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Kuwait says it respects Iran's integrity after Ahvaz meeting

Deputy FM reassures Iranian envoy, says meeting was held without approval

Damkhi files to grill Aseeri

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Islamist opposition MP Adel Al-Damkhi yesterday filed to grill Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Ghadeer Aseeri barely a week after she took office, over allegations that she challenged the integrity of MPs. In his brief grilling, Damkhi charged the minister of violating the principles of cooperation between the National Assembly and the government by issuing statements deemed offensive to lawmakers.

Acting Assembly Speaker Essa Al-Kandari said the grilling will be listed on the Jan 7 session's agenda for a possible debate unless the minister invokes her right to delay the debate



Adel Al-Damkhi

for two more weeks. The minister became a target of criticism by several opposition MPs for tweets she posted on her account some eight years ago in which she declared her total support for anti-government protests in neighboring Bahrain and for criticizing the dispatching of Gulf troops to Bahrain to support the government.

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Kuwait said yesterday that it respects Iran's "territorial integrity", a day after Tehran summoned its envoy to protest against Kuwaiti officials meeting Iranian separatists. In a meeting with Iran's ambassador Mohammad Irani, Kuwait's deputy foreign minister Khaled Al-Jarallah stressed that his country's foreign policy was based on respecting "sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs and good neighborliness", KUNA said. KUNA said Jarallah had reassured Iran's ambassador that Kuwait respects the "Islamic Republic of Iran's territorial integrity".

Iran's foreign ministry had said on Saturday that it summoned Kuwait's envoy to Tehran to protest against its officials meeting a separatist group and holding an "anti-Iran meeting". "Such actions are a clear interference in the internal affairs" of Iran, the foreign ministry told a Kuwaiti envoy, according to a statement. The Iranian statement did not specify which separatist group the Kuwaiti officials stood accused of having met.

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KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Irani yesterday. — KUNA

Maid dies after brutal assault

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Capital police were alerted yesterday after receiving a report from Sabah Hospital concerning the arrival of a deceased Filipina housemaid with bruises on various parts of her body. Initial examination of the body suggested the possibility of a homicide, so the public prosecutor was notified and the body was reexamined by the coroner, who confirmed earlier suspicions.

The maid's sponsor, who had taken her to hospital, admitted during interrogations that his wife had beaten the maid until she fainted, adding he was shocked when he realized at the hospital that she had died. The sponsor was detained and his wife was summoned. She admitted to beating the maid but said she had not intended to kill her.

Detectives and forensic experts rushed to the sponsor's house in Sulaibikhat to examine the crime scene, where they found traces of blood that had been cleaned and evidence that the maid had been brutally beaten. A case was filed and further investigations are still in progress.

Kuwait ends successful UNSC tenure

NEW YORK: Kuwait has concluded its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council with great success, defending during its tenure a multitude of Arab-related causes connected with Palestine, Syria and Yemen. Moreover, Kuwait helped in formulating a resolution - the first of its kind - on missing persons in armed conflicts. The GCC state also had a hand in UNSC decisions on the humanitarian situation within context of the Syrian crisis and also contributed to a presidential statement on Yemen.

During the past two years, Kuwait managed to bear the great burden of being the sole Arab member of the council, and succeeded in following up and coordinating with Arab countries and trying to reflect their positions and concerns in the decisions or statements discussed by the council. "Unfortunately, Arab issues are many in the Security Council, and some of them have gone on for many years, such as the Palestinian cause. There are other issues listed since the seventies and since 2011... the situation has been very difficult and according to the statistics of the council, the Arab causes in which the council is occupied constitute almost 50 percent of its overall work," Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi told KUNA.

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UNITED NATIONS: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi casts a vote during a session on Syria's humanitarian situation. — KUNA

Lathi: Indian cops' colonial weapon

NEW DELHI: As Indian protests against a new citizenship law have intensified, so has police use of "lathis", sturdy sticks used to whack, thwack and quell dissent since British colonial times - to sometimes deadly effect. At least 27 people have died in the past two weeks of protests, mostly from bullets, but hundreds more have been injured in clashes between demonstrators and riot police wielding the bamboo canes.

Images shot by AFP and other media of officers hitting people with them, in some cases apparently indiscriminately

lashes out at passersby and even minors, has only fuelled public anger. One video of a group of Muslim women in New Delhi protecting a cowering male fellow student from a police lathi barrage spread like wildfire on social media in India.

Those who have experienced a blow from a lathi, measuring five or six feet (1.5-1.8 m) and made of stout bamboo or plastic, say it leaves a numbing sensation that lasts for days. Multiple strikes can break bones, cripple and even kill. "From being used as means to regulate crowds, lathi has turned into a lethal weapon," said V Suresh, the secretary general of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCIL), a non-profit rights group. "It is... being freely used, so much so that as a country we have become injured to it. Lathi is seen as a normal but it is

Continued on Page 24



GALORE, India: In this picture taken on Dec 19, 2019, policemen with "lathis" beat a protester during a demonstration against India's new citizenship law. — AFP

Iraq protesters lock down oil field, call strike

NASIRIYAH, Iraq: Iraqi anti-government protesters blockaded an oilfield and rallied in southern cities yesterday while political factions remained paralyzed in their attempts to form a new government. Several hundred people demanding jobs shut off access to the Nasiriyah field, 300 km south of Baghdad, which produces 82,000 barrels of oil per day, executives said. The two-day-old blockade is the first to disrupt operations in OPEC's second largest producer since the start of the popular revolt set to enter its fourth month in early January.

The Iraqi oil ministry said the blockade "will not

have an impact on production and exports", adding that the national oil company's branch in the southern port of Basra will "compensate for the losses". Iraq exports around 3.6 million barrels of oil per day. The youth-led protests demand the ouster of the entire political class that has run the country in the aftermath of the 2003 US-led invasion that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein.

Demonstrators have vented their fury at what they consider inept politicians who have mismanaged the economy, enriched themselves and are beholden to powerful neighbor Iran. Sit-in protests have shut down state offices and schools across the Shiite-majority south for weeks, and demonstrators again declared a "general strike" in Diwaniyah yesterday, the first day of the working week. Mass rallies and picket lines also paralyzed Kut, Hilla, Amara and the shrine city of Najaf, AFP correspondents said.

The protests have continued despite being met with batons, tear gas and, at times, live rounds in violence that has claimed nearly 460 lives and left some 25,000

people wounded. The activists scored a partial success in November with the resignation of prime minister Adel Abdel Mahdi, who however remains in charge in a caretaker role. Pro-Iranian and other political factions have since wrangled over finding a replacement - so far without success.

And although parliament has just voted for an electoral reform package, there has been no indication that the early polls many citizens are calling for will be held anytime soon. Heightening the turmoil, President Barham Saleh last week threatened to resign rather than put forward the name of a pro-Iran candidate to form the next government.

Nasiriyah student demonstrator Osama Ali praised the head of state, saying he had "foiled the attempts by parties and militiamen to kill off the revolution to protect their own interests". "This gives us hope to continue our peaceful movement until we obtain all our demands," he told AFP.

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News in brief

Death sentence for Yemeni stabber

RIYADH: A Saudi court sentenced a Yemeni man to death yesterday for a knife attack on a Spanish theatre group, state television said. The court also sentenced an accomplice to 12 and a half years in jail for the Nov 11 attack, which state media linked to militant group Al-Qaeda, and which Madrid said left four performers wounded. The assailant, identified by Saudi police as a 33-year-old Yemeni, went on a stabbing spree during a musical in the capital's King Abdullah Park. — AFP

Slain men were driving car bomb

DUBAI: Two Saudi men shot dead last week in the eastern city of Dammam were driving a car loaded with explosives and were planning an "imminent terrorist operation", the SPA state news agency said yesterday, citing security forces. The two started shooting at security forces when they were approached on Wednesday and were shot dead. Five kg of paste was taken from the car and found later to contain the explosive RDX. — Reuters

Arrests over 'indecent', harassment

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has arrested more than 200 people for violating "public decency" - including by wearing immodest clothing - and "harassment", police said. Some 120 men and women have been arrested over the past week for offending public morals, including wearing "inappropriate clothes". Another 88 people were arrested in various harassment cases after several women complained on social media that they were harassed at the MDL Beast music festival in Riyadh earlier this month. — AFP

Kuwait Amir receives newly appointed judiciary officials

Sheikh Sabah offers condolence over Mogadishu blast victims, Egypt accident



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Justice Dr Fahad Al-Afasi, Chief Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa, and the newly-appointed court prosecutor and member of the constitutional court judge Saleh Al-Mraished and the court of appeal prosecutor and member of the constitutional court justice Abdulrahman Al-Drami. —Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



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



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



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Essa Al-Kandari.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Essa Al-Kandari. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir received President of the Supreme Judicial Council, President of the Constitutional Court and Head of the Cassation Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa and a number of newly appointed judiciary officials who took oath yesterday. Present at the meeting were Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah in addition to Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi.

Al-Mubarak, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Essa Al-Kandari, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Moreover, he hosted Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh as well as Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Saturday sent a cable to Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo, offering heartfelt condolences over the victims of a vehicle blast in Mogadishu, which left heavy casualties. In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed compassion for the victims and wished a speedy recovery for

the injured. Sheikh Sabah voiced Kuwait's emphatic condemnation of this appalling criminal act that targeted innocents in a breach of all heavenly religions and human values. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah also expressed similar sentiments in two separate cables of condolences sent to the Somali president, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Justice Dr Fahad Al-Afasi, Chief Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa, and the newly-appointed court prosecutor and member of the constitutional court judge Saleh Al-Mraished and the court of appeal prosecutor and member of the constitutional court justice Abdulrahman Al-Drami.

sent cables to Speaker of the Somali House of People Mohamed Mursal and Speaker of the Somalian senate Abdi Hadi Abdullah.

Separately, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi over victims of the traffic accident on one of the roads in Port Said governorate, which resulted in many casualties. In the cable,

His Highness wished mercy for the deceased and a swift recovery for the injured. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem sent a condolence cable to Egypt's Parliament Speaker Dr Ali Abdulaal. —KUNA



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



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



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



Kuwait condemns appalling act that targeted innocents

Local

Kuwait championed Arab, Islamic and humanitarian causes at UNSC

Report highlights two years of Kuwait's active diplomacy

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti diplomacy spent two years in the halls of the United Nations Security Council actively tackling various issues and putting its weight behind Arab, Islamic and humanitarian causes. The end of this year marks the end of this journey at the Security Council, but Kuwait will continue its role in the United Nations and its different institutions. Through its non-permanent membership in the Security Council, Kuwait succeeded in enforcing its distinguished diplomatic mark and present solutions to many complex issues facing the world, and coordinate with member countries to suggest and adopt many important projects, resolutions and statements.

On January 1, 2018, Kuwait began its membership at the Security Council as a non-permanent member, succeeding Egypt, to represent Arab countries. Although it was faced by many challenges, Kuwait tackled some of the most important global challenges, most significantly maintaining peace and security, and improving work methods at the Security Council. On that historical day, Kuwait returned to that seat 40 years after its first membership in 1973. Kuwait, caring trust of the international community for a non-permanent seat in the Security Council, received support of 188 out of 198 members and gave the Gulf Nation a two-year mandate.

Before commencing its activities at the Security Council, then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah asserted Kuwait's keenness on continuing its moderate and balanced approach in seeking to achieve preventive diplomacy. He added that Kuwait would cooperate with member countries to prevent disputes and wars, in addition to solve conflicts peacefully. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled added, "We represent our Arab brothers, the Asian group, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and Asia-Pacific countries. We will work on looking into all that is related to our Arab causes and the challenges facing our Arab and Islamic nations."

During its tenure on the UNSC, Kuwait presented a number of draft resolutions concerning significant global issues, and released statements on many vital issues in Arab and Islamic countries. In February 2018, Kuwait assumed presidency of the UNSC. During that month many important sessions were held and discussed three main issues: Palestine, Iraq and the purposes of the United Nations Charter in maintaining international peace and security.

On February 21, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled chaired a UNSC session at the request of Kuwait about "the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter in Maintaining International Peace and Security." Member countries discussed methods to improve the UNSC working mechanisms to limit risks and threats facing the international community. During the session member states reiterated their commitments to the principles of United Nations Charter in light of the increasing challenges facing the international community, and the best means to employ the tools provided by the charter to enable the UNSC to carry on its mission effectively.

The following day, The UNSC discussed Kuwait's request to hold a special session to discuss the best means to revive the peace process in the Middle East in light of regional and international

initiatives approved by the Council. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled chaired the session which aimed to provide a clear path to reach a solution to the Palestinian cause which would grant Palestinians the right to establish an independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital by implementing relevant international resolutions and the Arab peace initiative.

On October 30, 2018, Kuwait and Sweden, as the penholders of the Syrian Humanitarian file at the UNSC, called on all concerned parties to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to 'Rukban' area on Syrian-Jordanian border, and to respond to UN demands and UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Kuwait and Sweden also expressed deep concern over the horrible situation in Rukban, where more than 45,000 people are suffering acute shortages of food, humanitarian and medical supplies. On December 13, 2018, the UNSC held a vote on a draft resolution presented by Kuwait and Sweden asserting the need to ensure that humanitarian assistance reach Syrians in need, specifically cross-border aid through four crossings in order to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people. After gaining UNSC's approval, the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi said that the resolution is a success for Kuwaiti diplomacy and is a continuation of the humanitarian work by the country's leadership, which focus on improving the humanitarian situation in Syria.

On March 15, 2019, the UNSC approved a statement presented by Kuwait and Indonesia condemning in the strongest terms the attacks on two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, which killed and injured dozens of civilians. The statement affirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. On May 31, 2019, Kuwait chaired the UNSC for the month of June, for the third time in its history. The first was in February 1979 during its first non-permanent seat term at the UNSC, and the second was on February 2018 during its current tenure. In that occasion, Ambassador Otaibi stated that chairing the UNSC is considered a historical moment for Kuwaiti diplomacy whose foreign policy is based on balance and moderation, respecting principles of the UN Charter and international laws, and seeks to actively contribute to maintain international peace and security.

On June 11, the UNSC unanimously adopted a Kuwaiti draft resolution on missing persons in armed conflicts. It aims to support and promote frameworks to protect civilians in armed conflicts. That resolution is the only one that Kuwait presented solely, and it reflects Kuwait's continuous effort to shed light on humanitarian issues. Furthermore, Kuwait-sponsored resolution stems from its bitter experience during the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait in 1990 which resulted in a large number of missing Kuwaitis with their fates still unknown. Kuwait is of the view that this resolution will form a basis on the methods of dealing with missing persons in armed conflicts. This is the first resolution on missing persons and armed conflicts in the UNSC. In accordance with the resolution, the UNSC deplores the deliberate targeting of civilians and other protected persons in armed conflicts, calling upon all par-

ties to put an end to these practices, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law.

On June 13, 2019, Kuwait released a presidential statement of the UNSC on the cooperation between the council and the Arab League during a session chaired by Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, which included representatives of both bodies to discuss "Cooperation between the United Nations, Regional Organizations and Sub-regional Organization in Maintaining International Peace and Security." The session was included in Kuwait's agenda as president of the UNSC for the month of June. Among the participants are the United Nations Security General Antonio Guterres and the Arab League Secretary General Ahmad Abul Gheit. The statement affirmed that the UNSC is responsible for maintaining international peace and security, and that resolutions and presidential statements which assert the need for establishing an effective partnership between the UN and regional organizations according to the UN Charter and relevant regulations applied in regional and Sub regional organizations.

On August 20, 2019, Ambassador Otaibi submitted a letter to the UNSC regarding Kuwait constructing a platform in Fisht Al-Eij. It affirmed that the platform is being constructed within Kuwait's territorial waters, thus was part of Kuwait's practicing of its sovereignty over its territories, and it is being constructed to monitor and follow-up ships movement in Khor Abdullah. On August 29,



NEW YORK: In this file photo, then Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah heads Kuwait's delegation at a UN Security Council meeting on Palestine. — KUNA

2019, Ambassador Otaibi announced that the penholders of the Syrian humanitarian file at the UNSC, which are Kuwait, Belgium and Germany, presented a draft resolution to the UNSC on Idlib, which aims to put an end to the deteriorating human conditions in the Syrian city.

The UNSC discussed the draft resolution on September 29, however it failed to adopt it due to Russian and China's veto. In response, Ambassador Otaibi expressed disappointment of the UNSC's failure in living up to its responsibility, noting that "The stance of each UNSC member towards this balanced

humanitarian draft presented by Kuwait, Belgium and Germany will go down in history." He added that "the draft was meant to protect civilians in Idlib." The UNSC consists of 15 member states, 10 elected for two-year terms, while the five permanent member states-US, Britain, France, China and Russia-enjoy veto right. The United Nations Security Council is an entity of the six principal bodies of United Nations. These bodies are: UN Secretariat, the General Assembly, Trusteeship Council, International Court of Justice (ICJ) and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). — KUNA



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Kuwaiti Deputy FM meets Jordan ambassador



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait Saqr Abushtal. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met yesterday with Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait Saqr Abushtal and discussed bilateral cooperation as well as current

situation at regional and international fields. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Ambassador Ayham Abdullatif Al-Omar attended the meeting. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive during sunset on a highway in Kuwait. — Photo by Khaled Al-Shammari (KUNA)

Kuwait continued philanthropic action throughout 2019

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KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait, which the UN termed as a 'Humanitarian Center,' kept extending a helping hand for people in need in many parts of the globe. The following are major philanthropic contributions by the Gulf state throughout 2019.

January 16: His Highness the Amir directed dispatch of \$1.5 million in emergency relief aid to Syrian refugees in Rukban camp in Lebanon, through the Kuwaiti Red Crescent Society.

January 17: Kuwait donated \$5 million for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to cover UNHCR's program for Syrian refugees in neighboring countries.

January 18: Kuwait contributed \$9.1 million to a number of UN agencies to support the humanitarian situation in Syria.

January 20: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched a donation campaign at the Avenues Mall for the relief of the Yemeni people.

January 31: KRCS launched an emergency convoy to aid displaced people from the Yemeni governorates, including five trucks carrying 100 tons of humanitarian aid.

February 3: Kuwait offered a financial support of one million Euros to re-activate a hospital in the Italian city of Norcia after a devastating earthquake.

February 7: KRCS distributed 100 tons of humanitarian aid to 41,000 people across Yemen.

February 26: Kuwait donated \$250 million to the Humanitarian Response Plan Conference in Yemen launched by the UN in Geneva.

March 14: Kuwait announces \$300 million support to the Syrian refugees during the third Brussels conference on supporting the future of Syria and the region.

April 5: KRCS sent the first plane to Iran to help the flood victims upon the directives of His Highness the Amir.

April 6: KRCS offered humanitarian aid to Yemeni people in Socotra Island.

April 24: KRCS donated three medical clinics to Iraq displaced people as part of the 'Kuwait by your Side' campaign.

May 13: KRCS handed out food aid for 15 different countries to help more than 100,000 people during the holy month of Ramadan.

May 25: KRCS delivered 155 tons in medical aid for Yemeni people. July 8: Kuwait donated \$350,000 to build an educational center and a mosque in Montenegro.

July 24: KRCS President Dr Hilal Al-Sayer opened Sabah Al-Ahmad rehabilitation center in Sri Lanka. July 26: Kuwait donated \$5 million to UNRWA.

August 3: KRCS distributed 5,000 food baskets for refugees in Bosnia-Herzegovina.



A truck carrying humanitarian aid KRCS distributed to refugees.

August 8: Kuwait offered \$3 million to UN's FAO to boost food security in Syria.

August 30: KRCS sent the first airplane to Sudan with 40 tons of food and relief supplies to help the Sudanese people.

September 12: KRCS opened a water facility in Kenya. **September 28:** Kuwait donated \$11 million to support ICRC's operations in Yemen.

October 20: KRCS opened the fifth stage of a clinic for treatment of Syrian refugees in Amman, Jordan, bringing total aid to \$1 million in three years.

November 4: KRCS launched women designing and tailing project in order to improve families' income.

November 4: Kuwait has announced \$6.4 million voluntary contributions to a number of UN agencies, programs and funds to support UN humanitarian and developments activities.

November 15: KRCS launched an air corridor to Sudan, carrying 10 tons of food and humanitarian aid.

December 16: Kuwait pledges \$1 million grant to UN's emergency fund for 2020. — KUNA



KRCS volunteers attend a ceremony held for the opening of a Kuwait-funded water facility in Kenya.

Local

Grilling likely to force minister out of Kuwait Cabinet: Sources

Around 18 lawmakers in favor of planned no-confidence motion

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The grilling motion MP Adel Al-Damkhi filed yesterday against Minister of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseeri is not an individual act and was agreed upon by many lawmakers during a meeting held at MP Mohammed Hayef's office last week, well-informed parliamentary sources said. The sources added that the grilling motion is a manifestation of a reaction to a previous hostile attitude Aseeri had taken against the unified GCC stand concerning the 2011 events in Bahrain, when she was against the intervention of the Peninsula Shield forces and supported protestors in Bahrain.

Responding to a question about how to question the minister for a previous attitude and opinion, the sources, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that regardless of this detail, MPs plan to blame

the government for including a minister who had "embarrassed" Kuwait in front of sister countries. "How would the minister react in GCC meetings while she is against them - this would embarrass Kuwait," the sources noted. A session will be held on Jan 7 to debate the grilling motion filed against Aseeri, the sources said, adding that the government will have either to have her take the podium or resign from office, because lawmakers will strongly oppose referring the motion to the legislative committee or the constitutional court.

"Should the government succeed in doing so, another grilling will be filed against the minister within a month, which means that she will have to resign," the sources stressed. The sources highlighted that a no-confidence motion will be prepared before discussing the grilling motion and that there more than 10 (around 18) lawmakers in favor of the motion. "The

government should accept her resignation and appoint a new Shiite minister," the sources stressed, noting that MP Mohammed Al-Mutair plans to grill His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah if the government rejects passing the general amnesty law and dropping previous verdicts issued against former lawmakers for breaking into the parliament.

Sentence overruled

The court of cassation yesterday annulled a previous verdict issued acquitting a Bangladeshi man who had been charged of committing hostile actions against US and Britain and sentenced him to eight months in prison. The court also sentenced the same defendant to one year in prison, a KD 1,000 fine and deportation for misusing Instagram and threatening the British ambassador and the US Army commander in Kuwait.

Policemen arrested

Two policemen were caught red-handed while recklessly driving a vehicle and performing stunts near Sulabikhat cemetery. Security sources said on leaving the cemetery, MoI Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Nahham spotted the vehicle and ordered to stop it. Both the driver and his companion turned out to be policemen, who were immediately arrested and the vehicle was impounded.



Minister of Social Affairs
Dr Ghadeer Aseeri

Union denies increase in Zubaidi prices

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwaiti Fishermen Union Thaher Al-Sowayan stressed the union's keenness on providing fresh local fish for reasonable prices. Accordingly, Sowayan denied social media reports claiming that the price of 16 kilograms of Zubaidi (pomfret) fish climbed to KD 270, noting that the real price is only KD 207, or KD 13 per kilogram, which he argues is a reasonable price considering that it is not Zubaidi fishing season yet. "Local shrimp was sold for KD 100 per basket, while 10 kilograms of Iranian Zubaidi was sold for KD 125, or KD 12.5 per kilogram, and the Iranian shrimp basket was sold for KD 95," he elaborated, expressing criticism for the "fuss created despite the small difference in price between local and imported fish." Sowayan added that there is an abundance of She'em, Nuwaibi and Sbour fish in the market nowadays, noting that Pomfret fishing season starts in April.



KUWAIT: Shoppers walk in a makeshift market in Hasawi. — Photos by Ben Garcia

Crackdowns help achieve noticeable changes in Jleeb

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Some areas of Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh - notoriously known as the slum of Kuwait - are now relatively cleaner than before. There have been some noticeable changes as the municipality continues operations to clean the area of garbage, makeshift markets, illegal stalls, etc. Full of old and dilapidated buildings and traffic chaos, the Hasawi area of Jleeb is now a bit better.

There were times in the past when low-income laborers staged protests in Jleeb against their employers, complaining mostly of unpaid salaries. Hasawi is now being cleared and put in order, particularly the main road running through the area.

Makeshift markets - which were a feature of this area - have been relegated to just one corner behind the main road. Vendors - mostly Bangladeshis - sell fruits and vegetables at very reasonable prices to cater to the low-income families living there. Kuwait Times noticed that side streets seem much wider after encroachments were removed. Many shops and businesses have been sealed by the authorities for operating without licenses and permits.



A shop closed by Kuwait Municipality.



A general view of a street in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

NCCAL announces state's 2019 awards winners

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) yesterday announced the winners of the state's discretionary and encouraging awards for the year 2019. The winners' names were adopted at the meeting of the Higher Committee for State Awards, which was recently held under the chairmanship of the Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri. In a press statement, the council said that the State Appreciation Award in the field of social sciences was won by Dr Fattouh Al-Khatrash, while poet Bader Buresli and artist Mohammad Al-Mansour won in the field of fine arts, theatrical and musical arts. The statement noted that the winners will be honored in a special celebration that will be held at the 26th Qurain Cultural Festival at exactly seven thirty in the evening on Saturday, the 18th of January at the Abdul Hussein Abduredha Theater. The Council Secretary-General Kamil Al-Abduljaleel congratulated the winners, praising their distinguished achievements in the field of arts, literature and humanities and their cultural, literary and intellectual contributions that have affected the cultural and artistic field. The state's discretionary awards are an indication of the country's sponsorship represented by the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters in Kuwaiti creators and their interest in promoting cultural development through the council's keenness to revive culture and heritage, he added. — KUNA

Investigations department sets up hotline

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry announced yesterday a hotline through which callers can submit complaints directly to the General Investigations Department. In a statement to the press yesterday, the relations and security information department at the interior ministry said the General Investigations Department has set up a hotline to receive complaints around the clock. The number is 1888988. Meanwhile, the service centers direc-

torate said yesterday that service centers that operate on weekends will remain closed on Saturday, Jan 4, 2020, on the occasion of the start of the new Gregorian year.

Yarmouk fire

Fire broke out in a two-storey house in Yarmouk Saturday night. Farwaniya and industrial Shuwaikh fire stations responded, and firemen found the fire was in the kitchen. Power supply was cut off and the fire brought under control. No

casualties were reported.

Training program

The training program "Preparing Security Plans - 4" concluded at the coordination command under the patronage and presence of director general of coordination command operations for the protection of domestic security Maj Gen Staff Dr Mohammad Al-Daihani. Sixteen officers participated in the program - 12 from the interior ministry, two national guards and two from the fire department.



A group photo of participants in the "Preparing Security Plans - 4" training program.



KUWAIT: Fire trucks seen outside a Yarmouk house where a fire was reported.

Kuwait, Saudi outline border in neutral zone

KUWAIT: Kuwait and Saudi Arabia agreed after talks in Riyadh last week to resume shared oil output in the neutral zone after setting up an officially-recognized border within the area, the Kuwaiti negotiating committee said on Saturday. Three new deals, described as being appended agreements, were reached on Tuesday after extensive negotiations. They come after an oil production halt in 2014 in the cities of Wafra, Kuwait and Khafji, Saudi Arabia both located within the neutral zone, which produces more than 470,000 barrels of oil per day through onshore and offshore fields. The new deals have set out two boundaries within the neutral zone, including two agreements for land and maritime borders, and a memorandum of understanding for the resumption of oil production. Signing the border agreements was Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Nasser Sabah Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman Al-Saud.

Meanwhile, the MoU was signed by both Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister and Kuwait's Oil Minister and Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel. "There is no new agreement," Assistant Foreign Minister for Legal Affairs and the deals' negotiating committee Deputy Director Ambassador Ghanem Al-Ghanem told Kuwait TV in an interview. "The current agreement is appended to the land border demarcation agreement of 1965 and the maritime demarcation agreement of 2000," he said. The new deal is "more accurate and more definitive" and outlines a clear-cut border between both countries in accordance with the previous agreements. It outlines complete sovereignty on the northern part of the zone for Kuwait and the same for Saudi Arabia for the southern part. "There was no clear cut text stating this in previous agreements," added the official. The natural resources located in both areas, however, will remain shared between both countries. The current agreements also state that the resources located within the zone will be governed by joint operations, not by a sole country.

The so-called joint operations mechanism carries out the integrated exploration of all the hydrocarbon resources in the zone and splits costs equally, he added. Explaining further, he said the MoU also outlines aspects of cooperation, including offshore investments in Durra field and onshore investments in Khafji. The neutral zone, an area of just under 5,800 sq-km, was left undivided when the two countries marked their border at the Uqair Convention in 1922, however, both nations had equal sovereign rights over land and resources, he added. This remained the case until the 1965 deal that split the area into demarcated northern Kuwaiti and southern Saudi portions but the natural resources remained shared between both.

Speaking about the breakthrough, Committee Director Ambassador Majdi Al-Dhifeeri said it "reflects the depth of the neighboring countries' strategic bilateral relationship, built on transparency, exclusivity, mutual interest and compatibility." It comes in accordance with the directions of both His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah of Kuwait and King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud of Saudi Arabia, he added. The talks were described as having been reached after both sides saw eye-to-eye "completely and comprehensively" on the matters discussed "actually and not only verbally." "The goal is to be in accord, not to be divided," he said, adding Saudi Arabia is a "strategic depth" for Kuwait, just as Kuwait is to Saudi Arabia. — KUNA



Ukrainian rivals exchange 200 prisoners in controversial swap

Tourists stay away from Taj Mahal, other attractions as protests flare



A Syrian child reacts upon her arrival in the back of a truck at a camp for displaced people near the village of Harbounah in the Idlib province after fleeing government forces' advance on Maaret Al-Numan in the south of the province on Saturday.—AFP

Turkey not to pull out from Idlib army posts

Syria regime must halt 'escalation of violence': EU

ISTANBUL: Turkey will not withdraw from its observation posts in the Syrian rebel bastion province of Idlib which has seen an increase in violence carried out by regime forces supported by Russian airstrikes, the defense minister said.

The posts were established under a September 2018 deal between Syrian regime ally Moscow and Ankara, which backs the rebels, to avert an all-out Syrian government onslaught in Idlib. President Bashar Al-Assad's forces surrounded one of 12 Turkish observation posts in Idlib province on Monday after overrunning nearby areas in a push to take the last opposition holdout, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

"We respect the agreement reached with Russia and we expect Russia to abide by this agreement," Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said in comments published on Sunday on the defence ministry's Twitter account. "We will by no means empty those 12 observation posts, we will not leave there," Akar said.

His comments came during a visit, together with top army commanders, to the southern province of Hatay on the Syrian border to inspect Turkish troops on Saturday. Turkey, worried over a new wave of refugees from

the Idlib region, is pressing for a fresh ceasefire deal, as it sent a delegation to Moscow on Monday.

"We are doing what's needed to put an end to this massacre," Akar was quoted as saying by the official news agency Anadolu. He said Ankara expected Damascus ally Russia to "use its influence on the regime in order to stop ground and air assault" in Idlib.

The latest violence has displaced more than 235,000 people and killed scores of civilians, despite an August ceasefire deal and international calls for a de-escalation.

The Idlib region hosts some three million people including many displaced by years of violence in other parts of Syria. "As long as this pressure remains in place, it will trigger a new migrant wave and put further burden on Turkey which is already hosting nearly four million Syrian brothers," said Akar.

Around 300 protesters—mostly Syrians living in Turkey — held an anti-Moscow demonstration near the Russian consulate in Istanbul on Saturday against the intensified attacks in Idlib, shouting "murderer Putin, get out of Syria!", referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Libya timetable

Akar's visit to soldiers on the border

region comes as Turkey is also readying to send troops to support the UN-recognized government in Tripoli against strongman Khalifa Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army. "The Turkish Armed Forces are ready for whatever task is given in order to protect our country and people's interests," Akar said.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Thursday said Ankara would respond to an invitation from the Libyan national unity government and that the Turkish parliament would vote on a motion to send troops as soon as it returns from recess as early as next month. Ankara signed in November a security and military cooperation deal with the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) but in order to send troops, parliament needs to vote through a motion as it does for Iraq and Syria.

Anadolu news agency, citing sources in Erdogan's ruling party, reported that the timetable could be brought forward and the motion could be presented to the parliamentary speaker's office on Monday.

The General Assembly could vote the measure in an extraordinary session on Thursday, it said. Parliament is due to return from recess on January 7.

The European Union meanwhile, called on

Syria's regime and its allies to halt "indiscriminate" military attacks on civilians in the country's north west, where an intensifying bombardment by Damascus and Russian forces has displaced tens of thousands.

Civilians have streamed out of affected areas of jihadist-dominated Idlib province in recent weeks to escape heightened attacks on the southern edge of the final major opposition-held pocket of Syria, eight years into the country's devastating war. "The escalation of violence in the Northwest of Syria by the Syrian regime and its allies must cease," the EU said in a statement by spokesperson for European Foreign Minister Josep Borrell, which said airstrikes and shelling had led to "countless civilian deaths".

"All parties have the obligation to protect civilians. The regime and its allies must cease indiscriminate military attacks and respect international humanitarian law," the statement said.

Violence has intensified since mid-December despite an August ceasefire deal and international calls for a de-escalation. More than 235,000 people fled the area between December 12 and 25, mostly from the beleaguered city of Maaret Al-Numan, according to the United Nations' humanitarian coordination agency OCHA. The EU

called for urgent unhindered humanitarian access to the three million civilians thought to be living in Idlib province.

It acknowledged that "terrorist groups" were operating in the region, but stressed that combating these networks "does not permit the undermining of international humanitarian law or the targeting of civilians". The Idlib region is dominated by the country's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham. Residents in the province mainly depend on critical cross-border aid, which came under threat in December after Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have extended such deliveries for a year.

The move raised fears that vital UN-funded aid could stop entering Idlib from January unless an alternative agreement is reached.

The Damascus regime, which now controls 70 percent of Syria, has repeatedly vowed to take back the region. Backed by Moscow, Damascus launched a blistering offensive against Idlib in April, killing around 1,000 civilians and displacing more than 400,000 people.

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

French government, unions exchange barbs in deadlock

PARIS: The French government and a key trade union on Sunday exchanged bitter accusations over who was to blame for France's over three-week transport strike against pension reforms, as the stalemate showed little sign of relenting. Deputy Transport Minister Jean-Baptiste Djebbari accused the hardline CGT union of a "systematic opposition to any reform" while the union's chief Philippe Martinez charged the government with strewing "chaos" in the conflict.

The strike—now longer than the notorious 22-day strike of winter 1995 — has now lasted 25 days and is on course to surpass the longest transport strike in France which lasted for 28 days in 1986 and early 1987. Aside from two driverless lines, the Paris metro was again almost completely shut down yesterday while only a fraction of high-speed TGV trains were running.

The government and unions are only due to hold their next talks on January 7, two days ahead of a new day of mass demonstrations against the reform which is championed by President Emmanuel Macron. In an interview with the Journal de Dimanche newspaper, Djebbari angrily accused the CGT of "attitudes of intimidation, harassment and even aggression" against railway workers who had opted not to down tools.

He accused the CGT of showing a "systematic opposition to any reform, of blocking and sometimes intimidation". "The

CGT wants to make its mark through media stunts. But the French are not going to be duped by the extreme-left politicization of this movement," he added.

'Like Thatcher'

But in an interview with the same newspaper, Martinez accused the government of trying to ensure the conflict deteriorated further. "Emmanuel Macron presents himself as a man of a new world but he is imitating Margaret Thatcher," he said, referring to the late British prime minister who sought to break the power of the unions in 1980s standoffs.

"There is real anger. Of course, not being paid for 24 days is tough. But the conflict is the result of two-and-a-half years of suffering," Martinez added. He said he was awaiting concessions from Macron in a New Year's address Tuesday evening as well as recognition that "most people are not happy and that he (the president) was wrong". The French president, elected in 2017 on pledges to reform France, has remained virtually silent on the standoff, save for a call for a Christmas truce that went unheeded and a vow not to take a presidential pension.

This will intensify attention on December 31 address, with all eyes on whether Macron offers steps to defuse the conflict or indicates he is ready for a long, grinding standoff.

The unions are demanding that the government drops a plan to merge 42 existing pension schemes into a single, points-based system. The overhaul would see workers in certain sectors—including the railways—lose early retirement benefits. The government says the pension overhaul is needed to create a fairer system. But workers object to the inclusion of a so-called pivot age of 64 until which people would have to work to earn a full pension—two years beyond the official retirement age.—AFP



PARIS: Protesters demonstrate as part of a nationwide multi-sector strike against French government's pensions overhaul near the city hall in Paris on Saturday.—AFP

International

Iran accuses Paris of 'interference' over jailed Iranian-French academic

Tehran insists Adelkhah faces security charges

TEHRAN: Tehran accused Paris yesterday of "interference" in the case of an Iranian-French academic held in the Islamic republic, saying she is considered an Iranian national and faces security charges.

France said Friday it summoned Iran's ambassador to protest the imprisonment of Fariba Adelkhah and another academic, Roland Marchal of France, saying their detention was "intolerable".

Their imprisonment has added to distrust between Tehran and Paris at a time when French President Emmanuel Macron is seeking to play a leading role in defusing tensions between Iran and its arch-foe the United States. "The statement by France's foreign ministry regarding an Iranian national is an act of interference and we see their request to have no legal basis," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said in a statement.

"The individual in question (Adelkhah) is an Iranian national and has been arrested over 'acts of espionage'," he said, adding that her lawyer had knowledge about the details of the case which is being investigated.

Iran does not recognize dual nationality and has repeatedly rebuffed calls from foreign governments for consular access to those it has detained during legal proceedings. In its statement on Friday, the French foreign ministry reiterated its call for the release of Adelkhah and Marchal.

It also reaffirmed France's demand for consular access. In response, Mousavi said Marchal was detained for "conspiring against national security", that he has had "consular access multiple times" and that his lawyer was in touch with the judiciary.

Hunger strikes

A specialist in Shiite Islam and a research director at Sciences Po University in Paris, Adelkhah's arrest for suspected "espionage" was confirmed in July. Her colleague Marchal was arrested while visiting Adelkhah, according to his lawyer. A judge had decided to release the two on bail this month, as they had been entitled to it after six months in detention, their lawyer said.

But this was opposed by the prosecution, and as a result the case was referred to Iran's Revolutionary Court to settle the dispute, Iran's semi-official news agency ISNA reported.

The Revolutionary Court typically handles high-profile cases in Iran, including those involving espionage. The university and supporters said this week that Adelkhah and another detained academic, Australian Kylie Moore-Gilbert, had started an indefinite hunger strike just before Christmas.

The French statement said the ministry had made clear to the ambassador "our grave concern over the situation of Mrs Fariba Adelkhah, who has stopped taking food".

"Creating hype cannot stop Iran's judiciary from handling the case, especially considering the security charges the two face," Mousavi said. Mousavi had previously dismissed similar calls from France, saying it should remember that "Iran is sovereign and independent" and interference in its affairs is "unacceptable". The latest tensions come after Xiyue Wang, an American scholar who had been serving 10 years on espionage charges, was released by Iran this month in exchange for Massoud Soleimani, an Iranian who had been held in the US for allegedly breaching sanctions.



A handout photo made available by the Iranian Army office yesterday shows a view of the Russian Navy Neustrashimyy-class frigate "Yaroslav Mudry" during joint Iran-Russia-China naval drills in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman. —AFP

Iran has said it is open to more such prisoner swaps with the United States. Tehran is still holding several other foreign nationals in high profile cases, including British-Iranian mother Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and Iranian-American businessman Siamak Namazi and

his father Mohammad Bagher Namazi.

US-Iran tensions have soared since Washington pulled out of a landmark nuclear agreement with Tehran last year and reimposed crippling sanctions. —AFP

Algeria's new PM pledges to regain trust

ALGIERS: Algeria's new president on Saturday named as his prime minister an academic turned political insider who vowed to work to win back people's trust after months of street protests.

Abdelmadjid Tebboune, elected this month to succeed ousted president Abdelaziz Bouteflika, asked Abdelaziz Djerad to form a government, the presidency announced in a statement carried by state television. The 65-year-old premier, who has a Ph.D in political science, struck a conciliatory tone after meeting Tebboune, whose election victory was rejected by protesters as a ploy to keep establishment insiders in power.

Djerad pledged to work with all Algerians to surmount the economic and social challenges confronting the north African country. "We face a major challenge to win back the trust" of the people, he added.

But the initial response on the street

to Djerad's appointment suggested he has his work cut out.

"This change of prime minister is illegitimate since the one who appointed him is illegitimate," said pharmacy student Maassoum. The people "asked for a new soup. They just changed the spoon," said one of his friends, Amine. Although from an academic background, Djerad already has experience of the inner workings of the Algerian state, having held posts including general secretary of the presidency from 1993-1995 and the same role at the foreign ministry from 2001-2003.

He replaces Sabri Boukadoum, the foreign minister who was appointed interim prime minister after Tebboune's election win. Algeria's 10-month-old protest movement has rejected Tebboune as part of the same corrupt system that has ruled since independence in 1962. Demonstrators have stayed on the streets since Bouteflika resigned in April after two decades in office. On Friday tens of thousands of Algerians rallied again insisting on a total revamp of the political establishment.

But the demonstration seemed one of the smallest since the start of the unprecedented, peaceful uprising, with some protesters saying school and uni-



ALGIERS: A handout picture released by the official Algeria Press Service (APS) shows Algerian President Abdelaziz Tebboune (left) receiving the newly appointed Prime Minister Abdelaziz Djerad in the capital Algiers on Saturday. —AFP

versity holidays had kept people away.

The crowd was outnumbered by the throngs of people who had turned out for the funeral on Wednesday of powerful army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah, who had become the de facto strongman in the country after Bouteflika quit. The

December 12 election was boycotted by a large part of the electorate. Tebboune won with 58.1 percent of the vote on a turnout of less than 40 percent, according to official results, and was sworn in on December 19, days before Gaid Salah died of a heart attack at age 79. —AFP

Qaeda-linked Shabaab in Somalia

MOGADISHU: Dozens of people were killed in a massive car bomb attack on a busy street in the Somali capital Mogadishu on Saturday. No group has claimed responsibility, but Al-Shabaab, meaning "youth" in Arabic, is the main militant group in Somalia, which has been mired in chaos since 1991.

Here is some background on the Islamist militant organization with links to Al-Qaeda.

Al-Qaeda links

The Shabaab stem from Somalia's Islamic Courts Union that controlled central and southern Somalia including the capital Mogadishu for six months in 2006 before being ousted by Ethiopian troops.

In 2010 the Shabaab declared their allegiance to Al-Qaeda, to which they were officially integrated in 2012. They are estimated to have between 5,000 and 9,000 men. Since the death in September 2014 of Ahmed Abdi Godane, killed in a US strike, the group's leader has been Ahmed Diriye.

The Shabaab were chased out of their last bastions in Mogadishu in 2011 by the 22,000-strong African Union peace-enforcement mission, AMISOM-in Somalia since 2007 — and since then they have had to abandon most of their strongholds.

They nevertheless control vast rural areas and remain the key threat to peace in Somalia. In October 2017 a truck bombing in a busy neighborhood of Mogadishu killed more than 500 people in the deadliest attack in Somalia to date. The Shabaab have intensified their activity since the start of 2016 and Somalia's President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, elected in February 2017, has declared a state of war against the group.

In March 2017 US President Donald Trump authorized the Pentagon to take action against suspected militants in Somalia and since then US forces have conducted a series of air strikes against the Shabaab. On October 12, 2018 one of these strikes killed around 60 militants, according to the US army.

Moving abroad

In 2010, the Shabaab claimed responsibility for a twin attack in Kampala, the capital of Uganda and main contributor to AMISOM. The suicide bombings in two restaurants in Kampala on July 11 killed 76 people and injured more than 80. It was the first major Shabaab attack outside its borders.

On May 24, 2014 the Shabaab claimed responsibility for an attack in Djibouti on a restaurant packed with Westerners, saying they had targeted French "crusaders" and that the strike was in retaliation for Djibouti's hosting of the biggest US military base in Africa.

Shabaab targets Kenya

The Shabaab began a spate of bloody attacks in

neighboring Kenya since its troops intervened in Somalia in 2011. The deadliest took place on April 2, 2015 when the Shabaab killed 148 people at Garissa University in northeastern Kenya. In June-July 2014 around 100 people were killed in raids in the coastal Lamu region in Kenya's northeast, home of a once-popular tourist island.

In September 2013 the Shabaab claimed responsibility for a dramatic raid on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi that killed 67 people over a four-day siege.

In January 2019, a Shabaab attack on an upscale Nairobi hotel complex left at least 21 people dead in an hours-long siege.

Foreign forces

Somalia's armed forces rely heavily on the 21,000-strong AMISOM troops, though the African Union last year said it is gradually scaling back its forces as local forces are trained up. Uganda has the most troops in the AMISOM Somalia mission at 6,200 men followed by Burundi at 5,400 troops. Other contributors include Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. US special forces have been deployed in Somalia for years while US drone strikes have also been used against Shabaab commanders. Dozens of regular troops from the 101st Airborne Division have also deployed since 2017.

Strikes in Somalia also surged in 2017 after US President Donald Trump declared the south of the country an "area of active hostilities". But the rate of air strikes rose sharply again in 2019 against Al-Shabaab and Islamic State in Somalia. —AFP

ment in Tripoli. Greece immediately rejected it as baseless, arguing that Turkey and Libya share no maritime border. "(Libya) is our natural maritime neighbor, not Turkey's," Mitsotakis said yesterday. The Turkish deal lays claim to much of the Mediterranean for energy exploration, conflicting with rival claims by Greece and Cyprus.

At the same time, Turkey is stepping up military aid to Tripoli, which is battling the forces of military strongman Khalifa Haftar for control of the capital. —AFP

'World's oldest rhino' dies in Tanzania at 57

DAR ES SALAAM: A rhino believed to be the world's oldest has died at the age of 57 in a Tanzanian conservation area, authorities said. Fausta, a female black rhino, died of natural causes in captivity on Friday in the Ngorongoro Crater, the state conservation body said.

"Records show that Fausta lived (longer) than any rhino in the world and survived in the Ngorongoro, free-ranging, for more than 54 years before it was kept in a sanctuary for the last three years of its life in 2016," the Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority said in a statement.

Fausta was first located in 1965 at between three and four years' old by a scientist. Her health deteriorated from 2016 after hyena attacks, when she was taken into refuge.

"Fausta survived 57 years without bearing calves," the statement added. Rhinos' life expectancy is around 40 years in the wild but they can live an extra decade in captivity, according to the Ngorongoro authority. Decimated by poaching, black rhinos now number around 5,500, according to charity Save The Rhino. The smaller of the two African species, they are found around south and east Africa, including Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. —Reuters



The rhino named Fausta is seen in Ngorongoro, Tanzania in this undated picture. —Reuters

Yemen missile strike kills five separatists

ADEN: A missile struck a passing out ceremony in southern Yemen yesterday, killing at least five southern separatists, security officials said. The ceremony in the town of Ad-Dali was for new recruits to the separatist-dominated Security Belt Forces, a formation trained and equipped by the United Arab Emirates to patrol territory retaken from northern rebels or Al-Qaeda, its spokesman Majed Al-Shuaibi said. Five soldiers were killed and nine others wounded when the missile hit the reviewing stand during the march-past.

Shuaibi told AFP the missile was fired by the Houthi rebels who control the capital Sanaa and much of the north. But there was no immediate claim of responsibility from the Iran-allied rebels, whose forces are present in the mountains just 60 kilometers (40 miles) north of Ad-Dali.

In August, 36 Security Belt soldiers were killed in a drone and missile attack by the Houthis on a passing out ceremony just outside the main southern city of Aden. The security forces in the south have also come under repeated attack by both Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group. —AFP

Greece 'wants a say' in Libya peace process: PM

ATHENS: Greece wants to be included in UN-sponsored talks in January on the Libya conflict, Prime Minister Kyriakos

Mitsotakis said yesterday, as tensions escalate with neighbours Turkey over the issue. Libya has become another diplomatic front for Greece and Turkey as the traditional rivals jostle over Mediterranean maritime rights and the competing camps in the North African country's conflict.

"We do not want a source of instability in our neighbourhood. Therefore we want a say in developments in Libya," Mitsotakis told To Vima weekly in an interview. "We want to be part of the solution in Libya, as it concerns us too," he said. The UN has said an international

conference will be held next month in Berlin to pave the way for a political solution to Libya's ongoing conflict.

Libya has been beset by chaos since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, with rival administrations in the east and the west vying for power. "I have requested, and will do so again with greater insistence, that we participate in the Berlin process," Mitsotakis said.

In November, Ankara signed a contentious maritime and military deal with the embattled UN-recognized govern-

International

Ukrainian rivals exchange 200 prisoners in controversial swap

Release of riot police has raised concerns

CHECKPOINT MAYORSKE, Ukraine: Ukraine and Russia-backed separatists in the country's war-torn east exchanged 200 prisoners yesterday, swapping detained fighters for civilians and servicemen held captive in some cases for years in two breakaway regions. Kiev handed over to separatists five riot policemen suspected of killing protesters during a pro-Western uprising in 2014 as part of the swap, sparking public outrage. "The mutual release of the detainees has ended," the Ukrainian presidential office said in a statement on Facebook, adding that it would provide more details later.

The presidency said Kiev received 76 captives, while separatist officials said the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics took in a total of 124. The head of the Lugansk stronghold, Leonid Pasechnik, congratulated his people on a new "victory" ahead of the New Year's festivities. The exchange came after Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky held their first face-to-face talks in Paris on Dec 9 and agreed measures to de-escalate Europe's only active war.

Prisoners filed off coaches at the Mayorske checkpoint in the eastern Donetsk region, many carrying plastic bags stuffed with their belongings, as gun-toting uniformed soldiers and ambulances were on standby. Among the group of detainees handed over by the sepa-

ratists were those who said they had been held for several years after getting caught up in the conflict while visiting relatives. Volodymyr Danylchenko, who said he had spent three years in captivity, said he was at a loss for words. "I myself don't understand what's happened," said the 36-year-old, adding that he was leaving his mother behind in the separatist region of Lugansk.

Bittersweet homecoming
Another detainee released by the separatists, who gave just her first name Victoria, said she had been held for three years. "I am so happy," the 24-year-old told AFP, adding that she had been convicted of "state treason" and sentenced to 12 years in prison after arriving in the Lugansk region to see her parents. Another woman being handed to Kiev sported a handwritten sign on her clothing: "My country is Ukraine!"

The swap, which was overseen by monitors from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, came three months after Ukraine carried out a long-awaited exchange with Russia of 35 prisoners each. The previous prisoner swap between Kiev and separatists took place in 2017. Ties between Ukraine and Russia were shredded after the bloody 2014 uprising ousted a Kremlin-backed regime. Moscow went on to annex Crimea and support insurgents in east-

ern Ukraine who launched a bid for independence in 2014. Since then more than 13,000 people have been killed in the conflict.

'No future'

The release of the riot police has raised concerns in Ukraine, with many fearing the country is being pushed to pay too high a price for the swap. Ahead of the exchange three riot policemen were released from custody while another two were freed from house arrest. The riot policemen are suspected to have been involved in the bloody crackdown on protesters in 2014. Some 100 demonstrators were shot dead during the uprising. "What Ukrainians have been fighting for is going down the drain," filmmaker Oleg Sentsov, who was released in the September prisoner exchange, said on Facebook. In an open letter to Zelensky, the victims' families warned that the release of the suspects could lead to a "wave of protests". Volodymyr Golodnyuk, whose 19-year son was killed in the uprising, accused authorities of "abusing the justice system". "This country has no future," he said. In an apparent move to allay concerns, Ukraine's prosecutor-general's office said the trial of the five former policemen would continue.

'Frozen' conflict

Since coming to power in May, comedian-



Pro-Russian rebels - who were made prisoners - board a bus during a prisoner exchange between Ukraine and pro-Russian rebels near the Mayorske checkpoint yesterday. — AFP

turned-president Zelensky, 41, has sought to kickstart a peace process to end the conflict. At the Paris summit, the leaders sought to revive accords signed in Minsk in 2015 that call for the withdrawal of heavy weapons, and the restoration of Kiev's control over its borders, among other conditions. But many doubt whether Putin genuinely wants to settle the conflict. He has said that if Kiev gets back con-

trol of the border in the east, residents of separatist-held territories could be targeted. Zelensky's peace plan has also been strongly criticized by war veterans and nationalists. Dmitri Trenin, head of the Carnegie Moscow Centre, praised the prisoner exchange but said it would not bring a settlement any closer. "The conflict is much more likely to become frozen than resolved," he said on Twitter. — AFP

EU charts path for 'challenging' post-Brexit deal

BRUSSELS: The EU will keep engaging with the UK through the WTO and the UN as both sides work out a deal on their future ties once Britain leaves the bloc, according to the top Brexit negotiator in Brussels. Agreeing and ratifying a post-Brexit relationship by the end of 2020 "will be immensely challenging, but we will give it our all, even if we won't be able to achieve everything," the official, Michel Barnier, wrote in a weekend online commentary for the Project Syndicate magazine website.

The two sides will have just 11 months to settle that agreement following Britain's formal departure from the EU on January 31.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson insists he will not seek an extension beyond 2020 to fine-tune a deal. He has also made it clear his country will drop EU labour, environmental, financial, health and safety standards, spurring Brussels' concerns about British trade "dumping" and making prospects of a quick and comprehensive deal appear remote.

'New Year's resolutions'

Barnier, who was unflinchingly courteous when he negotiated the terms of Britain's withdrawal in a way to protect the EU's single market and citizens, said he had three goals-framed as "New Year's resolutions"—for the upcoming talks on the future relationship. To work together on global issues, "the EU will continue to engage positively with the UK, both bilaterally and in global fora such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, and the G20," he said. In terms of security issues, while it is "simply not possible" for Britain to have the same access to data as EU members, "tackling terrorism, cyberattacks, and other attempts to undermine our democracies will require a joint effort".

Barnier said there should be "unconditional commitment from both sides" to building a security alliance. And for economic ties, "any free-trade agreement must provide for a level playing field on standards, state aid, and tax matters," Barnier emphasized.

That last point is seen as being a big stumbling block in the talks. Johnson told the British parliament last Friday that an "ambitious" trade agreement would be struck "with no alignment on EU rules, but instead with control of our own laws, and close and friendly relations". EU officials and lawmakers have voiced concern that Johnson might be seeking to build Britain as a deregulated "Singapore-on-Thames" that would try to sell goods into the EU made cheaper by cutting rules meant to protect workers, consumers and the environment. — AFP

Two killed in Texas shooting

HOUSTON: A shooting killed two people and wounded at least seven while they were filming a music video in the US state of Texas, authorities said Saturday. "We are now at 9 total gunshot wound victims: 2 were confirmed deceased at scene, 1 was critical, the others remain hospitalized," Harris County Sheriff Ed Gonzalez tweeted.

The attack on a group of Hispanic men in their 20s occurred around 9:30 pm Friday (0330 GMT Saturday) at a parking lot in a residential Houston neighborhood, Gonzalez said at a media briefing that night. A video posted on Twitter Saturday morning by a Houston Chronicle reporter showed bloodstains on the ground in the parking lot and cars dotted with bullet holes.

"There were other vehicles that were staged there, and they were filming some type of music video when, all of a sudden, basically they were ambushed, we believe by individuals in cars and/or foot that fired shots into the parking lot," Gonzalez said in the media briefing. Police do not yet know the motive for the shooting, he added. According to government figures, around 40,000 people died from gun-fire in 2017 in the US, a country that is plagued by frequent gun violence. — AFP

Five stabbed at NY rabbi's home in 'terrorist' attack

MONSEY, New York: An intruder stabbed and wounded five people at a rabbi's home in a New York suburb late Saturday, in an incident the state governor said was "an act of terrorism" after a spate of attacks on Jewish targets. Local media reported that a man with a machete entered the rabbi's property in Monsey, Rockland County, during celebrations for the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, knifing several people before fleeing. Victims were rushed to nearby hospitals, with no official details on their injuries. Police said a suspect was later arrested.

"This is an act of terrorism. I think these are domestic terrorists. They are trying to inflict fear," New York Governor Andrew Cuomo told reporters at the scene yesterday. "They're motivated by hate. They are doing mass attacks. These are terrorists in our country perpetrating terrorism on other Americans, and that's how we should treat it." Last year a white supremacist walked into a Pittsburgh synagogue and killed 11 people - the deadliest attack against the Jewish community in the United States.

I Coast ex-rebel vows to organize 'political resistance' from abroad

PARIS: Former rebel leader and would-be Ivory Coast presidential candidate Guillaume Soro said he would organize "political resistance" from abroad in an interview published yesterday, a day after president Alassane Ouattara warned him and other rivals against destabilizing the country.

"It is only a question of political resistance," Soro told French newspaper Le Journal du Dimanche following accusations he was preparing an imminent "civilian military insurrection" to seize power. "I am and remain a presidential candidate... I will organize the resistance just as de Gaulle did from London," he said, referring to the French wartime resistance leader. Ouattara on Saturday had warned against any attempt to destabilize the country, days after an arrest warrant was issued for Soro, a former ally turned political rival.

"No one will be allowed to destabilize Ivory Coast," Ouattara said during a joint news conference with Equatorial Guinea's President Teodoro Obiang Nguema, according to a statement sent to AFP.

"The law will be applied to everyone, candidate or not," Ouattara said. "Nobody is above the law, former presidents of the republic, presidents of institutions, the president of the republic and everyone else," he added.

Ouattara's comments could be seen as directed at not just Soro, but also former president Henri Konan Bedie, leader of the main opposition party, who has not yet said whether he is running for the presidency. Soro had been due to head back to Ivory Coast on Monday after a six-month absence. But after security forces stormed his party headquarters in Abidjan he diverted his flight.

Prosecutors then issued an arrest warrant for him. He told the Journal the arrest warrant against him was politically motivated, adding he planned to remain

Earlier this month six people, including two suspects, were killed in a Jersey City shooting at a kosher deli, which authorities said was fueled in part by anti-Semitism. A report in April from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) stated that the number of anti-Semitic attacks in 2018 was close to the record of 2017, with 1,879 incidents.

"I was praying for my life," said witness Aron Kohn, 65, comparing the knife used by the attacker to "the size of a broom-

stick". Kohn threw chairs and tables in an attempt to head off the assault. "I saw him stabbing people," he added. "He injured a guy, he was bleeding in his hand, all over." Kohn said the attacker tried to enter the adjacent synagogue, but it was locked.

Extra patrols

Yossi Gestetner, of the Orthodox Jewish Public Affairs Council (OJPAC), told The New York Times that one of the victims



NEW YORK: Two police officers stand guard as the press gathers outside a rabbi's home where a machete attack that took place earlier during the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, in Monsey, New York, yesterday. — AFP

Guinea-Bissau votes in runoff presidential poll to end turmoil

BISSAU, Guinea-Bissau: Voters in Guinea-Bissau cast their ballots in a presidential runoff yesterday with the hope of ending months of political turmoil in the coup-prone West African state that is one of the world's poorest nations.

Some 700,000 registered voters have a choice between two former prime ministers-Domingos Simoes Pereira, from the traditional ruling PAIGC party, and opposition figure Umaro Sissoco Embalo.

Both are promising a better economic future in a young country wracked by poverty, instability, high unemployment and corruption. Incumbent Jose Mario Vaz crashed out of the race in the first round in November-becoming the first elected president in 25 years to reach the end of his mandate without being ousted or dying in office, in a country where the military has loomed large in politics.

Polling stations, often set up in the open air, opened at 0700 GMT.

"This is the most important day. We want everything to go well," said Dominique Zale, a security guard and father-of-six who spoke to AFP at a polling station near the port in the capital Bissau, where voters started lining up before dawn. "We must vote to change things. The next president will have the mission to make the country work," said 31-year-old Jair Fernandes Martins, at a nearby polling station. Nearly 70 percent of Guinea-Bissau's 1.8 million people lives on less than \$1.90 a day and the country ranks 178th out of 189 on the UN Human Development Index.

The small tropical country gained independence from Portugal in 1974, but has suffered a string of military coups,

attempted coups and political assassinations ever since. After the latest coup in 2012, the West African regional bloc ECOWAS deployed a nearly 700-member force to try to stabilize the fragile nation. A member of the European Union election observation team expressed cautious optimism that the military would not disrupt the political process this time.

"The soldiers are quiet. I hope that this will continue, but we will see after the results are announced," they said. Polls close at 1700 GMT and the results are not expected until next week.

Raucous campaign

The election campaign passed loudly and colorfully and with no violence. Pereira, 56, a civil engineer by training, won 40.1 percent of the vote in the first round on November 24. He belongs to the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), which is historically rooted in the fight to end Portugal's colonial rule. Embalo, a former general who wears a red-and-white Arab keffiyeh headress, is gambling that he can chip away at Pereira's lead by getting backing from candidates knocked out in the first round in November.

The 47-year-old came second with 27.65 percent. He represents Madem, an opposition party formed by PAIGC rebels. The latest crisis erupted in 2015 when Vaz sacked Pereira as prime minister, a move that incensed the PAIGC.

Thereafter, Vaz was unable to get parliamentary backing for his proposed prime ministers-and parliament did not sit for nearly two years until April 2018 when Aristides Gomes was appointed "consensus" prime minister. Vaz came fourth in the first round of voting, with just 12.4 percent. Guinea-Bissau has been lacerated by graft, ranking 172nd out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2018 index for perceived levels of corruption. Latin American drug runners have exploited the instability and poverty to make the country a hub along the cocaine-smuggling route to Europe. — AFP



Guillaume Soro

International

Tourists stay away from Taj Mahal, other attractions as protests flare

Discriminatory Indian law triggers protests as 7 countries issue travel warnings

MUMBAI: India's tourism industry has been hit by a wave of violent anti-government protests against a new citizenship law that have rocked several cities this month, with at least seven countries issuing travel warnings.

At least 25 people have been killed in clashes between police and protesters, and demonstrations against the law continue. Officials estimate about 200,000 domestic and international tourists cancelled or postponed their trip to the Taj Mahal in the past two weeks, one of the world's most popular tourist attractions.

"There has been a 60 percent decline in visitor footfalls in December this year," said Dinesh Kumar, a police inspector overseeing a special tourist police station near the Taj Mahal who has access to visitor data. He said the decline was compared to December last year. "Indian and foreign tourists have been calling our control rooms to check security. We assure them protection, but many still decide to stay away," said Kumar.

The 17th century marble monument is in Uttar Pradesh, the northern state that has witnessed the highest number of deaths and intense bursts of violence in two weeks of unrest. A group of European tourists travelling in a group across India said they now planned to cut short their 20 day trip. "We are all retired folks, for us travel has to be slow and relaxing. The newspaper headlines have led to a sense of concern and we will leave sooner than we had planned," said Dave Millikin, a retired banker living on the outskirts of London, who

spoke to Reuters from the capital New Delhi. The Taj Mahal, situated in the town of Agra, attracts over 6.5 million tourists every year, generating nearly \$14 million annually from entrance fees. A foreign tourist pays 1,100 rupees (about \$15) to enter the grounds, although nationals from neighboring countries get a discount.

Managers in luxury hotels and guest houses around the Taj Mahal said last minute cancellations during the festive season have further dampened business sentiment at a time when the country's economic growth has slowed to 4.5 percent, its slowest pace in more than six years. In a bid to clamp down on violence and unrest, authorities have suspended mobile internet services in Agra.

"Blocking the internet has affected travel and tourism in Agra by about 50-60 percent," said Sandeep Arora, president of the Agra Tourism Development Foundation that groups over 250 tour operators, hotels and guides. The United States, Britain, Russia, Israel, Singapore, Canada and Taiwan have issued travel advisories asking their citizens to either refrain from visiting or to exercise caution when visiting regions embroiled in India's protests. Jayanta Malla Baruah, the head of the Assam Tourism Development Corp., said the state, home to the world's largest concentration of one-horned rhinoceroses, is visited on average by 500,000 tourists during December. "But this time, due to the ongoing protests and travel advisories by various countries, the number is down by 90 percent if not more." — Reuters



AGRA: Tourists visit The Taj Mahal under heavy smog conditions in Agra on Saturday. — AFP

N Korea's Kim holds top party meeting ahead of US deadline

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has convened a key meeting of top ruling party officials, state media said yesterday, ahead of a year-end deadline for Washington to shift its stance on stalled nuclear talks. The plenary session, which opened on Saturday, follows widespread speculation that Pyongyang is preparing to test an intercontinental ballistic missile—as a threatened "Christmas gift" for Washington.

Kim presided over the meeting which discussed a new "transparent, anti-imperialist independent stand", the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

The ruling Workers' Party of Korea will also "discuss important matters arising... in the building of the state and national defense", KCNA added. Talks on denuclearizing the Korean peninsula have been largely deadlocked since the second summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump collapsed in Hanoi at the start of this year.

The opening of the plenary comes a week after Kim held a meeting of top defense officials and discussed boosting military capabilities, and ahead of the leader's New Year speech on January 1, a key political set-piece in the isolated country. Pyongyang has carried out a series of static tests at its Sohae rocket facility this month, after a number of weapons launches in recent weeks—some of them described as ballistic missiles by Japan and others.

North Korea is under heavy US and United Nations sanctions over its nuclear program, but it has been frustrated at the lack of relief after it declared a moratorium on nuclear and intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests.

Russia and China—North Korea's main ally—have proposed easing sanctions in a bid to de-escalate tensions.

'Imminent' threat

The ongoing meeting could have Pyongyang announce "major policy shift" from its previous approach with the US, said Hong Min, a senior researcher at the South's state-run Korea Institute for National Unification. Earlier this month, North Korean media published pictures of Kim riding a white horse on a sacred mountain, imagery that experts said was heavy with symbolism and may indicate a policy announcement. "We'll find out what the surprise is

and we'll deal with it very successfully," Trump said. "Everybody's got surprises for me, but let's see what happens. I handle them as they come along."

But Trump's former national security advisor John Bolton—a longtime hawk on North Korea—has sharply criticized the president's handling of the issue, and claimed that Pyongyang poses an "imminent" threat. The US president has invested a huge amount of political capital in his attempt to persuade Kim to end North Korea's isolation and give up its nuclear weapons. There has been little progress, however, after three face-to-face meetings and numerous letter exchanges. — AFP



PYONGYANG: This picture taken on December 28, 2019 and released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday shows the 5th Plenary Meeting of the 7th Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea in Pyongyang. — AFP

Australia to compensate bushfire volunteers

SYDNEY: Volunteer firefighters in Australia will be offered government compensation after spending extended periods fighting bushfires raging across the country, authorities announced yesterday.

Rural Fire Service volunteers who have spent at least 10 days battling blazes in worst-hit New South Wales (NSW) state are immediately eligible for the scheme, which offers payments of up to Aus\$300 (\$209) per day for a maximum of Aus\$6,000 per person. "While I know RFS volunteers don't seek payment for their service, I don't want to see volunteers or their families unable to pay bills, or struggle financially as a result of the selfless contribution they are making," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said. "This is not about paying volunteers. It is about sustaining our volunteer efforts by protecting them from financial loss." Morrison said the compensation scheme would be rolled out across other Australian states and territories if local authorities requested that assistance.

"They run their own shows; they know what their challenges are," he said of the state governments.

The scheme—which applies only to self-employed volunteers and those working for small- and medium-sized businesses—is expected to cost about Aus\$50 million in NSW, which boasts the world's largest volunteer fire service at 70,000 people.

Volunteers who are also government employees were last week granted additional paid leave to help fight the blazes. Morrison has come under increasing pressure in recent weeks over his response to the bushfire crisis, which has killed 10 people, destroyed hundreds of homes and scorched more than three million hectares (7.4 million acres). The prime minister was forced to apologize for taking a family holiday to Hawaii as Australia battled the bushfires, a decision that sparked public outrage and prompted street protests.

Evacuation ordered

Temperatures are set to soar again across large parts of south-eastern Australia, with elevated fire danger expected in the lead-up to New Year's Day. People were ordered to evacuate Victoria state's East Gippsland region yesterday amid concerns three large blazes sparked over a month ago could burn out of control.

Victoria's Emergency Management commissioner Andrew Crisp said the more than 30,000 people in the popular tourist region should "leave now", as fires could force the closure of the last major road still open. "What we're saying now with the conditions that will be confronting us tomorrow... is if

you're holidaying in that part of the state, it's time you left," Crisp said, while urging local residents to do the same.

A major music festival was also cancelled ahead of the forecast extreme weather conditions, with 9,000 people asked to leave the Falls Festival campsite in Lorne due to the risk of bushfires, smoke haze and severe winds. Severe thunderstorms and damaging wind gusts are predicted for neighboring South Australia state, where multiple fires are raging and the bushfire danger will be extreme in several areas today.

Firefighters are also bracing for bushfire conditions to worsen during the week in NSW, where 95 blazes were burning yesterday, including 48 uncontained. — AFP



SYDNEY: A house and van are seen destroyed after bushfires ravaged the town of Bilpin, 70km west of Sydney yesterday. A heatwave is due to sweep across parts of New South Wales in the coming days, with deteriorating bushfire conditions expected to hit on New Year's Eve tomorrow. — AFP

7 bodies found on suspected North Korean boat in Japan

TOKYO: The badly decomposed remains of seven people have been found in a suspected North Korean fishing boat that washed up on a Japanese island, a coast guard official said yesterday. The remains were found on Saturday in a broken vessel on the shore of Sado Island, which lies around 900 kilometers (560 miles) from North Korea across the Sea of Japan. "Five of the bodies were identified as men but the remaining two could not be identified" as they were badly damaged, the official told AFP.

"There have been similar cases but this was the first discovery of bodies in such a wrecked boat on this island this year," the official added. Korean alphabet and numbers were painted on the wooden hull,

which was broken in half, he said, adding that there was nothing to show their nationality.

Local media said Japanese police and coast guard are investigating the case, suspecting the vessel departed from North Korea. So far this year, at least 156 suspected North Korean fishing vessels washed up on Japan's coast or were found drifting in Japanese waters, according to the Yomiuri Shimbun. Experts say some North Korean fishermen are travelling far out to sea in order to satisfy government mandates for bigger catches.

But their old and poorly equipped vessels are prone to mechanical and other problems, including running out of fuel, and there are few ways for them to call for rescue. Some of the boats wash up on Japanese shores with dead crews, called "ghost ships" by local media.

Last year, 10 North Koreans rescued from a tiny wooden boat drifting off northern Japan were deported. In October, around 60 members of a North Korean fishing boat were rescued in the Sea of Japan after it sank following a collision with a Japanese patrol vessel. — AFP

Two dead, 2,500 seek emergency shelter in Fiji

WELLINGTON: Tropical Cyclone Sarai was moving slowly away from Fiji yesterday, leaving two people dead and more than 2,500 needing emergency shelter. The cyclone damaged houses, crops and trees, cut power and forced the cancellation of several international flights, stranding holidaymakers visiting the island nation, which is a major tourist draw.

National Disaster Management Office director Vasiti Soko said an 18-year-old student drowned off the island of Kadavu. "The man is believed to have

been swept away by strong currents when he was swimming with his friends," she said.

The body of a man in his 40s was found yesterday off the coast of the main island Viti Levu a day after he was swept away by strong currents when crossing a river. Another person was in intensive care in hospital after being hit by a falling tree.

Soko said that at the height of the storm, there were 2,538 people packed into 70 evacuation centres although by Sunday evening 500 had been cleared to return home.

Electricity was restored to 80 percent of the capital Suva but power company Energy Fiji Limited said it could take a week to restore supplies to all areas of Viti Levu. Sarai, maintaining winds of up to 150 kilometers per hour (93 miles per hour), was tracking east and was expected to pass over Tonga on New Year's Eve. — AFP

Business

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DUBAI: A picture taken on December 25, 2019 shows the skyline of Dubai with Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building. —AFP

Dubai to spend record \$18.1bn to revive economy

Emirate hopes Dubai Expo to bring \$17.5bn in revenues

DUBAI: Dubai unveiled a 2020 budget yesterday projecting record spending of \$18.1 billion, up 17 percent on this year, as it seeks to revive its flagging economy. The Gulf city state expects revenues too to rise sharply next year as it hosts Expo 2020, the global six-month trade fair set to open on October 20.

But it still foresees a deficit for the fourth year in a row of \$700 million. The government is hoping that Expo will draw some 25 million visitors, many of them from abroad, and is projecting a 25 percent increase in revenues to \$17.4 billion.

Dubai is the only government in the Gulf not dependent on hydrocarbon revenues, and projects around 94 percent of income to come from non-oil sources. Dubai is renowned for its skyscrapers, like the world's tallest building Burj Khalifa, but its key property sector has been sliding since 2014.

Last year, growth slowed to 1.94 percent, less half the 2017 figure and the worst in a decade. It picked up slightly to 2.1 percent in the first half of this year but the government is keen to do more to stimulate consumer spending and the real estate market.

Emaar Properties is selling the observation decks of the world's tallest skyscraper the Burj Khalifa, four sources told Reuters, potentially raising \$1 billion for Dubai's biggest developer amid a real estate downturn. Two of the sources said Emaar had appointed Standard Chartered to advise it on the sale of the popular "At The Top" tourist attraction.

Emaar, in which the Dubai government has a minority stake of 29.2%, and Standard Chartered declined to comment. At over 828 meters, the Burj Khalifa is twice as tall as New York's Empire State

Building and nearly three times the height of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

At The Top is a popular tourist destination in Dubai, which attracted 15.92 million overnight visitors in 2018. The viewing decks make about 600-700 million dirhams (\$163-\$191 million) a year, a banking source said. A financial source estimated they could be worth around \$1 billion. The sales process began in November, both of these sources said, declining to be named as the deal is not public.

Dubai is a regional hub for tourism, foreign trade and business services, but has

faced a slowing real estate market for most of the decade. It set up a real estate planning commission in September to regulate projects and avoid competition between semi-government and private firms.

Emaar has been divesting hospitality related assets to finance existing operations and expansion, an industry source and a Dubai-based banker said. Emaar hired Standard Chartered earlier this year for the sale of its district cooling business, and last year for the disposal of five hospitality assets, which were sold to Abu Dhabi National Hotels. —Agencies

Sixty years on, Africa still seeks right model for growth

PARIS: As 1960 dawned, sub-Saharan Africa braced for historic change: that year, 17 of its countries were destined to gain independence from European colonial powers. But six decades on, the continent is mired in many problems. It is struggling to build an economic model that encourages enduring growth, addresses poverty and provides a future for its youth.

Here are some of the key issues:

Youth 'explosion'

Africa's population grew from 227 million in 1960 to more than one billion in 2018. More than 60 percent are aged under 25, according to the Brookings Institution, a US think tank. "The most striking change for me is the increasing reality of disaffected youth... a younger population that is ready to explode at any moment," Cameroonian sociologist Francis Nyamnjoh said.

"They are hungry for political freedoms, they are hungry for economic opportunities and they are hungry for social fulfilment." Joblessness is a major peril. Unemployed youths are an easy prey for armed groups, particularly jihadist movements in the Sahel, or may be tempted to risk clandestine emigration, often at the cost of their lives.

The continent's population is expected to double by 2050, led by Nigeria, Ethiopia and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Poverty and inequality

The proportion of Africa's population living below the poverty line—less than \$1.90 (1.7 euros) per day—fell from 54.7 percent in 1990 to 41.4 percent in 2015, according to the World Bank. But this average masks enormous differences from one country to another, exemplified by Gabon (3.4 percent of the population in 2017) and Madagascar (77.6 percent in 2012). "The inequalities between countries are as extreme as in Asia and the inequalities within countries as high as in Latin America, where landless peasants coexist with huge landowners," said Togolese economist Kako Nubukpo.

Christophe Cottet, an economist at the French Development Agency (AFD), pointed out that inequality in Africa is "very poorly measured." "There are notably no figures on inequalities of inherited wealth, a key issue in Africa."

Mega-cities and countryside

Recent decades have seen the expansion of megacities like Lagos and Kinshasa, typically ringed by shantytowns where people live in extreme poverty, although many medium-sized cities have also grown. More than 40 percent of Africans now live in urban areas, compared with 14.6 percent in 1960, according to the World Bank.

In 1960, Cairo and Johannesburg were the only African cities with more than a million residents. Consultants McKinsey and Company estimate that by 2030, about 100 cities will have a million inhabitants, twice as many as in Latin America. But this urban growth is not necessarily the outcome of a rural exodus, said Cottet. "The population is rising across Africa as a whole, rather faster in towns than in rural areas," said Cottet.

"There is also the problem of unemployment in towns — (rural) people have little interest in migrating there."

Lost decades of growth

Growth in Africa slammed to a halt in the early 1980s, braked by a debt crisis and structural adjustment policies. It took two decades to recover. Per-capita GDP, as measured in constant US dollars, shows the up-and-downs, although these figures are official and do not cover Africa's large informal economy: \$1.12 in 1960, \$1.531 in 1974, \$1.166 in 1994 and \$1.657 in 2018.

"If you do an assessment over 60 years, something serious happened in Africa, with the loss of 20 years. But there is no denying that what is happening now is more positive," Cottet said.

The IMF's and World Bank's structural adjustment programs "broke the motors of growth," said Nubukpo, whose book, "L'Urgence Africaine," (The African Emergency) makes the case for a revamped growth model. The belt-tightening programs "emphasized the short term, to the detriment of investments in education, health and training."

New thinking needed

Africa has a low rate of industrialization, is heavily dependent on agriculture and its service sector has only recently started to emerge. "We have not escaped the colonial model. Basically, Africa remains a producer and exporter of raw materials," said Nubukpo.

He gave the example of cotton: 97 percent of Africa's cotton fiber is exported without processing—the phase which adds value to raw materials and provides jobs. For Jean-Joseph Boillot, a researcher attached to the French Institute for International and Strategic Affairs, "Africa is still seeking an economic model of development."

"There is very little development of local industries," he said. "This can only be achieved through a very strong approach, of continental industrial protection—but this is undermined by the great powers in order to pursue free trade." "The Chinese, the Indians and Westerners want to



Africa's population grew from 227 million in 1960 to more than one billion in 2018 and more than 60 per cent are aged under 25. —Reuters

be able to go on distributing their products."

Governance problem

Lack of democracy, transparency and efficient judicial systems are major brakes on African growth, and wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, said the experts. Of the 40 states deemed last year to be the most world's most corrupt countries, 20 are in sub-Saharan Africa, according to Transparency International. "Africa is not developing because it is caught in the trap of private wealth and the top wealth holders are African leaders," said Nubukpo.

"We must promote democracy, free and transparent elections to have legitimate leaders who have the public interest at heart, which we absolutely do not have." Nyamnjoh also pointed to marginalized groups—"There should be more room for inclusivity of voices, including voices of the young, voices of women." —AFP

Business

A year full of international awards and recognitions for Boubyan Bank

International and regional institutions confirm Boubyan Bank's excellence in local market



Abdullah Al-Mehri, the Acting Chief Operations Officer receiving Best Humanitarian Initiative in the Region



Abdulla Al-Tuwaijri, Deputy Chief Executive Officer receiving Service Hero Award

KUWAIT: As this year approaches its end, Boubyan Bank celebrates a remarkable year, which was full of achievements and successes that qualified it to receive many international and regional awards in addition to being recognized by many global institutions that are renowned for their fairness and strength.

During the celebration of its 15th anniversary and marking 10 years of continuous achievements in 2019, Boubyan Bank has received over 20 regional and international awards this year that reconfirmed its excellence and merit to be the fastest and strongest growing bank in Kuwait.

The Best Globally

Were it easy to achieve local or even regional achievements, achieving international ones seems to be a true challenge that Boubyan Bank managed to overcome through being awarded Global Finance's award for the World's Best Islamic Digital Bank for the fifth year in a row.

The most significant aspect of this award is placing Boubyan Bank, being an Arab Islamic bank, in the ranks of top banks, which is a new achievement for Kuwaiti banks in particular, and Kuwait's banking and financial sector in general. The world's best banks list also includes the international Citibank and Standard Chartered.

Boubyan Bank has also earned a number of awards this year in this area, including Global Finance's awards, namely, the Best Islamic Digital Bank in the Middle East, the Best Islamic Digital Bank in Kuwait, the Best Mobile Banking App, the Most Innovative Digital Bank, and the Best Innovation in IMAL Technology.

In its report about the selection criteria for naming Boubyan the best in Kuwait for many years, Global Finance referred to such criteria as:

- Strength of strategy set by the bank for attracting and servicing digital customers.
- Success in getting clients to use digital offerings.
- Growth of customers who use digital banking services through their various channels, whether through online banking or smart phones.
- Innovation and creativity in providing outstanding banking and non-banking services via electronic channels.

The Second Highest Credit Rating in Kuwait

Furthermore, Boubyan Bank has made a new achievement, adding to its other successes, as Standard & Poor's Global rating agency has confirmed its Long-Term Issuer Credit Rating at "A/Stable", thereby ranking the bank as the second highest credit rating among local banks. S&P's rationale for the rating noted Boubyan Bank as the fifth largest bank in Kuwait, with a solid retail franchise, good market position, strong capitalization as well as exhibiting good profitability.

The Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait

For the first time in Kuwait, two international institutions, namely, Global Finance and The Banker, agree on naming Boubyan Bank the Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait in 2019 due to the progress it achieved across various financial indicators and the growth of its market shares. In their reports about the selection criteria for choosing Boubyan Bank, they stated that the bank managed during a relatively short period to make great leaps in growing its financial indicators, especially its market shares, in one of the most competitive markets in the region.

Boubyan Bank has already announced KD 45 million in net profits until the end of September, at a growth rate of 12 percent compared with the comparative period of the past year, while the earning per share amounts to 15.25 fils compared with 14.20 fils for the comparative period of 2018. The market share, in financing, increased generally to approximately 9 percent in the meantime, while Boubyan Bank's share of the retail finance increased specifically to approximately 12 percent. Besides, the bank has recorded outstanding growth rates in the corporate credit portfolio which stood at 16 percent. This was achieved by attracting a number of operational companies known for their financial and economic creditworthiness while continuing to maintain the highest standards of credit quality, studying and diversifying risks.

Staying Atop the Customer Service Pyramid

Boubyan Bank has continued to top the pyramid of customer service in Kuwait in 2019, supported by earning two awards from Service Hero, the international consumer-driven customer satisfaction index. The bank received the First Place Award in



Al-Majed receiving Best Islamic Bank in Washington

Customer Service as a Country Winner, for the fourth time in addition to being named the Best Islamic Bank in Customer Service for the ninth year in a row since 2010. Boubyan's choice by Service Hero relied on a group of criteria they followed during the survey, which extended over one year among consumers who evaluated companies on a scale of 10 against their service-level expectations, their experience and their satisfaction following the customer-service experience.

The Best Humanitarian Initiative

Furthermore, Boubyan Bank's initiative, Noor Boubyan for eyesight-restoration operations in Africa, was a major achievement as it was named the Best Social Humanitarian Initiative at the GCC level this year due to the initiative's success over three years during which over 8,000 people had their eyesight already restored in various African countries through previous campaigns conducted with the participation of a number of Kuwaiti ophthalmologists and volunteers from the bank and other cooperating bodies.

The initiative, which is organized annually by the bank in cooperation with the International Islamic Charitable Organization and Al-Darayn Volunteer Team, succeeded, thanks to Almighty Allah, in giving hope back to thousands of those who lost their eyesight. It also supported them in their lives as by restoring their eyesight, they managed to continue their lives normally.

The Highest National Manpower Ratio

In 2019, Boubyan Bank has added a new achievement by receiving the Award for the "Replacement and Nationalization of Manpower" for the fifth year in a row atop the Banking Sector in Kuwait. This award is given for institutions with a high national manpower percentage. This achievement is the fruit of the bank's keenness on adopting the latest talent development programs in developing its human resources as well as the tireless and continuous efforts over the past years which were crowned by succeeding in increasing the percentage of national manpower in the bank to reach 77.2 percent. This makes the bank an example of the Kuwaiti private sector which succeeds in attracting the best national cadres.

This percentage is not only one of the highest percentages at the level of local banks but also at the level of the Kuwaiti private sector where the bank stands as an example of successful local manpower recruitment and development in addition to creating excellent job opportunities in the region.

Honoring the CEO

In addition to the awards received by the bank, the Arab Economic Forum has honored Adel Abdul Wahab Al-Majed, Chairman of Kuwait Banking Association, and Vice-Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of Boubyan Bank, in its 27th session held in Beirut last May, owing to his great and remarkable contributions during his career which spanned over 3 decades in the banking business. Al-Majed was honored in recognition of his contributions to the Kuwaiti Banking Sector over more than 35 years at the National Bank of Kuwait and Boubyan Bank in addition to his role in the Kuwait Banking Association where he assumes the current Chairman's position, and as he is regarded

as one of the contributors to the growth of the banking industry in Kuwait and the region as a whole.

Al-Majed's chapter with Boubyan Bank is a success story where he reversed the loss position of the bank to a profit position while multiplying the bank's market share in various sectors, making Boubyan the bank of choice among the Kuwaiti youth coupled with its excellence in digital banking.

Audit Group Award in Kuwait and the GCC. The award was received in the Conference on (Leading Practices in Internal Audit "Award Category - Governance, Risk and Control") during the 19th annual internal audit regional conference, held in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE. The bank made another achievement by being named the "Fastest Growing Visa Portfolio" Award in Kuwait in 2018, thereby continuing in the path of receiving global and regional recognition due to the growth and development of the bank.

Remarkable Awards

Moreover, Boubyan Bank has received the Best Internal





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Towards perfection



Al-Hariri and Madbouly honor Al-Majed during the Arab Economic Forum

What's On

IWG tour 360 Kuwait, Shaikh Jaber Al Abdullah Al Sabah Tennis Complex



Members of the Kuwait International Women's Group (IWG) made up of diplomats' wives, dignitaries and distinguished women from the Kuwaiti society were invited for an exclusive tour of 360 Kuwait and the Shaikh Jaber Al Abdullah Al Sabah tennis complex to learn more about the project's recent developments.

The Tamdeen Group team received the IWG members and introduced them to the project components beginning with 360 Kuwait, one of Kuwait's award-winning and iconic shopping malls, where they learned of the new changes and developments that the project will include mainly connecting 360 Kuwait to the Shaikh Jaber Al Abdullah Al Sabah Tennis Complex. IWG members praised the concept Tamdeen Group is pioneering in the region and aiming to embed in Kuwait by combining shopping, entertainment and sports under one roof through this project.

The tour continued through the Shaikh Jaber Al Abdullah Al Sabah Tennis Complex, which includes the recently announced Rafa Nadal Academy,

the largest tennis academy in the Middle East, which includes 8 indoor and outdoor state-of-the-art tennis courts, a multipurpose arena that seats 5,000 people and a secondary tennis stadium with 1,500 capacity. Members of IWG were also introduced to the additional retail space that the project will hold including new offerings of brands and F&B concepts. The tour left a positive impact on the members who commended the design and development standards of the project and expressed their pride in having such a project in Kuwait that will reflect greatly on the country and the region.

Tamdeen Group has consistently delivered exceptional results across several businesses including real-estate. Today, the Group is managing and developing over 5 million sq.ft. of space across regional, community, lifestyle, neighborhood and mixed-use centres. With its diverse range of projects and ongoing investments, Tamdeen Group is continuously re-emphasizing its commitment to contribute to Kuwait's economic development.

Leaders Group thanks KAC for supporting Horeca Kuwait 2020

Preparations for the Horeca Kuwait 2020 exhibition are steadily progressing and attracting more companies to take part in it as an event providing a golden opportunity to scientifically exchange expertise that would match the local market needs and future expansion plans.

The exhibition is due to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with

Hospitality Services Co. at Mishref International Fairgrounds in the period of January 20-22, 2020.

In this regard, Leaders Group expressed gratitude to Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) for supporting Horeca Kuwait 2020 as an official carrier for participants, visitors and the jury panel members from outside Kuwait.

As the organizer, Leaders Group issued a statement stressing that: "The facilities KAC provides for the exhibition reflect the care this national carrier shows to improving tourism and hospitality services with the aim of improving Kuwait's ranking in the field".

The statement added that the exhibition significance lies in improving hospitality service environments in Kuwait, including that of avia-

tion companies, which plays a growing role in improving competitiveness and rating of world aviation companies. "It is noteworthy to mention that KAC has recently made several achievements in competitiveness and customer satisfaction", the statement underlined.

Further, Leaders Group explained that one of KAC achievements was being awarded the APEX rating award for the most comfortable on flight seats in the Middle East in 2019, getting a Five-Star rating from the same organization based on a questionnaire conducted amongst passengers of over 600 airlines worldwide in the period of July 1st, 2018 until June 30, 2019, which probed passengers' satisfaction with seats, cabin services, food, beverage, recreation and Wi-Fi services.



Nabeela Al-Anjari

ADAK celebrates Christmas, New Year, bids farewell to patron

Alappuzha District Association (ADAK) celebrated Christmas and New Year and bid farewell to its patron Chacko George Kutty at a function.

Varghese Puthukulangara, President, OICC-Kuwait inaugurated the function, chaired by President B S Pillai, at Hidine Auditorium, Abbassiya. Vipin Mangattu, General Secretary welcomed the audience. Rev Father Jacob Thomas delivered a Christmas message and J Saji, Rajeev Neduvilemuri, Christopher Daniel and Shibu



Cherian delivered felicitation speeches on the occasion. All speakers extended best wishes to Chacko George Kutty and family.

In his reply speech George Kutty expressed gratitude to ADAK for giving such a memorable farewell. In recognition of his social services, a memento was presented to Chacko George Kutty and his wife by Vice-

President Binu Chempalayam in the presence of ADAK executive members.

Premesan Kayamkulam, C. Krishnakumar, Shamsu Thamarakulam, Manoj Roy, Ideal Salim, Shaji P I, Sunny Ampiyil, Siniyith, Sreekumar KG, Madhu Vettiyyar and Jacob Cherian coordinated the program. Program Convener Vijo Thomas proposed a vote of thanks.

Baked Lemon-Butter Chicken Thighs

These low-carb, keto-friendly chicken thighs are basted with a tangy and rich butter sauce. They are easy enough for a weeknight meal and guaranteed to impress the pickiest eaters. Serve over egg noodles, mashed potatoes, or rice, or alongside your favorite vegetables.

Original recipe yields 4 servings

- 4 tablespoons butter, divided
- 4 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon onion powder
- 4 (8 ounce) skin-on, bone-in chicken thighs

- salt and ground black pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped

Directions

- Step 1 Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F (190

degrees C).

• Step 2

Place 3 tablespoons butter in a microwave-safe bowl and heat in a microwave oven until melted, 1 to 2 minutes. Smash garlic cloves with the side of a chef's knife and add garlic to the warm butter. Stir in lemon juice and onion powder. Set aside.

• Step 3

Sprinkle both sides of chicken thighs with salt and pepper. Heat remaining 1 tablespoon butter in a medium-sized oven-safe skillet over medium-high heat. Brown chicken, skin-side down, for 3 to 4 minutes. Flip chicken over and brush skin with lemon-butter mixture. Pour remaining butter mixture into skillet and remove from heat.

• Step 4

Bake in the preheated oven until chicken is no longer pink at the bone and the juices run clear, about 30 minutes. An instant-read ther-



момeter inserted near the bone should read 165 degrees F (74 degrees C). Brush skin every 10 minutes with pan juices.

• Step 5

Remove skillet from the oven and place chicken on a serving platter. Drizzle chicken with pan juices and garnish with parsley.

TIES Center

The TIES Center cordially invites you to our last Tafseer (Divine Wisdom from the Last Testament) class in 2019 tomorrow, December 30th, at 7pm. In that class, we will focus on verses 13 and 14 of Surat Al-Mujadilah (She who Argued).

We will learn why charity before privately consulting Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was legislated, people's reaction, and why it was later abrogated. We will discuss some tangible and spiritual benefits of charity, its types, and how to give it.

We will also discuss the relationship between Salah (Muslim ritual prayer) and Zakah (compulsory charity), and why Salah is the only act of worship for which there is no excuse to miss.

Finally, we will examine the importance of making an honest living, its benefits, and the dangers of haste in accumulating wealth. We will also discuss some of the qualities of honest and effective leaders. Come and learn more about the Book of Allah (SWT) in a serene, friendly and encouraging environment.



Christmastide program 2019-2020 Holy Family Cathedral

December 31st 2019 Tuesday (Morning) - Normal Masses
06.30 a.m. Holy Mass in English (Cathedral)
07.00 a.m. Holy Mass in English (Cathedral)

December 31st 2019 Tuesday New Year's Eve - Masses

- 05.30 p.m. Malayalam (Latin) Holy Mass
- 06.00 p.m. French Holy Mass
- 06.30 p.m. Malankara Holy Mass
- 07.00 p.m. Tagalog Holy Mass
- 08.00 p.m. Korean Holy Mass
- 08.30 p.m. Solemn Pontifical Holy Mass
- 10.30 p.m. Konkani Holy Mass
- 10.30 p.m. New Catechumenal Holy Mass
- 10.30 p.m. Coptic Arabic Holy Mass
- 11.45 p.m. Syro-Malabar Holy Mass
- 10.00 p.m. Maronite Holy Mass

January 1st 2020 Wednesday New Year's Day Holy Masses

- 07.00 a.m. English Holy Mass
- 08.30 a.m. English Holy Mass
- 10.30 a.m. English Holy Mass
- 12.00 Noon Maronite Holy Mass
- 02.00 p.m. Tagalog Holy Mass
- 03.15 p.m. Konkani Holy Mass
- 04.00 p.m. Tamil Holy Mass
- 04.30 p.m. Konkani Holy Mass
- 04.30 p.m. Bengali Holy Mass
- 05.30 p.m. English Holy Mass
- 05.45 p.m. Sinhala Holy Mass
- 06.30 p.m. English Holy Mass
- 07.45 p.m. Malayalam (Latin) Holy Mass
- 06.00 p.m. Spanish Holy Mass
- Basement 08.00 p.m. Arabic Latin Holy Mass Salmiya Basement.



Health & Science

Taiba Hospital reveals 2020 strategy

KUWAIT: Taiba Hospital revealed during a press conference yesterday its new strategy for the year 2020, announcing a focus on promoting health and medical knowledge within the community, supporting its needs and engaging directly with patients through three main pillars which are 'Taiba Cares,' 'Taiba Connects' and 'Taiba Educates.'

The announcement was made by Taiba Hospital Chief Executive Officer Lama Sanad Al-Fadala, who was joined by Consultant of Internal Medicine and Diabetes Dr Nabeela Abdella, and Specialist of Obstetrics and Gynecology Dr Fatemah Alhadhoud. Both Dr Abdella and Dr Alhadhoud recently joined Taiba Hospital's expanding team of medical caregivers.

"Our new strategy at Taiba Hospital complements our continued investments in providing the highest standards of medical care in Kuwait," Fadala said. "Taiba Hospital has a track record of successes having partnered with world-class medical services providers and bring home to top-class practitioners who hold certifications from leading hospitals in Europe, the United States and Canada. As we move forward today, we are committing even more to our patients and our community, promising to continue caring for them with reliable services, connecting with them and educating them about preventions and treatments."

Global Partnerships

Taiba Hospital is the only hospital in Kuwait to have signed a partnership agreement with the Belgian consultancy company, HICT, to maximize its operational excellence

and provide patients with the best medical and healthcare services in Kuwait. Taiba Hospital has also signed a partnership with the French company ENGIE to take over the management of facilities and supporting services, employing the latest technologies used to monitor and manage buildings and to provide high-quality security services.

"Our partnerships with HICT and ENGIE come as part of our commitment to making healthcare better for Kuwaiti citizens and residents," Fadala said. "Our commitment ensure safety, quality and advanced medical care in our premises, and every day."

Expanding team

"Taiba Hospital prides itself with its team of medical caregivers which comprises today over 80 doctors specialized in 20 fields as it continues to expand its medical services," Fadala continued. "Thirty nine of these doctors are leading Kuwaiti doctors, and a number of them have joined Taiba Hospital to open two new departments for Cardiology and Pain Management. Our Cardiology Department brings world-class consultants who care for heart conditions and are equipped to perform cardiac catheterization and stent placements. As for the Pain Management Department, our consultants focus on the diagnosis and management of chronic pain through interventional therapies. With these two departments, our Hospital continues to grow to cover majority of the requirements of our patients."

World-class medical care

Taiba Hospital has 20 departments overall.

Eight of them operate around the clock to ensure patients are cared for at any time, especially in cases of medical emergencies. These departments include Obstetrics and Gynecology, Pediatrics, Emergency Department, Pharmacy, Laboratory, Radiology and Medical Imaging, General Surgery and Gastroenterology.

With over 19 beds, the Hospital's Emergency Department (ED) is fully equipped and responds to emergencies and critical cases under the supervision of specialized doctors who are available as well around the clock.

In the Gastroenterology Department, seven doctors, including four Kuwaiti consultants, provides specialized medical care in common and critical diseases of the digestive system and perform endoscopy procedures.

The Hospital's Radiology and Medical Imaging Department is equipped with the latest radiology and sonar devices, CT scanner and two MRI devices, ensuring patients receive accurate diagnostic and interventional services. Taiba Hospital is also home to 13 surgeons, including five Kuwaiti surgeons, who perform general surgeries, endoscopies and surgeries for patients of obesity.

As for the Orthopedic Department, patients have access to 12 doctors, six of which are Kuwaiti consultants, and who are all highly qualified to perform operations, such as knee and pelvic joint replacements, and microscopic spine, sports injuries and shoulder surgeries. The department is supported by a fully-integrated physiotherapy center. Taiba Hospital has one of the leading



KUWAIT: Taiba Hospital staff attend the press conference.

Internal Medicine Departments in which provides care, treatments and surgeries for neuro-relates conditions, hematology, oncology, chest and kidney diseases.

Fadala concluded by saying: "At Taiba Hospital, we are committed to caring for our patients with highest standards of care. We are doing so by ensuring we provide

training and continued growth to our Hospital's caregivers. And today, we are expanding our commitment to quality care by connecting with our patients, understanding their needs, providing accurate information, and showing them that they always have a place to care for their health, and that is Taiba Hospital."

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

MONDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2019



People gather around a depiction of the ancient Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamun's death mask made of 7,260 cups of coffee in front of the newly-built Grand Egyptian Museum in Giza, on the southwestern outskirts of the capital Cairo, on Saturday. — AFP

Egypt sets new world record for largest coffee cup mosaic

At the yard of the Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) near the Great Pyramids of Giza, Egypt celebrated on Saturday in an open-air ceremony setting a new Guinness World Record for the largest mosaic of ancient Egyptian King Tutankhamun's mask made of coffee cups. "The mosaic of King Tut's mask is made of 7,260 cups of coffee, which is a plus for the GEM whose opening is awaited by the whole world in late 2020," Mostafa Waziri, secretary-general of the Supreme Council of Antiquities, told Xinhua during the ceremony.

The mosaic of Egypt's world-famous boy king's mask was carried out by a group of Egyptian youth. The area of the mosaic is 60 square meters, beating the 2012 world record set by a similar coffee-cup mosaic in the

United States depicting late American singer and actor Elvis Presley's face, which consisted of 5,642 cups of coffee with a total area of 37.24 square meters. The event was attended by the regional director of Guinness World Records for the Middle East and North Africa, Talal Omar, who said that King Tut's mosaic sets a new world record in terms of the number of cups and the total area.

"I'm happy to be in Cairo today to witness a new world record of a portrait (mosaic) made of coffee cups. We are happy about the visit, but feeling happier to be briefed about the Grand Egyptian Museum which will house thousands of ancient Egyptian artifacts. Today, the world record depends upon the total area of the coffee cups or the portrait made of the coffee cups, as it

should be more than 60 square meters. On behalf of Guinness World Records, I am happy to be here to register a new world record for the largest coffee-cup mosaic at the GEM, a great cultural edifice that is expected next year to be jammed with tourists who would love to explore Egypt's history and civilization," Omar told the attendees.

The event was held under the auspices of the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, which used to be two separate ministries before a recent cabinet reshuffle took place earlier in December. "This is the first event to be held after merging the two ministries and it is an important activity for promoting the GEM. Coffee is a welcome drink in Egypt and the cups of coffee in today's

activity signify welcoming Egyptian and foreign tourists to visit this magnificent building," said Ghada Shalaby, deputy minister of tourism and antiquities.

The GEM total area is about 500,000 square meters and it will be the world's largest museum displaying artifacts of one civilization. It is expected to host over 100,000 artifacts, some 3,500 of which belong to King Tut. "Architecturally, about 94.5 percent of the GEM construction is completed, and at least 7,200 square meters of the GEM area will be dedicated to featuring King Tut's artifacts," El-Tayeb Abbas, the GEM's director for archeological affairs, told Xinhua during the event. —Reuters



Syrian singer Asala and Kuwaiti singer Mutref Al-Mutref perform at a concert at the international fairground in Mishref.

Asala, Mutref headline 'romantic family night'

By Nawara Fattahova

A musical concert titled 'A Night in Life 5' was held at the international fairground in Mishref during the weekend. It was attended by over 3,000 people of different ages and nationalities. The concert - which can be described as a romantic family night - started at 8:00 pm with the young Kuwaiti singer Mutref Al-Mutref.

The audience welcomed him with a huge round of applause, chanting his name. Apart from his new and old songs, he performed one of his father's popular songs on the oud. He concluded at 9:30 pm, expressing his happiness to be performing at the end of the year.

At 10:15 pm, popular Syrian singer Asala came on stage wearing a long white dress. After singing two songs, she announced the surprise of her new upcoming Khaleeji-style album, some of whose songs are composed by Mutref. She then said that she will present a duo with Mutref, who came on stage and sang two songs with her.

After some time, Asala took her shoes off as she felt uncomfortable. "I won't be able to continue singing unless I take my shoes off. I apologize for singing barefoot. I hope you all start the new year in comfort. I'm glad I concluded my musical season with this concert in Kuwait," she noted.





In this file photo taken on Nov 10, 2016, US President Barack Obama and President-elect Donald Trump shake hands during a transition planning meeting in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on June 28, 2019, China's President Xi Jinping shakes hands with US President Donald Trump before a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Osaka.

Trump, Syria and Facebook: Volatile cocktail of the 2010s

The Arab Spring gave way to bloodletting in Syria, a refugee exodus and surging militant violence. Obama gave way to Trump. The United Kingdom chose to Brexit. And for many around the world, while the 2010s began with hope for a more equitable world, they end with a slide towards nationalistic populism. The following is a look at some of the people and events that shaped the past decade:

America divided

The United States will begin the 2020s with Donald Trump in the Oval Office, as a president of a country riven by political, societal and economic discord - and a leader facing impeachment. Trump - who is accused of abusing his power to ask a foreign nation, Ukraine, to investigate a domestic political rival - has every chance of being acquitted by the Senate, where his Republican Party faithful hold the majority.

But Trump still stands to become the third ever US president to be impeached, after Bill Clinton and Andrew Johnson - Richard Nixon having resigned before he could face judgment by lawmakers. The stranger-than-fiction unfolding of his presidency mirrors his rise to power - in 2016, it seemed unfathomable to some that a real estate mogul-turned-reality show star would lead the world's biggest economy.

But he defeated Democrat Hillary Clinton in what was for many an upset for the ages, and the tall New Yorker with the wispy blond mane succeeded Barack Obama, America's first black president. Obama was a Nobel peace laureate; Trump once hosted "The Apprentice." POTUS 44 and 45 could not be more different.

Trump - who is a climate change skeptic, a protectionist and tough on immigration - has eschewed tradition and run the White House his way, taking no prisoners. "From this day forward, a new vision will govern our land. From this moment on, it's going to be America First," he said on the Capitol steps in his inauguration speech on January 20, 2017.

As the 2010s draw to a close, the booming success of the American economy will help his chances at re-election next year. Abroad, Trump is rough with his allies, flouts international agreements and does not hesitate to boost his ties with authoritarian governments like that of North Korea's Kim Jong Un.

A disappointing Arab Spring

After the decade began with the hope of the Arab Spring, it ends with strongmen back in power in several countries. On Jan 14, 2011, Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was chased from office by a popular rebellion that was unthinkable only a few weeks before. The Arab Spring erupted in the Middle East and North Africa. Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi was toppled that same year in a NATO-backed uprising.

In Egypt, the protests in Cairo's Tahrir Square spelled the end of Hosni Mubarak's reign, but the country ended the decade in the iron grip of general turned President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. The fate of millions of people would be changed in Syria. A protest movement against the ruling Assad family descended into a bloody crackdown and eventually a brutal civil war. In eight years of conflict since early 2011, more than 370,000 people have been killed and millions have been displaced from their homes. And the conflict has gone global.

Russia intervened on behalf of Bashar Al-Assad. Turkey moved to prevent the Kurds from setting up a stronghold on the border. The West built a coalition to defeat the "caliphate" of the Islamic State (IS), an extremist group that profited from the chaos to claim swathes of territory in Syria and Iraq. The militants wrought havoc, and attracted thousands of foreign fighters - mainly from Europe - to their cause.

Europe destabilized

Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi proclaimed the establishment of the "caliphate" in June 2014, extending from Aleppo in northern Syria to Diyala in Iraq. The organization would eclipse Al-Qaeda and unleash a new torrent of violence, taking several forms. It encouraged its followers to commit their own elementary acts of terror, rather than stage elaborate operations like the Sept 11 attacks.

On Nov 13, 2015, a Belgium-based cell run from Syria descended on Paris, killing 130 people in bombings and shootings at a concert hall, bars, restaurants, and the Stade de France sports stadium. At the Bataclan, a fabled Paris concert venue, 90 people died at a show by American group Eagles of Death Metal. France, Belgium, Denmark and Britain all fell victim to attacks in the course of the decade. The movement swept through



An image grab taken from a propaganda video released on July 5, 2014 by Al-Furqan Media allegedly shows the leader of the Islamic State (IS) group Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, aka Caliph Ibrahim, addressing Muslim worshippers at a mosque in the militant-held northern Iraqi city of Mosul.

Africa's vast Sahel region, and parts of Asia.

But the United States, their Kurdish allies and European nations together seized back the IS "caliphate" - which was declared eliminated in March this year. And Baghdadi was killed in a raid by US special forces - he died "like a dog", as Trump said on Oct 27.

Migrant tragedies

The Syrian conflict resulted in the export of violence, but also in an immense human tragedy on Europe's doorstep, as millions left their homes in search of security and a better life. They crisscrossed Europe in giant processions, ending up in whichever country

would welcome them with open arms. Chancellor Angela Merkel's Germany thought it could absorb the influx of refugees. "If Europe fails on the question of refugees, if this close link with universal civil rights is broken, then it won't be the Europe we wished for," she said on Aug 31, 2015. Hundreds of thousands of Syrians would end up in Germany.

But the pressure mounted in countries straining under the weight of the constant arrivals of people in dire straits. In the north of France, at the port of Calais, migrants crammed into makeshift camps waiting for a chance to cross the English Channel to

Britain. In the Mediterranean, desperate migrants made the journey through north Africa to the sea, using rickety boats and rafts to try to get to Europe. Many did not survive.

In the United States, Trump made the fight against migrants illegally entering the country from Mexico one of his signature political issues. And he asked Congress for billions of dollars to build a wall to help keep them out. Trump's rise emboldened a surging wave of populist and far-right political movements - from Hungary's Viktor Orban to Italy's Matteo Salvini and Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro.

In France, the far-right remained a political force thanks to the Le Pen family, and gathered strength in Germany, where some questioned the soundness of Merkel's open arms. In Britain, a historic 2016 referendum in which voters opted to leave the European Union promised to change the complexion of the continent. After a tortuous process, Prime Minister Boris Johnson seems on his way to leading the United Kingdom out of the bloc after an election win, with the blessing of Trump, the first US leader not to back European unity.

Citizens take action

As 2019 comes to an end, one Swedish teenager has rewritten the rules about activism and awakened public consciousness about the fight against climate change. Millions of young people see themselves in 16-year-old Greta Thunberg, and think their elders have sacrificed the planet on the altar of economic growth and creature comforts. "How dare you?" the teen said in September at the United Nations, challenging world leaders over their inaction on global warming.

In a decade that began with a major nuclear accident in Japan sparked by an earthquake and deadly tsunami, the world



This file photo taken on Oct 1, 2019, shows the logos of mobile apps Facebook and Google displayed on a tablet in Lille, France.



In this file photo taken on Dec 11, 2019, Britain's Prime Minister and Conservative party leader Boris Johnson poses after hammering a "Get Brexit Done" sign into the garden of a supporter, with a sledgehammer as he campaigns with his team in Benfleet, east of London.



In this file photo taken on May 26, 2019, a man evacuates a young bombing casualty after a reported air strike by regime forces and their allies in the jihadist-held Syrian town of Maaret Al-Noman in the southern Idlib province.

has focused on extreme weather and its ill effects. We are not winning the race to reduce greenhouse gas emissions - and the temperature is rising. The international community managed to reach the landmark Paris accord in 2015, but the commitments made were not enough, and the United States is withdrawing from the plan.

Protection of the environment is front and center in many countries. But a simpler question - how men and women relate to each other - also took center stage during the 2010s. The #MeToo movement, which went viral in the wake of a litany of allegations against Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, has encouraged women to confront their abusers, and led to the downfall of a number of powerful men. The question of gender and identity also rose to the fore this decade, with many redefining what it is to be a man or a woman - or neither. "They" - the pronoun preferred by many who identify as non-binary - was Merriam-Webster's word of the year in 2019.

Humanity: Connected

From schoolkids fighting for the planet, to women calling out their abusers, to citizens pushing for democracy - or militants advocating terror, all had one thing in common: An ever-growing reliance on social media. 2.4 billion is a giant, difficult to grasp number, but it is the number of regular monthly users on Facebook, the world's largest social network. In 2011, that figure was a little more than 500 million.

Technology is radically changing how we live. Dating, friendship, news, politics, music, banking and shopping are all now handled in cyberspace, and we spend more and more time staring at screens. Facebook is not the only boldface name in the sector dominated by US firms. Google, Twitter, Amazon, Apple

and WhatsApp are some of the other brands that have transformed our lives.

They are making billions of dollars - and sparking their share of controversies. These companies have access to our personal data, and the threat to privacy is considerable. They facilitate free speech, but the risk of harassment - or worse - is real. They are making content more accessible to more people, but artists and news outlets are not always being paid for their work. And in the end, Facebook was found to have been one of the principal weapons for a Russian campaign to interfere in the US presidential election in 2016.

US, China lock horns

On the back of skyrocketing growth, China became the world's number two economy in 2010, surpassing Japan and only trailing the United States. The world's workshop has brandished its military ambitions and is positioning itself as a strategic rival to Washington. In the middle of the decade, China staked a claim in the technology sector, working to become a world leader in robotics, information tech and clean energy.

Beijing is trying to change gears - it no longer is satisfied with being home to the factories that produce the world's consumer goods. America has sensed that its supremacy could be contested. And under Trump, that concern erupted in the open. The Republican leader launched a trade war with China, accusing it of rampant intellectual property theft. "Trade wars are good and easy to win," Trump boasted in 2018. He has unleashed stiff tariffs on Chinese goods, but Beijing did not blink. And even if the two countries just signed a "phase one" trade deal, their arm wrestling is sure to define the next decade. — AFP



In this file photo taken on March 23, 2017 US President Donald Trump sits in the driver's seat of a semi-truck as he welcomes truckers and CEOs to the White House in Washington to discuss healthcare.



In this file photo taken on Dec 11, 2019, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg speaks during a high-level event on climate emergency hosted by the Chilean presidency during the UN Climate Change Conference COP25 in Madrid.



In this file photo taken on Jan 10, 2011, a Tunisian demonstrator prepares to throw a tear-gas canister during clashes with security forces in Regueb, near Sidi Bouzid.



Betancur shows a plant he collected. — AFP photos

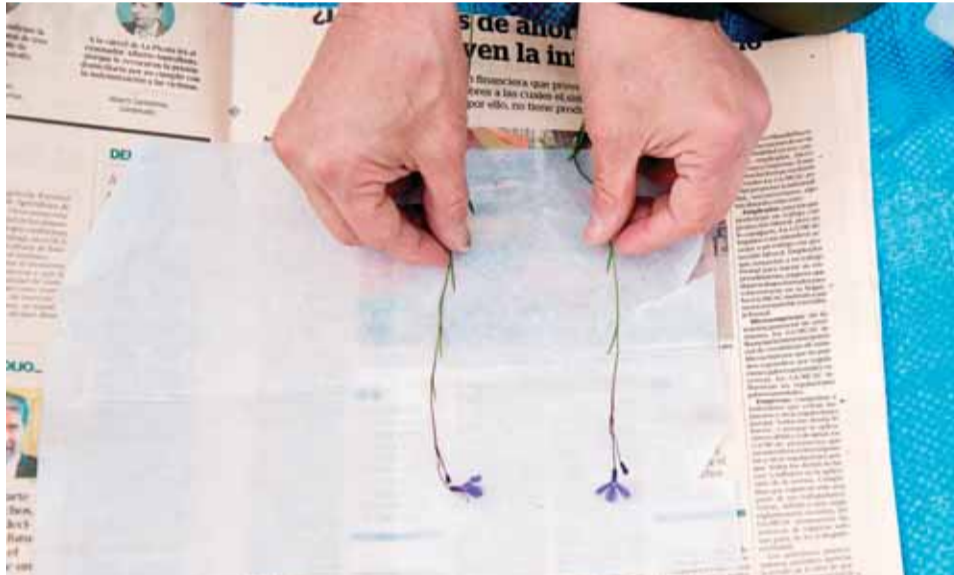
Colombian botanist risking his life to preserve nature's memory

For the last three decades, botanist Julio Betancur has braved minefields and penetrated deep into jungle territory infested with drug traffickers and armed gangs in a bid to document Colombia's rich biodiversity. Colombia is second only to Brazil for its incredible range of fauna and flora. Armed only with a notebook and gardening shears, Betancur has taken considerable risks to collect plant cuttings. He's contributed four percent of the 600,000 samples in the University of Colombia's herbarium.

There have been close calls including "a slightly violent" encounter with a group of drug runners Betancur and his colleagues came across in the jungle. "Without realizing it, we were putting ourselves in the eye of the storm," Betancur told AFP. Fortunately, the drug traffickers accepted their explanations and left them alone. On another occasion, local peasants freed them from a minefield. "If it hadn't been for them, the communities, we wouldn't be here telling the story," said Betancur.

The 59-year-old, a biologist, university professor and collector of bromeliads - which include the pineapple, Spanish moss and queen of the Andes - says it's worth taking the risks so his country can "know about" its biodiversity. While dangers lurk for Betancur, Colombia's biodiversity faces far more threats. Deforestation - mainly from livestock farming but also illegal mining and coca plantations - has done untold damage to Colombia's jungles.

Almost five percent of the 169,000 hectares of illegal coca plantations are in protected areas. Illicit gold mining, using



techniques that are harmful to the environment, cover 98,000 hectares - an area greater than Berlin. Since 2010, more than a million hectares of Colombian jungle have been cut down, according to an official report.

'Book of forests'

Wearing an explorer's hat and with a rucksack on his back, Betancur forges into the mountainous Chingaza National Park some 40 km from the capital Bogota. Suddenly, he stops in front of a plant with tiny yellow flowers known as a "chite" in Colombia: a member of the St John's-wort family. He takes a clipping and wraps it in newspaper soaked in alcohol.

Back in the university herbarium, where Betancur works as a curator, he jots down in his notebook the color, size, smell, coordinates and the sample number that betrays his vast body of research: 22,999. "Every time I take a botanical sample it's like writing a page in the book of our forests," he said. In the future, once the vegetation has disappeared from somewhere, people "will know what species lived there at a certain time and with that will reconstruct the natural history of this territory."

In his early expeditions, Betancur traversed Amazonian forests studying species that have since disappeared. The Alexander von Humboldt Biological Resources Research Institute in Bogota estimates that at least



In this photo taken on Oct 1, 2019, Colombian botanist Julio Betancur works in Bogota.



Betancur collects plants on his way to the Chingaza National Natural Park.



Betancur shows plant archives during an interview at the National University in Bogota.

2,100 plant species are in danger of extinction due to deforestation. Of the 30,000 plants the institute has documented in Colombia, 26 percent are endemic. Betancur's work is displayed on rickety shelving at Colombia's national university. The botanist compares the herbarium to the Great Library of Alexandria in Egypt, one of the most significant libraries of the ancient world.

lection of bromeliads. These plants, with their colorful flowers ranging from red to green, provide a water source for animals during times of drought. Among them is a species that had never before been documented until Betancur noticed it while out driving. He spotted it high up in a tree in Bogota's savannah and climbed up to take some clippings. "I still don't know what to call it because I have to baptize it," said Betancur, one of the Colombians to have named the largest number of plants. — AFP

Baptism needed

At Betancur's apartment in Bogota, he has a large terrace where he looks after his col-



Betancur looks into his plant archive.



Road to riches for China's rag trade runs through Paris

"Made in China" may still evoke more off the rack than catwalk, but Chinese designers are slowly installing themselves in Paris, the fashion capital, as a part of an upscale march towards the lucrative luxury market, a segment that is increasingly made up of Chinese shoppers. As Paris gears up for its next run of shows early in the new year, it is clear that Chinese designers have made it into the rarefied world of fashion.

Think Guo Pei, the Chinese-born and trained couturier best known for the massive canary-yellow coronation cape worn by Rihanna that stole the show at the New York Met's 2015 gala. Guo, who has a Paris boutique, will present her haute culture collection. Several

other Chinese designers, such as Uma Wang, Masha Ma, Yang Li, Jarel Zhang, Dawei and Shangquan Zhe, will show their collections at the ready-to-wear shows in February.

"We're starting to see fashion coming from China aimed at the entire world and which is creating new ideas about the country - a new 'Made in China' of quality and refinement," said Isabelle Capron, head of Chinese fashion group Icicle's Paris office.

Paris a 'springboard'

Founded in Shanghai in 1997, Icicle has 270 shops in China and generates 250 million euros (\$275 million) in annual sales. Under the label's back-to-nature ethos, it favors natural fabrics like cashmere, silk, cotton, wool and linen. It uses natural dyes made from onions, walnut bark, wood and tea to color the clothes it makes in the three factories that it owns in China.

The Chinese firm opened its first international store in September in Paris in the heart of the city's "Golden Triangle" of luxury boutiques. "It's a springboard for our internationalization," Capron said. "Paris is the capital of fashion, and the goal is to give our brand visibility," she added. Even though many Western brands are produced in China, European consumers still view clothes tagged "Made in China" as being of mediocre quality.

"Stereotypes are very tenacious: seven years ago when I said I was joining a Chinese group, some people looked at me and it was clear that 'the Chinese have no taste' and 'the Chinese are poor-quality manufacturers' were running through their heads," Capron said. "But today, there has been a real swing, this new wave of Chinese brands is a tidal wave."

'Product more important'

Designer Shangquan Zhe, founder of the Sankuanz label based in the Chinese port city of Xiamen, made his international debut in London in 2015. Now a regular at the Paris men's ready-to-wear shows, Shangquan said he has not encountered stereotypes or challenges based on his nationality from fellow designers. "People from outside the industry are more likely to have these stereotypes," he told AFP in China. "People from within the industry are fully aware of the level China's manufacturing is at," he said, adding: "The quality is actually getting better and better." Speaking to AFP from China, he said: "Paris is a very international stage. People don't really care where you came from... The product itself is more important."

'Neo-Chinese chic'

Shiatzy Chen, a fashion house founded in 1978 in Taiwan, produces its clothes in Shanghai and Taipei. It

has staged shows in Paris for a decade and has a boutique in one of Paris's most exclusive streets. Why Paris? "Paris is the centre of Western fashion and the birthplace of the couture. A design studio in Paris, the heart of couture, helps us to explore complex Western construction techniques as well as stay on top of the latest trends," Wang Chen Tsai-Hsia, who founded the fashion house and who has been dubbed the Coco Chanel of Taiwan, told AFP.

The label, which set itself a mission to create "neo-Chinese chic" through a fusion of East and West, has 70 boutiques throughout Asia. The collections marry traditional techniques with contemporary cuts. "To be attractive, including for Chinese clients, a Chinese label cannot limit itself to boutiques at home, it must also be present in Paris, which fascinates" the Chinese, said luxury goods expert Eric Briones, noting that China today represents some 35 percent of the global luxury goods market.

This "rise of a new 'Made in China' is just the start of a revolution, initiated by a young generation that wants to consume Chinese," said Briones, who co-founded the Paris School of Luxury. "It is a return to favor for local brands which began with streetwear and is now spreading to luxury clothes," he added. — AFP



Iraqis in the holy shrine city of Najaf launch rice paper hot air balloons in Saturday to show solidarity with the ongoing anti-government protests across the country. — AFP

Turkish military plane evacuates injured Somalia bomb victims

MOGADISHU: A Turkish military plane yesterday evacuated 16 gravely wounded victims of a devastating bombing that killed 79 people and overwhelmed local health services, in the latest attack on a city dogged by insecurity. The aircraft also brought doctors to help treat the some 125 people injured in Saturday's blast, which happened when a vehicle packed with explosives detonated at a busy security checkpoint.

"The rescue mission continues since yesterday when the blast occurred and after long and diligent efforts, we have managed to evacuate 16 of the wounded people to Turkey for further medical treatment," Mogadishu mayor Omar Mohamed Mohamad told reporters at the airport. No group has claimed the bloody attack, however President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo has blamed Islamist group Al-Shabaab, which regularly carries out car bombings and other attacks on the capital, in their decade-long bid to topple the internationally-backed government.

Saturday's bombing was the deadliest since truck exploded in 2017 near a fuel tanker, creating a fireball that killed over 500 people. Farmaajo pinned the attack on the "terrorist organization Al-Shabaab" in a televised message and slammed it as an attempt to "intimidate and terrorize the Somali public and to massacre them at every opportunity available".

At least 16 of those killed were students from the capital's private Banadir University, who had been

travelling on a bus when the car bomb detonated at a busy intersection southwest of the Somali capital. The director of the private Aamin Ambulance service, Abdulkadir Abdurahman Haji, told AFP around 125 people were injured, a number which has overwhelmed health services in the capital.

Somali police chief Abdi Hassan Mohamed said Saturday that 79 had died, but the toll could increase. "There are still rescue operations going on to assist those who have been massacred by the terrorists while going about their business," Somalia's Information Minister Mohamed Abdi Heyr told journalists. "We have received this morning doctors and medicine sent by the Turkish government and we are working to separate people seriously wounded from others in order to send them outside the country and the rest will be treated by the doctors," he added.

The minister said about 24 doctors specializing in trauma had arrived from Turkey - a key ally of Somalia. Somalia's Security Minister Mohamed Abukar Islow who held a press conference alongside the mayor at the airport said some of the doctors from Turkey would stay to treat people in the country. "There are doctors from Turkey some of them went back with the plane but others will remain here preferably to treat people here; our Qatari brothers will also send another plane which will evacuate some more people who are seriously wounded as well," he said.

"cutting", denoting a blow to the neck and head.

"The lathi is a legacy of the British colonial rule," said Syed Ali Kazim, an assistant professor of history at Aligarh Muslim University. "There is clear historical evidence that (freedom fighter) Lala Lajpat Rai died because of the lathi blows on his head during a protest against the British," he told AFP. The British left in 1947 but the lathi stayed in use, and not only for the security forces.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the militaristic parent organization of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, uses lathis in its early morning drills. Last week, long-lines of white-shirted RSS members marched through the streets of Hyderabad beating drums, riding horses - and holding aloft their long sticks. "Lathis are not regular sticks. The cane is soaked, dried and then oil is applied to it - it goes through a treatment process to make it a deadly weapon," said Suresh from PUCL. "They also put iron or steel at the tip which tears the flesh. It can maim and kill." — AFP

uct (GDP) in 16 years.

The protesters also want justice for those activists who have been murdered, many shot dead in the streets or outside their homes. Dozens have also reported being abducted to a rural area near Baghdad for several hours or days before being abandoned by the roadside. The United Nations has accused "militias" of waging a sweeping campaign of threats, kidnappings and murders of demonstrators. The state-run Human Rights Commission says it has still not heard from 56 missing activists. — AFP

no knowledge he was a member of the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahwaz. MP Abdullah Fahhad, who attended the meeting, also confirmed that Kaabi was received as a researcher and nothing else.

Jarallah told Iran's ambassador that the meeting took place without permission from relevant Kuwaiti authorities, KUNA reported, adding that competent officials have "begun taking necessary legal measures" over the "disappointing" affair, which was undertaken in a "private" capacity. Iran and Kuwait have had relatively good relations in recent years despite tensions between the Islamic republic and other Gulf Arab states. Kuwait greatly reduced its diplomatic presence in Tehran in 2016 after Saudi Arabia completely severed relations with Iran, but it kept a charge d'affaires and two officials.

Dozens of ambulances carried wounded people from various hospitals in the city to the Turkish-run Recep Tayyip Erdogan Hospital from where they were taken to the airport. Abdulkadir Moalim, a Mogadishu resident, said his family was feeling desperate because his cousin had sustained serious head wounds in the blast. "The problem with the blast is that even if you escape death, you can sustain life-threatening injuries like my cousin, who has injuries in the head and medical doctors here could

not treat him inside the country," he said. "Thank God, he will be taken to Turkey now and we are expecting that with time he gets well."

Two Turkish citizens were killed in the blast and according to medical sources, another two who were wounded will be among those airlifted home. Since 2015, there have been 13 attacks in Somalia with death tolls above 20. Eleven of these have been in Mogadishu, according to a tally of AFP figures. All of them involved car bombs. —AFP

Kuwait ends successful...

Continued from Page 1

Kuwait contributed to work on issues pertaining to Arab countries, as tasks requiring permanent coordination at different levels with Arab missions in New York, he added. Regarding the opinion of Arabs on the performance of Kuwait in the council, he said: "I think there is satisfaction and praise for the role of Kuwait and its continuous coordination and work in a transparent manner with all members of Arab countries."

Otaibi noted this was a very useful experience in the history of Kuwaiti diplomacy, because Kuwait is a small country that does not have a hidden agenda in any of the topics of the Security Council and "the issues that concern us are primarily those of Arab countries". He pointed out that the foundations and principles of Kuwaiti foreign policy are the same as stipulated in the UN Charter and are based on non-interference in internal affairs of countries, resolving disputes by peaceful means and respecting the sovereignty of states.

He added that Kuwait succeeded with Sweden in adopting the first two resolutions in 2018 calling for a ceasefire in all regions of Syria and allowing unimpeded access of humanitarian aid and demanding respect for the obligations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and not targeting civilians or civil facilities and infrastructure.

"In December 2018, we managed with Sweden to issue a decision to renew the mechanism for the entry of humanitarian aid through crossing points specified by the decision with Turkey, Jordan and Iraq, a mechanism that contributed to saving the lives of millions of Syrians who depend on this aid that comes through the border crossings," Otaibi said.

On the Palestinian issue, Otaibi stressed that it is the first Arab case, and there are stable Arab positions, starting from the issue and at different levels such as the Arab League Ministerial Council or at the level of the summit and Kuwait. He affirmed that there is complete coordination with the Palestinians, and the draft resolution to secure international protection for the Palestinian people was in coordination with the Palestinian delegation that put forward the idea of protecting Palestinians from the Israeli occupation forces.

Regarding the Yemeni crisis, Otaibi said: "The history of Kuwait's mediation and its attempt to resolve the Yemeni differences is very old. There were previous mediations and our relations with Yemen are historical. When the current crisis erupted with the Houthi coup

against the legitimate government, Kuwait had principled positions and joined the coalition to restore legitimacy and mediation efforts before we entered the council in 2016."

He noted that during the recent Stockholm negotiations, Kuwait facilitated the process of transferring Houthi negotiators from Sanaa to Stockholm and through membership in the council, Kuwait supported the UN efforts, implemented relevant Security Council resolutions, and always confirms in all its statements that a military solution in Yemen must be resolved peacefully by negotiations.

On the relationship of the Security Council with the League of Arab States, Otaibi said: "We have been keen to improve this relationship according to agreements to be signed between the two organizations in the field of maintaining international peace and security." Regarding Kuwaiti prisoners and missing persons in Iraq, he affirmed Iraq has not fulfilled all its obligations, adding that the Iraqi authorities are fully cooperating with the UN organizations in resolving this case.

On the Rohingya minority issue, Otaibi said Kuwait succeeded in organizing a visit to Bangladesh and Myanmar with the aim of highlighting the plight of Rohingya refugees living in miserable conditions. During the visit, Kuwait tried - in coordination with Britain and Peru - to push for an organized plan to return the Rohingya to their Rakhine home state.

"I had meetings with His Highness the Amir during my visit to Kuwait," said Otaibi, adding, "He always praises the performance of the delegation". "During these short meetings, there were directives that we cherish and take seriously and we implement from the standpoint of our national issues or our Arab issues sometimes and there were direct directions as these things facilitated our work," indicated Otaibi.

Meanwhile, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany at the UN headquarters in New York Jürgen Schulz affirmed that he and his colleagues were pleased with Kuwait's performance during its tenure at the UNSC, saying that along with the Belgian delegation, Kuwait and Germany managed to coordinate on issues connected with the Syrian humanitarian crisis. Working with peers from Kuwait, Germany and other members had benefited from the Gulf nation's experience in handling the Syrian humanitarian file, he added.

Middle East Affairs official at the Belgium Mission to the UN, Second Secretary Florinda Baleci, told KUNA that working with Kuwait within the frame of the Syrian humanitarian file was excellent. The Kuwaiti delegation demonstrated merit, efficiency and high professionalism that contributed to achieving what was presented in this file on alleviating the human suffering of the Syrian people, she affirmed. — KUNA

this represents a direct accusation against the Kuwaiti people too.

Another opposition MP Mohammad Al-Barrak had vowed to grill the prime minister for including Aseeri in the Cabinet, but two days ago he said he had decided to delay any action against the premier to give him sufficient time to approve a general amnesty. Damkhi also said the minister violated her oath by falsely accusing MPs of spreading lies and rumors, although what MPs spoke about was fully mentioned on the minister's Twitter account. MPs Abdullah Fahhad, Riyadh Al-Adasani and Mohammad Hayef declared their backing of the grilling.

Lathi: Indian cops' colonial...

Continued from Page 1

a horrible weapon," Suresh told AFP. "Nothing legitimizes its brutal use."

Many believe the lathi originated as a martial arts accessory in South Asia. It was also used by feudal landlords against poor peasants, emerging as a symbol of unquestioned power and authority. In India, the weapon began to inspire fear and awe when the British used it unsparingly to disrupt protest marches that defined the non-violent independence movement in the late 19th and early 20th century. The British even came up with lathi guidelines that included commands such as "jabbing", which meant hitting people in the gut, and

Iraq protesters lock down oil...

Continued from Page 1

Those demands include an end to a system that doles out state jobs according to ethnicity and religion, and a stop to the endemic corruption estimated to have swallowed up twice Iraq's gross domestic prod-

Kuwait says it respects Iran's...

Continued from Page 1

But MP Saleh Ashour said on his Twitter account yesterday that National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem had received a dissident from Iran's Ahwaz region without knowing he was a member of an opposition group in Iran. Ashour added that he contacted the speaker, who confirmed to him that he received Hakim Al-Kaabi as a doctorate researcher who has done research on Kuwait's democracy and that he had

Damkhi files to grill Aseeri...

Continued from Page 1

Damkhi said the minister should not escape accountability by deleting the tweets soon after she was selected as a minister in the Cabinet for the first time. The lawmaker was particularly infuriated over a statement by Aseeri in which she described criticism by MPs as rumors aimed at their electoral bases, adding

Sports

Fleury hits milestone, Knights take Pacific lead

Meier nets hat trick, Sharks rout Flyers

LAS VEGAS: Mark Stone scored two goals, and Marc-Andre Fleury moved into a tie for sixth place on the NHL's all-time wins list as the Vegas Golden Knights took sole possession of first place in the Pacific Division with a 4-1 win over the Arizona Coyotes on Saturday night in Las Vegas. Chandler Stephenson and Paul Stastny also scored goals, and Shea Theodore tied a career-high with three assists for Vegas, which snapped a two-game losing streak. Fleury, who had allowed a dozen goals in his two previous starts including seven in a 7-3 loss to Colorado on Monday, finished with 27 saves. He moved even with Curtis Joseph for sixth place with his 454th career victory. Michael Grabner scored for Arizona, which entered the contest tied with Vegas for first place. Antti Raanta stopped 12 of 16 shots before being replaced by Adin Hill early in the second period. Hill finished with 20 saves in his first appearance of the season.

SHARKS 6, FLYERS 1

Timo Meier collected his first career hat trick as host San Jose routed Philadelphia to snap a four-game losing skid. Mario Ferraro and Joel Kellman both scored their first NHL goals, and Patrick Marleau also tallied. Goaltender Martin Jones made 26 saves for the Sharks, who went into the game with just one victory in their previous 11 outings. Ivan Provorov scored the Flyers' only goal, on a power play less than a minute into the third period. Carter Hart made 23 saves for the Flyers, who had a four-game winning streak snapped in the first outing of a six-game road trip.

LIGHTNING 5, CANADIENS 4

Alex Killorn had two goals and an assist, and Victor Hedman had a career-high four assists as Tampa Bay rallied for a victory over visiting Montreal. Steven Stamkos and Anthony Cirelli each finished with a goal and an assist, and Mitchell Stephens also scored a goal for the Lightning, who extended their win streak against Atlantic Division opponents to 10 games. Andrei Vasilevskiy had 39 saves and also picked up his third assist of the season. Jesperi Kotkaniemi, Max Domi, Ben Chiarot and Jordan Weal scored for the Canadiens. Carey Price finished with 25 saves.

PENGUINS 6, PREDATORS 4

Jake Guentzel stuffed a puck in on a wraparound

move for a go-ahead power-play goal with 1:03 left in regulation as host Pittsburgh downed Nashville to sweep the home-and-home series. Bryan Rust scored twice, including an empty-netter, and added two assists. Alex Galchenyuk had a goal and an assist. Dominik Kahun and Kris Letang also scored; and Evgeni Malkin had three assists for the Penguins. Matt Murray, in just his third start in December, made 44 saves. Mikael Granlund scored twice, including the tying goal, for Nashville. Viktor Arvidsson and Craig Smith also scored, and Roman Josi had three assists. Predators' goalie Juuse Saros was pulled during the first period after giving up three goals on eight shots. Pekka Rinne stopped 25 of 27 shots in relief.

HURRICANES 6, CAPITALS 4

Warren Foegele scored two goals and added an assist as host Carolina defeated Washington, snapping a three-game losing streak. Lucas Wallmark, Dougie Hamilton, Martin Necas and Andrei Svechnikov also scored for the Hurricanes, who won at Washington in overtime in the second game of the season. Carolina goalie Petr Mrazek made 25 saves for the victory after losses in his last two decisions. Nic Dowd, Alex Ovechkin, Evgeny Kuznetsov and Richard Panik scored for the Capitals. Braden Holtby stopped 23 shots. It was only the fifth time in Holtby's last 23 games that Washington didn't secure at least one point.

RANGERS 5, MAPLE LEAFS 4

Tony DeAngelo scored 52 seconds into overtime as New York ended host Toronto's six-game winning streak. Ryan Strome had two goals and two assists for New York, while Brett Howden and Miika Zibanejad also scored. Artemi Panarin had three assists, and Alexander Georgiev stopped 44 shots. Auston Matthews had two goals, including the tying goal in the final minute of regulation, and added an assist for the Maple Leafs. William Nylander added a goal and an assist, Pierre Engvall had a goal, and Tyson Barrie had two assists for Toronto. Frederik Andersen made 33 saves.

STARS 3, AVALANCHE 2 (SO)

Alexander Radulov returned from injury to score the shootout clincher, and Ben Bishop made 41 saves as host Dallas avoided a third straight loss by beating Colorado for the third time in as many meetings this



LAS VEGAS: Adin Hill #31 of the Arizona Coyotes makes a save against William Karlsson #71 of the Vegas Golden Knights in the second period of their game at T-Mobile Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Golden Knights defeated the Coyotes 4-1. — AFP

season. Tyler Seguin scored his fifth goal in five games, Denis Gurianov posted his ninth goal of the season, and Joe Pavelski also had a shootout goal for Dallas, which had lost three of four. Bishop was solid all night and perfect in the shootout while snapping his four-game losing streak for the Stars, who also ended an 0-2-1 home slide. Colorado, meanwhile, got goals from J.T. Compher and Ian Cole and a 38-save performance from Philipp Grubauer. The Avalanche have dropped five of their last seven.

CANUCKS 3, KINGS 2

Elias Pettersson had a goal and an assist, including the tiebreaking tally at 7:05 of the third period, and Jacob Markstrom made 49 saves as Vancouver defeated visiting Los Angeles. Jake Virtanen and Tyler Motte also scored for the Canucks, who returned from their holiday break and won their season-high fourth game

in a row — during which they've outscored their opponents 16-9. Anze Kopitar and Tyler Toffoli had goals for the Kings, who were playing the second half of a back-to-back after winning 3-2 in overtime Friday night in San Jose. Jonathan Quick stopped 23 of 28 shots.

PANTHERS 5, RED WINGS 4

Dominic Toninato scored the go-ahead goal in the second period as host Florida rallied to defeat Detroit at Sunrise, Fla. Florida also got goals from Evgenii Dadonov, Brett Connolly, Mike Hoffman and Anton Stralman as the Panthers rallied from a 3-1 deficit. Hoffman added two assists. Panthers goalie Chris Driedger, starting just his fourth NHL game, made 35 stops to improve to 3-1-0. Detroit got goals from Darren Helm, Dylan Larkin, Frans Nielsen and Luke Glendening, but the Wings still lost their fifth straight game and have lost 17 of their past 19. — Reuters

Norway's Kilde leads Paris after super-G run in WCup combined

BORMIO: Norway's Aleksander Aamodt Kilde pushed Dominik Paris into second place after the super-G run of the men's alpine World Cup combined event in Bormio yesterday.

World super-G champion Paris had claimed back-to-back downhill wins on Friday and Saturday on his home piste. But the 30-year-old Italian was pipped by just 0.03sec by Kilde who led the first run down the "Stelvio" in the Italian Alps, with the slalom to come later on Sunday.

"I felt very tired. I made a mistake at (diagonal) Carcentina, now let's see what the slalom legs will be like," said Paris. Austria's Vincent Kriechmayr was third fastest at 0.35sec.

World combined champion Alexis Pinturault of France, who had been in doubt before the race with a thigh injury, posted the 11th fastest time at 0.97sec. "It was really not easy without training, with only yesterday on

skis after my small injury," said Pinturault, who remains the favourite going into the slalom.

"I tried my best tried to stay focused on what I had to do and at least it worked pretty well." The combined event has been revamped with the best skiers from the super-G starting first in the slalom, reversing the usual order with the aim of favouring the speed specialists.

"I'm satisfied for now, let's see how the slalom will go with the new format," added the French skier. "The thigh? While I was going down it didn't hurt. It's hard to say how it will work out, here at Bormio the downhillers can go really fast."

The super-G race was interrupted after Austria's Christopher Neumayer crashed off the course and was airlifted off the piste by helicopter, like teammate Hannes Reichelt in Saturday's downhill. The start of the slalom run was pushed back until 1315 GMT. — AFP

Murphy proud of Leicester fight in Harlequins draw

LONDON: Leicester Tigers coach Geordan Murphy saluted his struggling side's determination as they came from 14 points down to draw 30-30 with Harlequins in front of a 75,000 crowd at Twickenham on Saturday.

This was the 12th 'Big Game' at Twickenham and the match followed the inaugural edition in finishing in a draw when Murphy scored for the Tigers in a 26-26 clash with Quins back in 2008.

Leicester remained second-bottom in the English Premiership, with only reigning champions Saracens — hit with a huge 35-point deduction for salary cap breaches — below them in the table.

Tries in Saturday's final quarter from Jordan Taufua and Telusa Veainu helped Leicester to a share of the spoils after Quins were reduced to 14 men and Murphy was delighted by the way his team's pack paved the way for a couple of points.

"We knew that they were on a final warning scrum wise, we thought we had an edge there," he said.

"We used that to build us a platform and at 30-30 and when they were down to 14 with seven minutes to go, I thought we'd go on and win that game, so it certainly feels like a very strange game."

Quins boss Paul Gustard was frustrated by his side's failure to see out the game in a match played just round the corner from the London club's Stoop headquarters.

"For me, (I'm) gutted. I'm disappointed with the referee today and it feels more like a loss than getting two points," he said. "It was difficult, obviously, with sin-binning our tighthead prop, we had to move Joe Marler across."

Elsewhere Bath edged out Sale 16-14 in a thriller at the Recreation Ground to leave them just outside the top playoff places. It was a second straight win for Bath, whose hopes of reaching this year's European Cup knockout phase have been ended long before the finish of the pool stages.

Wales fly-half Rhys Priestland kicked three penalties for Bath, the last proving to be a match-winner after England centre Jonathan Joseph had gone over for a converted try.

Meanwhile Wales No 8 Taulupe Faletau came through a full match for the first time this season, a timely appearance ahead of new national coach Wayne Pivac's unveiling his inaugural Six Nations squad.

"He is pleased he has got through it," Hooper said. "Credit to him for the work he has put in and to our medical team." — AFP

Montpellier held by Stade Francais

LYON: South Africa's Rugby World Cup winner Handre Pollard's first try in the French Top 14 was not enough as Montpellier drew 20-20 with Stade Francais on Saturday. Pollard, 25, who made his club debut last weekend after lifting the Webb Ellis trophy in early November, crossed in the final quarter of an hour after taking a quick penalty five metres from the Parisians line on his maiden home appearance.

Despite his efforts the visitors' 22-year old fly-half Joris Segonds slotted a penalty with six minutes to go to claim a draw for the side who remain bottom of the table. Argentina outside-half Nicholas Sanchez wasted nine points from the boot which would have claimed the Parisians' first away league win of the campaign. "I'm disappointed because it's a game we should have won but we didn't have the ingredients to win," Pollard said after the fixture. "The squad's lacking confidence because we're failing to win successive games," he added.

The hosts led 10-0 after 25 minutes as Pollard converted Arthur Vincent's try and kicked a penalty goal. Stade, owned by billionaire Hans-Peter Wild, sparked into action before the break as Australia's Sefa Naivalu and France's Gael Fickou crossed for a 14-10 lead but Pumas back-rower Pablo Matera left the field with a suspected back injury.

Pollard and Segonds traded a penalty each before the Springbok's moment of magic with 13 minutes to go as he took a penalty quickly to crash over. His conversion made it 20-17 but Segonds stepped up with have a dozen of minutes to play to deny Pollard a winning home debut.

Earlier, Lyon destroyed Bayonne with an emphatic 52-9 win that featured seven tries and hoists them provisionally to first spot in the table. The flurry of tries from six different scorers in front of a 16,000 home crowd at the Stade Gerland lifts early-season pace-setters Lyon onto 40 points.

Bordeaux-Begles, who are two points back in second, went into the weekend top and travel to struggling Pau on Sunday needing a win to put them back at the summit. Lyon got off to a flying start to the Top 14 season but three defeats in the past four outings were firmly put behind them Saturday.

The 21-year-old France centre Pierre-Louis Barassi was the chief motor of Bayonne's destruction and is a good bet to add to his one Test cap in the upcoming Six Nations. Bayonne coach Yannick Bru refused to take the defeat on the chin. "It was a bit of a spanking, but strangely, despite the score, we weren't far off," he claimed after the game.

Barassi dotted down four minutes into the second half before two quickfire tries from South African Hendrik Roodt led to Bayonne crumbling. Elsewhere on Saturday, newly promoted Brive lost at home in the league for the first time this season as hooker Camille Chat scored twice in Racing 92's 44-20 victory at Stade Amedee-Domenech.

Ex-France fly-half Francois Trinh-Duc made his debut in the Parisians' seventh win from their past eight games across all competitions. — AFP

Shiffrin cleans up in Lienz with slalom triumph

LIENZ: Resurgent American ski star Mikaela Shiffrin made it a clean sweep in Lienz after winning yesterday's alpine World Cup slalom, a day after charging to victory in the giant slalom.

Shiffrin posted the fastest time on both descents for the second day in a row, leaving Slovakia's exasperated Petra Vlhova 0.61sec back in second, while third-placed Michelle Gisin cried tears of joy to be on the podium.

The two clear victories at Lienz marks a return to form for the nervy American who had bombed to 17th in her previous performance in Courchevel before taking a week off to concentrate on training.

Defending overall champion Shiffrin finished her first run 0.26sec ahead of Vlhova, who produced a dynamic second descent to throw down the gauntlet.

"I needed to give it 110 percent to beat her and that's what I did," said Shiffrin, whose dextrous negotiation of the gates made the difference.

As Shiffrin swept over to hug her awaiting mother, Vlhova's disappointment was written all over on her face. This was in stark contrast to the Swiss Gisin, who had burst into tears earlier as she realised she would finish at least third as she watched Katharina Liensberger take a gate wide.



LIENZ: (L-R) Second placed Petra Vlhova of Slovakia, winner Mikaela Shiffrin of the US and third placed Michelle Gisin of Switzerland pose after the women's Slalom event of the Alpine Skiing World Cup in Lienz, Austria, yesterday. — AFP

Yesterday's win extends Shiffrin's lead at the top of the overall rankings to 295 ahead of Italian Federica Brignone, who finished over three seconds back in 13th.

It also consolidates her lead in the slalom classification and extend her number of individual World Cup wins to 64. Her triumph in the giant slalom on Saturday put her

out on her own in second place for women's wins, one ahead of retired Austrian Annemarie Moser-Proell. She is closing in on men's skiing legend Marcel Hirscher's total of 67 but still has some way to go to catch compatriot Lindsey Vonn, who racked up 82 wins before hanging up her skis at the end of last season. — AFP

Sports

Captain Paine hails teamwork as Australia crush N Zealand

Australia winning all four home Tests so far this summer

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at the end of the second Test between New Zealand and Australia at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday:

Australia 1st innings 467 (T. Head 114, S. Smith 85, T. Paine 79, M. Labuschagne 63; Wagner 4-38, Southee 3-103)
New Zealand 1st innings 148 (T. Latham 50; P. Cummins 5-28, J. Pattinson 3-34)

Australia 2nd innings (overnight 137-4)
D. Warner c Blundell b Wagner 38
J. Burns c Watling b Santner 35
M. Labuschagne run out (Santner) 19
S. Smith c Southee b Wagner 7
M. Wade not out 30
T. Head b Wagner 28
Extras (lb4, b4, w2, nb1) 11
Total (5 wkts declared, 54.2 overs) 168
Did not bat: Tim Paine, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, James Pattinson
Fall of wickets: 1-62 (Warner), 2-100 (Labuschagne), 3-110 (Burns), 4-110 (Smith), 5-168 (Head)
Bowling: Boult 9-0-30-0, Southee 15-3-44-0, de Grandhomme 5-0-14-0 (lbw), Wagner 17.2-1-50-3 (lbw, lb), Santner 8-0-22-1

New Zealand 2nd innings
T. Latham c Paine b Pattinson 8
T. Blundell c Lyon b Labuschagne 121
K. Williamson lbw Pattinson 0
R. Taylor b Pattinson 2
H. Nicholls st Paine b Lyon 33
B. Watling c Warner b Lyon 22
C. de Grandhomme c Warner b Lyon 9
M. Santner c Paine b Lyon 27
T. Southee run out (Paine) 2
N. Wagner not out 6
T. Boult absent hurt -
Extras (lb7, nb1, w2) 10
Total (all out: 71 overs) 240
Fall of wickets: 1-32 (Latham), 2-33 (Williamson), 3-35 (Taylor), 4-89 (Nicholls), 5-161 (Watling), 6-172 (de Grandhomme), 7-212 (Santner), 8-214 (Southee), 9-240 (Blundell)
Bowling: Starc 15-3-59-0 (2w, lbw), Cummins 18-4-47-0, Pattinson 12-3-35-3, Lyon 23-4-81-4, Labuschagne 3-1-11-1
Result: Australia won by 247 runs.

MELBOURNE: Captain Tim Paine pointed to teamwork yesterday as the crucial factor in Australia winning all four home Tests so far this summer — and all inside four days. After crushing Pakistan twice, they have now done the same to New Zealand, wrapping up their three-Test series against the Black Caps with a 247-run thrashing in Melbourne.

A first-innings Travis Head century, 85 from Steve Smith and 79 by Paine took the game away from the visitors after Australia lost the toss and were put into bat. Pat Cummins, James Pattinson and Nathan Lyon then led the attack in dismissing New Zealand twice.

Paine said it was all about players stepping up when others were having an off day. "I think it shows that we're starting to spread the load," he said. "When we work together as a team and build pressure — one day it's going to be Pat (Cummins), the next day it's going to be Nathan (Lyon), the next day it's going to be James Pattinson, another day it's going to be Mitchell Starc.

"We just keep driving that home to all our team," he added. "If we keep building pressure as a team we've got some absolute firepower and we know that all of them are going to have their day in the sun."

Paine said the same applied to the batting, where some fired in Melbourne and others didn't. "The same with the batting, trying to build partnerships, trying to take teams' bowlers really deep, make them bowl lots of overs," he said.

"At some stage we're all going to get a chance to score lots of runs as well." Australia, who retained the Ashes in England heading into the home summer, have one final Test against the Black Caps in Sydney later this week. Paine said he wanted the same intensity for that game, which meant muted celebrations in Melbourne with such a short turnaround. "We



MELBOURNE: Australia's wicketkeeper Tim Paine (R) stumps New Zealand batsman Henry Nicholls (L) on the fourth day of the second cricket Test match at the MCG in Melbourne yesterday.—AFP

want to win every Test match, there's no doubt about that," he said.

"We know we've wrapped up the series here today, which was pleasing, but with the (ICC) Test match

championship every Test is really important.

"So winning the series is almost less important until we wrap up next week hopefully with another good win." —AFP

South Africa see off stubborn England to claim 107-run victory

CENTURION: South Africa broke down stubborn England resistance to win the first Test of their World Test Championship series by 107 runs at SuperSport Park yesterday. England needed 376 to win but despite some committed batting were bowled out for 268 on the fourth day of the five-day encounter.

An enthralling contest swung South Africa's way when left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj bowled Ben Stokes to halt a brief flurry of strokes as Stokes and captain Joe Root tried to lift the scoring rate before the second new ball was due.

The new ball then had an immediate impact with Kagiso Rabada having Jonny Bairstow caught at gully before Anrich Nortje claimed the crucial wicket of Root, who made a fighting 48 before he was caught behind.

It was the second time in the day Nortje claimed a wicket with the second ball of a new spell after he made the first breakthrough of the day by dismissing top-scorer Rory Burns for 84.

The remaining wickets fell quickly, with Rabada finishing with four for 103 and fellow fast bowler Anrich Nortje claiming three for 56. Maharaj, who broke England's first wicket stand of 92 on Saturday when he dismissed Dom Sibley, took two for 37.

South Africa produced a disciplined bowling performance, making scoring difficult on a pitch which always offered something to the bowlers with some sideways movement and uneven bounce.

England added only 50 runs in 25 overs while losing two wickets during the morning.

Rory Burns took his overnight score of 77 to 84 before mistiming a pull against Nortje to be caught at mid-on, while Joe Denly was leg before wicket to Dwaine Pretorius for 31.

Burns and Denly saw off the threat of Vernon Philander and Rabada but found scoring difficult.

Philander conceded only one run in five overs. Rabada gave up 23 in six overs, which included two hooked sixes by Denly.

Burns, who faced most of Philander's bowling, adding only seven runs off 37 balls. The change to Nortje brought an immediate result for South Africa as Burns attempted to pull the fast bowler's second delivery and sent the ball looping to Rabada at mid-on.



CENTURION: South Africa's Rudi Second (L) throws the ball in an attempt to run out England's Rory Burns (R) during the fourth day of the first Test cricket match between South Africa and England at The SuperSport Park stadium at Centurion near Pretoria yesterday.—AFP

Nortje made a second crucial breakthrough when South African captain Faf du Plessis made an inspired bowling change. First innings destroyer Vernon Philander

sent down three overs with the second new ball but was not making the batsmen play many deliveries, so Du Plessis called on Nortje with immediate success. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

Centurion, South Africa: Final scores on the fourth day of the first Test between South Africa and England at SuperSport Park yesterday:

South Africa, first innings, 284
England, first innings, 181
South Africa, second innings, 272
England, second innings (overnight 121-1)
R. Burns c Rabada b Nortje 84
D. Sibley c and b Maharaj 29
J. Denly lbw b Pretorius 31
J. Root c De Kock b Nortje 48
B. Stokes b Maharaj 14
J. Bairstow c Hamza b Rabada 9
J. Buttler c Pretorius b Rabada 22
S. Curran c De Kock b Rabada 9

J. Archer c Van der Dussen b Nortje 4
S. Broad b Rabada 6
J. Anderson not out 0
Extras (b8, lb3, w1) 12
Total (93 overs) 268
Fall of wickets: 1-92 (Sibley), 2-139 (Burns), 3-158 (Denly), 4-204 (Stokes), 5-222 (Bairstow), 6-232 (Root), 7-251 (Curran), 8-256 (Archer), 9-262 (Buttler)
Bowling: Rabada 24-3-103-4, Philander 20-8-35-0, Nortje 17-4-56-3 (lbw), Pretorius 16-6-26-1, Maharaj 16-3-37-2.
Result: South Africa won by 107 runs

Williamson urges more fighting spirit from NZ

MELBOURNE: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson said his team need to mirror the fighting spirit of century-maker Tom Blundell if they are to bounce back from their second-Test thrashing by Australia.

Opener Blundell was the last man out in Melbourne after compiling a battling 121 as team-mates threw their wickets away in the improbable 488-run chase to save the match. Williamson called it a "magnificent" innings. "Obviously it was hard work out there, the task was immense. But you look at some small positives... that was a truly fantastic innings," he said after the 247-run defeat — their second Test loss inside four days.

"He led the way and it is important that we all take something from that. "The effort from the bowlers throughout was something that is inspiring to us as a team, that never-give-up attitude. "But at the same time if we are looking for areas to improve there are a few of them. We do need to try and put Australia under a bit more pressure before their first innings total gets past that point of control." Australia took the game away from New Zealand on day one after Williamson won the toss and took a gamble by putting them in to bat. It turned out to be a poor decision, but he insisted it was a reasonable one at the time. "I felt like there was enough in the surface to bowl first and it was obviously very important for us to be on top of our game and the surface did offer some sideways movement and swing," he said.

"But credit to Australia for getting through that first session and put 400 on the board." Williamson's team must now regroup quickly with the third and final Test in Sydney later this week. The series has been lost and they will be playing for pride only. "All round from our perspective we need to be better in all departments. We do need to be better come Sydney," he said. "We haven't been at our best, but it is important that we try and learn really quickly and improve in all areas." —AFP

Australia's Siddle announces retirement

MELBOURNE: Veteran Australian bowler Peter Siddle announced his international retirement yesterday after a 67-Test career, with national coach Justin Langer praising him as giving his "heart and soul" to the team.

The 35-year-old had been called up to the second Test squad in Melbourne but was not selected in the side to face New Zealand and decided to call it quits. "Just being able to play, to walk out, wear the baggy green — I'd watched guys like Punter (Ricky Ponting), Steve Waugh, guys like that wear it, represent Australia," he said.

"Every time I stepped out was amazing, I don't think I could pick one special one. "At the end of the day, to play one is amazing, to end up playing what I did is truly special." Siddle, who played a key role in helping Australia retain the Ashes in England earlier this year, went to the Australian dressing room at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to tell his teammates personally.

"The year after I retired from playing, Matty Hayden and Ricky Ponting were raving about this guy called Peter Siddle," Langer said. "If it came from them, you knew it was right and so it proved throughout his brilliant international career. "He is an unbelievable bloke and an extremely good cricketer. He is the everything of what a team player is. He has given his heart and soul to the Australian team and the game of cricket." Siddle took 221 wickets from his 67 Tests including eight five-wicket hauls.

He is the 13th highest Test wicket-taker among Australian bowlers and is best remembered for the hat-trick he claimed on his 26th birthday against England in Brisbane in 2010. —AFP

Somerset agree personal terms with SA's Philander

LONDON: Somerset have agreed personal terms with South Africa's Vernon Philander, the club announced Saturday after the Proteas paceman had already confirmed he would be playing for the English county.

Somerset, runners-up in last season's first-class County Championship, will now look to complete the paperwork on a deal that would see the 34-year-old Philander heading to Taunton as a Kolpak player following South Africa's home Test series with England.

"Somerset County Cricket Club are today able to officially confirm that we have agreed personal terms with Vernon Philander for him to become a Somerset player in 2020," the county said in a statement.

"It has been widely reported over the last few days that the South African would be joining the county, but the official paperwork required to complete the deal is being finalised with the ECB, with the club

working towards the full procedure being completed successfully in the New Year."

Philander, who took four wickets as South Africa dismissed England for 181 in the first innings of the ongoing first Test in Centurion, confirmed on Friday he would be returning to Somerset, having previously played for the county in 2012.

"Everyone knows that," he told reporters. But the Proteas stalwart added it was incorrect he had signed a three-year contract. "We're going to go on a year-by-year basis and see how we go," he said.

Philander was speaking after the second day's play at Centurion in what he has announced will be his final series before retiring from international cricket.

The Kolpak ruling means citizens of countries who have signed European Union association agreements or who are lawfully working within an EU country, have the same free movement rights as EU citizens.

Kolpak signings, as well as cricketers with EU passports, are currently eligible to play in England without counting as "overseas" players. But both these employment rulings could be directly affected by Britain's withdrawal from the EU, now set to take place next month.

The ruling, allied to the low value of South Africa's rand currency, has seen several former Proteas internationals join English county clubs in moves that have effectively signalled the end of their international careers so they can be deemed 'home' players under the regulations.

And while Morne Morkel joined Surrey after a long career with the Proteas, fellow fast bowlers Kyle Abbott (Hampshire) and Duanne Olivier (Yorkshire) cut short their time in international cricket to sign Kolpak deals intensified concerns about a damaging talent drain from the South Africa set-up. —AFP

Sports

Jimmy Butler helps host Heat survive 76ers in overtime

Lakers halt skid, get back on track with win over Trail Blazers

MIAMI: Jimmy Butler made the go-ahead free throw with 2.3 seconds remaining in overtime against his former team, as the host Miami Heat recorded a 117-116 victory over the Philadelphia 76ers on Saturday. After Ben Simmons converted an alley-oop dunk to forge a tie at 116 with 18.3 seconds left in overtime, Butler was fouled on a jumper on the next possession. Butler misfired on the first attempt before sinking the second, and Tobias Harris failed to convert a 3-point attempt as Miami improved to 6-0 in overtime and an NBA-best 15-1 at home this season. Butler finished with 25 points, nine assists and nine rebounds. He was playing in his third game against his former team after inking a four-year, \$142 million deal with Miami in a sign-and-trade deal that brought Josh Richardson to Philadelphia. Joel Embiid collected 35 points and 11 rebounds for the 76ers, who have dropped the first two contests of their four-game road trip.

DALLAS MAVERICKS 141 - GOLDEN STATE WARRIORS 121

Luka Dončić recorded 31 points, 15 assists and 12 rebounds for his ninth triple-double of the season to lead Dallas past host Golden State in San Francisco. Dončić and tied the franchise record for triple-doubles in a season set by Jason Kidd in 1995-96. Dončić also made five 3-pointers as Dallas set a franchise record by making 24 from behind the arc (out of 51 attempts). The Mavericks won for the 15th time in the last 20 games. Tim Hardaway Jr. made six 3-pointers and scored 25 points, and Kristaps Porziņģis made four treys while adding 18 points, seven rebounds and four blocked shots. D'Angelo Russell scored 35 points and matched his career best of nine 3-pointers for the Warriors, who had a four-game winning streak halted.

LOS ANGELES LAKERS 128 - PORTLAND TRAIL BLAZERS 120

LeBron James scored 21 points, matched his season best of 16 assists and also collected seven rebounds while playing through a groin injury to lead Los Angeles past host Portland. Kyle Kuzma scored a team-high 24 points, and Anthony Davis added 20 points, nine rebounds and five assists as the Lakers halted a season-worst, four-game losing streak. Rajon Rondo tallied 15 points, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added 13 and Dwight Howard had 11 points, eight rebounds and four blocked shots. Damian Lillard recorded 31 points and nine assists for the Trail Blazers, who lost their third straight game. Hassan Whiteside recorded 19 points and 16 rebounds, CJ McCollum scored 18 points, Anfernee Simons added 14, Carmelo Anthony had 13 and Anthony Tolliver tallied 12.

UTAH JAZZ 120 - LOS ANGELES CLIPPERS 107

Donovan Mitchell had 30 points, nine assists and seven rebounds, leading visiting Utah over Los Angeles. Jordan Clarkson scored 19 points, Bojan Bogdanović added 17 and Joe Ingles chipped in 15 for the Jazz, who captured their seventh win in their last eight games. Paul George had 20 points and 10 rebounds, and Kawhi Leonard scored 19 points for the Clippers. Center Ivica Zubac finished with 15 points and 12 boards, nine of those on the offensive end. Two free throws by Zubac cut the Jazz's lead to 109-107 with 3:35 left, but Utah scored the final 11 points to clinch the win.

DENVER NUGGETS 119 - MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES 110

Nikola Jokic had a season-high 31 points to go with 10

rebounds and 10 assists for his seventh triple-double of the season, Will Barton scored 20 points and had seven assists, and host Denver beat Memphis. Jamal Murray and Mason Plumlee had 15 points each for the Nuggets, who had seven players reach double figures in scoring to rebound from Wednesday's 112-100 loss to the New Orleans Pelicans. Jaren Jackson Jr. had 20 points, De'Anthony Melton had 17, Ja Morant scored 16 and Jonas Valanciunas had 14 points and 10 rebounds for the Grizzlies. Brandon Clarke finished with 15 points.

HOUSTON ROCKETS 108 - BROOKLYN NETS 98

James Harden delivered 44 points and 10 rebounds, and host Houston survived unsightly 3-point shooting in its victory over Brooklyn. Russell Westbrook added 23 points, nine rebounds and seven assists prior to his ejection inside the final minute. Austin Rivers tallied 14 points off the bench on 4-for-9 shooting on 3-pointers. But Houston shot just 13 of 42 from deep, perimeter struggles that enabled Brooklyn to remain close. Spencer Dinwiddie paced five Nets in double figures with 17 points while adding a game-high 11 assists. Taurean Prince and Jarrett Allen scored 16 apiece for the Nets, who shot 40.2 percent.

MILWAUKEE BUCKS 111 - ORLANDO MAGIC 100

A dominant fourth quarter powered host Milwaukee to its second win without star Giannis Antetokounmpo in as many nights, as it downed Orlando. Antetokounmpo missed his second game with a back injury, but Milwaukee started and finished strong in his absence. Khris Middleton led the Bucks in scoring Saturday, as he did Friday at Atlanta, posting 21 points. Orlando was paced by 23 points from Evan Fournier and 21 points from Nikola Vucević. Jonathan Isaac scored 19 points and made seven steals, a big chunk of Milwaukee's 24 turnovers.

TORONTO RAPTORS 113 - BOSTON CELTICS 97

Kyle Lowry scored 30 points and registered seven assists for visiting Toronto, which never trailed as it gained a measure of revenge for its Christmas Day loss to Boston. Serge Ibaka finished with 20 points and 10 rebounds as the Raptors ended a two-game losing streak in their first game since falling to the Celtics 118-102 in Toronto on Wednesday. It was the first Christmas Day game played in Canada. Patrick McCaw had 18 points, seven rebounds and a game-high eight assists for the Raptors, while Fred VanVleet also scored 18 points. Kemba Walker scored 30 points for the Celtics, who had their five-game winning streak snapped. Jaylen Brown finished with 17 points, followed by Gordon Hayward (13), Jayson Tatum (12) and Enes Kanter (11).

CHICAGO BULLS 116 - ATLANTA HAWKS 81

Lauri Markkanen scored 25 points on 8-for-14 shooting, and Chicago cruised to a win over visiting Atlanta. Zach LaVine added 19 points on 7-for-15 shooting for the Bulls, who won for the third time in their past four games. Coby White scored 18 points off the bench, Wendell Carter Jr. had 13 points and Tomas Satoransky finished with 11 points to go along with eight rebounds and six assists. John Collins scored 34 points on 14-for-26 shooting in a losing effort for the Hawks, who played without top scorer Trae Young because of a sprained ankle. Atlanta lost its 10th game in a row and fell to 3-15 on the road.

claiming arguably the biggest win of Gerrard's managerial career so far.

Rangers dominated the League Cup final between the sides earlier this month, but were left to rue a host of missed chances and a stunning goalkeeping performance from Fraser Forster as 10-man Celtic claimed the trophy. The pattern from that match continued, though, and this time Rangers got their reward.

After a bright start from the visitors it was Celtic who were gifted a huge chance to take the lead just after the half hour mark when Katic was penalised for holding Christopher Jullien from a corner.

Forster saved Morelos' penalty in the cup final three weeks ago and the goalkeeper again came out on top as this time Alan McGregor got down low to his left to turn Christie's spot-kick to safety.

Celtic maintained the pressure and Jullien, who scored the winner the last time the sides met, saw a header cleared off the line by Steven Davis. Just as the hosts were beginning to take control, Rangers scored their first goal against their bitter rivals in three games this season.

Kent was a constant menace in two wins over Celtic last season and was the man to provide a moment of quality as he smashed Borna Barisic's low



MIAMI: Jimmy Butler #22 of the Miami Heat drives to the basket against the Philadelphia 76ers at American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida. —AFP

NEW ORLEANS PELICANS 120 - INDIANA PACERS 98

Brandon Ingram scored 24 points, and six teammates also scored in double figures as host New Orleans routed Indiana for its fourth win in five games and its first home victory since Nov 19. Jrue Holiday added 20 points, JJ Redick scored 15, Lonzo Ball had 13, E'Twaun Moore and Josh Hart came off the bench to score 11 each, and Derrick Favors had 10 points and 16 rebounds. Ingram and Holiday each added seven assists. Aaron Holiday scored 25 points, T.J. Warren added 20 and Domantas Sabonis had 15 points and 16 rebounds to lead the Pacers. According to the Elias Sports Bureau, Jrue, Justin, and Aaron Holiday became the first trio of brothers to play in an NBA game when Justin checked in for the Pacers with 5:13 left in the first quarter.

CLEVELAND CAVALIERS 94 - MINNESOTA TIMBERWOLVES 88

Collin Sexton and Darius Garland scored 18 points each as Cleveland won for the fourth time in five games by beating Minnesota in Minneapolis. In a game that was missing much of its star power, Kevin Love did not start for the Cavaliers because of hip and back soreness. The Timberwolves were without Karl-Anthony Towns for a sixth consecutive game because of a sprained left knee and also were without Andrew Wiggins because of the flu. Tristan Thompson grabbed 15 boards while scoring 12 points for the Cavaliers, and Kevin Porter Jr. added 10 points. For the Timberwolves, Jeff Teague scored 18 points, while Kelan Martin added 17. Minnesota lost for the 12th time in its last 13 games after ending an 11-game losing streak Thursday.

NEW YORK KNICKS 107 - WASHINGTON WIZARDS 100

Julius Randle had 30 points and 16 rebounds, and New

York defeated host Washington to win two games in a row for only the second time this season. Reserve Bobby Portis scored 17 points, RJ Barrett added 14 and Marcus Morris contributed 10. Washington's Isaiah Thomas scored 20 points in his return from a two-game league suspension. Jordan McRae also had 20 points, and Gary Payton II scored 15 points for the Wizards, who have lost two straight and five of six.

SAN ANTONIO SPURS 136 - DETROIT PISTONS 109

DeMar DeRozan scored 29 points on 13-of-16 shooting, and LaMarcus Aldridge added 25 points and 12 rebounds as host San Antonio flattened Detroit to avenge a 34-point loss to the Pistons on Dec 1. After a contentious first half that ended with the Spurs up four, San Antonio broke open the game by outscoring the Pistons 42-25 in the third quarter and waltzed to the win. Bryn Forbes added 18 points for San Antonio, with Rudy Gay hitting for 16 and Dejounte Murray scoring 13 in the win. Derrick Rose paced Detroit with 24 points off the bench, with Andre Drummond scoring 21 points and grabbing 18 rebounds.

PHOENIX SUNS 112 - SACRAMENTO KINGS 110

Devin Booker had 32 points and 10 assists, and Kelly Oubre had 20 points and a career-high 16 rebounds as Phoenix broke an eight-game losing streak with a victory at Sacramento. Ricky Rubio had 21 points and eight assists, and Aron Baynes had 17 points and six rebounds for the Suns, who had lost 13 of 16. Buddy Hield had 23 points and four 3-pointers, Bogdan Bogdanovic had 22 points and five 3-pointers off the bench and Harrison Barnes had 21 points and 10 rebounds for Kings, who have lost six in a row. Barnes' 26-footer to potentially win it missed with two seconds left. — Reuters

Rangers end long wait for win at Celtic Park

GLASGOW: Rangers ended a nine-year wait to beat Celtic away from home as goals from Ryan Kent and Nikola Katic earned a 2-1 win at Celtic Park to take control of the Scottish Premiership title race.

Steven Gerrard's men still trail Celtic by two points, but have a game in hand on the Scottish champions as they aim to end a run of eight straight league titles for the green-and-white half of Glasgow.

Celtic were left to rue Ryan Christie's penalty miss with the score at 0-0 as they suffered a first home league defeat since May 2018.

Rangers' top scorer Alfredo Morelos was sent off in stoppage time for the second time in three games and the seventh occasion over the past two seasons as his wait for an Old Firm goal continued.

However, that will matter little to Rangers after

West Ham to reappoint Moyes after Pellegrini sacking

LONDON: Premier League strugglers West Ham United are set to reappoint David Moyes as their new head coach to replace the sacked Manuel Pellegrini, Sky Sports and the BBC reported yesterday.

Chilean Pellegrini was sacked after Saturday's 2-1 defeat at home by Leicester City, their ninth loss in 12 league games that left the London side 17th in the standings — one point above the relegation zone.

It would be Moyes' second stint with West Ham after he saved the club from relegation in the 2017-18 campaign during a six-month deal. He was hired by West Ham in November 2017 to replace Slaven Bilic with the London side in the relegation zone and the Scotsman led them to a 13th-placed finish to ensure the club's survival in the top flight.



David Moyes

However, the club chose not to renew his contract and hired Manchester City's former title-winning manager Pellegrini in the off season last year, who led West Ham to a 10th-placed finish last season. If appointed, Moyes' first game in charge will be at home against 16th-placed Bournemouth on Wednesday. —Reuters

Stunning win for Hilal, El Kaabi bags Wydad hat-trick

JOHANNESBURG: A stunning victory for Al Hilal of Sudan and an Ayoub el Kaabi hat-trick for Wydad Casablanca of Morocco were the CAF Champions League matchday three highlights on Saturday.

Hilal won a group game in the elite African club competition for the first time after 22 failed attempts from 2007 by shocking Etoile Sahel of Tunisia 1-0 in Rades. Athar el Tahir scored the match-winner on 59 minutes by rifling a low shot past Achraf Krir and into the corner of the net after a neat three-man build-up.

The triumph lifted Hilal to first place in Group B, ahead of Al Ahly of Egypt and Etoile on head-to-head records as the three contenders have six points each. With home fixtures to come against Etoile and Ahly, a Hilal team coached by Egyptian Hamada Sedki can entertain realistic hopes of a top-two finish and a quarter-finals place. Based in Omdurman, a city on the western bank of the River Nile opposite the Sudanese capital

cross in off the post. The lead lasted just six minutes, though, as luck shined on Celtic when Callum McGregor's shot deflected in off the arm of Odsonne Edouard's hand and was not spotted by referee Kevin Clancy.

Morelos has scored 28 goals this season but has still not netted in 12 meetings against Celtic and was desperate to atone for a host of missed chances in the cup final. The Colombian had a huge chance to restore Rangers' lead early in the second half but spooned over after a brilliant low cross from Kent left the goal at his mercy. Rangers had to wait just six minutes longer to get back in front as they peppered the Celtic goal with a series of set-pieces and the pressure paid off when Katic powered home a Barisic corner.

McGregor was needed to make two big saves as Jullien threatened again from a corner before Boli Bolingoli's long-range strike was beaten away. Morelos saw red with virtually the last action of the game as he saw a second booking for diving inside the area. However, Rangers comfortably saw out the final stages to snap Celtic's 11-game winning streak in the league and set up a thrilling title race when the action resumes in the new year after a three-week winter break. — AFP

Khartoum, Hilal are trying for the 33rd time to win the top African club prize. They came closest in 1987 and 1992, losing two-leg finals against Ahly and Wydad respectively 2-0 on aggregate.

Walid Soliman, the 35-year-old Ahly veteran, scored in each half to earn the record eighth-time African champions a 2-0 win over pointless Platinum of Zimbabwe in Cairo.

Meanwhile, China-based Moroccan El Kaabi ended a loan spell at Wydad with a treble as Wydad finished 4-1 winners over Petro Luanda of Angola in an electric Casablanca atmosphere.

Against a backdrop of singing, flag-waving supporters, Wydad were stung midway through the second half when Brazilian Antonio 'Tony' Ribeiro equalised. But El Kaabi netted a second time to put Wydad ahead again on 79 minutes and completed the scoring after Wilson Carmo conceded an own-goal. —AFP

Leicester end Pellegrini's time at West Ham, Man Utd close on top four

LONDON: A much-changed Leicester inflicted the final blow of Manuel Pellegrini's time in charge of West Ham with a 2-1 win on Saturday as Manchester United closed on the Premier League's top four with a 2-0 victory at Burnley. Anthony Martial and Marcus Rashford struck late in each half to take United above Tottenham in fifth after Spurs were held 2-2 draw at Norwich. Pellegrini was sacked soon after the Hammers succumbed to a Leicester side that made nine changes after a Boxing Day thrashing by Liverpool.

Jamie Vardy was among those missing due to the birth of his daughter, but Kelechi Iheanacho and Demarai Gray made the most of their chance for a rare Premier League start by scoring either side of half-time.

"Anytime you come in if you're not playing so much you have to try and stamp your mark and get yourself in the team," said Gray, who also saw an early penalty saved by Lukasz Fabianski.

The Foxes move 10 points behind Liverpool, having played two games more, and stretch their lead in second over Manchester City to four points. Pablo Fornals levelled for the Hammers just before half-time, but a seventh defeat in nine games left them just one point above the relegation zone. "It has become clear that a change is required to get the club back on track in line with our ambitions this season," said the Hammers joint-chairman David Sullivan.

"We felt it was necessary to act now in order to give the new manager as much time as possible to try and achieve that goal."

United closed to within a point of fourth-placed Chelsea with Martial and Rashford again their talismans at Turf Moor. Martial produced a clinical finish after Andreas Pereira pounced on an error from Charlie Taylor a minute before half-time.

United had to wait till stoppage time to secure all three points when Rashford rounded off a rapid counter-attack as they kept a first clean sheet in 15 league games. "It is a big difference to get a clean sheet. It is important for us to know we can grind out results as well," said United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. Tottenham have also struggled for clean sheets under Jose Mourinho and their defensive deficiencies were again exposed by bottom-of-the-table Norwich. Mario Vrancic was afforded time and space to fire the Canaries into an early lead and only the finest of margins on a VAR review for offside denied Teemu Pukki putting Norwich 2-0 up before half-time. —AFP

25 Shiffrin cleans up in
Lienz with slalom triumph



26 Captain Paine hails teamwork
as Australia crush N Zealand



27 West Ham to reappoint Moyes
after Pellegrini sacking



Liverpool lean on VAR to edge Wolves



LIVERPOOL: Wolverhampton Wanderers' Moroccan midfielder Romain Saiss (C) sends a shot high over the bar during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Wolverhampton Wanderers at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England, yesterday. — AFP

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool continued their relentless march towards a first Premier League title in 30 years, but Jurgen Klopp's men needed the benefit of two VAR reviews to see off Wolves 1-0 at Anfield yesterday.

Sadio Mane scored the only goal three minutes before half-time as the Senegalese's strike was allowed to stand after initially being ruled out for handball against Adam Lallana.

Moments later Wolves had an equaliser scored by Pedro Neto disallowed by VAR for the tightest of off-side decisions. An 18th win in 19 Premier League games this season reestablished Liverpool's 13-point lead at the top of the table and they have a game in hand over closest challengers Leicester.

Wolves were angered even before kick-off with the scheduling that meant they travelled to the European champions just 45 hours after a thrilling 3-2 win over Manchester City.

Nuno Espirito Santo responded by making four changes with all three goalscorers from Friday — Raul Jimenez, Adam Traore and Matt Doherty — starting on the bench.

Liverpool made just one alteration from the side that thrashed Leicester 4-0 in a top-of-the-table clash on Boxing Day to open up a seemingly unassailable lead in the title race.

An extra day's rest for the hosts showed in the early stages as Mohamed Salah, Georginio Wijnaldum, Mane

and Roberto Firmino all came close. The deadlock was finally broken when Mane swept home his 14th goal of the season.

Referee Anthony Taylor ruled the goal out for handball as Lallana knocked the ball into Mane's path, but the English midfielder had instead used his shoulder and the goal was given after a lengthy VAR review.

If Wolves felt hard done by for the opener, they were rightly infuriated again in first half stoppage time when Neto's equaliser was ruled out.

Jonny was adjudged to be offside by the tiniest of margins to add to a number of Premier League goals over the past two days ruled out for the most marginal of offside calls.

Nuno was booked among the Wolves protestations, but the Portuguese coach's starting line-up meant he had weapons up his sleeve come the second half with the pace of Traore unleashed on the hour mark.

Wolves' top scorer Jimenez followed, but only after Diogo Jota's fierce strike forced Alisson Becker into a smart save. The visitors had lost just once in their previous 14 league games to move into contention for a top-four finish and they did not go down without a fight in the final stages.

Jimenez had the best chance to claim an equaliser, but was denied by a block from Joe Gomez before Joao Moutinho, Romain Saiss, Ruben Vinagre and Traore fired off target. — AFP

Chelsea sink Arsenal with late fightback

LONDON: Chelsea ruined Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta's home debut as Tammy Abraham's late strike sealed a dramatic 2-1 win after Bernd Leno's horrific blunder turned the tide in a thrilling London derby yesterday.

Leading through Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's early goal at the Emirates Stadium, Arteta was just seven minutes away from securing his first victory in his second game in charge. But Gunners goalkeeper Leno made a hash of coming to catch a free-kick and Jorginho tapped in to spark a Chelsea fightback that climaxed in Abraham firing home with three minutes left. After dominating the first half, it was a shocking but familiar collapse from Arsenal, whose lack of steel was the key element in the downfall of Arteta's predecessor Unai Emery. In their final game of the decade, Arsenal showed just how much work Arteta has to do to steer the Gunners back to respectability in his first managerial role.

After coming from behind to rescue a 1-1 draw at Bournemouth in his first match on Thursday, Arteta would have been encouraged by their bright start — but not the woe-filled meltdown that leaves Arsenal with only one win in their last 15 games in all competitions. Arsenal, 12 points adrift of the top four, have lost four consecutive home fixtures in all competitions for the first time in 60 years. They also suffered three successive top-flight home defeats for the first time since 1977. While Arteta held his head in despair after Abraham's winner, Frank Lampard's wild celebration showed Chelsea's need for the win after a difficult period of their own. Fourth placed Chelsea had lost five of their last seven league games, but a second successive away win — following their recent impressive success at Tottenham — moves them four points clear of fifth placed Manchester United.

There was no fanfare for Arteta before kick-off, the Spaniard quietly take his place on the bench to applause from Arsenal fans but without any elaborate introduction. Chelsea went close early on when Willian's quick free-kick caught Arsenal flat-footed, allowing Mason Mount to drift into space for a fierce strike that stung Leno's palms.

But, initially vibrant in possession and tireless without the ball, Arsenal exposed Chelsea's own problems at the back to take

the lead with a well-rehearsed set-piece routine in the 13th minute.

Calum Chambers was positioned perfectly to rise above Fikayo Tomori and glance Mesut Ozil's corner towards Aubameyang.

The Gabon striker, who also scored in Arteta's first game, applied the finishing touch, escaping Emerson's slack marking to guide a diving header past Kepa Arrizabalaga for his 15th goal of the season.

Arteta didn't hide his delight, fist-pumping in celebration of the first home goal of his reign. Aubameyang's goal meant Chelsea had kept just two clean sheets in their last 11 league fixtures and, with Arsenal well on top and threatening to score again, Lampard was forced to take drastic action.

In a bid to shake Chelsea out of their lethargy, Lampard hauled off Brazilian wing-back Emerson and sent on Italy midfielder Jorginho as he ditched his 3-4-3 formation after just 33 minutes.

The switch proved an inspired move but not before Mount, N'Golo Kante and Antonio Rudiger were all booked in quick succession as Chelsea used brute blunt Arsenal's momentum. Chelsea were on top in the second half and teenage debutant Tariq Lamptey led the charge when his surge ended with Abraham's shot being blocked by David Luiz. Leno's game-changing 83rd minute howler



LONDON: Arsenal's French midfielder Matteo Guendouzi (left) tangles with Chelsea's French midfielder N'Golo Kante during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Chelsea at the Emirates Stadium yesterday. — AFP

was truly farcical, the German lying with his head in his hands after his misjudgement of Mount's high free-kick allowed Jorginho to tap into the empty net. Willian broke into the

Arsenal area and crossed to Abraham, who turned unchecked by the ponderous Shkodran Mustafi to fire a cool strike under Leno. — AFP