we know what to do,” said Ingo Kuebler, the staff representative at Mahle, a German automotive supplier that has already been forced to downsize as car buyers

compared with its 10-year average of 10.9. Its lowest was 8.5 in October 2011, and the high was 13.09 in January 2018. China and Poland saw the biggest drop in their P/E ratios in the past decade, making them cheaper. Thailand saw the biggest rise in the valuation ratio. Russia and Czech Republic lead the dividend yields league table, while India had the lowest yield. Russia’s dividend yield rose to 6.8 percent at the end of November, compared with 1.6 percent at the start of 2010. Chile’s dividend yield also rose to 3.6 percent from 1.3 percent in that period. EM firms’ profits slowed after they posted solid growth of 40 percent in 2010, according to a Reuters analysis of 4402 firms, due to a combination of factors such as a fall in commodity prices, slowing demand for tech products and the US-China trade dispute.

The analysis showed that EM firms’ profit growth lagged those of developed market firms for most part of the decade. China, Mexico and Thai firms had the highest median profit growth of 10 percent or more for the past 10 years, while Hungary, Egypt and Turkey had negative median growth. — Reuters

Emerging market stocks were laggards in the past decade

NEW YORK: Despite a strong start to this decade in 2010, emerging market stocks underperformed developed market peers and were weighed down by events such as the Chinese market sell-off, debt crises in Turkey and Argentina and the Sino-US trade war. MSCI’s index of emerging market stocks has risen just 15 percent since the start of 2010, while the MSCI World index delivered a massive 104 percent return in that period.

Thailand, Philippines and Taiwan led emerging markets, with gains of more than 50 percent each over the past decade, while Greece, Turkey and Czech Republic bottomed the list with negative returns. The period from 2010 to this December also saw turbulent foreign portfolio flows into emerging markets as overseas investors balked during periodic swings in risk appetite, including a period of rising US interest rates as major central banks began to unwind their crisis-era stimulus.

Despite the volatility, share prices broadly kept pace with earnings growth. The MSCI EM index’s forward 12-month price-to-earnings (P/E) ratio was at 11.8 at the end of November,



BANGKOK: Customers do final shopping before the New Year in a mall yesterday. — AFP

turn away from diesel engines. “The big issue is transformation, digitalization, electric mobility,” he told AFP, fretting that an influx of cheap Chinese car batteries means “we are dreading the loss of many jobs”.

Since the financial crisis a decade ago, central bank policies have led to negative interest rates spreading in some countries, squeezing bank

profitability and inflating private debt. With growth faltering, the debate about wealth distribution will likely become still more acute. Anger at inequality runs like a thread through protest movements from rich Hong Kong to developing Chile. In 2018, according to Oxfam, 26 billionaires had as much money as the poorest half of the world. — AFP

Japan probe into casino bribery case widens

TOKYO: Japanese authorities raided the headquarters of a pachinko operator yesterday as part of a bribery investigation centred on a ruling party lawmaker, media reported, widening a scandal that could undermine government efforts to develop casinos. The Tokyo-based firm was under investigation for possible ties to ruling party lawmaker Tsukasa Akimoto, who was arrested on Wednesday on suspicion of accepting bribes when he oversaw the government’s policy on casino development, broadcaster NHK said.

Without identifying the pachinko company that was raided, NHK said its accounts were being scrutinized for any transactions involving Akimoto, who in the past served as a consultant for a firm that had dealings with the pachinko operator. Pachinko, a slot-cum-pinball form of gambling, is a national obsession though the number of players is declining as younger generations prefer to play games on their mobile phones.

Following Akimoto’s high-profile arrest, media has reported that prosecutors have been expanding their investigation into whether he accepted

cash and gifts from 500.com, an online gambling operator based in China interested in developing a casino in Japan. Prosecutors have not named the company. While Japan’s top government spokesman insisted that Akimoto’s arrest would not delay government plans to develop three casino resorts, the investigation will likely raise questions about the bidding process.

Laws to legalize casinos in Japan have been met with public opposition because of concern about gambling addiction. Akimoto is accused of receiving about 3 million yen in cash and a family holiday from officials at 500.com’s Japanese subsidiary, according to media reports. He has denied any wrongdoing. The company has not responded to multiple requests for comment.

Prosecutors have arrested three other people suspected of bribery and raided the offices of a former member of parliament for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Shigeaki Katsunuma, and current LDP lawmaker Takaki Shirasuka in connection with the case, media reported. Las Vegas-style casino resorts are among Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s plans to attract foreign tourists. Japan, which has a shrinking population and economy, is desperate to maintain growth in tourism, particularly after the Tokyo Olympics next year. Some analysts have said the casino market could be worth about \$20 billion a year or more, thanks to an affluent population and the proximity to Asia’s wealthy gamblers. — Reuters

Sports

Feuz braves 'Stelvio' and Italy's Paris with fractured hand

BORMIO: World Cup downhill leader Beat Feuz will brave the legendary 'Stelvio' piste and Italian speed star Dominik Paris looking to make it back-to-back wins in the discipline this season despite competing with a broken finger in two downhill races scheduled for Bormio starting today.

The 32-year-old Olympic bronze medalist picked up the break in his left hand during the super-G in Val Gardena last week, with the subsequent downhill in the Dolomites postponed because of heavy snowfall, and now set for the Italian alpine resort of Bormio today, followed by a second tomorrow.

"The hand is currently steady and I hope that I can ride a special track in Bormio again," said the two-time defending World Cup downhill champion, who finished third at Bormio last season for his first podium finish on the piste.

Feuz won in Beaver Creek, Colorado, last time out and also finished third in the season-opener at Lake Louise in the Canadian Rockies, where Germany's Thomas Dressen won.

Paris was runner-up in Lake Louise, and wants to climb back on the top of the podium he dominated last season with wins in both the downhill and super-G in Bormio.

The world super-G champion stood on

top of the podium seven times last season — four times in the downhill — only bettered by Austrian great Marcel Hirscher. Hirscher's retirement has thrown the field wide open in the battle for the overall World Cup title. "For the general classification my favourites are (Alexis) Pinturault and (Henrik) Kristoffersen," insisted Paris.

"But I will certainly try. "I prefer ice pistes, it's the condition in which I feel most comfortable, in which I know I can go faster." The 32-year-old will be at home in all senses on the spectacular Stelvio piste.

Renowned for being one of the most technically challenging, covering 3250 metres with a drop of 1,010 metres, it is notoriously icy. A win would help the Italian climb up the standings.

Feuz leads the downhill standings with 160 points followed by Austria's Vincent Kriechmayr on 116, with Paris fourth on 104. Paris is sixth in the overall World Cup standings where Kristoffersen (379) leads the way ahead of Kriechmayr (312) and Pinturault (302).

Dressen won in Lake Louise, for his third World Cup downhill win after Kitzbuhel and Kvitfjell last season, on his return from injury.

Pinturault is fighting to be fit after picking up a thigh injury at the World Cup parallel



VA GARDENA: File photo shows Switzerlans's Beat Feuz trains on the eve of the FIS Alpine World Cup Men Downhill in Val Gardena - Groeden, Italian Alps. —AFP

slalom at Alta Badia.

Many of the skiers were unhappy with conditions during the Alta Badia event with rising Swiss star Marco Odermatt undergoing surgery on a knee injury on Monday.

Pinturault, the French federation said, suf-

fered a "6mm muscle injury to the long adductor muscle of his left thigh". "Everything has been put in place so he can take part in Bormio," it added. Sunday will feature the alpine combined, a discipline in which Pinturault is reigning world champion. —AFP

Paes, 46, announces 2020 will be his final year as a professional

MUMBAI: India's veteran tennis player Leander Paes announced on Wednesday that 2020 would be his "farewell year" as a professional before he hangs up his racket. The 46-year-old, who started his professional career in 1991, has won 18 doubles and mixed doubles Grand Slam titles and a bronze medal in the singles at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

Paes won a total of 54 doubles titles in a career spanning three decades, partnering more than 100 players. He is also the most successful doubles player in the history of the Davis Cup with 43 victories in 56 matches.

"I want to announce 2020 as my farewell year as a pro tennis player," Paes wrote on Twitter <https://twitter.com/Leander/status/1209848717228019713?s=20> post where he also thanked his family for their support.

"I am looking forward to the 2020 tennis calendar where I will be playing a few select tournaments, travelling with my team and celebrating with all my friends and fans around the world."

"It is all of you who have inspired me to become me and I want to take this year to say 'Thank you' to you." At the peak of his career at the turn of the century, Paes was ranked No. 1 in the doubles circuit along with partner Mahesh Bhupathi, with whom he won three Grand Slam titles. The duo won 26 doubles titles as a pairing between 1997 and 2011. —Reuters

Kuwait tops medal table as Arab Fencing concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait ended its participation in the Arab Fencing Championship in the open category for both men and women, on top of the medals table after winning a gold and bronze medal during the final day of competition which concluded Wednesday evening. The championship was held at the Kuwait Fencing Association hall in Daeya with the participation of Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE, Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon, Qatar, Yemen, Palestine and host Kuwait.

Kuwait Foil team won the gold medal followed by Iraq in second place, UAE and Syria ended in third place. Kuwait's team of Yasser Ali Nasser, Khalid Abdelkareem Yousuf, Ali Nasser and Yaqoub Al-Shatti won the medal.

Kuwait and Qatar's Epee women team won the bronze medal, while the gold went to Syria and the silver was taken by UAE. Kuwait's team included Reem Al-Shatti, Lulu Al-Ayoub and Ritaj Al-Khalifa.

President of Kuwait Fencing Association Abdallah Al-Waalan lauded Kuwait's winnings and being on top of the championship by winning most of the gold medals, which shows that the game continues to be in control at the Arab level.

Al-Waalan said KFA board spares no effort in supporting teams and players in all arenas.

Al-Waalan appreciated the support of the Public Authority for Sport and its Director General Dr Humoud Fulaiteh and his deputy for competitive sports Dr Saqer Al-Mulla.

Country	Final medals tally		
	Gold	Silver	Bronze
Kuwait	7	2	3
UAE	4	5	-
Syria	2	1	3
Iraq	-	2	7
Saudi Arabia	-	2	-
Qatar	-	1	2



Top seed at stake as Seattle Seahawks host rival 49ers

SEATTLE: The San Francisco 49ers and injury-riddled Seattle Seahawks have already clinched playoff berths. But there's still plenty at stake when the teams meet Sunday night in Seattle. If the 49ers (12-3) win, they'll clinch the NFC West title and earn the conference's No. 1 seed for the playoffs, and the first-round bye that comes with it. If they lose, they'll be a wild-card team and start the playoffs on the road.

The Seahawks (11-4) would win the NFC West by beating San Francisco and clinch at least the No. 3 seed in the conference playoffs. They can also climb to either the No. 2 or even No. 1 seed with a win and some help. Seattle defeated the host 49ers 27-24 in overtime in Week 10 so it owns the tiebreaker for the division title. "That is what you play football for," 49ers fullback Kyle Juszczyk told reporters this week. "These are the kind of games that you dream about when you are a kid. We are really looking forward to that, and it would mean a lot to get the 'W.'"

The 49ers have lost eight straight games in Seattle since 2011, including a defeat in the NFC title game following the 2013 season.

"They've had as good of a 10-year run defensively as probably anyone in the history of football," 49ers head coach Kyle Shanahan said of the Seahawks. "Then you add in the elements of their stadium, where you can't hear. When you can't use cadence and you're going up against a very skilled team with a pass rush, it's extremely hard."

This will be San Francisco quarterback

Jimmy Garoppolo's first start in Seattle, after missing last year's game with a torn ACL.

Garoppolo is 20-5 in 25 career starts, but CenturyLink Field can be one of the most difficult for inexperienced quarterbacks. Since 2010, QBs with 25 or fewer starts are 6-22 at the Seahawks' home field.

"It's going to be a 60-minute game. You have to have your mind ready for that," Garoppolo said. "When you get to these big games, two good football teams, it's always going to go up until the last whistle, and we've had multiple experiences this year like that."

Shanahan said he hopes having played at New Orleans in the Superdome on Dec. 8 will help Garoppolo deal with the noise in Seattle. Garoppolo passed for 349 yards and four touchdowns against the Saints in a 48-46 victory. "I thought Garoppolo handled himself well there, and expect him to do the same in Seattle," Shanahan said.

The Seahawks were blindsided 27-13 at home by Arizona last week and lost their top two running backs, Chris Carson (hip) and C.J. Prosise (broken arm), for the season. In addition, starting left tackle Duane Brown underwent minor knee surgery Monday.

To replace Carson and Prosise, the Seahawks signed the retired Marshawn Lynch and Robert Turbin, the team's running back combo in 2012-14. "I'm hoping for him. He will have a blast playing with this team," Seahawks coach Pete Carroll said of Lynch. "He loves this city and he loves playing here and



SEATTLE: File photo shows Kenyan Drake #41 of the Arizona Cardinals runs with the ball against Mychal Kendricks #56 of the Seattle Seahawks in the fourth quarter during their game at CenturyLink Field on December 22, 2019 in Seattle, Washington. —AFP

would love to contribute in a way."

Lynch's return could produce a boost for both Seattle's players and fans. "There's a chance they're going to be frickin' flying off the top of the roof," Carroll said of the home crowd. "And there's a really good chance it's going to be as loud as it ever gets and as exciting as it ever gets." —AFP

To start or sit is the question for Vikings

CHICAGO: The Minnesota Vikings have little to play for in their regular-season finale against the Chicago Bears on Sunday in Minneapolis.

The Vikings, after all, are locked into the NFC's sixth seed. A win, loss or tie on Sunday does nothing to alter their standing going forward.

With that in mind, does that mean coach Mike Zimmer will opt to rest his starters before the Vikings take their show on the road for the playoffs? Or will Zimmer elect to play his starters in some — if not all — of the regular-season finale as a means to distance themselves from last Monday's 23-10 clunker against Green Bay?

"I haven't really decided yet. So I don't know the answer to that," Zimmer told reporters earlier this week.

Minnesota's ailing backfield may benefit from an additional week of rest, with Dalvin Cook (shoulder, chest) and rookie Alexander Mattison (high ankle sprain) nursing injuries. Both backs were limited during Wednesday's walk-through practice after missing the game Monday.

Linebackers Eric Kendricks (quadriceps) and Anthony Barr (hamstring) could also be on the sideline for Sunday's game after sustaining their injuries against the Packers. Kendricks was the lone member of the team that did not participate in Wednesday's walkthrough.

The injury-depleted Vikings mustered just 139 yards of offense and were limited to 22:28 of time of possession against the Packers on Monday, a loss which allowed Green

Bay to secure the NFC North title.

"Winning the division is great and everything because you get a home playoff game, but we weren't good enough to do that so we'll just keep trying to do something better," Zimmer said.

While Adam Thielen's troublesome hamstring may benefit from another week of rest, fellow wideout Stefon Diggs looks to cap his career season in style. The 26-year-old Diggs, who has recorded a personal-best 1,130 receiving yards this season, has seven touchdown catches in eight career games against Chicago.

Diggs was kept out of the end zone in the Vikings' 16-6 loss to the Bears on Sept. 29, although he matched a season high with seven catches to go along with 108 yards receiving.

While the Bears scored 16 points in that contest, that's also their sum of their last two games after losses to Green Bay and Kansas City.

Mitchell Trubisky threw for just 157 yards in a 26-3 loss against the Chiefs, resulting in the Soldier Field faithful booing the home team off the field.

"I think the biggest message for our team and for us is continuing to discuss what we've talked about all year long," coach Matt Nagy said. "It's not easy, but (we have) to stay mentally focused knowing it's our obligation. There's a pride element I think for all of us, so that's what we'll be looking for."

Trubisky had a brief cameo in the last encounter with the Vikings before exiting with a left shoulder injury. Chase Daniel came on and threw a 10-yard touchdown pass to running back Tarik Cohen in the first quarter.

Khalil Mack recorded 1.5 of his team's six sacks in that game to boost his personal total to 3.5 in four career contests versus Minnesota. He has 8.5 sacks in 2019 and needs 1.5 more to record his fifth consecutive season in double digits. —AFP

Cowboys enter Week 17 looking for win over Skins

DALLAS: The Dallas Cowboys will be desperate for a victory when they host the Washington Redskins on Sunday afternoon. Even then, it might not be enough. Dallas (7-8) can clinch the NFC East division title with a win over the Redskins, coupled with a loss by the Philadelphia Eagles against the New York Giants, on the final day of the regular season. The odds might not be in the Cowboys' favor, but they plan to keep fighting as long as they have a glimmer of hope to reach the playoffs. Such is life in Dallas following a 17-9 loss in Philadelphia in Week 16. "It's frustrating," Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott told reporters this week. "I've sat here after every game pretty much, win or loss, and said the good part about it is that we control our own destiny. But that's gone. That's out of our hands now. That's unfortunate. It's very disappointing. We had the chance...."

"But now that it's out of our hands, we've got to control what we can control, and that's getting a win next week."

That means knocking off Washington (3-12), which hopes to play the spoiler role against its longtime division rival. The Redskins have endured a miserable season that included a midseason coaching change, with Bill Callahan replacing the fired Jay Gruden on an interim basis, and they will try to finish with a victory after losing the previous three games. In the teams' first matchup in Week 2, the Cowboys posted a 31-21 win behind three touchdown passes by Prescott.

Dallas is sliding with four losses in its past five games, which has threatened the job security of coach Jason Garrett. The former quarterback could be coaching his final regular-season game for Dallas regardless of the outcome.

Still, the Cowboys are a much better team on paper than the Redskins. Prescott has passed for 4,599 yards, 26 touchdowns and 11 interceptions this season, and Ezekiel Elliott has amassed 1,235 yards and 11 scores on the ground.

Dallas also boasts a pair of 1,000-yard receivers in Amari Cooper (75 catches, 1,097 yards, eight TDs) and Michael Gallup (61 catches, 1,009 yards, three TDs). Jason Witten has caught 59 passes for 505 yards and four touchdowns. —Reuters

Sports

Smith eyes century as Australia seize control against N Zealand

MELBOURNE: Master batsman Steve Smith ground out an unbeaten 77 yesterday as he zeroed in on yet another century, putting Australia in the driving seat after the opening day of the second Test against New Zealand.

In the Black Caps' first Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground since 1987, skipper Kane Williamson won the toss and opted to bowl, and it looked to be a good decision with Joe Burns out first ball and David Warner just before lunch.

But first Marnus Labuschagne, the world's leading run-scorer for 2019, and then Smith smacked half centuries to seize back control and leave them on 257 for four, frustrating the disciplined New Zealand bowlers.

Along with the fidgety Smith, Travis Head was not out 25, desperate for runs after a lean spell. Labuschagne made 63 with Colin de Grandhomme taking 2-48.

The signs are ominous for New Zealand with superstar Smith scoring centuries in his past four Tests in Melbourne, and a fifth looking likely.

"The way they bowled and placed their field, I had to be patient," said Smith. "It's not the kind of wicket you could go after them. I think we did pretty well today."

"The plan will obviously be to score as many as we can (on Friday)," he added. "But after getting sent it, I think you'd take 257 for four at the end of the day. One more good partnership would be nice and sort of set the game up for us." The visitors need to win to square the three-match series after crashing in the opening day-

night clash in Perth by 296 runs. It was a bold decision by Williamson to bowl on a pitch that has traditionally been docile and favoured the batsmen.

And it appeared to pay dividends in a sizzling opening over from Trent Boult, back after missing two Tests with a rib injury. After three testing balls to Warner, his fourth clattered into Burns' middle stump, with the opener out for a golden duck to huge roars from the large New Zealand contingent in the 80,000-strong crowd.

Boult was sorely missed by the Black Caps in Perth and along with Tim Southee found early swing and zip with the ball. "Obviously we would have liked a few more wickets on our tally," said Boult. "I think the overheads (cloudy conditions) and the way the pitch played in the first hour or two, it's annoying not to have them a couple more down. "On the positive, they haven't got too far ahead of the game. Hopefully we get a couple (of wickets) early tomorrow."

After Burns fell, Labuschagne and Warner dug in to wrestle back the initiative before a Neil Wagner delivery saw Warner caught at slip for 41, with Southee taking an outstanding one-handed catch. The in-form Labuschagne looked set for another big score after plundering his fifth consecutive 50, having converted three of his previous four into centuries.

But it wasn't to be and he was out in bizarre fashion, with a rising de Grandhomme ball ricocheting off his elbow and onto the stumps as he attempted to leave it. Smith was met with a mix of boos and cheers as he walked to the crease



MELBOURNE: Australian batsman Steve Smith plays a shot on the first day of the second cricket Test match against New Zealand at the MCG in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

and after a poor summer, by his standards, appeared determined to build a decent score.

It was slow going, but he brought up his 28th Test half-century off 103 balls — his first in four Tests. Along the way he passed Greg Chappell (7,110 runs) to become Australia's 10th highest run-scorer, with David Boon's 7,422 his next tar-

get. As in Perth, Matthew Wade again came under a short-ball barrage from Neil Wagner, with one bouncing off his helmet as their rivalry heated up.

But he survived to make 38 and provide valuable support for Smith before edging de Grandhomme to wicketkeeper BJ Watling. — AFP

South Africa fight back after England grab first-ball wicket

PRETORIA: England took a South African wicket with the opening delivery of their Test series yesterday, adding four more in the first two sessions before a strong sixth-wicket partnership saw the hosts through to 187-5 at tea. James Anderson marked his 150th cap and return to the England attack at Centurion Park with the first-ball wicket of home opener Dean Elgar, as Sam Curran and Stuart Broad took two scalps each.

Quinton de Kock then sought to bash his team out of trouble, making a quickfire 64 off 69 balls to keep up home hopes of a decent score in the first innings of the four-Test series. He and 30-year-old debutant Dwaine Pretorius (25) had taken their unbeaten partnership to 76 by tea.

Broad, who had been a doubt after missing the warm-up games with flu, took 2-29 off 11 overs, including the promising Zubayr Hamza for 39 and captain Faf du Plessis, who made 29. Curran had opener Aiden Markram out for 20 and then Rassie van der Dussen, another debutant at 30, caught behind for six.

The 37-year-old Anderson's first ball back in test cricket for five months, having limped out of the Ashes with a calf injury, was a

warm-up delivery down the leg side that Elgar tried to flick at but instead edged through to wicketkeeper Jos Buttler.

That set the tone for a scratchy early batting display. Markram looked in positive form after recovering from a broken wrist, sustained when he thumped the change room wall after being dismissed for a pair of ducks in South Africa's second test in India in October. But he contrived to chip the ball to Jonny Bairstow at midwicket for 20 off 23 balls. Hamza, 24 and playing in just his third test, was caught behind by Ben Stokes off Broad for 39, just when he was looking likely to establish his credentials in an inexperienced South Africa team struggling after the recent retirement of many stalwarts.

England all-rounder Stokes elected to play as the health of his hospitalised father Ged, who fell seriously ill in Johannesburg on Monday, showed signs of improvement. England's selection had been in doubt up until Thursday morning as several players had been struck down by illness. Jack Leach, Ollie Pope and Chris Woakes remained out of contention, but Jofra Archer was another to recover in time to play. — Reuters

Arteta says Xhaka can succeed at Arsenal despite fan fallout

LONDON: Arsenal midfielder Granit Xhaka is moving in the right direction as he rebuilds his relationship with the club's fans and can be an important player for the team going forward, new manager Mikel Arteta said.

Swiss international Xhaka reacted angrily to home supporters booing him as he walked off the pitch in a match against Crystal Palace in October and was subsequently stripped of captaincy by former manager Unai Emery.

The 27-year-old, who was also dropped, has since found his way back into the squad and former Manchester City assistant Arteta said he would offer his full support to Xhaka, having taken charge of 11th-placed Arsenal last week.

"When I was going from Arsenal to City to start coaching and we were looking at that position, he was one of the players on my list," Arteta, a former Arsenal midfielder, told the British media before his first match in charge at

Bournemouth on Thursday.

"I was happy when Arsenal signed him because I thought he was going to be a terrific player. He has done some really good things and now has got stuck in a difficult situation that was growing and growing and one day it exploded.

"But I have been amazed by how this relationship is starting to come back a little bit and the fans have been positive about him. It's difficult to change completely the scenario from where he was to a magnificent one. But we're in the right direction." Xhaka has been linked by the German media with a switch to Hertha Berlin but Arteta said he had spoken to the player about his future.

"I told him how much I like him and what I expect from him, how important he is for the team," Arteta added. "I'm here to help him, I want him to feel we're right behind him... if we can get fans in the right way as well... it'll be helpful for the team." — Reuters

Sports

Leonard, Clippers overtake Lakers



LOS ANGELES: Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James (L) drives past Los Angeles Clippers forward Kawhi Leonard (C) on a pick by Lakers center JaVale McGee (R) during a Christmas Day National Basketball Association (NBA) match-up between the Los Angeles Clippers and Los Angeles Lakers. — AFP photod



DENVER: Will Barton #5 of the Denver Nuggets handles the ball during the game against the New Orleans Pelicans at the Pepsi Center in Denver, Colorado.

LOS ANGELES: Kawhi Leonard had 35 points and 12 rebounds to lead the visiting Los Angeles Clippers to a come-from-behind, 111-106 win against the Los Angeles Lakers on Wednesday evening. Montrezl Harrell scored 18 points off the bench, and Paul George had 17 points on 5-for-18 shooting for the Clippers, who are 2-0 against the Lakers this season. With 3.6 seconds to go and the Clippers up by three, Patrick Beverley blocked a LeBron James 3-point attempt. George then made two free throws to seal the outcome. Kyle Kuzma scored a season-high 25 points off the bench for the Lakers, who have lost four in a row. They hadn't dropped consecutive games all season before the current skid. Anthony Davis scored 24 points, and James finished with 23 points, nine rebounds and 10 assists.

**GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS
116 - HOUSTON ROCKETS 104**

Glenn Robinson III and Draymond Green

each bombed in a pair of 3-pointers in a late flurry as Golden State rallied to stun Houston in San Francisco. All five Golden State starters scored in double figures and the Warriors limited Houston to 16-of-51 shooting on 3-point attempts. Damion Lee paced the Warriors with 22 points and a career-high 15 rebounds. Green and D'Angelo Russell went for 20 points apiece, Robinson added 18, and Willie Cauley-Stein scored 10. Green grabbed 11 boards.

The Rockets' Russell Westbrook led all scorers with 30 points, but he shot just 11 of 32 overall and missed all eight of his 3-point attempts as Houston saw a four-game winning streak come to an end.

**PHILADELPHIA 76ERS
121 - MILWAUKEE BUCKS 109**

Joel Embiid had 31 points and 11 rebounds — his seventh game this season with at least 30 points and 10 rebounds — to lift host Philadelphia past Milwaukee. Ben Simmons had 15

points, 14 assists and seven rebounds for the Sixers, who won their third in a row and tied a franchise record with 21 made 3-pointers. Tobias Harris scored 22 points and went 5 of 7 from beyond the arc. Josh Richardson added 18 points, Furkan Korkmaz scored 16, and Al Horford had 11 points and 10 rebounds.

Khris Middleton led the Bucks with 31 points. Giannis Antetokounmpo added 18 points, 14 rebounds and seven assists, but he shot 8-for-27 and missed all seven 3-point attempts. George Hill scored 15 points for Milwaukee.

**BOSTON CELTICS 118 - TORONTO
RAPTORS 102**

Jaylen Brown scored 30 points, and Boston ended Toronto's 34-game home winning streak against Atlantic Division teams. Kemba Walker added 22 points for the Celtics, who have won four in a row and have captured the first two games between the teams this season. The clubs

meet again in Boston on Saturday. The game was the first Christmas Day home game for the Raptors in their history. Fred VanVleet had 27 points for the Raptors, who have lost two in a row. Chris Boucher added a career-best 24 points, and Kyle Lowry contributed 14 points.

**NEW ORLEANS PELICANS
112 - DENVER NUGGETS 100**

Brandon Ingram had 31 points, sinking 7 of 9 shots from 3-point range, and visiting New Orleans beat Denver for its third win in four games immediately after a 13-game losing streak. Jrue Holiday had 20 points, eight assists and six steals, Josh Hart scored 16 points, JJ Redick finished with 15, and Derrick Favors had eight points, eight assists and 13 rebounds for the Pelicans. Nikola Jokic finished with 23 points and 10 rebounds, Jerami Grant scored 17 off the bench, and Gary Harris had 15 for the Nuggets, who had their seven-game winning streak snapped. — Reuters

In-form Elhouni boosts Esperance hopes of CAF title hat-trick

JOHANNESBURG: Hamdou Elhouni-inspired Esperance of Tunisia want to carry on where they left off in the Club World Cup when the CAF Champions League resumes today with three matchday three fixtures. Libyan Elhouni scored a hat-trick in a 6-2 rout of Al Sadd from host nation Qatar last week as his side finished fifth in the annual competition, which Liverpool won. Group D leaders Esperance are seeking an unprecedented third straight Champions League title and will enjoy home advantage against pointless V Club of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

AFP Sport previews the eight-match sched-

ule spanning Friday and Saturday with Esperance, fellow Tunisian team Etoile Sahel and TP Mazembe of DR Congo defending perfect group records.

Group A

Primeiro Agosto of Angola must contain Jackson Muleka in Luanda if they hope to end the two-match winning run of five-time African champions Mazembe. Muleka scored twice in a 3-0 home triumph over Zamalek of Egypt, also five-time winners of the competition, and repeated the feat as Mazembe edged Zesco United 2-1 in Zambia. Winning away to 2018 semi-finalists Primeiro, who have only one point, would confirm Mazembe as favourites to win the group as they chase a first Champions League title since 2015.

The last Mazembe success was masterminded by French coach Patrice Carteron, now in charge of second-place Zamalek, who face Zesco in Zambian mining hub Ndola.

Group B

Algerian Karim Aribi hopes to increase his

chart-topping nine-goal tally in the Champions League this season when Etoile Sahel host Al Hilal of Sudan near Tunis. Aribi scored four goals in a qualifier and has at least four more matches to try and overtake Nigerian Stephen Worgu, who netted a record 13 times in the 2008 season.

Etoile, the only club to lift all five past and present CAF trophies, edged record eight-time Champions League winners Al Ahly of Egypt 1-0, then outclassed Platinum 3-0 in Zimbabwe.

Ahly recovered from the loss in Tunis to beat Al Hilal more decisively than the 2-1 score suggests and are expected to collect maximum points against pointless Platinum in Cairo.

Group C

Mamelodi Sundowns coach Pitso Mosimane believes the South African club can defeat hosts USM Alger of Algeria despite a disruptive build-up to the match in Blida near Algiers. Limited travel options meant the Pretoria outfit left Johannesburg Monday and flew via Paris to the north African nation, where they trained on Christmas Day.

"I believe we have more chance of defeating USM than Wydad Casablanca," said 2016 Champions League-winning coach Mosimane, referring to a 0-0 draw in Morocco this month. But if Sundowns lose, they could surrender top place if twice champions Wydad exploit home advantage and beat struggling Petro Luanda of Angola.

Group D

Esperance have recovered from a poor start to their challenge for a third consecutive title with wins over Raja Casablanca and JS Kabylie taking them to the top of the standings. The victories over the Moroccan and Algerian clubs came after the 'Blood and Gold' battled to overcome minnows Elect-Sport of Chad in a qualifier.

Apart from Elhouni, Tunisian international Anice Badri has been impressive, scoring twice against Al Sadd in Doha. With V Club virtually out of contention already, the clash of Raja and Kabylie in Casablanca assumes added importance as both former champions eye a top-two finish and a last-eight spot. — Reuters

Sports

Improving Saints stun Chelsea with 2-0 win at Stamford Bridge

Ancelotti gets winning start as Everton beat Burnley

LONDON: Goals from Michael Obafemi and Nathan Redmond earned Southampton a surprise 2-0 win at Chelsea in the Premier League yesterday. Obafemi broke the deadlock with his first goal of the season, bursting inside from the right and curling into the top corner after a tight opening half hour.

Frank Lampard changed his side's formation from 3-4-3 to 4-2-3-1 at the break and nearly earned an instant dividend as substitute Mason Mount set up Tammy Abraham, who flashed a shot into the side netting.

Saints winger Redmond was denied by Kefa Arrizabalaga on the break but coolly finished for the visitors' second after an impressive team move to silence Stamford Bridge.

The hosts struggled to break down Southampton's tight defence, and Ralph Hasenhuttl's side rose to 14th, three points clear of the relegation zone, building on last weekend's win over Aston Villa. Chelsea stay fourth with 32 points from 19 games and must pick themselves up for their visit to Arsenal on Sunday.

Meanwhile, Carlo Ancelotti enjoyed a winning start as Everton manager with an 80th-minute Dominic Calvert-Lewin header earning a 1-0 Premier League win over Burnley at Goodison Park on Thursday. Burnley had been typically resilient in defence, while posing few questions of Everton, and it took a high-quality finish to separate the sides.

Djibril Sidibe whipped in a cross from the right which Calvert-Lewin met with a superb angled diving header which flew in off the inside of the far post. Sidibe had gone closest to breaking the deadlock with a low drive in the 32nd minute which Burnley keeper Nick Pope did well to keep out with his leg.

Burnley's best opening came three minutes later when an Ashley Westwood free kick found Chris Wood at the back post but the New Zealander headed over the bar from a promising position. Italian Ancelotti, a Champions League winner with AC Milan and Real Madrid was appointed by Everton on Saturday to replace the sacked Marco Silva. — Reuters



LONDON: Chelsea's Brazilian midfielder Willian (L) vies with Southampton's English midfielder James Ward-Prowse (R) during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Southampton at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. — AFP

Ancelotti backs Kean to find his feet at Everton

LONDON: New Everton manager Carlo Ancelotti said his misfiring striker Moise Kean needs time to adapt to a new league and backed the Italian teenager to overcome his problems and succeed, citing the example of Michel Platini at Juventus in the 80s. The 19-year-old Kean joined Everton from Italian champions Juventus in August on a five-year deal for a fee of around 27.5 million euros (\$30.49 million), but is yet to score in 13 Premier League matches.

He struggled under former manager

Marco Silva while Duncan Ferguson, Everton's interim boss before Ancelotti took charge, brought him on as a second-half substitute against Manchester United this month and took him off before the game finished.

"When I was a player I remember Platini arriving at Juventus from Saint Etienne (at 27). It took him six months to adjust and that was Platini," Ancelotti told the British media.

"I had the same problem with Hirving

Lozano when he came to Napoli and he was two or three years older than Kean... We should always be patient with young players.

"Kean is a player we tried to sign when I was at Napoli but he chose Everton. He has fantastic quality and I'm sure he'll be a top talent but he's 19 and everything is new for him here."

Italian Ancelotti took charge of 15th-placed Everton for the first time against Burnley, who are 10th. — Reuters

Liverpool's Klopp says hectic festive schedule is a 'crime'

LONDON: Liverpool boss Juergen Klopp has described the Premier League's hectic festive schedule as a "crime" against some teams that are forced to play two matches in the space of 48 hours. The league leaders, who won the Club World Cup title by beating Brazil's Flamengo last Saturday, take on second-placed Leicester City on Thursday and host Wolverhampton Wanderers on Sunday, but other teams including Manchester City are not as fortunate.

The champions visit Nuno Espirito Santo's Wolves on Friday before welcom-

ing Sheffield United on Sunday, prompting manager Pep Guardiola to write to the league to "thank" them for a demanding schedule.

"It is absolutely not OK," Klopp told the British media. "There's no reason why more teams do not get more than 48 hours between Premier League games."

"None of the managers have a problem playing on Boxing Day, but playing on the 26th and 28th is a crime. This year we play 26th and 29th and it's like a holiday."

The likes of Brighton & Hove Albion, Everton, Watford and Manchester United

all play twice within 48 hours this week. "I understand all those saying it shouldn't happen. They're not moaning. They're telling," Klopp added.

"We can say what we want but no one is listening... sports science gives you nothing to deal with this. "The body needs a specific amount of time to go again. But we ignore that completely." Liverpool are looking to increase their 10-point advantage over Leicester, while the Foxes will aim to return to winning ways after their nine-match unbeaten run was ended by City. — Reuters

Wales fullback Williams to rejoin Scarlets

LONDON: Saracens fullback Liam Williams will return to Wales and rejoin his former side Scarlets at the end of the season, the two clubs announced yesterday. Williams helped Saracens to win the Champions Cup and Premiership double last season and was part of the Wales team who won this year's Six Nations Grand Slam.

The 28-year-old is the first major player to announce his departure from Saracens after they were handed a 35-point deduction for breaching salary cap regulations and fined 5.36 million pounds (\$6.95 million), a decision the club chose not to appeal.

"I've thoroughly enjoyed my time at Saracens over the past three seasons," Williams, who spent six years at Scarlets between 2011-2017, said in a statement <https://www.saracens.com/williams-to-join-scarlets>. "The environment has undoubtedly developed me as a player and a person."

"The opportunity to return home to the Scarlets was too good to turn down and I am incredibly excited about the future." Williams played four times in this year's Rugby World Cup and scored two tries before an ankle injury ruled him out of the semi-final against eventual champions South Africa. — Reuters

Sports

Villa deal Norwich Boxing Day blow with 1-0 win in relegation battle

Aubameyang goal earns Arteta's Arsenal draw at Bournemouth

LONDON: Aston Villa midfielder Conor Hourihane gave his side a 1-0 home win over Norwich City to move them one step closer to safety in the Premier League yesterday. The result moved Villa to 18 points, within a point of 17th placed West Ham United, while Norwich remain deep in the drop zone. Norwich full back Sam Byram nearly opened the scoring for the visitors in the 18th minute with a header from an Emi Buendia corner, only to see it come off the woodwork with goalkeeper Tom Heaton well and truly beaten.

Anwar El Ghazi had two good chances to put Villa ahead in the opening period. But he first failed to sort out his feet when attempting a shot from Trezeguet's header across the box, before another first-time effort from a Matt Target cross went wide. Villa finally made the breakthrough when skipper Jack Grealish and second-half substitute Hourihane combined in the box for the latter to sweep a left-footed strike past Tim Krul into the far corner. In Bournemouth, a second-half equaliser from Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang gave Mikel Arteta a point in his first game as Arsenal manager as his side came back from a goal down to draw 1-1 with Bournemouth in the Premier League yesterday. The two sides came into the game in poor form, with Bournemouth having lost six of their last seven and Arsenal only winning once since beating Bournemouth 1-0 at the Emirates on Oct. 6. Arteta restored Mesut Ozil to the starting line-up and the German forward looked sharp in the opening exchanges, but despite Arteta energetically encouraging his team from the sidelines, they failed to create many chances.

Arsenal's sloppiness was punished when they gave the ball away cheaply on the left wing and Bournemouth sliced through them quickly, midfielder Dan Gosling stabbing home Jack Stacey's centre from close range to give the home side the lead. The Gunners equalised in the 63rd minute as Reiss Nelson's shot deflected into the path of Aubameyang, and he swivelled to rifle the ball home before a wild celebration with the traveling fans that earned him a yellow card.

Both sides created opportunities in the pouring rain, but neither could grab a winner and the draw left Arsenal in 11th place on 24 points, with Bournemouth four points further back in 16th. "We missed a lot of chances in the second half, we should get the three points today but that can happen," Aubameyang said. "I think the attitude of the boys was great but we have to improve our chances." Arteta was disappointed not to win the game, but said his players had performed well.

"In terms of attitude, desire and commitment it was better than I expect. They are not used to playing at this rhythm," said the 37-year-old Spaniard, who spent five seasons as a player at the club. "I am still learning about the players, about the priorities, to make them more secure when they jump on to the pitch. My only aim now is to find solutions, to attack better, defend better," Arteta added. In Sheffield, Watford moved off the bottom of the Premier League after a spirited performance earned them a 1-1 draw at dominant Sheffield United yesterday. The visitors took a 27th-minute lead through Gerard Deulofeu against the run of play before Oliver Norwood levelled



BOURNEMOUTH: Bournemouth's English defender Jack Stacey (L) vies with Arsenal's English striker Bukayo Saka during the English Premier League football match between Bournemouth and Arsenal at the Vitality Stadium in Bournemouth, southern England yesterday. — AFP

with a 36th-minute penalty after Will Hughes tripped George Baldock.

The result left Watford 19th on 13 points from 19 games, one ahead of bottom team Norwich City, while Sheffield United slipped one place down to sixth on 29 points. After a 10-minute kick-off delay over what Sheffield United called operational issues, Oliver McBurnie twice went close for the home side before Deulofeu struck from out of the blue as

he raced clear and scored with a neat finish from 12 metres. Norwood levelled when he drove his spot-kick low past Watford keeper Ben Foster, who kept his side afloat with a superb 64th-minute reflex save to deny John Fleck from close range. Foster palmed away an Enda Stevens scorch before the visitors came agonisingly close to snatching a late winner, with Deulofeu curling a free kick inches wide of Dean Henderson's left-hand post. —Reuters

Alli caps Spurs fightback to sink Brighton

LONDON: Dele Alli got Tottenham back on track as the England midfielder capped a gritty escape act with the late winner in yesterday's 2-1 victory against Brighton. Jose Mourinho's side were in danger of a second successive Premier League defeat when Adam Webster headed Brighton into a shock lead at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. But Harry Kane equalised after the interval and Alli finished off a flowing Tottenham move in the closing stages to erase the bitter taste of last weekend's acrimonious London derby loss to Chelsea.

Avenging their defeat at Brighton in October, Tottenham, unbeaten in Boxing Day fixtures since 2003, have won three of their last four league games as they try to climb into the top four. That Chelsea setback was completely overshadowed by the alleged racist abuse of Blues defender Antonio Rudiger by Tottenham fans after his role in Son Heung-min's red card.

Amid widespread calls for stronger action to stamp out racism in football, Tot-

tenham fans appeared to behave better this time. Initially, there were worrying signs for Mourinho on the field however as Steven Alzate escaped Moussa Sissoko, making space for a low strike that drifted just wide.

Since Mourinho's first game in charge of Tottenham, no Premier League team had conceded more goals than the 14 his side allowed across all competitions heading into this round of matches. Those defensive frailties were on display when Alzate lost his marker and forced Paulo Gazzaniga into a sprawling save, while Aaron Mooy went close from the edge of the area. Kane has a knack of scoring on Boxing Day and the Tottenham striker thought he had netted again when he fired home from Winks' pass, but the goal went to a VAR review and was ruled out by the narrowest of offside decisions.

Brighton made the most of that let-off to take the lead in the 37th minute. Pascal Gross swung over a free-kick and Webster rose above Toby Alderweireld and

Davinson Sanchez to plant a powerful header past Gazzaniga for his third goal of the season. Mourinho must have been furious that Tottenham wilted against such a simple set-piece and his team's record of one clean-sheet in his nine matches suggests a defender could be high on his January shopping list. Underlining the urgency to address that problem area, Brighton's Bernardo forced Gazzaniga to save from a corner moments later to the audible frustration of the Tottenham crowd on a dank, wet day in north London. Mourinho, standing rain-soaked on the touchline, revealed before the game that his Christmas was ruined by the death of his family's pet Yorkshire Terrier.

But Kane put a smile back on his manager's face in the 53rd minute when he seized on a deflection off Lucas Moura after the Brazilian's determined run. Drilling a shot that Mat Ryan could only push back out, Kane gobbled up the rebound with a clinical finish for his eighth goals in five Premier League games on



LONDON: Brighton's Irish striker Aaron Connolly (C) misses a chance during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Brighton and Hove Albion at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in London, yesterday. — AFP

Boxing Day. Kane's 16th club goal this season was not immediately a catalyst for a Tottenham surge and Gazzaniga had to be alert to keep out Gross's fierce free-kick. But Mourinho made a significant switch when he sent on Christian Eriksen for Harry Winks, who moments before

was lucky to escape a red card for a foul when he had already been booked. Eriksen made an immediate impact in the 72nd minute when he floated a delicate pass to Serge Aurier who flicked the ball into the path of Alli, who guided a superb lofted finish over Ryan. — AFP



BOURNEMOUTH: Bournemouth's English defender Jack Stacey (L) vies with Arsenal's French striker Alexandre Lacazette during the English Premier League football match between Bournemouth and Arsenal at the Vitality Stadium in Bournemouth, southern England yesterday. — AFP

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