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All birds at Rai pet market culled over bird flu fears

Kuwait bans Indian poultry and eggs, lifts ban on Mexican chicken products

Envoy delivers message to Saudi Crown Prince



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's envoy, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah, delivered a written letter from the Amir to Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Prince Mohammad bin Salman yesterday. The message dealt with the solid ties between the two brotherly countries, regional and international issues and topics of common interest. — KUNA

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti authorities destroyed scores of birds yesterday at the pet market (also known as the bird market) in Rai to prevent the spread of bird flu. The birds were culled and placed in black garbage bags, which were then taken to an undisclosed location to be incinerated. "All the birds here were slaughtered because of bird flu - we won't take any chances," said a vet, who did not give his identity pending an official announcement. Asked if bird flu is dangerous and contagious to humans, he said so far there have been no transmissions of the virus to humans. "The ministry of health will come up with a bulletin on the matter," the vet told Kuwait Times.

All the shops were forcibly closed and customers were turned away as officials from the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) worked in cooperation with the environmental police and officers from the Municipality to eradicate infected and potentially infected birds. Trucks and police cars were on standby at the market. Avian influenza (H5N1), informally known as bird flu, is a viral infection that can infect not only birds, but also humans and other animals. However, most forms of the virus are restricted to birds.

Many shop owners were shocked to hear



KUWAIT: Workers collect birds to be destroyed at the pet market in Rai yesterday. — Photo by Ben Garcia

that their birds were being destroyed. A Bangladeshi shop attendant who had hundreds of birds at his shop, said it was very unfortunate that the birds that were not sick had to be killed. "They had collected birds from many shops. One shop experienced it first, then I heard many birds fell ill and died the following day. This morning the Municipality came to check - the next thing they were killing all the birds to prevent the spread of bird flu," he said.

Kuwait last suffered a major outbreak of bird flu in 2007. On Feb 13, 2007, PAAAFR reported the initial outbreak of H5N1 in poultry in Wafra. Subsequently, 131 influenza virus infected poultry were confirmed from 20 farms throughout the country. The disease resulted in high mortality rates among infected flocks, especially in commercial broiler farms in Wafra and among poultry raised in privately owned residential homes and backyard farms.

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News in brief

By-elections on March 16

KUWAIT: The government will organize by-elections in the second and third constituencies on March 16 after the court of cassation sentenced two MPs to prison terms. The government, in a meeting chaired by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, received a letter from National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem officially declaring the seats of MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbash vacant, an official statement said. The Cabinet assigned Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah to prepare for by-elections in these constituencies on March 16. — KUNA

Expats' burial based on area

KUWAIT: The Municipal Council's technical committee approved a proposal to bury deceased expats according to the governorates they had resided in, and decided that those from Farwaniya, Hawally and Jahra would be buried in Jahra cemetery, those from the Capital would be buried in Sulaibikhat cemetery and those from Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer would be buried in Subhan cemetery. The committee shelved a proposal to shift all theaters out of residential areas and build a center to serve all areas. It also rejected a proposal to ban serving shisha in cafes and restaurants frequented by families. — Meshal Al-Enezi

Rental curbs on 'bachelors'

KUWAIT: Official Municipality sources said the 'bachelors' committee will discuss a proposal to ban renting houses to expats in private residential areas. Expats will not be allowed to reside among Kuwaiti families unless they provide marriage contracts endorsed by Kuwaiti embassies abroad or local authorities, photocopies of their wives' civil IDs, sign contracts with owners with separate civil numbers for the rented units and then register the contracts with area mayors. — A Saleh

Briton held for wearing Qatar shirt

LONDON: Britain is assisting a British national arrested in the UAE, the Foreign Office said yesterday following reports that a man was being detained for having worn a Qatar football shirt there. The Guardian newspaper reported that Ali Issa Ahmad, 26, had traveled to the UAE for a holiday, bought a ticket for the second round match between Qatar and Iraq on Jan 22 and wore a Qatar shirt to the game. — AFP

Hashem calls for taxing expatriates; Dallal slams maid recruitment offices

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Safa Al-Hashem yesterday claimed the government collects no charges from expatriates in the country. Commenting on a response to her question by Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf about value-added tax (VAT), Hashem wondered why VAT should be imposed on Kuwaitis when the government "collects nothing" from expatriates, who are three times the number of Kuwaiti citizens. Hashem has earlier called to

tax expats for the air they breathe in Kuwait and for walking on the streets.

Expatriates pay annual health insurance fees and an array of medical charges at public hospitals and clinics, and are charged 250 percent more than Kuwaitis for electricity and water consumption. They are also charged for their work permit and residence renewals, in addition to several other charges. Expatriates are only slightly more than double the number of Kuwaitis and not three times more.

"Why do you want to impose VAT on Kuwaitis while we have a defect in the demographic structure, where expatriates are three times the number of Kuwaitis and the government does not charge them one fil," she said during a National Assembly session. The lawmaker said there are 5,000 Kuwaiti debtors who are unable to repay their loans, adding that she only inquired about bad debtors and not all debtors.

Meanwhile, MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said he had asked the former minister of social affairs and labor

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KUWAIT: MP Safa Al-Hashem speaks during a National Assembly session yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Pope holds historic public mass in UAE

ABU DHABI: Pope Francis held a historic public mass for an estimated 170,000 Catholics at a stadium in the capital of the United Arab Emirates yesterday, capping the first ever papal visit to the Gulf where Islam was born. The pontiff waved at the enthusiastic crowd carrying yellow Vatican flags and banners as he rode in an open-top Popemobile into Zayed Sports City Stadium, where an altar with a large cross was set up for the unprecedented open-air service in a country that normally restricts worship to inside churches.

The UAE borders Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, but unlike its larger neighbor, which outlaws all non-Muslim places of worship, Abu Dhabi allows Christians among its large migrant workforce to practice their faith discreetly. Francis, who has made outreach to Muslim communities a cornerstone of his papacy, wrapped up his historic three-day visit with the mass.

The pope's public comments in Abu Dhabi have centered on calls to end wars across the Middle East and protect the rights of all citizens. In a homily yesterday, he turned to the tens of thousands of migrant workers living in the Emirates. "It is most certainly not easy for you to live far from home, missing the affection of your loved ones, and perhaps also feeling uncertainty about the future," the pope said.

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ABU DHABI: Pope Francis blesses a child as he arrives to lead mass at the Zayed Sports City Stadium yesterday. — AFP

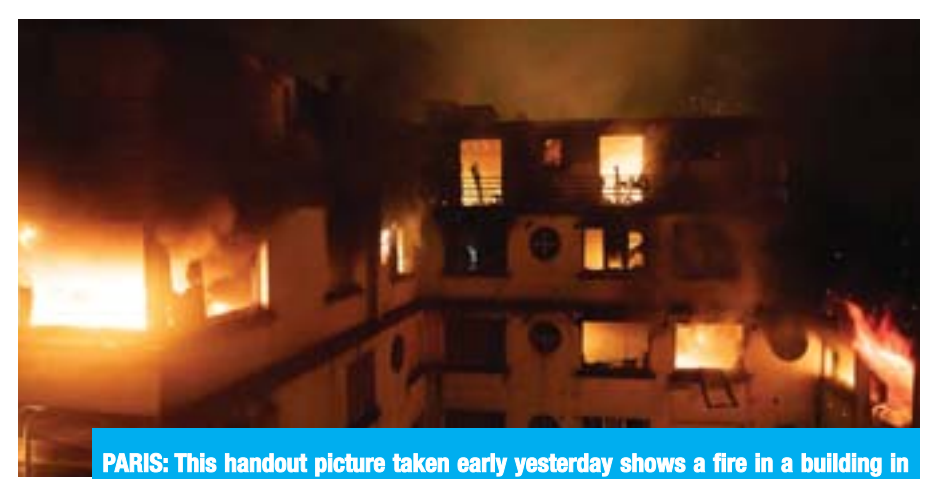
10 dead in Paris building blaze, arson suspected

PARIS: At least 10 people died and 30 were injured in an overnight blaze at an apartment block in Paris that police suspect was deliberately started by a female resident with psychological problems, officials said yesterday. The fire on the upper floors of the building on Rue Erlanger in the upscale 16th district of southwest Paris is the most deadly in the capital since 2005.

Dramatic footage from the scene showed flames shooting out of the windows and firemen climbing narrow ladders to rescue terrified residents, some dressed only in pyjamas, from the top of the eight-storey block. The blaze left at least 10 people dead and 33 injured - eight of them firefighters.

Paris prosecutor Remy Heitz said a 40-year-old woman who lived in the building and had "prior psychological problems" had been arrested near the scene, where the acrid smell of smoke still hung in the air several hours after the blaze was extinguished. The woman "appeared drunk and was trying to set a car on fire in the street when she was

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PARIS: This handout picture taken early yesterday shows a fire in a building in the 16th arrondissement. — AFP

Amir hosts Crown Prince, Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad

Amir meets Kuwait Transparency Society members



KUWAIT: 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. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. He also hosted Chairman of Kuwait Transparency Society Majed Al-Mefleh and board members. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of Kuwait Transparency Society Majed Al-Mefleh and board members.

Speaker holds official talks with Danish counterpart

KUWAIT: Speaker of Kuwait National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem held talks yesterday with Speaker of the Danish Parliament Pia Kjaersgaard and her visiting accompanying delegation. In their meeting, both sides discussed ways to enhance and strengthen bilateral relations between Kuwait and Denmark, as well as coordination at international parliamentary forums. They also discussed subjects of mutual concerns and latest developments on the regional and international scenes.

The meeting was attended by Head of the accompanying honor mission, MP Safa Al-Hashim, along with parliament members Naif Al-Ajmi, Khaled Al-Shatti, Kuwait Ambassador to Sweden and assigned to Denmark, Nabeel Al-

Dakheel, Secretary General of Kuwait National Assembly Allam Al-Kandari and the Danish ambassador to Kuwait. After the talks, Speaker Ghanem held a luncheon honoring the visiting guest and his accompanying delegation at the Grand Hall in National Assembly, which was attended by a number of MPs. Speaker of the Danish Parliament and her accompanying delegation arrived in Kuwait last Saturday on a five-day official visit.

Meanwhile, Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Industry and Commerce Ali Al-Ghanem affirmed adoption of a serious approach for boosting commercial and economic relations with Denmark. Speaking upon a reception of Kjaersgaard and her accompanying delegation, Ghanem called for more efforts to boost the Kuwaiti-Denmark relationship, through reciprocal visits to examine investment opportunities in the two countries. He noted necessity of enlightening the business community in the country about Danish business laws. In the meantime, the top Danish legislator lauded the noticeable efforts, exerted by the chamber for improving the economic relations between the two countries and called upon Kuwaiti companies to get engaged in strategic partnerships with their Danish counterparts. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Speaker of Kuwait National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem meets with his Danish counterpart Pia Kjaersgaard. — KUNA

Cabinet lauds improved anti-corruption ranking

KUWAIT: The cabinet lauded on Monday Kuwait's improved ranking in the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of 2018, which saw the country place at the 78th, a 5.1 percent improvement from the 85th spot in 2017. During its weekly meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said that Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Fahad Al-Afasi briefed the meeting on the matter. Minister Afasi quoted a report by the Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) regarding Kuwait's improved ranking. The cabinet commended the efforts by Nazaha to improve Kuwait's anti-corruption ranking, asking it to continue its action towards combating corruption.

Kuwait, among few other countries, was able to achieve progress in anti-corruption efforts, particularly in political, administrative, and economic sectors, a Transparency International's annual report said. The CPI index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and businesspeople, uses a scale of zero to 100, where zero is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean.

Meanwhile, Minister Saleh said that His Highness the Prime Minister briefed the cabinet regarding the visit by Qatari Amir Tamim Al-Thani to the country. He added that the cabinet congratulated the Qatari Amir on his country's winning the Asian Football Cup 2019 held in the UAE, expressing similar sentiments for the Emiratis for successful organization of such a prestigious tournament.

Minister Saleh said that the cabinet welcomed the safe return of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad to Kuwait, wishing him success in attending to his duties under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The cabinet ministers, said Saleh, paid tribute to former Minister of Water and Electricity Khalaf Al-Khalaf who passed away recently. The cabinet congratulated the new King of Malaysia Sultan Abdullah bin Sultan Ahmad Shah on assuming post, wishing him and his people and country evermore progress and welfare. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan for Royal Family Affairs Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah inaugurates the 13th Kuwait Formative Arts Festival. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



A general view of people attending the gallery.

13th Kuwait Formative Arts Festival kicks off

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister and Honorary Chairman of the Kuwaiti Society for Formative Arts Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, the 13th Kuwait Formative Arts Festival commenced Monday. On behalf of Sheikh Nasser, Undersecretary of the Amiri Diwan for Royal Family Affairs Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah inaugurated the event at the headquarters of the Kuwaiti Society for Formative Arts. Sheikh Sabah Nasser expressed pleasure to open this important



Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah tours the gallery.



cultural event. He voiced admiration of the participating works and the promising talent of the Kuwaiti artists. He lauded the Kuwaiti

Society for Formative Arts for supporting national artists. Sheikh Sabah Nasser honored the winners of the festival's awards.

The festival features an impressive collection of diverse 201 works of 87 male and female artists. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait predicts high demand for energy in coming two decades

OPEC meeting in April to review production cuts

By Faten Omar and KUNA

KUWAIT: Demand for energy is forecast to edge up by 33 percent in the coming two decades, anticipated CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Hashem Hashem, citing recent OPEC figures. Hashem made the remark in a speech he delivered on behalf of Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Khaled Al-Fadhel during the fifth annual GCC Energy Strategy Forum, hosted by the KPC yesterday. He expected the share of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in global oil supplies to shoot up to 36 percent by 2040 from 34 percent in 2017. He noted that for the third year, global investment in energy dipped to \$1.8 trillion in 2017.

Hashem revealed that a ministerial meeting of OPEC member states and producers will be held in April to review the performance of the production cut agreement in general. He noted that the world's oil supply is facing the risk of continued decline in Venezuelan crude oil in 2019 at a faster pace than current projections. "The (US President Donald) Trump administration on Monday sanctioned Venezuela's state-owned oil company, ratcheting up pressure on socialist President Nicolas Maduro to cede power to the US-backed opposition in the oil-rich nation in South America," he said. Hashem pointed out that the fears may lead to an atmosphere of stagnation of the global economy, which will increase the volatility of prices during 2019. "The industry outlook supports the growing demand

for oil in the short term, compared to current crude oil prices and the price curve path," he added.

He predicted that the current production cut agreement will rebalance the markets, as OPEC and non-OPEC producers agreed to cut production by 1.2 million barrels per day from January. "Despite the growth of the global economy in 2018, it is experiencing signs of a slowdown this year due to a combination of factors, including rising interest rates in the United States and the prospects of a US-China trade war, as well as volatility in equity markets."

Meanwhile, Hashem reassured that the strategic plans of the Kuwaiti oil sector until 2040 cover the development of various activities and shore up the Kuwaiti economy by means of creating jobs, training young people and boosting their technical capabilities, and going ahead with financial diversification blueprints. KPC is eager to fulfill the international criteria of high-quality and environmentally friendly oil byproducts, while expanding refining operations so as to meet local demand for energy, the KPC's CEO echoed.

24.7 million barrels a day

Secretary-General of the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) Abbas Al-Naqi addressed the event by saying that member states own roughly 705 billion barrels of oil, which make up 47.9 percent of the world's oil reserves. The quota of the OPEC's Gulf member states constitute around 33.7 percent of global oil stocks, Naqi added.

OPEC members produce 24.7 million barrels of oil per day, which make up roughly 28 percent of global output, while Gulf member states share about 21 percent of the world's production, he remarked. The OPEC chief predicted member states to boost their refining capacity by 1.9 million barrels per day following the setting up of new refineries in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Algeria and UAE, not to mention refinery production expansions in Bahrain and Egypt.

At the event, global energy issues were addressed, discussing energy transformation, current and future developments in the petroleum industry in OPEC member countries, regional market, global outlook, transformation of the petrochemical industry for a more sustainable era and new methods for financing energy projects and investment opportunities.

On the sidelines of the forum, Kuwait Times spoke with Richard Lucas, Resident Managing Director Holman Fenwick Willan (HFV) and a defense and infrastructure projects' lawyer. Lucas moderated the discussion panel about 'New Methods for Financing Energy Projects and Investment Opportunities'. "Our office in Kuwait, which was founded three years ago, gives advice to investors, contractors, sponsors, and governments here in Kuwait in the same way of our method in UAE or UK offices in industry sectors," he said.

Attractive market

Lucas affirmed that the Kuwaiti market is attracting investors because of its friendly

and secure environment. "We think it is important to grow our office here in Kuwait, and there are plans to cooperate with other lawyers to join us. We are involved more in the Kuwaiti market, where we are cooperating with both the public and private sectors." Lucas also provides counsel on a wide range of commercial contracts, including specialist purchase and supply agreements, service agreements and maintenance contracts, outsourcing and procurement agreements and IT contracts, where the clients range from government entities to global corporations, as well as large, medium and small corporations. He has decades of experience advising clients on defense contracting and complex infrastructure projects. He acts for many of the world's major defense contractors on a wide range of international defense procurement where he is familiar with all the latest procurement techniques, ranging from outright acquisition to third-party financed transactions to the provision of services under detailed performance measurement systems. He has significant experience of offset, outsourcing, intellectual property and technology transfer.

Andy Brogan, Partner, Global Oil and Gas Transaction Advisory Services Leader at Ernst & Young (EY), said: "The company engages in helping clients to take the decisions where to spend money and help in the implementation of technology." His company is a big player in this field, and helps clients deliver successful mergers, acquisitions and partnerships and to raise capital to support their ongoing growth and trans-



KUWAIT: CEO of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) Hashem Hashem speaks during the fifth annual GCC Energy Strategy Forum yesterday. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

formation.

Brogan has advised large and small firms as well as governments on corporate strategy, mergers and acquisitions, divestitures, valuations, deal structuring, bid negotiation, and financing. He has been with EY for over 25 years, during which he has worked on a wide range of acquisition, divestment and IPO projects across the energy and resources sectors. His clients have included Saudi Aramco, BP, Gazprom, BHP Billiton, Royal Dutch Shell, BG Group, SOCAR, RWE, ONGC, Carlyle International Energy partners, LetterOne, as well as the governments of China, Greece, Sri Lanka, Kazakhstan and the UAE.

Zain showcases available vacancies to CBA graduates

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the career fair and freshmen week organized by Kuwait University's College of Business Administration (CBA). The event was held under the patronage of the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamid Al-Azmi and the attendance of the College of Business Administration's Dean Dr Meshari Al-Hajri.

Zain's ongoing support to the various career fairs held in public and private universities all year long is part of the company's keenness in offering job opportunities to young national talents, especially in the telecommunications industry, which is considered one of the most vital fields operating in the Kuwaiti private sector.

Through Zain's dedicated booth, the company's Human Resources Division showcased the available full-time job vacancies, the company's human resources

policy, Zain's working environment, the nature of work at the various departments and divisions, as well as the available vacancies for undergraduates to work in part-time jobs as part of Zain's Future University Network (FUN) program.

During the event, Zain's Corporate Communications and Relations and Human Resources teams presented a seminar about the company's long experience in public relations and its leading experience in the telecommunications industry, as well as the Zain's strategy for developing its own human resources. Zain offers career incentives that assure the highest levels of quality and productivity, in addition to having a focused human resources development strategy for national talents.

Zain firmly believes in the importance of educational development, as it is essential for individuals to then go-on to be successful and contributing members of society. Career fairs play a big role in exposing bright and optimistic youth who are looking for job opportunities in the various industries within the local private sector.

Zain is committed to playing an active role in the investment of the Kuwaiti human capital. The company seeks to provide young and eager Kuwaitis with suitable job opportunities that allow them to apply their practical skills, achieve their potential, and fully develop their capabilities.



KUWAIT: The College of Business Administration's Dean Dr Meshari Al-Hajri with Zain's team at the company's booth during the career fair.

Nearly 150 projects participate in Maker Faire Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: One hundred forty seven projects from 13 countries out of 500 projects that registered were chosen to participate in the third edition of Maker Faire Kuwait. The exhibition is being held at Kuwait International Fairground's Hall 8 from Feb 5 to 9, 2019, organized by Kuwait Investment Company (KIC) under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The participating projects are from various fields, with 61 technology projects including electronics, mechanical, virtual reality and applications; 60 projects from the arts field and including clay carving, sand carving, woodcrafts and metal sculpture; 14 educational projects and 12 musical and traditional projects.

This is the largest international festival hosting



A boy interacts with a robot at the event.

technological, technical and educational industries in Kuwait. It is the largest exhibition of its kind in the Middle East, especially after the number of participants and manufacturers increased by 40 percent this year. "The activities this year include programs and workshops that exhibit special projects of young creators over a total area of 8,000 square meters," Chairman of KIC Dr Youssef Al-Ali said during the opening ceremony yesterday.

Ali pointed out the exhibition was able to make an imprint on the map of global exhibitions, like other countries where the Maker Faire is organized. "The exhibition has embraced the energies and talents of citizens and participants from the region, Europe and America to exhibit their projects in the areas of technology, arts and education, which contribute to the growth of various industry sectors. The exhibition also has an active and influential role to promote and accelerate development in the country," he added.

Factory owners can meet young talents at this event. "I noticed a great development of industries and crafts in this fair," Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan said after launching the fair. "Many of them started as a hobby, and today they are practicing it as a business and a source of livelihood. The government is supporting these talents and industries by providing facilities for them. I invite people to visit the Maker Faire and see the creative work of the participants."

Ali said Maker Faire Kuwait is considered as a means of communication between manufacturers and various government departments. "This fair makes all efforts to keep pace with our world today, providing opportunities for direct access to the latest and up-to-date projects and technical innovations in technology and crafts, which confirms the leadership of KIC in both social and economic investment to contribute to the development and progress of our beloved country," he explained.

"Maker Faire Kuwait 2019 is one of Kuwait's most important investment initiatives, which aims to establish its leadership in the concept of sustainable social development. This exhibition is the cornerstone of the slogan "Made in Kuwait" through promoting Kuwaiti products made entirely by Kuwaiti hands at the exhibition in the past two years," Ali added.



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan tours the third edition of Maker Faire Kuwait yesterday. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



A participant paints a portrait of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



A man is seen next to handicrafts displayed at the exhibition.

Local



Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf officially inaugurates the new slaughterhouse. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and KUNA



Mawashi Chairman Bader Al-Subaei presents a memento to Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf.

Livestock Trading Company opens new Capital governorate slaughterhouse

Largest in the Middle East over a total area of 94,000 square meters

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Livestock Transport and Trading Company (Mawashi) yesterday launched the new Capital governorate slaughterhouse and central livestock market located over a total area of 94,000 square meters in Rai, the largest in the Middle East. Mawashi Chairman Bader Al-Subaei said that the project was executed in 21 months and delivered on schedule and has been operating since Aug 2018 on a trial basis. Subaei added that the project is an integrated one in terms of commercial and other services it provides, noting that besides the automated and manual slaughtering halls, the project includes commercial stores providing various services. "The slaughterhouse has the capacity of 18,000 heads a day," he underlined.

Mawashi CEO Osama Boodai explained that the project comprises of a main building, offices, stores a livestock market, covered auction hall, covered barns, loading and unloading area, warehouses and freezers, 400 parking spaces and a mosque for 400 worshippers, in addition to other facilities. Boodai announced that on the occasion of opening the new slaughterhouse, customers who purchase sheep till the end of Feb would get free slaughtering and cutting services.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Livestock Transport and Trading Company's new Capital governorate slaughterhouse and central livestock market.

Court overrules charity society's dissolution order

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Social Affairs' assistant undersecretary for legal affairs Musallam Al-Subaei announced that the court of first instance yesterday annulled the ministry's decision to dissolve Al-Salam charity society, but stressed that the sentence was initial and non-binding. Subaei said the ministry will review the verdict and file an appeal to contest it.

Bedoons exempted

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fareed Emadi issued a directive exempting bedoons working for the ministry on monthly payment basis from getting unpaid annual leaves. Notably, the ministry's administrative resolution number 1424/2018 stated that all those working for the ministry on monthly payment basis will get a one month of unpaid annual leave.

Terminal 2

In collaboration with Ministry of Public Works (MPW) and the executing Turkish company Limak, a committee has been formed to manage the requirements of Kuwait Airport's new Terminal 2 (T2) due to be completed by 2022. Informed sources at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said the DGCA is about to sign a contract with an international advisor or operators to run T2 three years prior to its actual operation so that it conforms with international laws and systems. The sources added that in collaboration with Central Agency for Public Tenders (CAPT), the DGCA is currently studying offers of international advisors who have applied to execute the project.

Vessels inspection

As part of the Ministry of Services' efforts to develop a system to inspect foreign vessels in Kuwaiti national waters, and in implementation of the Riyadh memorandum of understanding, the marine transport department recently inspected all foreign vessels visiting Kuwaiti ports to make sure they are committed to international agreements and pacts issued by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Notably, the Riyadh memo of understanding has been signed by all GCC states to ban subpar vessels that might jeopardize maritime safety and the Arabian Gulf marine environment. Accordingly, MOC's transport sector held special training courses for GCC marine inspectors in Kuwait and is currently working on creating the new position of 'marine investigators' to investigate possible pollution resulting from various ships and vessel collisions. The new jobs will also include marine surveyors to inspect local vessels.

Crimes

Search for driver behind fatal crash

KUWAIT: A motorist was killed and another was injured in a three-way vehicle accident on Fourth Ring Road, while the driver who allegedly caused the crash has disappeared. Police responded to a call about the accident along with ambulances and fire engines. Forensic experts were called in to check the body of the victim, an Egyptian man, and take it to the coroner. A security source said the person who caused the accident escaped, but eyewitnesses gave police his car's license plate number, which was found to be in the name of a Saudi national.

Govt seals sold in Jleeb market

Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh cleaning center found seals of government employees in a makeshift market in the area. Military uniforms and epaulets were also found in the same market, and investigations are underway. Subsidized products and counterfeit items are usually sold in such markets.

Kidnap

A Kuwaiti woman told police someone pulled out her friend from her car and drove away with her. Police are working on identifying the kidnapper, as they have his car's plate number.

Theft

A woman pulled a knife against an Iranian man and took KD 400 from him inside a lift in Hawally. The man told police that a woman asked him to help her carry a gas cylinder from her apartment, and when obliged, she drew a knife and threatened to kill him. The man said that the woman, who was wearing an abaya, grabbed the money and escaped.

Storming

An Indian man stormed into his sponsor's neighbor's house in anger, accusing a child of pelting an egg on his head. He was taken to the police station and charged with entering a house with the intention of committing a crime.

Murder threat

A Kuwaiti man accused his brother of threatening him with a firearm in his house. The citizen went to Sabah Al-Salem police station and told them his brother stormed the house and threatened to kill him, then escaped. Police are looking for the suspect for questioning. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai and Al-Qabas

Mercenaries in conflicts threaten int'l security: Kuwait

NEW YORK: Kuwait reaffirmed that the usage of mercenaries is considered a threat to international and regional security. Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi said, in a speech titled 'Mercenary activities as a source of unsettlement in Africa' before the UN Security Council, that this case is 'complicated' as it is connected to several relevant issues that are scheduled on the Council's agenda.

Otaibi indicated that the different activities that mercenaries conduct in conflicts are considered illegal and contradict with international law. "Those activities lack moral, human and legal bases and they without a doubt have no consideration to international agreements during war times," Otaibi said. "Mercenaries target civilian facilities and commit war crimes, unfortunately, some governments hire those groups to create chaos and



Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi

instigate anarchy," he stressed.

"Reports indicate that the rise of poverty and unemployment figures are the reasons behind people turning into mercenaries. Those reports show that the wages mercenaries receive range between \$500 to \$1,000, and sometimes \$2,000 a day. The number of mercenaries have reached about 20 million, which is considered an alarming figure," Otaibi pointed out. — KUNA

Dasman Diabetes Institute holds scientific lectures

KUWAIT: Dasman Diabetes Institute (DDI), founded by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, has recently held two scientific lectures titled 'The Effect of Diabetes Mellitus on the Human Ocular Surface' which was delivered by Dr Sajjad Ahmad,

from the University College London, in the UK. The other lecture was titled 'Current Advances in Exosome Isolation for Research and Clinical Applications' which was delivered by Dr Tiago Ramos, from the University College London. The two lectures were held consecutively on the same day, and were well attended by many healthcare professionals from the Ministry of Health, Kuwait University and many other academic and health institutions around Kuwait. Holding such up-to-date advanced lectures stem from the Dasman Diabetes Institute's mission to shed light and take part in all the efforts exerted to tackle diabetes and its related conditions.



KUWAIT: Fahd Al-Mulla, Chief Scientific Officer at DDI, D. Hamad Yaseen from DDI with the guest speakers from UCL.

PIC signs deal for Canadian polypropylene plant

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) has clinched a major contract worth \$3.2 billion for a project to turn propane into plastic, which will deliver world prices to land-locked western Canadian oil and gas producers. The joint venture with Canada's Pembina Pipeline is among the Kuwaiti petrochemical firm's first foreign forays, the company said in a statement yesterday. The project will help solidify Kuwait's position as a world-class petrochemical hub, which fits into KPIC's plans of seeking more exposure abroad, the statement added. The plants' plastic pellets will be shipped to manufacturers around the world to be turned into recyclable products used in automobiles, medical devices, food packaging and home electronic appliances. — KUNA

Local

Conference discusses up-to-date discoveries in obstetrics, gynecology

Gynecology improved in Kuwait, continues to implement new guidelines



KUWAIT: CEO of Central Circle Company Dr Ziad Al-Alyan poses for a group photo with Central Circle Company staff. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The 23rd Kuwait Annual Obstetrics and Gynecology Conference at Four Seasons Hotel continued yesterday with exhibitions, workshops and seminars. The event, which kicked off on Sunday, is a comprehensive four-day event aiming to discuss the most up-to-date scientific discoveries in the world of obstetrics and gynecology. The conference has invited various international and regional senior medical professionals, distinguished scholars and government and private sector medical professionals from Kuwait, the Gulf Cooperation Council and

the Arab countries that are actively involved in the field of obstetrics and gynecology.

Dr Amal Ayed, the Head of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at Farwaniya Hospital, said the scientific forums include plenary sessions, oral presentations and interactive debate sessions to give participants the chance to share the latest experiences and advancements in the field. Hands-on training workshops will also be held in conjunction with the conference. "We have invited more than 11 international speakers from the US, Europe, Middle East and Asia to the conference and workshops. We have set 10 sessions during the four



Dr Abeer Al-Zaydai

days of the conference. We have showcased the latest technological



Dr Cristina Cura

developments in the field of obstetrics and gynecology," she added.

Dr Abeer Al-Zaydai, consultant obstetrician and head gynecologist at Al-Adan Hospital, said this conference is very important for gynecologists. "We are doing this to help improve women's health. We see here lots of advancement and updates in the field. We will follow the standard practice and will change things that are already not included in international guidelines," she said. According to her, gynecology in Kuwait has improved a lot and continues to implement new guidelines.

"With the support and cooperation of medical engineering, we have gone through lots of miracle after miracle in the field.

Nowadays, with a small tube for example, we can see the disease or problem internally and can give patients the necessary medicines. This is the wonder of medical science engineering. We intend to make a difference in women's health," she noted.

Dr Cristina Cura, MD, FDOGS, was elated to be attending the seminars and workshops yesterday. "I will be attending more seminars because this conference is really a must. These kinds of seminars add value to our skills and expertise, especially after seeing all the updates in the technology being used in the field. I thank the organizers for inviting me," she said.



Dr Amal Ayed, the Head of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department at Farwaniya Hospital (left), speaks during a tour at the exhibition.



CEO of Central Circle Company Dr Ziad Al-Alyan discusses the latest technologies with Health Ministry officials.

KAC opens new Oasis Club office

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation's (KAC) chairman Yousuf Al-Jassem yesterday launched the new Oasis Club office at Rakan Tower on Fahad Al-Salem Street in downtown Kuwait City. The new office is fully equipped with the latest technologies and comfortably furnished to fit the Oasis (Waha) Club card holders.

Speaking on the occasion, Jassem said that the renovations come within KAC's strategy to develop its services, adding that the club had always been an effective KAC service center. Furthermore, he noted that KAC had been awarded the MasterCard's best

service provider award in GCC states.

Further, Jassem said that Oasis Club card holders can use their cards in upgrading their tickets from economy to business class, adding that holders of the golden and silver cards have access to Terminal 4's first and business class 'Bayan Lounge'.

The opening ceremony was also attended by Jassem's consultant for general and executive affairs Abdullah Al-Sharhan, CEO's assistant for commercial affairs Dr Maria Hanna, public relations and media manager Fayeza Al-Enezi and marketing manager Shuroq Al-Awadhi.



KFH launches first national celebrations ad

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched its annual ad on the occasion of the national celebrations, being the first bank to take part in these celebrations. The ad which is titled 'Kuwait is beautiful with its people' targets to preserve this precious occasion, keeping its flag waving. It also marks the appreciation of blessings, security and safety that we live in and emphasizes the wisdom of its leadership that made this country as a symbol of humanity. The ad highlights the role of young Kuwaitis in raising the country as part of comprehensive efforts for developments in all fields.

The ad emphasizes the role of the young Kuwaitis, as being the future of our nation and the wellbeing of its development. It incarnates the efforts of police officers and the military personnel who play major role in the stability of the country. The ad sheds light on the values of science, charitable work, family cohesion, social relations and unity among Kuwaitis. These signs are important for an outstanding community that is built on appreciation of work and creativity and strong belief in God.

The celebration began with the flag of Kuwait waving high, on a straight lighted path, the stability of Kuwait's existence and the values of its people firmly rooted in the world. Then, an image is revealed of the advertising message based on the presentation of beauty and elements of strength and forms of goodness in people in an impressive image. The beautiful image emphasizes the need to pre-



serve the country and its people showing our flag as it shines above the mast, or the center of light above a mountain. While the country is combined with joy and splendor with overlapping beautiful colors, word and movement, to deepen the atmosphere of satisfaction, happiness and pride in this country. In addition, animated footage from several places were shown that focus on the efforts of citizens everywhere, we pray the lord to maintain these blessings on us and on our beloved country.

The ad also calls for deepening the values of citizenship, encouraging optimism and promoting community giving. The ad encourages developing ties and solidarity among the citizens of the nation, while affirming that Kuwait stands with fixed values and caregiving that will continue to work hard in order to maintain all the development aspects of life. This will result in a happier society secured by God's blessing, then by the care and work of its people.





We are not a 'political tool': Afghan women on peace talks

Greek PM visits Turkey for talks to ease tensions



BAGHOUZ: Civilians fleeing fighting between Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and Islamic State (IS) jihadists in the frontline Syrian village of Baghuz, await to be screened and registered by the SDF in the countryside of the eastern Syrian Deir Ezzor province. — AFP

Syrian civilians escape IS but not death

'Many have died. No one weeps for the dead anymore'

BAGHOUZ: Umra Abbas Ammour, 60, dreamt of safety as she and her family fled jihadists in eastern Syria, but hours after reaching US-backed forces her son, daughter and granddaughter were all dead. In recent weeks, thousands have escaped the last pocket of land held by the Islamic State group near the Iraqi border, seeking refuge in territory held by US-backed forces.

"We try to escape death then, when we go out, we find death in front of us," said Ammour, who hails from the Iraqi province of Anbar. Ammour is just one of several to say they were hit while attempting to flee into areas controlled by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces. The victims, mostly wounded by a bombardment more than one week ago, say they could not identify the source of the fire.

"We were carrying our belongings and on our way when a mortar round hit. My son died on the spot," said Ammour, a gold earring visible below her black headscarf. Her daughter was wounded by shrapnel, she said. In SDF-held territory, the grandmother sits behind a truck feeding her two-year-old grandson, after the death of his 40-year-old father Zuheir. Inside the vehicle, her daughter too lies dead, having received no

medical treatment.

Israa, 24, died just hours after the family arrived at an SDF checkpoint. "Many have died. No one weeps for the dead anymore," Ammour said, before tears started rolling down her cheeks. SDF fighters buried her daughter's corpse in a nearby plot, where four other civilians who died escaping IS are also laid to rest. Within hours, Ammour's granddaughter also died, from a wound to the stomach.

'Is he critical?'

After weeks of advancing steadily, the SDF halted their ground assault on IS's tiny remaining enclave last week, saying the jihadists were increasingly using civilians as human shields. But artillery fire by the SDF and air strikes by the US-led coalition continue to target the jihadists. On the dusty ground, six-year-old Mohammed shivers and groans, an IV tube attached to his arm and a white bandage wrapped around his head.

"Hammoudi! Hammoudi!" his mother Amani yells, using a nickname for her son, tears flowing down her black face veil. "Is his condition critical?" she asks a medic trying to keep him awake. She and her five chil-

dren first tried to leave IS territory last week, fleeing intense shelling, as well as food and medicine shortages. But the family was hit by a mortar round as they crossed. Four of her children were lightly wounded, but Mohammed sustained critical injuries to his head.

They were forced to return to IS-held areas without medical treatment, before finally escaping on Sunday. "Someone drove me to a particular point and then I carried Mohammed in my arms" to the SDF checkpoint, she said. A humanitarian service that sends medical teams into conflict zones, The Free Burma Rangers, transported him to a hospital.

More than 36,000 people, mostly women and children from jihadist families, have fled IS territory since the SDF and its coalition supporters intensified their offensive against the jihadists in December, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says. They also include some 3,200 jihadists, the Britain-based war monitor says.

'Outside this world'

At a gathering point for those who have fled, SDF forces separate men suspected of being jihadists from the civilians. The women sit on the floor, waiting to be

transported to the Al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria. They open relief packages distributed by SDF fighters and feed their children. Some ask for nappies for their infants, while others ask when they will leave after spending a night in the cold desert.

Iman Aswad, 20, places one of her toddlers on her lap and feeds him. She sits beside her crutches, her leg, which was injured by mortar fire, extended across the floor. "There is nothing there. No medicine, no treatment and not even hospitals," she said, referring to IS-held areas. Amal Al-Soussah, the 20-year-old widow of a Lebanese IS sniper, says conditions in IS-held areas are deplorable. "People are living on the streets. Those who are hit by shells stay on the ground until they bleed out and die," she said.

Safaa Hamdou, a 24-year-old woman from then countryside outside Syria's second city Aleppo, also rests her wounded legs. "Ten days ago, IS fired at us as we were trying to escape," she said. "One bullet punctured my leg but did not hit the bone, while another broke the bone in my other leg." Safaa, a mother of two, asks what the date is. "I'm exhausted. I feel like I'm outside this world," she said. — AFP

British crash investigators plan 'operation' on Sala's plane

LONDON: British crash investigators told AFP yesterday they were planning "an underwater operation" in the next couple of days on the wreckage of a plane carrying Argentine footballer Emiliano Sala in the Channel. "There is still an ongoing operation gathering evidence," said a spokesman for the Air Accident Investigations Branch.

Asked whether an attempt would be made to recover the aircraft and the unidentified body that a remotely operated vehicle found on board, he said only: "An underwater operation will be conducted over the next couple of days". The shipwreck hunter who found the remains of the plane on Sunday urged the authorities to urgently recover the body. "Time is of the essence when you're talking about a body, so really it's imperative that they proceed with the recovery of the plane and the body," David Mearns said.

Mearns was hired by Sala's family to find the light aircraft after it disappeared near the British island of Guernsey on January 21, with the 28-year-old footballer and pilot David Ibbotson on board. He found the wreckage on Sunday, before the AAIIB took over the



A picture shows flowers put in front of the entrance of the training center La Joneliere in La Chapelle-sur-Erdre on January 25, 2019, four days after the plane of Argentine forward Emiliano Sala vanished during a flight from Nantes, western France. — AFP

operation. They revealed on Monday that a body had been found at the site.

"Finding it is just the starting point. The AAIIB has got to investigate it... The best outcome for the families would be to find the plane and recover both bodies," Mearns said. "As tragic as the loss is, it's made much, much worse if the body is never recovered or they never get an answer to what happened." He is back at his home in England, but confirmed that AAIIB divers are currently on the site,

trying to establish what to do next.

"You have to see whether you can lift the plane without disturbing the body and also making sure that you're picking it all up," he said. The discovery of two seat cushions on the French coast last week revealed that the plane was broken, Mearns added. "It's in one area (on the seabed), it's all one mass, but some bits may not be connected. So what you don't want to do is to disturb the body in a way that you lose it," he said. — AFP

Tomb of Karl Marx vandalized

LONDON: Vandals have smashed and defaced the London tomb of Karl Marx in what the cemetery said appeared to be a deliberate attack against the philosopher's ideology. A marble plaque with the names of Marx and his family — the monument's oldest and most fragile part — was repeatedly hit with a blunt metal instrument, Ian Dungavell, who runs the cemetery trust, said yesterday. The damage was discovered on Monday, he said.

"The name of Karl Marx seems to have been particularly singled out, so it wasn't just a random smashing up of a monument — it seems a very targeted attack on Karl Marx," said Dungavell, chief executive of the Friends of Highgate Cemetery Trust, the charity which runs the graveyard. German revolutionary philosopher Marx moved to London in 1849 and

lived in the British capital for the rest of his life. He died on March 14, 1883, aged 64. The granite slab monument in north London, 12 feet tall and topped with a bronze bust of Marx, was funded in 1956 by the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The inset marble plaque that has been damaged came from the original simpler grave. The lettering and stonework was damaged, particularly around Marx's name, the date of his wife's death and the name of their grandson Harry Longuet, who died aged four. "The idea that you can disagree with someone's thoughts by smashing up a monument seems a particularly inarticulate way of going about debate," said Dungavell. The monument has been attacked before.

The bust has been pulled off, it was attacked with a pipe bomb in the 1970s and it has been daubed with paint and slogans. "It's battle-scarred and has all the marks of a rich and varied life," said Dungavell. "It's not irreparable but it will never be the same again." The tomb is a Grade I-listed monument, meaning it is among the most important sites in Britain that must be protected and preserved as a heritage asset. — AFP

International

New York jury weighs the fate of Mexican drug kingpin 'El Chapo'

Guzman faces possible life in prison if found guilty of the 10 felony charges

NEW YORK: A New York jury began deliberating the fate of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman Monday after a three month drug trial that laid bare the loves, schemes and escapes of Mexico's most famous drug lord. The 12 jurors met behind closed doors to consider the mountain of evidence presented by the prosecution and decide Guzman's guilt or innocence.

Accused of smuggling tons of cocaine, heroin, methamphetamines and marijuana into the United States over a 25 year period, Guzman faces possible life in prison if found guilty of the 10 felony charges against him. Besides drug trafficking, they include money-laundering and illegal weapons possession charges. Journalists, huddled in sleeping bags against the cold, camped overnight outside the Brooklyn federal court to assure a seat in Judge Brian Cogan's courtroom.

The trial has unfolded like a real-life telenovela with Guzman's former beauty queen wife in the audience and a parade of her husband's lovers and henchmen taking the witness stand as the onetime head of the Sinaloa cartel looked on. Before instructing the jury, Cogan asked whether any of them had read or heard about an "offensive or suspect article" related to the trial.

He was referring to a prosecution document, leaked after last week's closing arguments, that quotes one of the 14 prosecution witnesses, former Colombian drug trafficker Alex Cifuentes, as saying that Chapo, 61, drugged and raped girls as young as 13, regarding them as "vitamins" to stay young. Guzman, dressed in a dark suit and tie, listened quietly to the court proceedings, alert to his surroundings as he has been from the first day.

His young wife, Emma Coronel, who attended every day of the trial, arrived shortly after the start of deliberations. Cifuentes made no mention of the alleged rapes during his four days of testimony against his former associate. The jury, which is forbidden to read or listen to media reports about the trial, cannot take the leaked document into account in reaching a verdict.

An abundance of evidence

After questioning the jurors, Cogan decided to press ahead. "I have no opinion on the verdict you'll have to reach," Cogan told the jurors. "I have no dog in this fight." "Remember you took an oath ... to reach a verdict solely based on the evidence," he said. In his closing arguments on Thursday, Guzman's lawyer Jeffrey Lichtman asked the jury not to convict on the basis of the "garbage" testimony of government witnesses.

Lichtman contended that Guzman was merely a "scapegoat," and that the real culprit in the drug trafficking operations was Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, the co-founder of the Sinaloa cartel. "Mayo has been the largest narco-trafficker for decades in Mexico. He has never been arrested. He has paid hundreds of millions of dollars to stay free," Lichtman said. The government, meanwhile, appealed to the jury not to let Guzman escape — an allusion to his two spectacular jail breaks in Mexico, the last one in 2015 through a tunnel from a shower area in his cell.

"Do not let him escape responsibility. Hold him accountable for his crimes. Find him guilty on all counts," US assistant attorney Andrea Goldberg said in her closing arguments on Wednesday. During the trial, the government presented 56 witnesses and troves of



NEW YORK: Emma Coronel Aispuro (C), wife of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, and attorney for Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, Eduardo Balarezo (R), depart the US Federal Courthouse February 4, 2019 in Brooklyn. — AFP

incriminating materials, including intercepted calls between Guzman and his associates, and conversations taped secretly by informants.

The defense's strategy centered on attacking the credibility of the cooperating witnesses — former secretaries, pilots, cocaine suppliers, Guzman's top trafficker in the United States, a manager, an accountant, a

former communications chief, and even a former lover. Most are serving prison sentences and hoped to have their penalties reduced in return for their cooperation with prosecutors. "Those witnesses not only admitted to lying every day of their lives, their miserable, selfish lives — they lied to you here in the courtroom," Lichtman said. — AFP

Can Trump use govt 'emergency powers' to build border wall?

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has indicated he could declare a national emergency in order to force the construction of hundreds of miles of border wall to prevent migrants from crossing into the United States illegally from Mexico. Trump is frustrated by the continuing high level of migrants, mostly from Central America, crossing the border and seeking asylum, with more than 50,000 a month detained during the final three months of 2018. Congress has refused to allocate the \$5.7 billion he wants for the wall, but there remain deep questions over whether he has the prerogatives to take the "emergency" route.

Trump does have emergency powers

The National Emergencies Act allows the president to declare a national emergency, providing a specific reason for it. That then allows the mobilization of hundreds of dormant emergency powers under other laws. Those can permit the White House to declare martial law, suspend civil liberties, expand the military, seize property and restrict trade, communications and financial transactions.

Every recent president has used the NEA, and more than two dozen states of emergency are currently active, renewed annually. President George W. Bush invoked it after the September 11, 2001 Al-Qaeda attacks to expand the military beyond what was budgeted, and to undertake secret surveillance and employ interrogation methods on detainees widely denounced as torture.

President Barack Obama declared an emergency in 2009 over the swine flu threat, giving authorities and hospitals extra powers to act quickly against the outbreak. An NEA emer-



A man carries water near the US-Mexico border fence in Tijuana, Baja California State, Mexico. — AFP

gency in place since 1979 has restricted trade with Iran. Another, dating to 2006, blocks property of people who were deemed to be undermining democracy in Belarus.

Powers, funds limited

But the powers are not unlimited, and can be blocked by Congress and the courts. During the Korean War in 1952, President Harry Truman sought to take over US steel factories when industry workers planned a strike. The steel companies sued and the Supreme Court ruled in their favor, saying emergency powers did not allow the president to seize privately-owned plants to avert a strike.

In the case of the wall, Trump can expect legal pushback from private landowners along the border opposed to a wall on their land. If Trump declares a national emergency, he could deploy more manpower to the border. But to build a wall, he would still have to find billions of dollars to fund it. One emergency law permits the president to order "military construction projects" with money already available in the Pentagon budget. Trump reportedly might seek to divert money from ongoing Army Corps of Engineers projects to the wall. "I'm concerned that if the president does a national

emergency, where is he going to get the money?" Democratic Senator Debbie Stabenow told MSNBC last week. "I'm sure that there will be lawsuits."

Challenge from Congress

The NEA gives Congress the right to immediately challenge a presidential emergency declaration, and Democrats have warned they will do so. Given that Congress has already declined to fund the wall, a challenge would likely quickly pass the House, which is led by Democrats. Then the Republican-controlled Senate would have to decide whether they agree with the president's invocation of emergency powers to build a wall for which they haven't given him money.

Over the past month, a handful of Republicans have signaled their opposition to the president's hardline tactics to fund the wall. Republican Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell is said to have privately warned Trump against a declaration. But on Saturday, another senior Republican, Senator Lindsey Graham, tweeted that it appears Trump "has no other option" and that Republicans "need to get behind President Trump emergency declaration to build wall/barrier." — AFP

Yemen foes in new talks on troubled prisoner swap deal

AMMAN: Yemen's Saudi-backed government began a new round of UN-brokered talks with Shiite Houthi rebels in Jordan yesterday on a troubled prisoner swap deal that mediators say hangs in the balance. The huge prisoner exchange agreed in Stockholm in December is seen as a crucial confidence-building measure in the UN-led push to bring the warring sides to negotiations on ending four years of devastating conflict.

Both sides have said repeatedly they remain committed to the agreement that could see thousands of prisoners released by each side. During two days of talks in the Jordanian capital last month, they submitted lists of the detainees they each want to see freed, but deep distrust prevented them coming up with a final list of names for the exchange. At the end of January, the rebels released a captured Saudi soldier while Riyadh set free seven Houthi prisoners but they are the only detainees exchanged under the deal so far.



AMMAN: United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen Martin Griffiths (C-R) and International Committee of the Red Cross President Peter Maurer (C-L) attend a new round of talks by Yemen's warring parties on prisoners swap. — AFP

UN envoy Martin Griffiths said he hoped the two sides would be more successful this time as he opened three days of talks in Amman. "The aim of this event is to finalise... the lists of prisoners and detainees to be released and exchanged," he said. "Success in this regard is not only of huge importance for those who will be released and return to their families but also to the broader political process in which we are engaged."

A senior official of the International Committee of the Red Cross, which will oversee the deal's implementation, said on Monday that it was "hanging in the balance," with trust among the parties "insufficient". Each side has presented a list of up to 8,000 detainees to be freed, but many names cannot be accounted for, said Stillhart, adding that the prisoner swap realistically would involve a significantly lower number. — AFP

Virginia politics roiled by racism, sexual misconduct charges

WASHINGTON: Virginia politics went into further turmoil Monday as the lieutenant governor of the eastern US state, where the governor is under intense pressure to resign, was accused of sexual misconduct. Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax, who would take over if Governor Ralph Northam steps down, strongly denied the allegation made by a woman about a sexual encounter they had in a hotel room 15 years ago.

Fairfax, 39, a Democrat who won election along with Northam in November, said it had been a "100 percent consensual encounter." "There was no inappropriate contact whatsoever," Fairfax told reporters. "Years later, now we have a totally fabricated story out of the blue that's meant to attack me because of where I am in politics," he said. "This has been weaponized and used as a smear." The allegations against Fairfax came as Northam, 59, is facing calls to step down from both Republicans and Democrats alike.

Northam has been fighting for his political survival since a 1984 yearbook surfaced last week that features a racist photo on a page dedicated to

him. The allegation of sexual misconduct against Fairfax was made on the same conservative website that published the yearbook picture. At a press conference on Saturday, Northam denied that he was one of the men in the photo, which features two people standing together — one in blackface, the other dressed in a Ku Klux Klan robe and hood.

Blackface is makeup traditionally used by non-black performers to mock African Americans and was prevalent in minstrel shows in the 19th century. Northam described the photo as "shocking and horrific." While denying he was in the photo, the governor did admit that he had once applied shoe polish on his face — to imitate Michael Jackson during a 1984 dance contest. "I look back now and regret that I did not understand the harmful legacy of an action like that," Northam said. Fairfax demurred when asked whether Northam should resign. "I believe that the governor has to make the decisions in the best interests of the Commonwealth of Virginia," he said. "I know that there are many others who have called on him to resign." — AFP

Guaido boosted by Europe backing in standoff

CARACAS: International clamor for snap elections in Venezuela intensified as European powers recognized opposition chief Juan Guaido as interim leader, after President Nicolas Maduro rejected an ultimatum to call early voting. Britain, France and Spain were among 19 EU nations to side with Guaido, following in the footsteps of key regional powers and the United States, which has refused to rule out a military intervention in the crisis-wracked country.

But key Maduro ally Russia slammed what it called interference in the oil-rich but now poor Latin American country, saying it was an attempt to "legitimize usurped power." Guaido thanked each EU country in turn on Twitter "for supporting all Venezuelans in this struggle we undertake to rescue our nation's democracy, freedom and justice."

Claiming his legitimacy from the constitution, the 35-year-old National Assembly leader stunned the world when he proclaimed himself interim president on January 23, setting up a tense standoff with Maduro — with both men heading rival massive street rallies in Caracas on Saturday. Guaido is

trying to force from power the socialist leader — labeled a dictator by the West and his Latin American neighbors after presiding over Venezuela's economic collapse — aiming to set up a transitional government and hold new presidential elections.

Despite Guaido's pleas for his support, the armed forces — the country's key power — have remained loyal to Maduro. But the opposition leader has expressed confidence he will win over senior officers after a top air force general publicly sided with him on Saturday. Guaido lost no time in building on broadened international support, with his fledgling alternative administration announcing February 14 talks in Washington on responding to "the largest hemispheric humanitarian crisis in modern history."

The opposition leader says up to 300,000 people are at risk of death from malnutrition and illness after years of shortages of basic food and medicines. The US and other countries have already pledged humanitarian aid for Guaido's administration, though it remains to be seen where and how it can enter the country without the military's support.

The young lawmaker accused the military of planning to divert aid being stockpiled in Colombia, Brazil and an unidentified Caribbean island, in order to distribute it through the socialist government's subsidized food program for supporters. Guaido appealed to the military's "conscience" to let the aid reach those most in need. — AFP

International

Greek PM Tsipras visits Turkey for talks to ease rising tensions

'We are going through a difficult period in our relations'

ANKARA: Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras visits Turkey, where he will meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for talks to ease tensions over bilateral disputes and the long-running Cyprus problem. The two leaders are expected to discuss disputed Cyprus energy exploration, Aegean sea issues, a migrant deal and economic cooperation though analysts see little concrete progress. "We are going through a difficult period in our relations with Turkey, which is why we have to continue to discuss," Greek government spokesman Dimitris Tzanakopoulos told KiritiTV. "This visit can contribute to de-escalation of tensions."

In December 2017, Erdogan became the first Turkish president to visit Greece in 65 years. But he stunned his hosts when he asked for a revision of the 1923 Lausanne Treaty that defines the borders of modern Turkey after the collapse of Ottoman Empire. The Turkish leader also denounced "discrimination" of Greece's Muslim minority in northern towns like Komotini, near the border, citing a chapter in the treaty about minority rights, which he said had not been "respected".

"During my visit, I think we will have the opportunity to continue the difficult but frank dialogue that began in December 2017," Tsipras said in an interview with the Turkish state-run news agency Anadolu ahead of the visit. For Ozgur Unluhisarcikli at the German Marshall Fund of the United States think tank, "the positions (of the two countries) are too far away" to bring concrete results and the main objective would be to see "if there is any space for dialogue in the future".

Many disputes

Tsipras's visit comes a few days after the 23rd anniversary of a 1996 crisis that brought the two countries to the edge of a war over the sovereignty of rocky islets — called Kardak by Ankara and Imia by Athens. The trip also comes 20 years after the beginning of a rapprochement in

ties in 1999 when Greece rushed to Turkish help following a devastating earthquake that hit Istanbul.

"Even though these talks might not go anywhere, the essence is that there is a pretence of dialogue, and this is important," according to Dimitrios Triantaphyllou, director of the Centre for International and European Studies at Kadir Has University in Istanbul. "The concrete thing would be a picture of a smiling president and a smiling prime minister reinforcing their willingness to maintain good neighbourhood relations," he said, adding that the visit was "long overdue."

One of the main disputes is the issue of oil and gas exploration of Cyprus, which has been divided between the internationally-recognized Greek southern portion and the breakaway Turkish north for over four decades. The discovery in recent years of gigantic gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean has whetted the appetite of Cyprus which dreams of eventually becoming a major energy player. But Ankara says such exploration deprives Turkish Cypriots of the island's offshore resources and calls for its suspension until a lasting solution is found to the Cyprus problem.

Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said Monday Turkey would not allow a "fait accompli" in the eastern Mediterranean and would instead defend "equal and fair" sharing of the resources. "Greek Cypriot attempts to create a de facto situation is a futile effort. Turkey will not accept them," he told journalists. The two leaders are also expected to discuss a migrant deal which Ankara struck with the European Union in 2016 to stem the flow of refugees. Under the deal Turkey has agreed to take back migrants landing on Greek islands in exchange for incentives including financial aid.

Tsipras told Anadolu that as a result of the deal, "illegal flows and especially deaths in the Aegean drastically decreased". Despite the agreement, hundreds of migrants continue to disembark every day on the Greek islands — about 5,000 people between September and December,



ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shakes hands with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras during a meeting yesterday. — AFP

putting heavy pressure on overcrowded Greek refugee camps. The number of people crossing the land border between the two countries has also increased significantly, from 5,400 in 2017 to 14,000 in 2018, according to Greek Minister for Migration Policy Dimitris Vitsas.

Turkey also strongly criticizes Athens for granting asylum to Turkish soldiers who fled the country after the 2016 failed coup. After Ankara, Tsipras will go to Istanbul on Wednesday for a meeting with Greek Orthodox patriarch Bartholomew. — AFP

Billionaire Czech PM tests EU's new conflict of interest law

PRAGUE: Facing conflict of interest proceedings under tightened EU rules, billionaire Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis may soon become the first European politician found in violation of the bloc's new law. Babis, the second wealthiest Czech, is suspected of still owning the sprawling Agrofert chemicals, food and media group despite having formally transferred ownership to trust funds to comply with the law.

Separate proceedings sparked by the anti-corruption watchdog Transparency International and the opposition Pirate Party show that Babis has reason to worry. "Agrofert gets EU subsidies, Czech subsidies, and takes part in public procurement," David Ondracka, head of the Czech branch of Transparency International, told AFP. "Babis is in a conflict of interest in all these segments and they all should be suspended."

Last September, Transparency and the Pirates asked the European Commission whether Agrofert was entitled to receive billions in EU agricultural subsidies if Babis still controls it. They also sent a complaint to the town hall in Cernosice, responsible for Babis's place of residence near Prague, alleging that he violated a Czech conflict of interest law by owning media. Both the European Commission and Cernosice have suggested that they are inclined to believe the allegations.

'Political thing'

Babis has flatly denied any involvement in Agrofert's activities during his time as prime minister, labeling the Pirates as "informers". "You have squealed on me in Brussels, you have squealed on me in Cernosice," he said in parliament last week. The Cernosice town hall said in January that it had made its decision but refused to make it public. Only Babis knows the details.

"I definitely disagree (with the decision). It's become a political thing. I will definitely file an appeal," Babis said in response. "I can't see how clerks who deal with traffic misdemeanor can take a decision on a complex legal problem like this. They're wrong." In a leaked document, EU lawyers said Babis's dual role as premier and tycoon "qualifies as a conflict of interest" since public officials should not decide on EU payouts for companies they ultimately control. The Commission halted subsidies to Agrofert and sent auditors to check Babis's business pending a final verdict expected by April.

It is also looking into subsidies Agrofert received from 2014 when the Slovak-born ex-Communist Babis became finance minister in the previous coalition government led by the Social Democrats. Babis, whose meteoric rise in politics has been dogged by controversy since he founded the populist ANO movement in 2011, also faces criminal charges at home over alleged EU subsidy fraud from 2007 valued at some two million euros. He has also been hit by allegations that he served as a secret police agent in the 1980s when the former Czechoslovakia was under Moscow's rule.

'First test'

Ondracka said Transparency had used information from beneficial ownership registers introduced across the EU last year as part of the bloc's drive against money laundering. A legal term, "beneficial owner" defines specific property rights in equity belonging to a person even though the legal title of the property belongs to someone else.

As the Czech register is not fully public, they used the Slovak one which yields 37 companies sheltered by Agrofert with Babis listed as the beneficial owner and 28 listing his wife Monika who also sits on the boards of both trust funds in charge of Agrofert. In 2017, Agrofert received EU subsidies worth 2.1 billion koruna (82 million euros, \$94 million), according to Czech media. "Babis is in a unique position as a prime minister who is also a dominant recipient of EU subsidies," Ondracka said. — AFP

2 dead in Australia floods as fresh warning issued

TOWNSVILLE: Two bodies were discovered in Australia's flood-ravaged northeast yesterday as continuing heavy rain prompted authorities to warn of further flash flooding in the hours ahead. Prime Minister Scott Morrison toured the region where "once-in-a-century" floods have inundated thousands of homes and closed airports and schools, leaving cars and houses submerged. As stormwaters receded in some areas, he warned of a difficult recovery ahead.

"It's just going to be tough, going to be tough for a while," Morrison said, expressing sympathy for young families who had lost their homes. "The real work is to make sure that they can get through the clean-up and rebuild their lives." In hard-hit Townsville, more than 650 people have been evacuated from their homes and about 11,000 houses remained without power Tuesday. Around 9,000 more have asked for help.

Police said late yesterday that two bodies had been discovered in Townsville floodwaters following a search for two men in their 20s, who were last seen during the peak of the deluge early Monday. There seems little prospect of an immediate respite from what locals call the "Big Wet". "We expect this active monsoon to remain active for the coming days, potentially easing over the weekend, so there is an end in sight," said Richard Wardle of Queensland's Bureau of Meteorology. "But we are expecting further periods of heavy rainfall, some of it very heavy, about the north-east tropics for the next few days... with that there is the real elevated risk of flash flooding."

Local gym instructor Rebecca Chilmald described the scale of the devastation, of people left "without clothes, cars, their homes, everything". "People and businesses

In France's Basque, police grapple with migration flashpoint

BAYONNE: In the Basque Country town of Bayonne, in the foothills of the Pyrenees, French police are struggling to stem a growing flow of migrants crossing the snow-capped mountains that straddle the border between France and Spain. Spain became a major entry point for Africans fleeing war and poverty after a populist government took power in Italy early last year and largely shut down ports to migrants.

More than 58,000 migrants landed in Spain by boat in 2018, according to the International Organization for Migration, nearly triple the previous year and eclipsing for the first time the numbers passing through North Africa to Italy. Many head north and cross the French frontier hidden in trucks, riding buses or on foot, crossing mountains whose highest peak rises to 3,400 meters and where winter temperatures often fall below zero.

"My colleagues are professionals but they become despondent when they run searches, take migrants back over the border, only for them to re-enter. It's like emptying an ocean with a spoon," said Patrice Peyruqueou, a police official in France's southwest Pyrenees-Atlantiques region. Lack of resources meant police could



PARIS: Migrants stay at the Jean-Bouin gymnasium, western Paris, which has been requisitioned to welcome 150 migrants, on January 31, 2019. — AFP

not monitor all border crossing points around-the-clock, Peyruqueou added.

'Saving my skin'

The European Union has struggled to resolve tensions among member states over migration policy, even as overall numbers arriving from Africa and the Middle East have declined sharply. With Spain a flashpoint, Bayonne, 40 km north of the border, is grappling with a humanitarian situation that is stretching the town's finances and pitting mayor Jean-Rene Etchegaray against the local interior ministry representative.

In the New Year, Etchegaray asked the local prefect for funds to help finance the running of a reception centre dubbed "La Pausa" where up to 150 migrants at any one time can rest for three days, receiving food handouts and donated clothes. But the interior min-

istry's then local prefect, Gilbert Payet, refused support for the centre, arguing it helped encourage the movement of migrants across France. Etchegaray was stunned. "It's a question of humanity," he told a local radio station.

Somali teenager Mokhtar fled his homeland 18 months ago, but not before a policeman shot the 18-year-old in the thigh and then his lower leg after word got around he intended to leave. "He said that would make it harder for me to run," Mokhtar recounted. "I left to save my own skin." The youngster followed a route increasingly used by human traffickers, crossing the Sahara desert to Libya before heading west along the coast to Morocco then making a perilous traverse of the Straits of Gibraltar. He then wound his way north through Spain before reaching the French border. — Reuters



This handout from the Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) taken and received on February 4, 2019 shows flooding in Townsville. — AFP

have lost everything," she told AFP. "I sit and struggle to keep tears from falling thinking about it." Australia's tropical north typically experiences heavy rains during the monsoon season, but the recent downpour has seen some areas get a year's worth of rainfall in just a week.

"Last night it was crazy," Bluewater resident Michael Nieminen, some 30 kilometers northwest of Townsville, told national broadcaster ABC. "We had another lot of flash flooding come through, we had water come right up in the backyard again, similar to last week, not as high, luckily, but a lot of rain and a lot of water upstream," he

added. The authorities were forced to open floodgates of a major dam late Sunday, unleashing what they called "dangerous and high velocity floods".

As waters began to recede Tuesday in some areas, authorities were warning people of the dangers of returning home, not least thanks to the risk of encountering crocodiles. "Do not go swimming in those floodwaters," Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk said. "And when the clean-up begins, you need to make sure that you are wearing closed-in boots and that you do not have any scratches or anything exposed." — AFP

14 civilians killed in jihadist attack in Burkina Faso

OUAGADOUGOU: Fourteen civilians were killed in a jihadist attack in northern Burkina Faso near the Mali border, the military said on Monday. The army conducted raids in three northern provinces in response and said it had "neutralized" 146 militants, according to a report that AFP could not immediately confirm from an independent source. The jihadist attack, which took place in the town of Kain in the Yatenta province bordering Mali, is one of the most serious recorded in the country and came on the eve of a G5 Sahel summit in Ouagadougou. Army spokesman Colonel Lamoussa Fofana said in a statement:

"On the night of Sunday 3 to Monday, February 4, 2019 a terrorist attack in Kain left 14 civilian victims." In response to this attack, the national defence and security forces immediately began operations in the Kain, Banh (Loroum Province, north) and Bomboro (Kossi Province, northwest) areas. "This counterattack... resulted in a land and air operation which neutralized 146 terrorists in the three areas," the statement said. A military source confirmed to AFP that the term "neutralize" meant kill.

The army said it suffered "light casualties" but "no loss of life" during the retaliations, adding that security operations were continuing in the affected areas. Both civilians and security forces have paid a heavy price for jihadist attacks in recent years, with the death toll now standing at nearly 300 since 2015.

There were three major attacks in the north alone last month: on January 10, 12 civilians were killed in the village of Gasseliki; on January 27, 10 civilians were killed in an attack on Sikire; and on January 28, four soldiers died in a massive jihadist attack in Nassoumbou. Attacks have also affected the east, and to a lesser extent, the west of the country. Ouagadougou has been hit three times since 2016, with nearly 60 lives lost. — AFP

International

We are not a 'political tool': Afghan women on peace talks

'In the past 17 years Afghan women have gained some hard-won achievements'

KABUL: Women who lived under the harsh rule of the Taliban urged senior Afghan politicians to ensure their hard-won freedoms are not bargained away when they talk peace with the insurgents yesterday. The Afghan Women's Network said their rights should not be used as a "political tool" in dealings with the Taliban, who barred women from schools and jobs and drastically curtailed their personal liberties when they ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001.

Their appeal comes as the Taliban meets with a high-ranking Afghan delegation in Moscow, and a week after the insurgents held unprecedented talks with United States negotiators. The Taliban said the Moscow meeting — their most significant with Afghan politicians in recent memory — would discuss the withdrawal of foreign troops, peace terms and its vision for governance. The two-day gathering is separate from the US-Taliban negotiations in Doha in January, that ended with both sides touting "progress" and a draft framework which could pave the way for peace talks.

No representative from President Ashraf Ghani's government — which the Taliban considers a US puppet — was invited to either occasion, angering officials in Kabul. Afghan women, also largely excluded from the table, fear seeing their hard-won rights eroded if negotiators seek a hasty truce with the Taliban. "Women should not be used as a political tool by these politicians. If they (Taliban) return and impose restrictions on women, we will not

accept that," Mashal Roshan, a coordinator from the Kabul-based women's network, told AFP.

Harsh rights

"In the past 17 years Afghan women have gained some hard-won achievements. We don't want to lose that. It's our right to go to school and to work, and everyone should respect that." In a statement ahead of the Moscow meet, the network said they would not accept peace at the cost of their freedoms and urged delegates to defend the rights of half of Afghanistan's 35 million people. "There is no need to reinterpret Afghan women's lives," the statement said. Under their brutal interpretation of Sharia law, the Taliban confined women to their homes, only allowing them outside with a male escort and hidden beneath a burqa.

Girls were banned from schools and colleges and women prohibited from the workplace save in a few areas such as medicine. The militants have indicated they would provide a safe environment for women's work and education under an "Islamic system" they have proposed for Afghanistan's future. But involvement of the Taliban in any government frightens many women, who recall the stifling restrictions under the Islamic insurgents. Ghani and de facto prime minister Abdullah Abdullah have urged the Taliban to negotiate with Kabul, saying all Afghans should agree on the need for peace and a troop withdrawal. The Taliban are expected to meet with US negotiators again later in the month. — AFP



KABUL: In this photo taken on January 30, 2019, Afghan man and women talk over tea at a restaurant. — AFP

'Lord' Modi just like the British: Rahul Gandhi

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is lording it over India just like the British, opposition leader Rahul Gandhi said in a blistering pre-election broadside published yesterday. Gandhi, great-grandson of India's first prime minister after independence from Britain in 1947, Jawaharlal Nehru, hopes to unseat Modi in the vote due by May.

"Every institution in India is facing Mr Modi's autocratic backlash," Gandhi, head of the Congress party that has dominated Indian politics for decades, said in a newspaper interview. "Mr Modi believes that he is the Lord of India, just like the British believed," the 48-year-old told the Hindustan Times daily. Modi, 68, swept to power in a landslide in 2014 but with voters unhappy about unemployment and the dire state of Indian agriculture, winning again may not be so easy. Congress have been emboldened by state election victories in late 2018.

Gandhi said in the interview that this was "just the tip of the backlash" against Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "What Mr Modi doesn't accept is that India today is in a crisis. India has a massive job crisis, a humongous agriculture crisis, and Indian youngsters are deeply distressed about their future," he said. "This is generating a huge amount of anger." Gandhi's comments about Modi's "autocratic backlash" referred to a massive row raging since Sunday between the central government and the premier of the eastern state of West Bengal, which has made waves nationally.

On Sunday, West Bengal police prevented the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), India's FBI, from questioning Kolkata's chief of police in connection with a multi-million dollar ponzi scheme scandal. In dramatic



PATNA: Indian National Congress party President Rahul Gandhi waves during a political rally held at Gandhi Maidan in Patna in the Eastern state of Bihar. — AFP

scenes played out across national TV channels, the CBI officials were pushed into police vans, detained briefly, then released. West Bengal's firebrand state premier Mamata Banerjee has alleged the CBI was acting on the orders of Modi's government. A public protest she is holding entered its third day yesterday. Banerjee told thousands of supporters that officers of the CBI are being used for political ends. India's top court moved to defuse the standoff yesterday, ordering the Kolkata police chief, Rajeev Kumar, to make himself available for questioning and cooperate with the investigation agency. — AFP

Facebook bans four Myanmar ethnic groups

YANGON: Facebook has blacklisted four more of Myanmar's ethnic rebel groups, the platform announced yesterday as it struggles to control rampant hate speech, misinformation and incitement on its platform. For years the social media giant has been lambasted for its slow and ineffectual response to incendiary posts, particularly against the country's Rohingya Muslims.

The company has embarked on a huge PR campaign over the last year to prove it is taking action in a country with an estimated 20 million Facebook accounts. The latest rebel organizations to have been banned are the Arakan Army (AA), Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and Taung National Liberation Army (TNLA). "These armed groups are now banned from Facebook and all related praise, support and representation will be removed as soon as we become aware of it," Facebook's news page said.

"There is clear evidence that these organizations have been responsible for attacks against civilians and have engaged in violence in Myanmar, and we want to prevent them from using our services to further inflame tensions on the ground." Hardline nationalist monks and even top military generals — who UN investigators say should face prosecution for genocide for their crackdown

against the Rohingya — were kicked off the site last year. Hundreds of pages and accounts with hidden links to the armed forces were also removed in December.

Likewise, the Rohingya militant group, whose August 2017 attacks were used by the military as a justification for its brutal campaign, is already blacklisted. The newest rebel groups to be kicked off the site are among some two dozen ethnic armed organizations fighting decades-old conflicts over autonomy, identity, territory and natural resources. Since 2016, the four have clubbed together in an alliance, refusing to enter bilateral peace talks with the government.

In December, the military announced a temporary ceasefire in the troubled northeast of the country but has continued to pound AA rebels in Myanmar's beleaguered Rakhine state in violence that has seen several thousand displaced. Facebook told AFP that the government had flagged up content posted by the rebel groups several times but said the decision to blacklist them had been internal. The platform has tried to repair its battered reputation, improving the speed with which hate speech is taken down and boosting the number of Myanmar-language reviewers.

It confirmed it now employs more than 100 staff who speak Myanmar — including some who can also review content in Shan and Chin languages. Critics say, however, that the number is still insufficient to monitor the volume of accounts in the country, many in a patchwork of regional languages. After decades of isolating military rule, most people in Myanmar have only come online in the last few years as the country opened up and smartphone usage soared. — AFP

55 million devotees for busiest days of Hindu megafestival

ALLAHABAD: Some 55 million Hindu devotees plunged into holy waters to cleanse their sins and seek salvation over the busiest days of the world's largest religious gathering, officials said yesterday. The gigantic crowds thronged the confluence of three rivers, one of them mythical,

in northern India over Sunday and Monday. The Mauni Amavasya — or new moon day — on Monday, is the most auspicious day of the 48-day Kumbh Mela festival.

Numbers were bigger than expected and now over 120 million people have visited the Kumbh since it began in mid-January, more than were expected for the entire festival running until March 4. "We are not throwing random figures about the number of visitors to the Kumbh. Our calculations are based on observation from drone cameras and helicopters," Rajeev Rai, a senior official, told AFP. Hindus believe bathing at the meeting point of the Ganges, the Yamuna

and the mythical Saraswati at the festival — home to a vast tent city bigger than Manhattan — brings salvation.

According to Hindu mythology, gods and demons fought a war over a sacred pitcher, or Kumbh, containing the nectar of immortality. A few drops fell to earth at four different locations — one being Allahabad. The historic city was recently renamed Prayagraj by the local state's Hindu nationalist government but is still widely known as Allahabad, the name it was given by Muslim rulers hundreds of years ago. The festival has one more major bathing day on February 10. — AFP

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After deadly Syrian battle, Russian losses were obscured

The last contact Grigoriy Gancherov and his wife had with their son, a Russian private military contractor fighting in Syria, was on Feb 4 last year. The father subsequently learned from a friend and fellow fighter of Sergei's that the 25-year-old had died several days later in a major battle against US-led forces in the Deir al-Zor region. It was not until mid-April that he received formal notification of his son's death and the body was returned, accompanied by a death certificate stating he died on March 7 on the other side of Syria.

Gancherov's account is one of half a dozen instances Reuters has identified where the Kremlin-linked private military organization that recruited the fighters returned bodies more than seven weeks after the battle and with official documents bearing details that people who knew them say were incorrect. According to relatives and a battlefield witness, the fighters all died in the clash in Syria's Deir al-Zor region, which took place overnight on Feb 7.

Such practices, an unusual pattern for Russian fighters killed in Syria, would have helped conceal heavy casualties until after President Vladimir Putin's re-election in mid-March. Moscow's message at the time was that the military campaign in Syria was a success with only modest human cost. That details are emerging nearly a year after the Deir al-Zor battle indicates that Moscow may struggle to control its message about casualties abroad at a time when it is expanding its military activities in the Middle East and Africa.

New gravestone

About 100 Russian military contractors were killed in the Deir al-Zor battle, sources have said. The Russian foreign ministry has said that only a handful of Russian citizens were killed there and dismissed reports of heavy losses. Sergei Gancherov and his friend were standing near each other shortly before their position was hit, according to the account the friend gave to the father. The friend, who was wounded, told the father he learned about Gancherov's death on a medical evacuation plane on his way back to Russia.

Grigoriy Gancherov plans to replace the wooden cross that bears the date recorded in his son's official death certificate with a gravestone marked with the date of the Deir al-Zor battle. That was the first direct confrontation between the United States and Russia since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was also the only known battle in Syria in the early part of last year where Russian military contractors took part.

Yet in each of the six instances identified by Reuters where fighters were returned to families after the election, the death certificates, issued by Russian officials in Syria, stated they died in late February or March. Several relatives of those fighters said the recruiters who informed them about their family member's death told them not to disclose the circumstances.

The Kremlin declined to comment on Gancherov's death or that of the other fighters. Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it was wrong to suggest authorities postponed issuing death certificates of Russians killed in Syria because of the election. On whether death certificates issued by Russian officials contained incorrect information, Peskov said it wasn't a question for the Kremlin. He added that he didn't know whether there was a delay in returning the bodies.

As Reuters has reported, Russia secretly used private military contractors in Syria to carry out missions in support of Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad, Moscow's ally, in coordination with the Russian military. The organization that recruited the fighters, known as Wagner group, uses defense ministry transport infrastructure and hospitals. Russia denies using military contractors in Syria and says any Russian civilians there are volunteers. Peskov could not confirm whether the Wagner group operates in Syria or carries out missions on behalf of the Russian government.

On Feb 7 last year, Russian fighters advanced towards an oil refinery in Deir al-Zor province held by Kurdish forces and the US-led coalition, which responded with heavy air strikes. A military contractor who said he survived by taking cover identified among the many dead he saw two of the six fighters who were returned to families after the election with official documents bearing later dates of death. — Reuters



Muslim women walk towards the Eski Mosque located in the old market in Komotini in northern Greece, on the eve of the Greek's Prime Minister's visit to Turkey, on Sunday. — AFP

Greek Muslims complain of 'marginalization'

Outwardly, Komotini looks like other Greek cities, but there is a major difference: It has nine mosques whereas there are none in Athens. The northeastern city has existed from the second century and was captured by Ottoman-era Turkey in the 14th. It was an important hub connecting the capital city of Constantinople, as Istanbul was then known, with the European part of the empire. Now it is home to nearly 30,000 Muslims, many of whom complain of marginalization.

Greece has for centuries had a testy relationship with Turkey, with a slew of disputes ranging from Aegean sea issues to the long-running Cyprus problem. "The minority Muslims and their Greek compatriots cohabit but each side lives in its own corner," said Mustafa Mustafa, a lawmaker from Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras's party, speaking in this frontier city of some 60,000 people.

Tsipras visited Turkey yesterday in a bid to improve relations. "Relations deteriorated in the 1960s and until 1990 many villages in the area were ringed by military barricades," Mustafa, who is in his sixties, said. "We could not access our properties or get a driving license," he said. "We would like to be a bridge of peace and friendship and not act as a brake."

In the US, dreams of a 'Big Bang' for health insurance

Having a health insurance card in America is no guarantee of medical care without the risk of financial ruin. One must take care to choose a doctor or hospital that is part of a pre-approved network. Estimate how much would be paid out of pocket after hospital bills that can reach tens of thousands of dollars. And, for Americans covered by their employers, be careful about any change in jobs and try to avoid risky gaps in health insurance coverage.

The complexity of this public-private system, the continuing climb in prices and the fact that 27 million people go without health insurance have led numerous Democratic candidates for a White House bid in 2020 to propose a radical solution: a European-like system. Except they don't say it quite in those words. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who came up with the idea, California Senator Kamala Harris and New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand are among those calling for "Medicare for all," or offering everyone in the nation the type of public insurance offered to those over 65, a program in existence since the 1960s.

Americans have an ambiguous relationship with the federal government when it comes to their health. The idea of universal public health care goes back to before the first World War, according to Howard Markel, professor of the history of medicine at the University of Michigan. After the second World War, fears of communism did away with the project, leaving instead a system founded on employer-provided health insurance. But many gaps had to be filled over the following decades by the government.

Satisfied until sick

Today, government health insurance covers about 112 million Americans - one third of the population - according to the Kaiser Family Foundation. This includes the elderly, the poor, the disabled, children, and former military service members. Some 157 million Americans get insurance through their

jobs - about half the country. The rest are either not insured or have bought their own private insurance plans. "A lot of people are satisfied until they get sick," said Tricia Neuman, senior vice president and director of the program on Medicare policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation. Her colleague, Karen Pollitz, says problems typically include surprise medical bills, accidentally going out of network without realizing it, rising deductible and copays and out of pocket expenses.

Changed climate

When Sanders proposed his "Medicare for all" platform in the run-up to the 2016 election, Democratic challenger Hillary Clinton dismissed the idea as impractical in the current political climate. But the climate has changed. That's in part because former president Barack Obama's health care reform law, which passed in 2010, did not fully bridge this gap in healthcare. And healthcare costs have continued to climb faster than the US economy can keep up. The United States spends 18 percent of its gross domestic product on health, compared to 11 percent on average in other wealthy nations.

And finally, it's because Republican-led efforts to replace "Obamacare" have met with difficulties. Turns out, it's quite a challenge to cover everyone, while lowering prices, and sticking to a private health insurance system. The main advantage of a single-payer system would be that Medicare could negotiate lower rates than those typically agreed between insurers and hospitals, according to economist Colleen Carey, assistant professor of public policy at Cornell University. "Medicare has a good take it or leave it bargaining position with regard to health care providers for hospital and physician services," she said. "If they use that power, that would really hold costs down."

'A dream'

Americans on both sides of the political aisle tend to be fans of Medicare. More and more say they are open to expanding it to people beginning at age 50 (77 percent, according to a Kaiser Family Foundation poll), or even to all (56 percent). But support begins to crumble at the prospect of raising taxes to finance universal coverage, particularly among those who already pay health premiums for their employer-provided coverage. — AFP

'We are being used'

The issue of the Muslim minority is one of the sensitive areas in ties between the two neighbors. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during a historic trip to Greece in 2017 - the first by a Turkish leader in 65 years - visited the Thrace region and called for the respect of the Muslim minority, railing against "discrimination" by the Greek government. "It's sad that we are being used," said a young Muslim woman, speaking on condition of anonymity. "These are normal people like us who are paying the price of politics," she said of residents of Komotini, which lies about 100 km from the border.

There are up to 150,000 Muslims in Greece's western Thrace region, who were given minority status after the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne following the end of a war between Turkey and Greece which rang the death knell for the Ottoman Empire. The treaty provided for the application of sharia law to settle family disputes and the use of Turkish in educational institutions. The presence of a Turkish consulate in the region adds to tensions. "It would be better for everyone if the consulate stops serving the interests of the Turkish foreign ministry," Komotini's mayor Giorgos Petridis said.

'Islam = Turkey'

"What characterizes this population is a plural identity," said Thalia Dragona from the Athens National University. "The new generation is educated and wants to break free from being slotted," she said. A young Muslim recounted how her family was criticized for putting their children in Greek schools, saying: "In their eyes, we had become traitors."

Chatitze Molla Sali, who is in her seventies, lived in Komotini before relocating to Istanbul. She had inherited her husband's house under Greek law but her sisters-in-law contested the decision, evoking sharia. The European Court of Human Rights ruled in her favor in December. "The decision clarifies the situation since it makes it impossible to apply Muslim law on European citizens," her lawyer Yanis Kistakis said.

In a deeply orthodox society where 76 percent of Greeks see Christianity as a central part of their identity, according to the Pew Research Center, "many people associate Islam with Turkey", said Giorgos Kalantzis, the general secretary of religious affairs. "The country has suffered at the hands of Turkey and this still brings up painful memories," he said. — AFP

Learning to talk again: Life without Internet in Tonga

A two-week cyber blackout caused financial headache and social heartache in remote Tonga, but it also forced residents of the Pacific island kingdom to rediscover the art of offline communication. The sudden Internet outage on January 20 brought an abrupt halt to many businesses and cut access to social media - the community's lifeline to the outside world. "We had to learn how to talk to each other without Internet messaging," Joshua Savietti, who works in the creative arts, said of the involuntary digital detox. "We didn't know anything, what was going on, anything on the news, (or) if there was a cyclone coming."

It took 13 days to find the fault - a severed undersea cable - and reconnect Tonga, which lies nearly 2,400 km northeast of New Zealand. During the blackout, a small, locally operated satellite service helped maintain limited service, but the speed was a throwback to dial-up days. To conserve capacity officials filtered out social media, cutting families off from relatives and friends overseas and dealing a blow to companies which operate through Facebook.

For many of Tonga's 110,000 residents, it was a wake-up call to how much they have come to rely on the Internet in just half a decade since the 827-km fibre-optic cable from Fiji was put into service. Some queued for hours to access the satellite service, while others potted about in their gardens or went out socializing. "I actually felt that it was pretty good to be forced off the internet and talk to people again, go outside and see what everyone's up to," Savietti said. "There were a lot of people going out during that time, going to the bars ... it was so full."

But the outage did not come as a welcome break for everyone. Lives were at stake as medicine stocks reached dangerously low levels, and Health Ministry chief Siale 'Akau'ola

lost contact with government outposts on Tonga's outer islands. "There are areas that are critical and most of them need confirmation of supplies and when the goods are arriving. So things were kind of in the dark and dangerously low some of the stock," 'Akau'ola said. "Definitely there had to be an impact on various operations."

Closed for business

For Tonga, which relies heavily on international links for daily supplies and vital tourism income, no internet meant serious problems with making and confirming transactions. Banks could not process money transfers, hitting families reliant on income from relatives working overseas. Sam Vea, Tonga agent for global freight giant DHL, said the first week of the outage created "major issues" for the company. "We could not send our shipments because we have to upload documents before they are put onto the plane," he said. "We really need that connection. That was the scary part, and we didn't know how long it was going to be out."

Several small businesses which use Facebook to publicize their services could no longer take bookings online. In the capital Nuku'alofa, guesthouse operator Taiatu 'Afa'ata estimated she lost bookings "worth thousands of dollars". And Lee Latu was trying to run a hotel in Vava'u "with no idea if I have bookings needing to be picked up". Accountant Caryl Jones said he was unable to file monthly tax returns for his many clients. "I have clients that email me information, so they were unable to do so. And I have clients who have accounting in the cloud and they couldn't access their accounting system in order to do it."

When the cable - which joins up with the Southern Cross cable linking Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and the continental United States - was repaired, it caused fresh problems as people rushed to re-establish contact with family, friends and clients. At a murder trial in Nuku'alofa, judge Charles Cato had to remind the jury that they were there for, telling them that just because the Internet had been restored it did not mean they could use social media while evidence was being heard. The cause of the break in the cable has not been determined but it is suspected it was cut by a ship dragging its anchor along the seabed. — AFP

Business

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ABK records KD 42.1m in net profit for 2018

Bank's operating profit exceeds KD 100 million mark for first time

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), yesterday announced its financial results for the fiscal year ended 31st December, 2018. The Bank delivered a strong set of results with a net profit of KD 42.1 million, up 18.1 percent year-on-year. Operating Income was KD 168.8 million, up 7.5 percent over last year, while operating profit was up 6 percent to KD 103.7 million. Total assets reached KD 4.5 billion, up 4.3 percent from 2017, and total Shareholders' Equity increased by KD 12.8 million, reaching KD 585 million. Earnings per share increased to 26 fils, up by 4 fils. The ABK Board of Directors have proposed a distribution of 14 fils per share cash dividend compared to 12 fils in 2017, subject to the approval of ABK's General Assembly meeting.

ABK's customer deposits witnessed an increase of 6 percent over the same period last year to reach KD 3.1 billion. Asset quality remained very solid with the non-performing loan (NPL) ratio at 1.78 percent and NPL coverage well over 300 percent. The bank's capital adequacy ratio and Tier 1 capital ratio was 19.15 percent and 17.94 percent, respectively. The bank continues to maintain strong credit ratings on both Fitch and Moody's, receiving A+ and A2 ratings respectively.

Commenting on the results, Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK said: "Over the past year,

the bank has continued its steady growth trajectory despite a challenging global macro-economic environment. Our prudent business model has enabled us to deliver a robust and profitable operating performance across all our core businesses. For the first time in the history of ABK, we have surpassed the KD 100 million operating profit.

"I firmly believe that our 'Simpler Banking' strategy will fuel the future development of ABK, and create greater long-term value to our customers and shareholders. "ABK was the first Kuwaiti bank to open its doors in the UAE 40 years ago, to serve the interests of Kuwaiti businesses abroad. Driven by this commitment, we have further extended our reach in the UAE by opening a new DIFC branch that will serve as the Group's Corporate Finance hub and support our corporate and multinational clients in expanding their regional footprint," he said.

Shortly after opening the DIFC branch, ABK signed an agreement with Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (DAE) for a revolving credit facility worth \$800 million. The four-year facility was substantially oversubscribed.

Michel Accad, Group CEO of ABK said: "The sustained growth of ABK is built on our commitment to our core value pillars - Transparency, Integrity, Simplicity



Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani



Michel Accad

and Excellence. At an operational level, we have been able to efficiently respond to the growing need for digital transformation in the financial sector. We have expanded the scope of our capabilities across retail and corporate banking, and across our geographies, especially in Egypt, putting us firmly amongst the leading banks in the region. I am certain that the inherent strengths of ABK combined with our dedication towards enhancing our customers experience will make the Bank even stronger in the years ahead."

In line with its digital transformation journey, a num-

ber of digital products were launched during the year, some of which were first to market, such as "Global View" or the possibility to generate decades-old account statements online or through our mobile App. Harnessing the latest digital technology including Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, the user-friendly platform helps increase ABK's employee engagement and delivers improved agility to the workforce to achieve organizational goals.

ABK contributed to a number of social causes throughout the year with the main focus aligned to the Bank's CSR strategy of Healthy Living. Speaking about the bank's social responsibility, Accad said: "At ABK, we believe that the best way to support the interests of our stakeholders is by running a strong, profitable and growing business, which creates jobs and actively engages with the community. In our view, that is the basis for being a force for good. We are not only interested in contributing to growth today, but we also want to help individuals, businesses and economies progress in ways that will contribute to sustainable growth tomorrow." ABK received significant global exposure from various industry forums in 2018 and was recognized by Global Finance Magazine as one of the top ten 'Safest Banks' in the region for the second year in a row.

UK economy flat-lines as Brexit nears, firms cut jobs

LONDON: Britain's economy risks stalling or contracting as Brexit nears and a global slowdown worsens, with firms in the dominant services sector reporting job cuts for the first time in six years and falling new orders. Sterling slipped to near two-week lows against the dollar after a leading gauge of the world's fifth-biggest economy, the IHS Markit/CIPS UK Services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), fell to 50.1 in January from 51.2 in December.

That marked the PMI's lowest level since July 2016 and was barely above the 50 mark that separates growth from contraction. A Reuters poll of economists had expected a reading of 51.0.

Britain's economy defied forecasts from some economists that it would go into recession after the 2016 referendum vote to leave the European Union. But growth slowed sharply in late 2018 as worries mounted about an abrupt, no-deal Brexit. Overall, the survey suggested Britain's economy is flat-lining after losing momentum late last year. "The risk is that activity softens further-firms will become increasingly risk-averse and implement contingency Brexit planning,"



LONDON: Britain's Chief Secretary to the Treasury Liz Truss leaves 10 Downing Street in London yesterday after attending the weekly meeting of the cabinet. —AFP

ING economist James Smith said.

Yesterday's figures are likely to worry Bank of England officials ahead of their latest interest rate decision announcement and new forecasts for the economy tomorrow.

The report adds to other signs that Brexit-scheduled for March 29, less than eight weeks away-is taking its toll on businesses and consumers. Prime Minister Theresa May, under pressure from her own Conservative Party, wants to reopen her withdrawal agreement with the European Union to replace a contested Irish border arrangement, something Brussels has rejected.

Investors are urging the government to ensure an orderly exit from the club Britain joined in 1973.

On Monday, a Deloitte survey of chief financial officers showed appetite to take on financial risk had

fallen to its lowest level in nearly a decade due to fears of "the hardest of Brexits" and rising US protectionism. That caution was evident in yesterday's survey, covering the bulk of Britain's private sector economy. New orders fell for only the second time since the financial crisis, while employers cut jobs for the first time since late 2012 — around the last time Britain flirted with recession.

"The survey results indicate that companies are becoming increasingly risk-averse and eager to reduce overheads in the face of weakened customer demand and rising political uncertainty," Williamson said. New export orders contracted at the fastest pace since records for this part of the PMI began in September 2014. — Reuters

Turkey's Erdogan to move CHP's Isbank stake to Treasury

ANKARA: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday that the Treasury will take over a 28 percent stake in Isbank, the country's largest listed lender, from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP). Erdogan has said in the past that the stake, which was bequeathed to the CHP by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, founder of the Turkish Republic, will be moved to the Treasury.

"Political parties do not have the right or authority to take part in banking activities," Erdogan told

reporters following a parliamentary speech to his AK Party's lawmakers. Erdogan's comments knocked 6 percent off Isbank's share price.

The CHP, which appoints four members to Isbank's board, opposes the move by Erdogan, who said that Ataturk had bequeathed the stake to the Treasury, not the party. "I believe this parliament will take this historic decision, with God's permission, and the 28 percent Isbank stake will be transferred to the nation's treasury," Erdogan told lawmakers. In addition to the CHP stake, Isbank has a 31.4 percent free float and 40.5 percent is held by the Isbank pension fund.

At 28.1 percent, the CHP's holding is worth around 7.32 billion lira (\$1.41 billion), based on Isbank's market capitalization of some 26.04 billion lira. The CHP has said that its members on the Isbank board and the party do not get a dividend payout from the bank. Erdogan said the timing of the transfer to the Treasury would depend on how long the parliamentary process takes. — Reuters

ABK'S FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2018

KD 42.1 Million | Net Profit



Business

Flydubai becomes first Dubai-based airline to operate flights to Kozhikode

First flight lands in Kozhikode on February 1

KUWAIT: Dubai-based flydubai marked its inaugural flight to Kozhikode in Kerala, India on 01 February 2019. The airline is operating flights three times a week connecting Dubai International (DXB) to Kozhikode Calicut International Airport (CC). With this launch, flydubai now offers 30 weekly flights to and from Dubai to eight destinations in India.

On the launch of operations, Ghaith Al-Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer at flydubai, said: "as the first Dubai-based carrier to operate direct flights from Dubai to Kozhikode, we expect this route to be very popular for travellers from the UAE to the region. Similarly, passengers from Kozhikode now have easier access to popular destinations on the flydubai network as well as the Emirates network providing easy access to more destinations when visiting family and friends."

Speaking at the press conference, held on 04 February to mark the start of flights to Kozhikode, Sudhir Sreedharan, Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations (UAE, GCC, Subcontinent and Africa) at flydubai, said: "with the commencement of our service to Kozhikode passengers will be able to connect to hundreds of destinations. Flydubai's professional and friendly service on board will offer an exceptional travel experience whether travelling for business or leisure."

K Srinivasa Rao, Director of Calicut International Airport, said: "We are very much elated and feeling proud to welcome flydubai to Calicut International Airport; the gateway to Malabar Region. On behalf of the Airport Authority of India, I extend all our best wishes and commit 100 percent cooperation for its successful journey at Calicut. I wish and I am also pretty sure that flydubai will be enhancing their frequency to daily flights very soon."

Mohammed Shahid, Joint General Manager, Air Traffic Management of Calicut International Airport attended the press conference.

Business Class services will be available on this route and offers faster check-in, priority ground services and onboard comfortable spacious seats. Passengers choosing Economy Class will be able to enjoy our innovatively-designed seats to optimize legroom and maximize comfort. Depending on their travel needs, they will be able to select between bundled (Flex/Value) or unbundled (Lite) fares.

flydubai started operating to India in 2010 with the start of direct flights to Lucknow. With the commencement of this new route, the airline further grew its Indian network, which currently includes Ahmedabad, Chennai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Kochi, Lucknow and Mumbai. Kozhikode, formerly known as Calicut, is a trade centre known for its spices and hand-woven cotton cloth. The



city is a geographical haven, nestled between the Arabian Sea and the Wayanad Hills. With its serene beaches, green countryside and rich history, Kozhikode makes for a fascinating destination for travellers.

As part of the Emirates flydubai partnership announced in 2017, Emirates will codeshare on this route. For book-

ings under the codeshare, Emirates passengers will receive complimentary meals and the Emirates checked baggage allowance on flights operated by flydubai in Economy class. Benefiting from this codeshare partnership, travellers from India will have access to travel to hundreds of destinations all over the world via Dubai.

BP annual profit soars to \$9.4bn on surging oil prices

LONDON: BP almost trebled its annual net profit to \$9.4 billion (8.2 billion euros) last year as oil prices soared in 2018, the British energy giant announced yesterday. Profit after tax rocketed from \$3.4 billion in 2017, "primarily affected by higher oil prices and favorable foreign exchange" rates, BP said in a statement. Fourth-quarter net profit stood at \$766 million, up from \$27 million in the final three months of 2017.

However it was well down on 2018 third-quarter net profit of \$3.35 billion, which was fuelled by surging oil prices before they cooled approaching the new year. BP chief executive Bob Dudley said the group was benefitting also from "capital discipline".

"And we're doing this while growing the business-bringing more high-quality projects online, expanding marketing in the downstream and doing transformative deals such as BHP," he added in the statement. In 2018, the world's biggest miner BHP sold its US shale oil and gas operations to BP for \$10.5 billion.

Oil prices meanwhile surged in the latter part of 2018 on tight supply concerns but have since fallen back sharply,

in line with volatility seen across financial markets.

BP yesterday added that its full-year production of oil and gas grew 2.4 percent to 3.7 million barrels per day. It said that 2019 output was expected to be higher thanks to major production projects.

"The actual reported outcome will depend on the exact timing of project start-ups, acquisition and divestment activities, OPEC quotas and entitlement impacts in our production-sharing agreements," BP said. Also last year, BP took a further hit of \$3.2 billion in financial costs linked to a deadly explosion on a BP-leased drilling rig in 2010 that unleashed the worst environmental disaster in US history.

It expects a further charge of \$2.0 billion this year, taking BP's total bill so far for the Gulf of Mexico catastrophe to around \$70 billion.

Following yesterday's update, shares in BP jumped 3.44 percent to 538 pence, topping London's benchmark FTSE 100 index, which was up 0.8 percent overall. "Numbers from BP paint a picture of a company operating above expectations across all of its businesses," noted Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets UK.

"The decline in oil prices in the fourth quarter, from four-year peaks of \$85 a barrel saw profits decline slightly from the lofty levels" in the previous quarter, he added. BP rival Royal Dutch Shell last week posted an 80 percent increase in annual net profit to \$23.4 billion on higher oil prices and big cost cutting. — AFP

WB leadership search likely to end with US candidate, again

WASHINGTON: The search for a new leader for one of the most high-profile global organizations begins tomorrow and seems likely to end again with selection of the US candidate.

The Washington-based World Bank has been led by an American ever since it was founded in the aftermath of World War II, while its sister institution, the International Monetary Fund, has always been led by a European. Growing emerging market countries have challenged this unwritten arrangement in recent years, demanding a more open, merit-based selection process, and a greater voice in the institutions themselves.

But it is unlikely they can build sufficient opposition to the candidate put forward by US President Donald Trump, nor is Trump likely to cede a prominent position on the global stage.

That is unless Trump's nominee is so objectionable or unqualified as to unify the emerging markets as well as Europe, officials familiar with the process say. However, if Europe were to oppose the US selection, it would tacitly be giving up the leadership of the far-more prominent IMF once Christine Lagarde departs. "I think the developing countries banding together, organizing themselves, is hard to imagine," Simon Johnson, a former IMF chief economist, told AFP. "Maybe six or eight years ago they seemed like they were becoming more cohesive as a bloc. I don't think they're particularly cohesive now."

'Time for a change'

The surprise early departure of World Bank

Lebanese CB chief: Dollar offered in market since govt formed

BEIRUT: US dollars are being offered in Lebanon's local market to buy Lebanese pounds since the formation of a new government, Al-Jadeed television quoted the central bank gov-

ernor, Riad Salameh, as saying yesterday. Lebanese leaders agreed a new national unity government last week after nearly nine months of political wrangling over how to share out cabinet portfolios.

Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri has said bold reforms must now be taken to address problems in the heavily indebted state, which has suffered from years of low economic growth and has some of the world's worst debt and balance-of-payment ratios.

The Lebanese pound has been pegged against the dollar at its current level for more than two decades. "After the formation of the government the dollar has been offered in the

local market to buy pounds and this restores the strength of the role of national currency in savings," Al-Jadeed quoted Salameh as saying from the presidential palace. Presidential sources said President Michel Aoun had discussed the monetary situation at a meeting with Salameh.

Moody's said on Monday the government formation was positive for the country's credit rating as it should help unlock a \$11 billion, five-year international support package offered last year. The international institutions and foreign governments that pledged the support, mostly in the form of concessional loans, want to see government reforms to put the state finances on a sustainable path. — Reuters



In this file photo, CEO of PepsiCo Indra Nooyi attends a dinner with the US president and business leaders in Bedminster, New Jersey. — AFP

Mohamed El-Erian, an Egyptian-American, and former PepsiCo CEO Indra Nooyi, an Indian-American. But David Malpass, US Treasury undersecretary for international affairs who has aggressively criticized the World Bank for continuing to lend to China and other relatively well-off countries, is said to be the leading US candidate.

Tony Fratto, former Treasury assistant secretary in the George W. Bush administration, did not mince words: "David Malpass would be a disastrous, toxic choice for World Bank president," he tweeted.

Masood Ahmed, who had a long career at the World Bank and IMF, was more diplomatic, saying that a controversial candidate with well-known views would have a harder time getting support of the members. Ahmed, president of the Center for Global Development in Washington, said "whoever it is, it's important that it is a person who can forge that consensus and get the confidence of all the shareholders."

But he warned the continued adherence to the decades-old hold on the leadership of the World Bank and IMF, rather than relying on a "truly merit-based" process, "ends up eroding a little further the legitimacy and credibility of the organization." — Reuters



BP said its full-year production of oil and gas grew 2.4 percent to 3.7 million barrels per day. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	303.650
Euro	351.170
Sterling Pound	400.670
Canadian dollar	233.760
Turkish lira	59.540
Swiss Franc	308.270
US Dollar Buying	302.450

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.767
Indian Rupees	4.246
Pakistani Rupees	2.214
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.713
Nepali Rupees	2.645
Singapore Dollar	226.020
Hongkong Dollar	38.748
Bangladesh Taka	3.563
Philippine Peso	5.811
Thai Baht	9.786
Malaysian ringgit	77.749

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.121
Qatari Riyal	83.551
Omani Riyal	790.123
Bahraini Dinar	807.760
UAE Dirham	82.823

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.850
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.167
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.220
Tunisian Dinar	103.630
Jordanian Dinar	428.370
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.022
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.372

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.290
Canadian Dollar	232.220
Sterling Pound	399.230
Euro	349.970
Swiss Frank	304.560
Bahrain Dinar	806.560
UAE Dirhams	82.975
Qatari Riyals	84.215
Saudi Riyals	81.775
Jordanian Dinar	429.055
Egyptian Pound	17.181
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.711
Indian Rupees	4.256
Pakistani Rupees	2.193
Bangladesh Taka	3.617
Philippines Pesto	5.814
Cyprus pound	18.045
Japanese Yen	3.770
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.671
Malaysian Ringgit	74.880

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.440
Thai Bhat	10.680
Turkish Lira	58.640
Singapore dollars	224.363

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.388973	0.402873
Czech Korune	0.005524	0.014824
Danish Krone	0.042488	0.047488
Euro	0.339763	0.353463
Georgian Lari	0.131870	0.131870
Hungarian 0.001146	0.001336	
Norwegian Krone	0.031889	0.037089
Romanian Leu	0.065123	0.081973
Russian ruble	0.004652	0.004652
Slovakia	0.009081	0.019081
Swedish Krona	0.029332	0.034332
Swiss Franc	0.297664	0.0308664
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.212256	0.224256
New Zealand Dollar	0.203368	0.212868
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.226447	0.235447
US Dollars	0.299900	0.305200
US Dollars Mint	0.300400	0.305200
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003048	0.003849

Chinese Yuan	0.043634	0.047134
Hong Kong Dollar	0.0366985	0.039735
Indian Rupee	0.003722	0.004494
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002682	0.002862
Korean Won	0.000261	0.000276
Malaysian Ringgit	0.071167	0.077167
Nepalese Rupee	0.002606	0.002946
Pakistan Rupee	0.001565	0.002335
Philippine Peso	0.005775	0.006075
Singapore Dollar	0.219633	0.229633
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001338	0.001916
Taiwan	0.010147	0.010327
Thai Baht	0.009389	0.009938
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.791796	0.808296
Egyptian Pound	0.017093	0.019693
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000208	0.000266
Jordanian Dinar	0.424473	0.433473
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000156	0.000256
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021700	0.045700
Omani Riyal	0.783292	0.788972
Qatar Riyal	0.079211	0.084151
audi Riyal	0.079980	0.081280
Syrian Pound	0.001289	0.001509
Tunisian Dinar	0.096100	0.104100
Turkish Lira	0.051665	0.063165
UAE Dirhams	0.081296	0.082996
Yemeni Riyal	0.000988	0.001068

Business

VIVA records KD 50.4m as a net profit in 2018, a growth of 18%

Revenues reach KD 288 million in 2018

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced the financial results for the full year ended on 31 December 2018; whereby VIVA's net profit grew to reach KD 50.4 million recording growth of 18 percent compared to the year ended 2017. Whereas the revenues during 2018 reached KD 288 million. These results reflect VIVA's focus on achieving outstanding customer experience, high quality of services, innovative promotions and solutions to meet its customers' needs and aspirations, inspired by their confidence which motivates us to provide the best services with the highest possible quality.

Commenting on 2018 financial results, Dr Mahmoud Ahmed Abdulrahman, VIVA's Chairman said: "Despite the high competition witnessed in Kuwait Telecommunication Market, VIVA was able to achieve good levels of revenues and growth in profitability to sustain the operational efficiency to ensure generating positive return to our shareholders. These results were achieved by an integrated management approach from a highly professional team that promotes VIVA's substantial and positive role as a leading telecommunications company that always provides intelligent communications solutions to meet its customers' needs."

He added: "VIVA has demonstrated its ability to achieve growth in the net profit amid the current fierce



Dr Mahmoud Ahmed Abdulrahman

Eng Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Badran

conditions in Kuwait Telecommunication sector and the decline in telecom tariffs thus pressurizing the growth of revenues. VIVA managed to achieve net profit of KD 50.4 million (earnings per share of 101 fils) during the FY 2018 compared to net profit of KD 42.8 million (earnings per share of 86 fils) during FY 2017."

On the other hand, VIVA has enhanced shareholders' equity base to stand at KD 192 million at the end of 2018 with a growth rate of 22 percent compared to 2017. These

results achieved by VIVA during 2018 reflect the efficient business strategy adopted by the company to achieve outstanding results in spite of the increasing competitiveness. Also, VIVA managed to achieve positive earnings for its shareholders as a result of the commitment to elevate the quality of customer service and improving the operational efficiency". The Board of Directors has recommended distributing cash dividends of 40 fils among the shareholders representing 40 percent of the nominal share value for the year ended 2018 subject to the approval of the Ordinary General Assembly of the company.

On his part, Eng Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Badran, VIVA's CEO said: "Results of 2018 came in line with VIVA's goals and boundless ambitions to achieve an increase in its operational revenues, profitability and strengthen its leadership in the telecommunication market. It is noteworthy to mention that, VIVA has won many awards including "Leading Corporate for Investor Relations in Kuwait" and third in the Middle East by MEIRA, "Best Network Development" in the MENA region presented at the third annual 5G MENA Awards 2018 Ceremony, "Speedtest Award Winner 2017 - Kuwait's Fastest Mobile Network" by Ookla, launched Voice over Long Term Evolution Plus 'VoLTE Plus' technology, and was the first telecom company in Kuwait that has physically demo its "5G" services to its customers."

He added: "VIVA has achieved good levels of revenues and increase in the profitability which improved the company's financial and operational efficiency. As a result, VIVA recorded revenues of KD 288 million during FY 2018 and achieved net profit of KD 50.4 million (earnings per share of 101 fils) recording growth of 18 percent compared to FY 2017, whereas EBITDA reached KD 77.8 million compared to KD 71.1 million during FY 2017. On the other hand, VIVA customer base has reached 2.2 million at the end of December, 2018".

On his part, Mohammed Bin AbdulMohsen Al-Assaf, VIVA's CFO, said: "VIVA's financial results reflect its ability to compete, sustain revenues and maintain its position as the second largest telecom operator in the Kuwaiti market in term of market share in the telecommunication sector. Al-Assaf said, "we started to observe the impact of the cost optimization program adopted by the company during the current year on profitability which increased by 18 percent, as the company adopted a balanced and effective financial policy in managing CAPEX and operating expenses". He added: "We will continue our hard work in implementing our strategy to maintain our competitive edge and achieve further growth and success in the Kuwaiti telecom market through offering innovative products and services in line with the latest technology to meet our customers' needs".

CBK launches 'Your Salary Plus Cash' campaign

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) launched its new 'Your Salary Plus Cash' promotional campaign to encourage both Kuwaiti and expat employees in private and public sectors as well as retirees to transfer their salaries to the Commercial Bank. The campaign commences today (February 6) and will last until December 31, 2019.

CBK's Personal Banking Services Manager Hameed Ibrahim Salman said that the campaign offers various gifts and surprises to all clients who transfer their salaries to the bank. "The CBK has always been rewarding the trust of its loyal clients", Salman added. Salman further explained that any Kuwaiti employee with a minimum salary of KD 500 can transfer it to CBK to get an instant cash reward of

KD 250 or an interest-less loan equal to five folds of the salary with a maximum limit of KD 10,000. They will also enter a weekly draw for a KD 1,000 reward.

Salman said that expat clients with premier banking accounts for salaries over KD 1,700 + would also get instant cash rewards on transferring their salaries. Finally, Salman explained that retired citizens with minimum salaries of KD 1,000 who transfer their pension salaries to CBK would get an instant cash prize of KD 150. They will enter weekly draws for KD 1,000 prizes.



Hameed Ibrahim Salman

Nissan taps new Renault boss to replace Ghosn

TOKYO: Japan's Nissan said yesterday that its board has nominated the new boss of Renault to replace Carlos Ghosn, who is in detention facing charges of financial misconduct.

The decision to turn over Ghosn's board seat to Jean-Dominique Senard must still be ratified by shareholders, and the company said it had set an April 8 date for an extraordinary shareholders' meeting. Nissan said the shareholder meeting would be limited to discussion of Senard's nomination and the official removal of Ghosn and his right-hand man Greg Kelly from the board.

Ghosn and Kelly were sacked from the board after their arrest on November 19 but a special shareholders' meeting is required to remove them officially.

Senard's nomination does not mean he will replace Ghosn as chairman at Nissan. The automaker is still searching for a replacement and is not expected to

announce a decision before June. The firm has not announced plans to replace Kelly on the board. Ghosn's arrest and subsequent indictment on three charges exposed rifts between Nissan and French carmaker Renault which, together with Mitsubishi Motors, make up the world's top-selling auto manufacturing group.

The Japanese firms jettisoned Ghosn almost immediately but Renault waited much longer and the tycoon eventually resigned as chairman and CEO. Current Nissan CEO Hiroto Saikawa has described Senard's appointment as a "new chapter" in relations between the two firms-an unlikely alliance that Ghosn created and held together.

Ghosn faces allegations he under-reported his salary over the course of eight years, and tried to transfer personal losses to Nissan's books. In an interview with AFP last week, Ghosn said Nissan's probe into his alleged misconduct was a "trap", "plot" and a "story of betrayal".

It was a result of "opposition and anxiety on the project of bringing the companies together," said Ghosn, amid rumors his arrest was a "coup" designed to prevent a fully fledged merger between Nissan and Renault. "The scenario was to create a holding company that would control the three operational entities and would hold all the shares, while preserving autonomy of each group," Ghosn said.—AFP.



In this file photo, workers leave the Nissan car plant after finishing their shift in Sunderland, north east England. — AFP

Iran rejects EU trade, anti-money laundering link

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday ruled out linkage between a new EU mechanism to trade with Tehran bypassing US sanctions and an anti-money laundering bill.

"Linking implementation of this mechanism... with the requirements of institutions such as the FATF is unacceptable," the foreign ministry said, referring to the international Financial Action Task Force.

Iran is on an FATF blacklist drawn up to counter money laundering and the financing of terrorist groups, but the Paris-based organization has suspended counter-measures since 2017 while Tehran works on reforms. EU leaders on Monday welcomed the bloc's new mechanism to trade with Iran but warned Tehran over its ballistic missile program and regional policies while calling for it to implement reforms to comply with FATF demands.

Britain, France and Germany created the system last week to allow firms to trade with Iran without falling foul of US sanctions. The foreign ministry, in its statement, welcomed the EU's "positive stances" but also criticized the bloc's warnings on its missile program and its regional policies. "Iran's defense activities... are merely defensive, deterrent and a domestic matter that has never been on the agenda of our negotiations with other countries," it said. "Raising such issues under current regional circumstances and clear threats against the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran is not constructive," the ministry said.

It urged European countries "to take a realistic look at regional incidents and issues and not to be influenced" by the United States. Brussels, for its part, hopes the special payment mechanism for trade with Iran — registered under the name INSTEX—will help save the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and major powers.

Washington has reimposed sanctions after President Donald Trump last year quit the accord which lifted the measures in exchange for curbs on Iran's nuclear program.

Iran has welcomed INSTEX as a "first step", while US officials have said it would not affect its efforts to exert economic pressure on Tehran. — AFP

Aussie bank stocks soar after inquiry

SYDNEY: Share prices of Australia's major banks soared yesterday as investors expressed relief that a national inquiry into abuses in their sector shied away from harsh measures that could threaten profits. Financials had been under sustained pressure ahead of Monday's publication of a Royal Commission report, which revealed rampant misconduct and poor treatment of customers.

The year-long investigation referred more than 20 cases to regulators for possible prosecution, but crucially for markets, stopped short of recommending a shake-up of bank structures.

At the close of trade in Sydney yesterday, the "big four" banks were sharply higher, with Commonwealth Bank up 4.7 percent, ANZ jumping 6.5 percent and Westpac soaring 7.4 percent. Even National Australia Bank (NAB), whose chairman and chief executive were singled out by the inquiry's commissioner Kenneth Hayne, jumped 3.9 percent. "The much anticipated release of the Royal Commission Final Report was disappointing, in our view," UBS analyst Jonathan Mott said in a note to clients.

"The final recommendations fell well short of market expectations... Without powerful recommendations, we are concerned that ensuring lasting cultural change over the years may be difficult, especially as management and boards rotate." Deutsche Bank analysts said yesterday the 76 recommendations—which included closing legal loopholes and increasing protections for consumers such as banning some aggressive sales practices—were practical but possibly "too docile".

Global ratings agency Moody's added that the report's lack of calls for wide shake-up of banking structures was a "positive for bank profitability".

Mortgage brokers and other non-bank financial institutions, which face stricter regulations and the removal of commissions if the recommendations are adopted, were the big losers, with share prices in listed firms tumbling yesterday. Despite investors' optimism, there were dark clouds hanging over the future of NAB's chair Ken Henry and chief executive Andrew Thorburn, who cancelled a long period of annual leave to return to work. Veteran banking analyst Brian Johnson of CLSA said change at the top of NAB was likely. — AFP



Business

Bank lending leading financing tool for large projects in GCC

NBK led financing of energy projects worth KD 3bn over the last couple of years



KUWAIT: During his participation at the Fifth GCC Energy Strategy Forum held in Kuwait, the General Manager of Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance Group of the National Bank of Kuwait, Pradeep Handa, said that bank lending remains the leading financing tool for large projects in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

He said: "The region's banks have more liquidity and the debt capital market for the energy sector, and energy companies in specific, provides inherent advantages that include fixed interest rates, flexibility in financings and a wider lending base."

Handa gave an overview on the energy sector in Kuwait, starting with a look at KPC's 2040 vision and the increases projected in output, while the broader energy sector, Public-Private Partnership projects are planned to be tendered at a minimum CAPEX of \$5 billion on the short-term. CAPEX is expected to see an additional \$394 billion until 2040.

He added: "The lending environment may change in the future as borrowers become more sophisticated, GCC markets become more mature and regulatory capital gets more scarce for regional banks. Initiatives in these direction are seen with an increasing emphasis on the PPP

model in Saudi, UAE, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar, however much less in Kuwait despite the opportunities."

Handa however spoke of the success of major financings taking place in Kuwait and the region, as well as the success of sukuk and bonds for the private sector. He



NBK attends 5th GCC Energy Strategy Forum

said: "The opportunities available for financing these projects in the backdrop of relatively low oil prices and budget deficits projected are abundant. "NBK has led the financing of over KD 1.2 billion for the Clean Fuels Project and KD 390 million for the LNG Terminal.

We've recently completed the financing of the Duqm



Refinery Project at \$4.6 billion, which is one third financed by a mix of Kuwaiti banks. The Bank has also successfully managed the Sukuk and Bonds issuance a leading petrochemical company, EQUATE. Banks without a doubt remain a great supporter to the energy sector, and the opportunities are ahead of us."

Meanwhile, Managing Director and Head of Investment Banking at NBK Capital, Rani Selwanes, participated as a panelist to discuss: New Methods for Financing Energy Projects and Investment Opportunities.

In his remarks, Selwanes focused on the growth prospects and capital expenditure for Kuwait's oil sector. He presented insight into the various financing tools available for the oil sector. Furthermore, he added that the K-companies will be able to adopt structured financing structures to secure long-term financing including direct bank loans and global market fixed income issuances. Selwanes

highlighted the key challenges borrowers, including Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and its subsidiaries, have to consider while obtaining financing, including: the extensive timelines associated with formal approvals, regulatory restrictions on the local banking sector, and international investor stringent requirements including collaterals disclosures and corporate governance.

The Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation ("API-CORP") estimates that GCC member states will require around \$320 billion in expected capital expenditure for oil and gas projects over the next five years, while the Middle East and North Africa region is expected to invest around US\$611 billion in the energy sector over the same period.

Selwanes emphasized on the local banking market's ability and readiness to support and finance the Kuwait's oil sector upcoming mega projects. "The Kuwaiti banking sector has significant capacity and ample appetite to finance the oil sector's projects," Selwanes said. "There are several advantages to obtain financing through the local banks as opposed to international financing, including the attractive interest rate environment in addition to the Kuwaiti banks' ability to provide dollar financing, which what the market witnessed during the dollar financing of the Duqm refinery in Oman."

Five times more benefits on Shamel Plans from Ooredoo

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait announced the launch of its latest promotional campaign on the occasion of Kuwait's national celebrations. Customers will be able to enjoy up to 5 times more benefits on Shamel Plans, where they will be able to choose any mobile or SIM-only plan, and enjoy the benefits of the next higher plan during the joyous month of February at very aggressive prices, and is available to both existing customers and new customers.

The month of February is a time of great pride and celebration in Kuwait, and Ooredoo has always strived to take part in celebrating and sharing this special occasion with all of its customers. Ooredoo's new campaign, which is ongoing until February 28, offers customers the ability to enjoy up to 5 times more benefits on the Shamel Plans by choosing from any mobile or SIM-only plan. Shamel Plans include many exciting features such as unlimited local minutes, carry over unused internet to the next month, and adding a second device which includes the latest iPhone XR, iPhone XS Plus, Samsung Galaxy Note 9, and Huawei Mate 20 Pro. Adding a second device is conditional of being on the current Shamel contract for 6 months or more.

Customers can also experience real speed with Shamel Home which provides a fast, reliable, and consistent fiber internet service at home powered by FASTelco, a subsidiary of Ooredoo Kuwait. Customers looking for speed boosts can upgrade the unlimited fiber service to speeds of up to 100Mbps. Customer can choose from an array of plans under Shamel Home portfolio which bundles home fiber fixed internet from FASTelco, mobile wireless internet, entertainment digital services, and a range of devices. During the month of February, customers will be able to enjoy amazing Hala Feb offers which gives the customer a free jump to the higher plan.

The offer stems from Ooredoo's core values of caring, connecting and challenging, as the company aims to enrich customers' lives through telecommunication technology. Ooredoo's plans aim to complement the lifestyle of customers based on their usage and needs, taking in mind the lifestyle of the company's global-oriented customer base.

The plans additionally include a number of Shamel's exclusive features, such as Ooredoo subscribers can now enjoy the privilege of freezing their contract for up to 3 months a year when they travel, without worrying about paying bills for months that they don't use. Additionally, Ooredoo now allows customers to transfer contracts to other customers even during the contract period, with no penalties or extra fees. All Shamel subscribers in the plans included in the offer can enjoy unlimited calls, and customers with plans that have limited internet can enjoy data rollover, to ensure that they are making full use of their internet package.



Jazeera Airways introduces self-check-in kiosks at T5

KUWAIT: Jazeera Airways, Kuwait's leading low-cost airline, operating regionally and internationally, has introduced state-of-the-art self-check-in kiosks at its Terminal 5 (T5) at Kuwait International Airport, in addition to a series of services and new offerings that add value to passengers and make their travel experience easier with Jazeera Airways.

In addition to the self-check-in kiosks, the airline has introduced free WiFi internet service at its gates at T5, as well as announced the opening of new restaurants and shops at the duty free and terminal areas. Jazeera Airways is also providing support to passengers with a dedicated Help Team present at the terminal and a

Huge, pricey trucks haul jobs and profits for the Detroit Three

DECATUR, Texas/FLINT: Mickey McMaster is on his 12th pickup truck. The 61-year old farm equipment dealer in Decatur, Texas, two weeks ago treated himself to a 2019 GMC Denali for around \$69,000 - a reward for long hours at work. "For me this is the Cadillac of trucks, it's a real luxury vehicle," McMaster said. "I've worked my way up to afford a truck like this and it shows that I've earned it."

McMaster is the kind of customer General Motors Co is banking on as it plans to add 1,000 jobs at a plant in Flint, Michigan that will build a new generation of its largest pickups. Demand from Texas and other heartland states for big pick-ups is providing a lifeline to many workers the No 1 US automaker is laying off at plants elsewhere.

The Detroit Three automakers and thousands of their US workers are counting on customers like McMaster to keep buying bigger and more luxurious pickup trucks even if overall US vehicle demand weakens this year, as most analysts predict. At Flint, GM will build a new generation of its heavy-duty Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierras, including luxury models that are some of the most profitable vehicles on the planet. GM, Ford Motor Co and Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV's Ram division own the segment and are each doubling down with new or redesigned models launching this year.

Sales of heavy-duty pickups in the United States have grown to more than 600,000 vehicles a year, up more than 20 percent since 2013, according to industry data. Prices for luxury models can easily top \$70,000.

GM on Tuesday will celebrate the launch of a new generation of heavy-duty GMC and

24-hour Terminal 5 call center service at 176. Commenting on the new services available to passengers, Jazeera Airways CEO, Rohit Ramchandran, said: "We continue to introduce services that add value to our customers when traveling with Jazeera Airways. These additional amenities and services at our dedicated Jazeera Terminal are raising the level of the passenger experience that customers can benefit from when flying Jazeera Airways at Kuwait International Airport."

Fast self-check-in kiosks

Using the latest self-check-in kiosks available in the industry, passengers can print their boarding pass and baggage tag in less than a minute. They are required to enter their booking reference, scan their passport and ensure their bags do not contain restricted goods. After printing their boarding pass and baggage tags, passengers drop their bags off at the dedicated desk and then directly head to passport control. The self-check-in kiosks service is available for passengers traveling to any destination served by Jazeera Airways.

Chevrolet pickups at the assembly plant in Flint, Michigan, that is now building all such trucks for the company.

At the same time that GM is laying off thousands of US workers and planning to shutter five North American factories, Flint is hiring. The plant runs on three daily shifts, six days a week. As the new model's assembly system ramps up, the plant's capacity will increase by more than 25 percent, plant manager Mike Perez told Reuters. The Flint plant plans to add 1,000 workers, more than half of the 1,500 factory workers who have asked to transfer from plants GM has targeted for shutdown as part of CEO Mary Barra's restructuring plan. "We're bringing in 50 to 100 people every week," said Perez.

Workers last week were still finishing the job of retooling the Flint factory to build the new heavy-duty trucks as part of a \$1.5 billion investment project. A highlight of the new assembly line: two-story tall Fanuc robots hoist a cab and a bed for a truck from separate pallets, swing them in opposing arcs, then gently lower them onto a truck frame to be bolted together by different robots.

Detroit Three executives boast that the heavy-duty pickup market is protected by "moats" - a 25-percent tariff on imported trucks and decades of engineering that have yielded vehicles that haul 30,000 pound trailers, ride like large luxury sedans, and offer the same safety and connectivity technology as a BMW or Lexus luxury car.

Pickup trucks account for three-quarters of the 235 or so new vehicles Carey "CW" Williams sells each month at his Decatur dealership. And nearly half of those are higher-end, luxury models that can sell for \$70,000 or more. Williams said he is not concerned about the new Ram trucks as competition for GM. "Pickup trucks are our bread and butter, and we've got the new model to prove it with all the bells and whistles customers want," he said.

Mark Ary, 37, a second-generation owner of an HVAC installation/repair business, paid \$65,000 for a white 2019 Silverado High Country. — Reuters



T5 call center number: 176

The new dedicated number of T5 serves passengers and their families to inquire about flights and other services. A Jazeera Help Team is also available at the terminal to guide passengers and respond to their queries.

WiFi at gates

The WiFi internet connection service is

available free for passengers when boarding at the T5 gates.

New restaurants and shops

Among the new restaurants and shops now open at T5, passengers can enjoy a Duty Free shop, and now get refreshments airtide at Costa Coffee, Slim Chickens and Caff Supreme before their flight.

Gulf Bank to host yearly salary account draw tomorrow

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is hosting its yearly draw for Kuwait's largest salary prize on Thursday (7th February 2019). The event will take place from 5 pm to 8.30 pm at Al-Murooj, and one lucky winner will receive a cash prize of KD 250,000, in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

Kicking off at 5 pm, there will be a fantastic lineup of activities and entertainment, including a dedicated photo booth and the much-loved Gulf Bank 'Catch the Cash' game. With food and beverage available throughout the event, the festivities will also feature a special performance by 'Sons of Yusuf', before the lucky salary account winner of KD 250,000 is announced. The event will be broadcast live on 88FM Kuwait Pulse.

Ahmed Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communication, Gulf Bank, said: "Gulf Bank's salary account is tailored for Kuwaiti customers, providing them with added value and benefits, with a number of unique offers and monthly chances to win cash prizes. We are delighted to celebrate another successful year of the Salary Account Draw and we wish all our patrons the best of luck ahead of the draw." The salary account gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and will be eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank.

Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a free of charge Visa or MasterCard credit card for a year, as well as a chance to apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000, or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000. Existing and new customers, who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance of winning cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary, and a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest salary prize of up to 100 times their salary.



Ahmed Al-Amir

What's On



More Cafe, Glow Ice Cream open at Al Kout Mall

More Cafe and Glow Ice Cream has officially opened its doors in Kuwait in Al Kout Mall, one of Al Kout Project's six bespoke experiences, in partnership with Tamdeen Food Company, the food and beverage division of the Tamdeen Group. This step comes as part of Tamdeen Food's continued commitment to provide unique experiences to its visitors through a carefully selected group of the best outstanding brands.

The European-styled cafe offers its visitors traditional European cuisine with a modern twist on signature More dishes. The Cafe's offerings are always fresh provided daily by the best suppliers and prepared to the taste of the Cafe's customers. More Cafe and Glow Ice Cream's menu surpasses the concept of traditional cafe offerings as it features a

variety of more than 60 dishes from sumptuous breakfasts, starters, salads, main courses and desserts inspired by world famous cuisines.

More Cafe and Glow Ice Cream also brings signature drinks inspired from more than 13 countries. The beverages menu includes highest quality teas and coffees in addition to hot and cold drinks, natural juices prepared from locally sourced ingredients. To celebrate the opening, the cafe offers complimentary coffee to its visitors until February 20, 2019.

In addition to savoring More's famous food, diners can rejoice the love of great food and great art in a very unique space created for local artists and talents to exhibit their inspirational work in addition to a library offering many

books that can be exchanged and shared, making this a hub for those looking for an exceptional cultural experience to feed their passion for fine art. The More Cafe and Glow Ice Cream is uniquely located on Al Kout Mall's terrace overlooking Nag'at Al Kout with a festive atmosphere that invites families and friends to come together and celebrate this truly wonderful destination.

Expressing his excitement at the opening, James Le Gassick, CEO of MIF said: "We are honored to be opening our first More Cafe and Glow Ice Cream concept in Kuwait. The Kuwaiti market has always been a priority in our expansion plans and Al Kout Mall offers a prestigious and prime location for our first venture. We look forward to welcoming guests for an unparalleled dining experience."



CBK celebrates employees graduation

The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently celebrated the graduation of a number of its employees who had successfully passed professional training programs organized by the Banking Studies Institute in credit management, advanced credit management, branch manager, assistant branch manager,

er, risk management, investment basis and strategic performance system management. In this regard, CBK's deputy director for human resources, Sadeq Abdullah said that investment in employees is a priority for CBK and that expansion plans mainly depend on well-trained and qualified human resources.



Hilton Kuwait Resort celebrates 100 years

Hilton Kuwait Resort hosted its annual exclusive celebration to honor and pay tribute to its loyal corporate partners. The annual event, held at the hotel's magnificent Al Dorra Ballroom, also celebrated an exciting milestone in Hilton's history marking its 100th anniversary taking place this year. Ziad Tantawi, General Manager of Hilton Kuwait Resort, along with Fady Iskandar, Director of Business Development, and Karim Fattouh, Director of Sales, welcomed their special guests to the ballroom for an unforgettable evening of delicious food and captivating entertainment hosted by the famous presenter, Tamara Saab.

Ziad Tantawi, General Manager of Hilton Kuwait

Resort, said: "It was important to us honor those who support us year upon year. We have fantastic corporate partners who help us to make our business the success that it is and we are very much looking forward to collaborating with them all in 2019."

Over the course of the evening the resort's management recognized the contribution of prominent Kuwaiti businesses that have supported and added to the Resort's success. Guests enjoyed a delightful seated dinner, which was followed by a raffle draw which gifted unique experiences and complimentary night stays in Hilton Hotels and Resorts around the world. Guests were mesmerized by entertainment from the talented Lucca and Anca, the revolutionary mind reading duo who left the audience amazed by their act.

"Over the last 100 years, Hilton has served hundreds of millions of travelers all over the world and pioneered business in ways that allowed people to travel and enjoy cultural experiences in a safe and secure way. This milestone is an exciting time for us and certainly a cause for celebration," added Tantawi.

Burgan Bank sponsors Ahmadi Music Group's biggest concert in Kuwait

Burgan Bank, a leading contributor to the arts and cultural scene in Kuwait, is sponsoring Kuwait's biggest orchestra comprising of 130 performers from all over the world. Following the success of the first ever classical music performance last year, Ahmadi Music Group returns to present one of Mozart's most famous symphonies played by international calibers from the UK, Russia and Bulgaria.

Driven to support social advancement among all communities, Burgan Bank continues to sponsor one of Kuwait's most prestigious music and arts organizations for the fifth consecutive year. This year, the respected music group celebrates the work of a legend, led by Maestro Richard Bushman, in one of the largest and oldest musical ensembles in Kuwait. Audiences heard Mozart's requiem, one of the most influential compositions in classical music and his last masterpiece, in addition to a clarinet concerto.

The event was hosted at Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Centre wherein both international and locally acclaimed soloists, including a rising talent from the UK

and two more top-level soloists from Bulgaria performed. Also, seated alongside the professional orchestra was a youth orchestra consisting of eight young players.

Ahmadi Music Group's annual performances constitute a mix of jazz, classical, Broadway, opera and newly-commissioned music of which the members include both seasoned professionals and beginners. Bringing unique experiences for over 65 years with world class musical standards, the internationally famous group continues to inspire and nurture a new generation of Kuwaiti Classical performers. Burgan Bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.



GUST holds 14th annual book, information fair

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) announced the launch of its 14th Annual Book and Information Fair on its campus. The event, organized by the A M Al-Refai Library, aims at connecting the GUST community with publishers, and to give them the opportunity to discover the latest additions to its library resources. The event was attended by the university's top management, and officially opened by GUST President, Professor Walid Bouhamra, Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Professor Jassem Abdulsalam, Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr Ali Ansari, and Library Director, Shobhita Kohli. The main sponsor of the event was That Al Salasil, GUST's campus bookstore.

The Book and Information Fair offers leading publishers a platform to display the latest editions of books and online catalogs, and offers online service providers the opportunity to introduce their latest products and innovations available in the world of technology to help faculty adopt and navigate these resources in the classroom and to advance their research.

The fair also celebrated the release of 12 different books authored by its faculty in the last year. The books include: Politics and Digital Literature in the Middle East and Participation Culture in the Gulf both by Dr Nele Lenze; Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Era by Dr Salah Al-Sharhan, Dr Antonis Simintiras, Dr Luay Tahat, Dr Issam Moughrabi, and Dr Taher Ali; Media Law in Kuwait by Dr Ali Dashti, Dr Ildiko Kaposi, and Dr Matt Duffy.

Lulu's Song and the Four Flying Friends by Dr Shahd Al Shammari and illustrated by GUST student Hajar Al-Marhoun; Hegel and the Foundations of Literary Theory by Dr M A R Habib; Book Chapter Faculty Development for Online Teaching, in the book: Handbook of Research on Virtual Training and Mentoring of Online Instructors by Dr Gertrude I Hewapathirana; Basics of Geographic Information Systems in Rand Spatial Econometrics in R by Dr Mohammed Moustafa; Tayseer Al-Rahman in the Sciences and Literature and the Provisions of the Koran by Dr Salah Arkadan; and Exporting Wealth and Importing Labor: A History of Production in the Gulf Arab States by Dr Omar Al-Shehabi.

The Book and Information Fair is a yearly event which contributes to elevating GUST's standing in the academic world, as well as recognizing the authors' efforts and giving them an opportunity to showcase their contributions to the university's mission of research, teaching and service.



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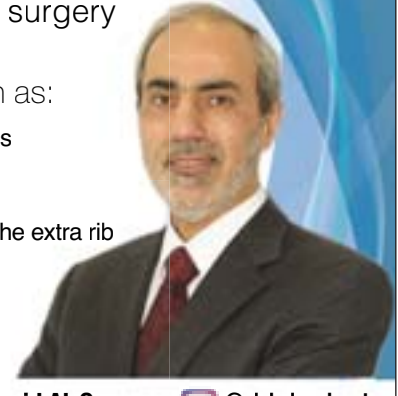
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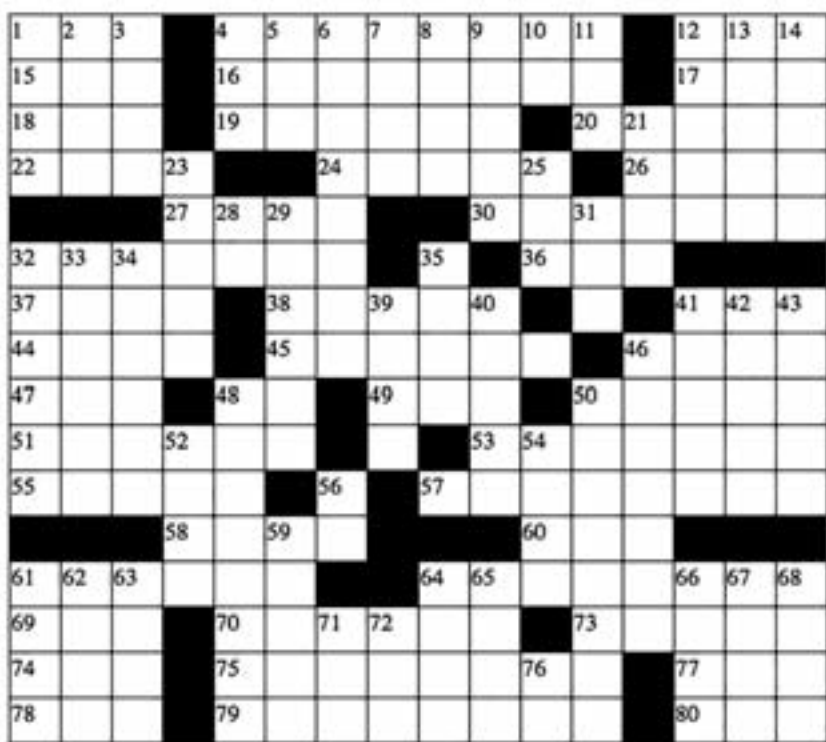
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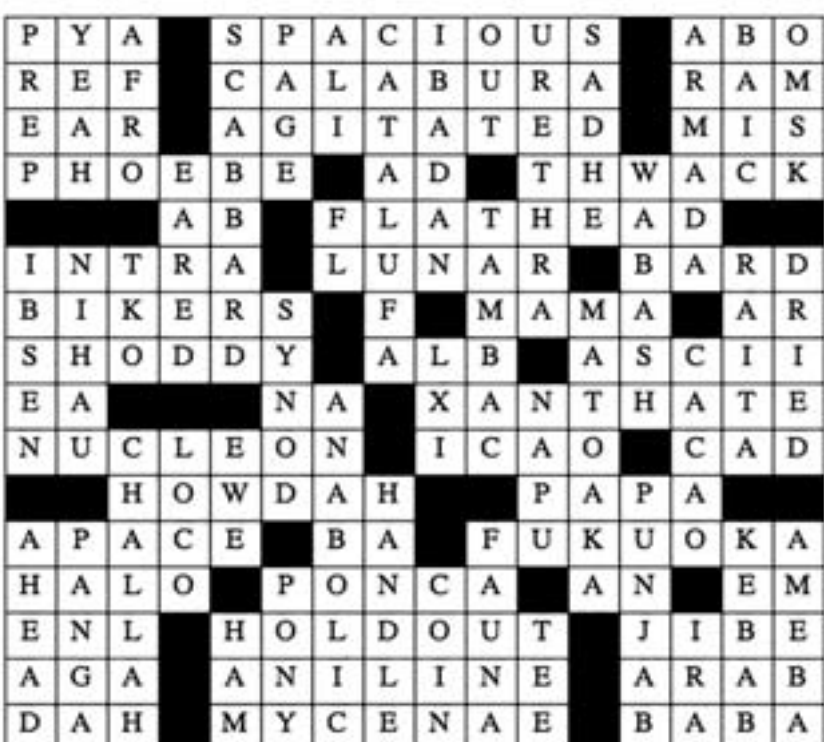
ACROSS

1. Characteristic of a mob.
4. A feeling of craving something.
12. A syndrome that occurs in many women from 2 to 14 days before the onset of menstruation.
15. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
16. Bearing a heavy burden of work or difficulties or responsibilities.
17. Take in solid food.
18. Having leadership guidance.
19. Surveying instrument consisting of the upper movable part of a theodolite including the telescope and its attachments.
20. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
22. A fraudulent business scheme.
24. (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
26. The state of affairs that a plan is intended to achieve and that (when achieved) terminates behavior intended to achieve it.
27. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
30. A cloud of solid or liquid particles in a gas.
32. Glove that encases the thumb separately and the other four fingers together.
36. Tooth on the rim of gear wheel.
37. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
38. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
44. The muscular back part of the shank.
45. Plants closely allied to the genera *Satureja* and *Calamintha*.
47. A guided missile fired from shipboard against an airborne target.
49. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
51. (Sumerian) Consort of Dumuzi (Tammuz).
53. Of a particle or body or system.
55. Having a face or facing especially of a specified kind or number.
57. A tributary of the Missouri River.
58. Prolific Spanish playwright (1562-1635).
60. Perennial herb of East India to Polynesia and Australia cultivated for its large edible root yielding *Otaheite* arrowroot starch.
61. Streaming or flapping or spreading wide as if in a current of air.
69. The cry made by sheep.
70. A river that rises in northern Colombia and flows generally eastward to the Orinoco in central Venezuela.
73. An edict of the Russian tsar.
74. Electronic warfare undertaken to prevent or reduce an enemy's effective use of the electromagnetic spectrum.
75. Succulent carpet-forming plant having small brilliant reddish-pink flowers.
77. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
78. A young woman making her debut into society.
79. A great raja.
80. A score in baseball made by a runner touching all four bases safely.

DOWN

1. A master's degree in library science.
2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
3. English monk and scholar (672-735).
4. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
5. 100 puls equal 1 afghani.
6. Antacid (trade name Prilosec) that suppresses acid secretion in the stomach.
7. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
8. A cooperative unit.
9. A republic in the Asian subcontinent in southern Asia.
10. A brittle silver-white metalloid element that is related to selenium and sulfur.
11. A doctor's degree in education.
12. A tributary of the Rio Grande.
13. A Portuguese province on the south coast of China and two islands in the South China Sea.
14. A compartment in a stable where a single animal is confined and fed.
21. Highly excited.
23. God of justice.
25. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
28. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
29. The capital of Turkey.
31. Take something away by force or without the consent of the owner.
33. Large herbivorous tropical American arboreal lizards with a spiny crest along the back.
34. Covered with paving material.
35. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
39. A digestive juice secreted by the liver and stored in the gallbladder.
40. Italian lawn bowling (played on a long narrow dirt court).
41. Goddess of war.
42. A strong emotion.
43. English monk and scholar (672-735).
46. A building used to house military personnel v l.
48. (sports) With hand brought forward and up from below shoulder level.
50. Indonesian wild pig with enormous curved canine teeth.
52. A river in northwestern Russia flowing generally west into the Gulf of Finland.
54. A member of the Shoshonean people of northeastern Arizona.
56. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
59. Small genus of hairy herbs with yellow flowers.
62. The front of the head from the forehead to the chin and ear to ear.
63. Young sheep.
64. A mark left by the healing of injured tissue.
65. Type genus of the Majidae.
66. Dense growth of hairs covering the body or parts of it (as on the human head).
67. (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
68. An administrator in charge of a division of a university or college.
71. Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
72. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
76. A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, okay it's time to let out your real self out. You've studied your life in the past few days and found that you want to change some personal habits and emotional thought patterns. Well, you're doing it now and sometimes it might cause a little upset in family, friends and the workplace. Your avantgarde attitude might be hard for others to understand. But they will notice though and think you have some good ideas. Your boss will notice and be impressed. Relish your real-time today, Aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you feel great, probably because you've gotten some sort of exercise. Your mind is sharp and you want to create something with your hands. Friends are quick to see this mood and make good work for you such as gardening, building a she/he shed or painting. Things run smoothly in anything like this that you attempt, Taurus. You know that you'll be invited back to your friends quickly for more of this comradery. The only fly in this ointment is someone might tell you that you don't really know how to do what you're doing. Overlook them and enjoy your day.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini you're at your most creative today. At every turn you find inspiration. Work is easier for you because you're able to make the hard decisions and be right in making them. Logically you're on the ball but you can also see the logic in your imagination bending it to work for you to make your life better in all aspects. After a hard day at work, take a break. Either go for a walk and continue to let your mind work in a meditative state or share a great movie with your love Gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you remember the "be calm" message yesterday? You're going to need it today. When others lead you into an argument, they're in control of you. Remember this now. Your emotions are full today and may cause you to feel a little more insecure. Know this will pass and keep it under control as much as possible at this time. That friend you love so much will come to your side and help you when you feel your worse, Cancer. This is a time of day-dreaming about your wonderful past which really wasn't so much better than now if you think about it. Get under a nice blanket at home, watch TV or read a book.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you're commanding and very serious. It's all about you now. You have lots of energy and want your work place to be better or you're going elsewhere. This has to do with money and better work conditions. Others appreciate your thoughtful behavior but may not like your manner of speech. You're practical, Leo, and in your exuberance to make your life better may find yourself in an argument with someone with whom you generally agree. Breathe before you speak. Try to make your home life better too.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, yes! Today is better than it's been the last few days. The only problem may come from jealousy of you and your usual good intelligent thoughts at work. A coworker might inform you that your thoughts aren't where they should be. Smile and go on. Ignorance is contagious once rolling. Others will side with you and tell you how important you are to them. See, all better, Virgo. At home the tenseness is better too. You don't have to hide from a lover or family member because you feel inept now. This emotional thought process has been all



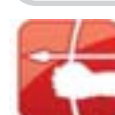
Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, it's going to be just the least bit hard for you to try to be the sweet person you are today. Though you're studying to become more compassionate, you might be irritated by ignorance. Remember, two ignorant people arguing might lend those watching the display to wondering which one is truly ignorant. You're like Jekyll and Hyde when it comes to work today, Libra. You can do what you must to survive there and prosper. Teaching coworkers better work habits makes you look great while you're truly only thinking about your life and how to be more spiritual.



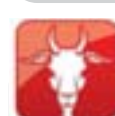
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you have nervous energy to spare. At work this is good because you're focused on making better career choices and encouraging those choices to multiply in compensation. You don't just want the money though, Scorpio, you want the accolades and you're receiving them. Intense is the word for you. Your family knows to let it go now and wait for better days but your lover probably isn't so understanding. He or she wants your attention which isn't happening now. That could lead to hurt feelings which you don't understand. Your love life could be at a stalemate now but will revive in intensity.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, well, you worked hard yesterday and today you need to play. But, guess what, it's a work day and you'll be working today. So, do something that you can skate through so that it doesn't cause a big commotion if you mess up. You're intelligent enough to fake it. Get out tonight with friends and celebrate making it through the day, Sagittarius. You're not one to have to sit and stew. You'd rather be on the go and enjoying others. You and friends might decide to make travel plans. Make entertainment and education your priority for this evening. Have fun. You deserve it.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, your career is in the midst of change and possibly in the middle of severe problems? This requires much of your time and attention. You don't mind working extra hard but you know that as the Capricorn you are, you probably have other methods of seeking material wealth happening too. Keep those systems running but take the time to create a better place at your job now using any method at your disposal including your intuition. You'll find your insight is strong now and you'll come up with the best answers to imposing questions about what you love best in life, your security.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Aquarius, you may find yourself standing around the watercooler talking about your adventures with inventions and work ideas. You feel good being your coworkers center of attention and also feel that you can give very good, logical advice to your workmates. They listen intently. Your family calls upon you to help them with whatever life's problem has popped up especially if it's with a younger relative. They think you have the knowledge and the answers, Aquarius. This is one of the times you feel confident enough to help. Communication is easy now.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You have always been one to say exactly what is on your mind. You may find yourself extremely outspoken and impulsive today. You may find yourself feeling very passionate today. You are ready for change. The changes you make today will have a great effect on your life for a great while so resist the urge to make impulsive decisions and put much thought into this. You may find yourself in a curious mood possibly paying close attention to and even taking part in a gossip session today. You feel not only the need to discover what drives and motivates others but are spending much of your time and focus trying to figure out the same about yourself.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Thankful For...

Find and circle all of the people and things to be thankful for. The remaining letters spell a secret message.

SEOMRAINBOWSMEMEUSICO
PYAMDNRAGLYVOLUNTEERSR
SESSALGEYDEHEARINGCEA
RSERALCWDESISTERSNHTSA
YIPESGRAEOLMBMBOUAEESL
IGAWGNERRLOEAMGFOWBNE
CHORRCFROEA FERALNURINS
ETELAORVUCGMSBTAOSOHDE
SHNFNMETHTYILREPHAMSNV
SETEDPHEEPAEVLEWHSUNIT
MLSLPUSOPSNSNCEAHROKHUK
LERNATSALSRLRRETONSFR
LCLIONEHI I IEMUHSROSEOI
ETAIAARHNDLDSTCFESHMRST
SRHSHGDDGHAANTITEABTN
TISIDSBROOIEYHIITKSFUCU
ECEVPNEOWTNGSALTUHRAA
PIRENEEOTGUSFYLIMAFUT
HTFLAORIRKAGNIHTOLCENN
SYHECSAVRLSAMTSIRHCEBR
OSETEFILRSFAPLACETOLIVE

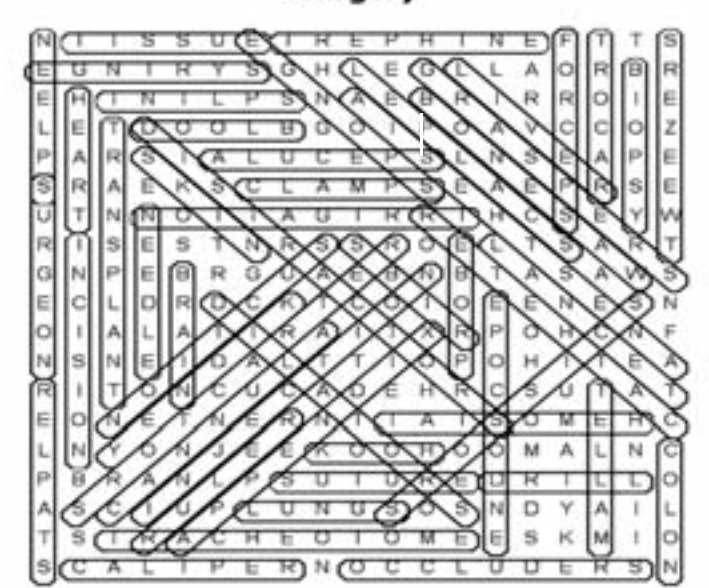
ACTS OF KINDNESS
A PLACE TO LIVE
BEACHES
BEAUTIFUL NATURE
BLESSINGS
BOOKS
BROTHERS
CARE GIVERS
CHILDREN
CHRISTMAS
CLEAN WATER
CLOTHING
COMPUTERS

ELECTRICITY
EYEGGLASSES
EYESIGHT
FAITH
FAMILY
FLOWERS
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Surgery



- | | | | |
|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| ANESTHESIA | DRILL | LUNGS | SPLINT |
| APPENDIX | ENDOSCOPE | MALLET | SPONGE |
| BIOPSY | FORCEPS | NEEDLE | STAPLER |
| BLOOD | GRASPERS | OCCLUDERS | SUCTION |
| BONE SAW | HEART | PROBE | SURGEON |
| BRAIN | HEMOSTAT | RETRACTORS | SUTURE |
| CALIPER | HOOK | RULER | SYRINGE |
| CANNULA | INCISION | SCALPEL | TISSUE |
| CATHETER | INJECTION | SCISSORS | TRACHEOTOME |
| CLAMPS | IRRIGATION | SKIN | TRANSPLANT |
| COLON | KIDNEY | LANCET | TREPINE |
| DILATORS | LANCET | SPECULA | TROCAR |
| DISTRACTORS | LIVER | SPLEEN | TWEEZERS |

The hidden message is: THE LARGEST ORGAN OF THE HUMAN BODY IS SKIN

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2019



Women pose for a "selfie" as they stand in the courtyard of the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi on February 4, 2019, ahead of Pope Francis' visit. — AFP

Jolie demands Myanmar 'commitment' to end anti-Rohingya violence



Angelina Jolie (left) visits a school in the Kutupalong camp for Rohingya refugees in Ukhaia in southern Bangladesh yesterday. — AFP

Angelina Jolie said yesterday that Myanmar must "show genuine commitment" to end violence that has driven hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims into neighboring Bangladesh. The superstar envoy for the UN refugee agency made the comments on the second day of emotional meetings with Rohingya, including rape survivors, in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar district where some 740,000 Rohingya have taken refuge since August 2017. There were already about 300,000 in camps before the exodus, which has strained Bangladesh's resources to the limit. The visit came ahead of a new UN appeal to raise nearly one billion dollars for the one million Rohingya now in the camps around the town of Cox's Bazar.

"It was deeply upsetting to meet the families who have only known persecution and statelessness their whole lives, who speak of being 'treated like cattle,'" Jolie told reporters. "The Rohingya families I have met are no different from other refugees in one crucial respect: they want to be able to return home," she said. The latest wave of refugees arrived after a military clampdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state. Jolie insisted that the refugees should return home "only when they feel safe enough to do so voluntarily and they know that their rights will be respected."

"I met a woman yesterday, a survivor of rape in Myanmar, and she told me, 'You would have to shoot me where I stand before I go back without my rights,'" the 43-year-old said. "The responsibility to ensure those rights and make it possible for the Rohingya people to return to Rakhine state lies squarely with the government and the authorities in Myanmar," she added. She called for an end to violence in Rakhine, which UN officials have compared to genocide, and demanded action against the perpetrators. "I urge the Myanmar authorities to show the genuine commitment needed to end the cycle of violence and displacement and improve the conditions for all communities in Rakhine state," she said.

Jolie has previously met with displaced Rohingya while in Myanmar in July 2015 and in India in 2006. She will conclude her visit on Wednesday by meeting Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, and other senior officials in Dhaka, a UN statement said. The talks will focus on how the UN's refugee agency can help Bangladesh's efforts for the Rohingya and "sustainable solutions" to settle the persecuted minority, the statement added. — AFP

PHOTOGRAPHERS IN IRAQ'S MOSUL SNAP DARK DAYS, BRIGHT FUTURES

Ashraf Al-Atraqji carefully stepped around tufts of weeds sprouting in a mountain of rubble in Iraq's Mosul, found a seat on a sun-soaked rock, and struck a pose for the photographer. Behind him stretched the ruins of the Prophet Yunus mosque, an ancient monument infamously destroyed by the Islamic State group when it overran Mosul in 2014. A year and a half after Iraqi forces recaptured Mosul from IS, residents have been hiring local photographers to capture mementos of their city's darkest days.

Looking out at the metal fences and barbed wire now surrounding what's left of the mosque, 38-year-old Atraqji told AFP he hoped those days never return. "Each stone in this place is linked to the history and identity of our city," said the father of three, his goatee neatly trimmed and wearing stylish sunglasses. "I want to document what the terrorists did so that my children can build a future beyond these ruins." He wasn't the only one. A little further up the hill, a couple positioned themselves near a concrete wall marred with graffiti as the sun cast a golden glow. "We want a souvenir, a piece of evidence of the horrors IS perpetrated in Mosul," said the 32-year-old woman, who identified herself as Um Mohammad.

When IS swept across parts of Iraq in 2014 it massacred civilians, leaving their remains in dozens of mass graves across the country that the United Nations says could hold up to 12,000 victims. Jihadists imposed their ultra-conservative interpretation of Islamic law, destroying everything from centuries-old churches to musical instruments. They even raided some 300 photography studios, tearing pictures off the walls. Terrified of being fined or subject to IS's horrifying atrocities, studio owners and photographers fled or hid their equipment.

Capturing the comeback

Many of Mosul's commercial districts have witnessed a modest revival. Religious leaders laid the first stone to rebuild the iconic Al-Nuri

mosque, and Dominican priests are saving 16th-century books and irreplaceable records. Residents and the amateur photographers they've hired are doing their own kind of archiving, too, including open-air photo galleries and family portraiture. Mohammad Dhia posed with his two young children in a recently-renovated square in the city's bustling downtown.

Like many of Iraq's 20 million internet users—nearly half the population—he hoped to upload his shots to his Facebook profile. "They're high-quality, beautiful photographs

between 200 and 600 dollars," said Bassem.

Lights, camera, action

The square in downtown Mosul teemed with amateur portrait photographers carrying flashes, tripods, and reflectors to control light and shadow. They gave directions to their subjects: stand up straight, tilt your chin, look towards the setting sun. One young man posed with a guitar, another with a violin. Some struck a pensive look while perched on a bench; others were lost in thought staring into a pool of water. Even



An Iraqi photographer takes a picture of a man posing on a pile of rubble at the ruins of the Prophet Yunus mosque.

and it's my way of helping young photographers," said Dhia, 27. Clad in white trousers, a patterned burgundy shirt and dark shoes, he hugged his stylishly-dressed children close to him in the crisp Mosul winter.

When the session is done, Dhia slid a few bills to the photographer. A single picture costs between 1,000 and 2,000 Iraqi dinars, or less than \$2, said photographer Mohammad Bassem. For longer sessions lasting several hours, he charges between \$20 and \$50. "I do this after my university courses, and it allows me to make a bit to help out my family," the 24-year-old told AFP. Despite their cheap rates, these self-taught photographers have to shell out a sizeable sum to buy their equipment. "Our cameras cost

members of the security forces, dressed head-to-toe in camouflage, struck a pose. Photographers often went the extra mile by retouching the images to eliminate blemishes and brighten eyes.

But in a Mosul that remains broadly conservative, not everyone was willing to join in. Noha Ahmed, 25, watched the amateur shoots from afar and said they felt too risky for her. "I'm afraid that my pictures would be used for something and that it would cause me problems," she told AFP. — AFP



An Iraqi photographer takes a picture of a man posing past the fence of the ruins of the Prophet Yunus mosque. — AFP photos



An Iraqi photographer shows a girl a picture taken on his camera at Nafoura square in the Al-Zuhur neighborhood in the eastern part of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul yesterday.

Lifestyle | Gossip

Status Quo rocker **Francis Rossi** does puzzles to unwind

Status Quo's Francis Rossi does jigsaw puzzles in between band practice. The 69-year-old rocker is set to embark on a European tour with his bandmates - Andy Bown, John 'Rhino' Edwards, Leon Cave and Richie Malone - this summer, including a stop at London's The SSE Arena, Wembley, on June 29, and he's revealed he much prefers to chill out with a puzzle at his home in Croydon, London, than host or attend parties. Rossi - who has lived at the same house since 1975 - told the Daily Star newspaper: "Jigsaw puzzles help me unwind. 'I tend to start at 10 in the morning and I finish at five, then I work out, then I do a bit of the puzzle then I practice for an hour or two and then I play patience and go to sleep again - I'm very regimented. 'As stay at home as much as possible. Indoors. 'I've never had a rock 'n' roll party while living here.' The 'Rockin' All Over The World' group's co-founder Rick Parfitt passed away at the age of 68 in December 2016 from sepsis, a day after being admitted to a Marbella hospital to be treated for an infection affecting a pre-existing shoulder injury. And although the band have continued to play shows, they cut back their performances last year, but Rossi told fans that they may start

working on a new album - their first since 2016's 'Aquostic II: That's a Fact!' - some time this year. Speaking in 2018, he said: "This year has been one of change and reassessment following the sad death of Rick Parfitt. Although Rick had already retired from touring for six months before he died, it was still a major shock and my immediate reaction was to honor existing contracts and then knock it on the head. "However, since then I have become increasingly confused as I realized just how much I was enjoying touring with two vibrant young guys in the band in guitarist Richie Malone and drummer Leon Cave. "They have given us old guys a good kick up the backside and while it could never be the same as with Rick in the band, it is different now but in an exciting and vibrant way that I can't fully explain. "The 2017 gigs have been absolutely incredible and spirits are high, but we do now need some thinking time to consider all of the options now on offer for 2019, which could well include the recording a new full on Quo rock album!"

**Mark Ronson** is up for writing a disco track for Kylie Minogue

Mark Ronson would jump at the chance to pen a disco track for Kylie Minogue. The 'Nothing Breaks Like a Heart' hitmaker has responded after the 50-year-old Australian pop princess revealed she would love to return to the sound she's synonymous for by working with the 'Uptown Funk' producer - after going country on last year's 'Golden'. On whether he'd be up for producing a track that echoes back to Kylie's huge dance anthems, such as 'Can't Get You Out of My Head', 'Spinning Around' and 'Sexercize', Mark told the Daily Star newspaper: "Kylie always makes such good music, always progressive all of the time. "So of course I would work with her ... always. "I would never turn down the chance to work with someone like that. "That story got good traction and I got some good props that week. "I first met Kylie at the 2008 BRITs. "She performed that year, and then I've seen her play a few times since, she is such a legend." Speaking in September, Kylie said: "I feel a bit of disco coming on next. "There's actually a big disco section in this show and we all know about it by the end because it nearly takes us all out. "It's full-on, full-tilt, so that's where I would go at this point." When asked who she would like to work with on a disco project, she replied: "Mark Ronson I love, of course. He is one of many I'm interested in." The 'San Andreas' actress already gave fans a flavor for what's to come, as her long-awaited dance track with DJ Sigala, 'What You Waiting For', was released that month. The pair held onto the song as it didn't fit the "DNA" of 'Golden'. She explained: "That was one of the first things I demoed, but as the DNA of this album took shape it didn't fit. So I'm thrilled it's on his album." Sigala - whose real name is Bruce Fielder - previously admitted it was "weird" working for the 'Dancing' hitmaker and even more surreal because they hadn't even met and she was initially thinking about releasing it as the single for her 14th studio album. He told BANG Showbiz: "It was a bit of a weird one. It kind of doesn't feel real because I haven't met her yet. "I wrote the songs with a few other people and the guys I wrote it with happened to be working with her already. "They showed her the song and she went crazy for it, apparently, hopefully, she wants it to be her single."

**Hardy** to cast alongside Roth in Recovery

Ben Hardy has joined the cast of the upcoming thriller 'Recovery'. The 28-year-old actor is set to star in Adam Randall's drama movie alongside Tim Roth, with the last lead of the three-hander now being cast ahead of a shoot in the spring, according to Screen Daily. The film - which will

follow three men, one of whom is a terrorist, travelling together in a truck from London to Birmingham - is scheduled to begin production in March in the UK and also in Belgium. Roy Boulter and Sol Papadopoulos will produce for Liverpool-based Hurricane Films, while the British-Belgian co-production will also work with Umedia and backers Creative England's West Midlands Fund. Banksie Films is launching sales on the movie at this week's European Film Market in Berlin. It's not been revealed who Ben or Tim, 57, will play in the thriller - but Adam has admitted that Tim's character will "hark back to his early roles", such as that of the 1982 crime drama 'Made In Britain', in which he played a teenage skinhead. Adam previously said: "Tim Roth is an amazing actor; I've been a fan of his for so long. This part harks back to his early roles - such as 'Made In Britain' and 'Meantime' - in which he played working-class characters on the fringes of society." Ben is fresh from his role as Queen drummer Roger Taylor in the award-winning biopic 'Bohemian Rhapsody', which follows the extraordinary life of Freddie Mercury. — Bang Showbiz

**Carey** announces mini Royal Albert Hall residency

Mariah Carey has announced a three-day residency at London's Royal Albert Hall. The 'Hero' hitmaker will play the iconic venue in the British capital between May 25 and May 27 as part of her 'Caution World Tour'. The pop diva has hosted several residencies in Las Vegas since 2015. Mariah will perform at Dublin's 3Arena on May 22, before the three consecutive nights in London. She will then head to Europe for shows in Paris, Hamburg, Aalborg, Barcelona, Bordeaux and Amsterdam. The 48-year-old star hasn't played non-festive shows on UK soil since 2016's 'The Sweet Sweet Fantasy Tour', which included a stop at The O2 arena in March that year. Mariah recently admitted she is looking forward to getting "close" to her fans on her 2019 tour. The superstar - who has seven-year-old twins Moroccan and Monroe with ex-husband Nick Cannon - can't wait for the "intimate" theatre shows she has coming up, which kick off in Dallas on February 27, and as well as new material from her 15th LP 'Caution' - which was released in November - she wants to treat the audiences to some forgotten classics. She said: "I'm going to be touring again and it's going to be more intimate and close with the fans this time. I'm looking forward to it. I really am. "I get to do the new material and hopefully some songs I haven't done in a while - maybe some of the 'Glitter' songs for the nostalgia. "I want to put together a tour that the fans will feel is a new moment - as well as a chance to hear some of their favorite Mariah songs." Tickets for the Royal Albert Hall shows go on sale on February 8 at 9am from all major ticket outlets.

The Who to start recording new album this week

The Who will start recording their new album in west London this week. The 'Pinball Wizard' group's guitarist Pete Townshend has revealed he is heading to the iconic British Grove Studios - where The Rolling Stones produced their 2016 covers LP 'Blue & Lonesome' - to start putting together their first record in over a decade. However, frontman Roger Daltrey won't be joining them until later this month to add his parts. Pete told the Daily Star newspaper: "Roger is not with us for the first day which is kind of sad but he's off preparing for the year ahead. "He'll be in to do some vocal work when he gets back, which is about halfway through February." The surviving members of the legendary rock band - who were joined by the late drummer Keith Moon and bassist John Entwistle in the original formation of the band - revealed last month that they have a follow-up to 2006's 'Endless Wire' in the pipeline. Describing the tracks he has penned already, Pete teased: "Dark ballads, heavy rock stuff, experimental electronica, sampled stuff and Who-ish tunes that began with a guitar that goes yanga-dang." The record is mainly the work of the 73-year-old musician, but his bandmate hinted he'll add some of his own songs to the mix. Roger explained: "This has nothing to do with wanting a hit album [or] the fact The Who need a new album. It's purely personal. It's about my pride, my sense of self-worth and self-dignity as a writer." The 74-year-old singer added: "There's at least five or six [songs] I can lay into and I'm sure they'll come out incredible." As well as new music, The Who will bring their 'Moving On! Tour' to the London's The SSE Arena, Wembley, on July 6. The gig will see the band joined by special guests, including Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder and Kaiser Chiefs, with more acts to be announced. As previously confirmed for the tour, the show will feature the pair playing songs from their back



catalogue accompanied by an orchestra, and frontman Roger previously reassured fans that it doesn't mean they will be giving their performance any less "throttle". He said: "Be aware Who fans! Just because it's The Who with an orchestra, in no way will it compromise the way Pete and I deliver our music. This will be full throttle Who with horns and bells on."

Mandy Moore 'down' for third Princess Diaries movie

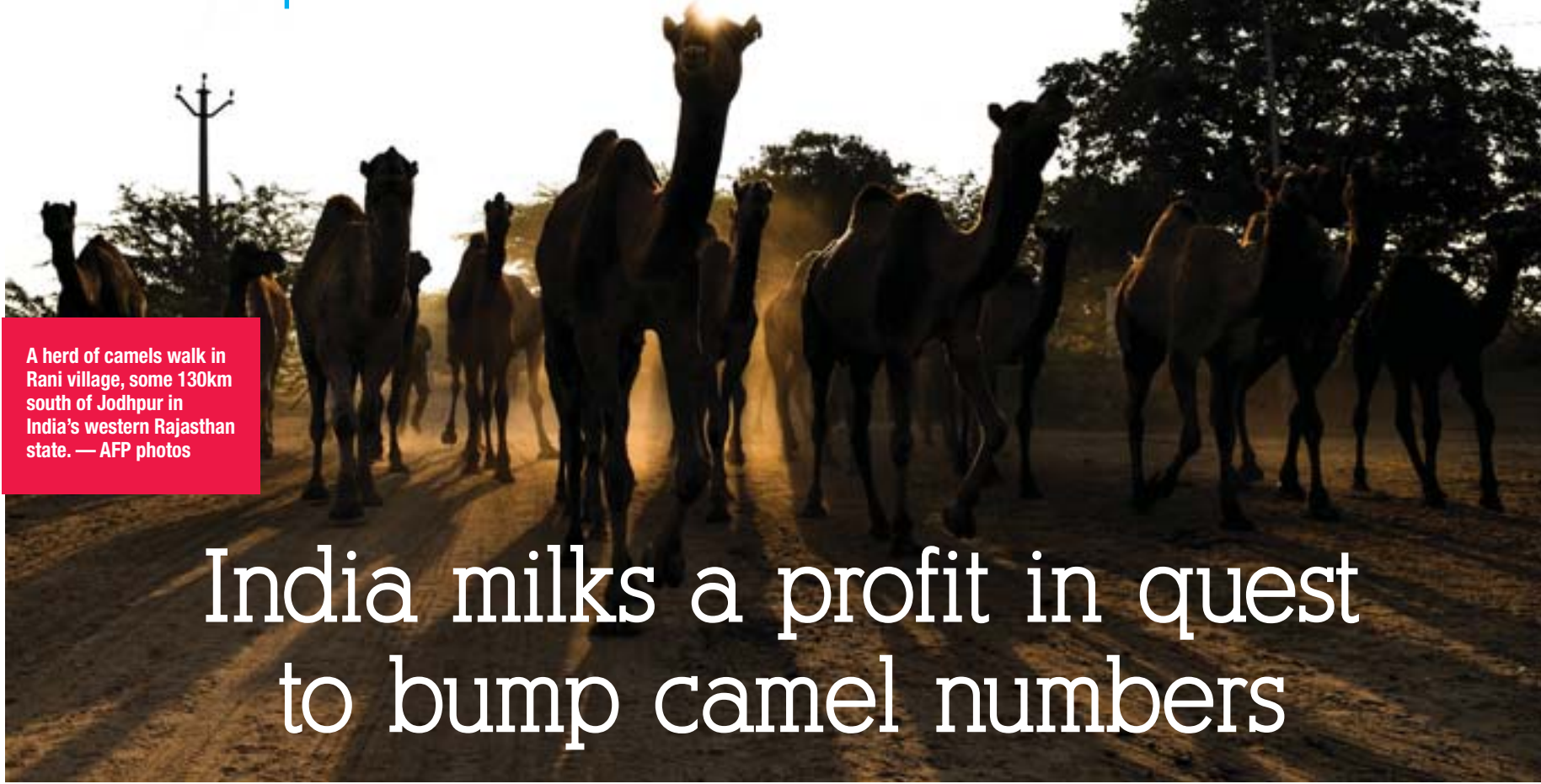
Mandy Moore would "be down" for a third 'The Princess Diaries' movie. The 34-year-old actress played school bully Lana Thomas in the original 2001 film and despite not returning for the sequel 'The Princess Diaries 2: A Royal Engagement' she admitted she'd be up for reprising her role for a third installment - though she'd like to see her character knocked "down a few pegs" and become "a little more humble". Speaking to People Now about the possibility of a third movie, she said: "I mean I'd like to see life had like kicked her down a few pegs because she was the bully in school. "So if she does come back I would like to see her, life has come full circle for her maybe she's a little bit more humble...I mean I'd be down." The original film followed teenager Mia Thermopolis, played by Anne Hathaway, whose life was turned upside-down when she learns the astonishing news that she's the heir apparent to the crown of the small European principality of Genovia. Earlier this year Anne, 36, revealed that "there is a script" for the third chapter of the romantic comedy series and says both she and Dame Julie Andrews - who plays Mia's grandmother, Queen Clarisse Renaldi - are on board for the project. She previously said: "There is a script for the third movie. There is a script. I want to do it. Julie [Andrews] wants to do it. Debra Martin Chase, our producer, wants to do it. We all really want it to happen." Tragically, the original director Garry Marshall passed away in 2016, and Anne says those involved are working to make sure the third installment is "perfect" before they go ahead with creating the picture. Anne previously added: "It's just we don't want to unless it's perfect because we love it just as much as you guys love it. It's as important to us as it is to you, and we don't want to deliver anything until it's ready, but we're working on it."

**Pratt** relates to Lego Movie character in a 'major way'

Chris Pratt's new 'Lego Movie' character was inspired by his own life and career. The 39-year-old actor plays Emmet Brickowski in the first installment of the animated series, an ordinary Lego figurine who is identified as an extraordinary being and the key to saving the world - and reprised his role in sequel 'The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part and The Lego Movie'. The new film also sees Chris voice Emmet's new pal, Rex Dangervest, who is described as "a galaxy-defending archaeologist cowboy raptor trainer who likes building furniture, bustin' heads and having chiselled features previously hidden under baby fat", which has drawn parallels to Chris' own career, from his humble beginnings in sitcom 'Parks and Recreation' to heroic lead character Star-Lord in Marvel's 'Guardians of the Galaxy' franchise and he's admitted that isn't a coincidence. He told Digital Spy: "I learned early on that I would be voicing a second character in this, and was able to help collaborate in a small way by having conversations with them throughout the course of them writing the script. "And I mentioned how I felt that the first movie really paralleled my own life in a major way - that Emmet was this ordinary guy who gets the chance to become special and do something extraordinary and be a hero. "Through the course of voicing the first 'Lego Movie' I got cast in 'Guardians of the Galaxy', so I myself, a very ordinary, regular guy get given the opportunity to do something extraordinary. "So I really saw that in myself on screen as Emmet, and it felt real, so I told them, 'Please feel free to go back to that well. Mine anything you want from my life since then'. And they came back with this character, and I said, 'That's great!'"



Lifestyle | Features



A herd of camels walk in Rani village, some 130km south of Jodhpur in India's western Rajasthan state. — AFP photos

India milks a profit in quest to bump camel numbers

On the edge of the Indian desert, Lakshman Raika boils tea with fresh milk from one of his camels, gently stirring the brew his tribal herdsman have consumed for generations. Far away in city supermarkets demand for chocolates, soaps and skin creams made from such milk is growing—a boon for nomads like Raika and India's fast disappearing camels. Once dubbed the "ships of the desert" and indispensable to life in India's arid west, camel numbers have steadily declined as they have been usurped by technological upheaval.

Roads now stretch deeper into the desert cutting days off the same journey by camel, while the increasing mechanization in agriculture means the animals are increasingly unnecessary on farms. The days of Raika and his kin leading grand caravans—some hundreds of camels long—over the sands with passengers, cargo and precious stores of water are all but over. "Not long ago, village hierarchies in our communities were determined by the size of each family's herd. Not anymore," lamented Raika, as he smoked a pipe and sipped his tea on the outskirts of Rani, a remote village in Rajasthan state. "These days, just like old men, no one is really interested in them," he added.

Raika has more than halved his herd in the past year. Unable to afford their upkeep, many were given to relatives at bargain-basement prices, he said. Sales have been flat at Rajasthan's famous camel fairs too, where herdsman in red turbans converge on cities like Pushkar and Bikaner with tens of thousands of beasts to trade. The National Research Centre on Camel, a state-run institution in Bikaner, says India's camel population has shrunk by around 30 percent in just a few years. "The situation is indeed worrying," NV Patil, the centre's director, told AFP in the city some 500 kilometers (310 miles) southwest of India's capital New Delhi.

Economic lifeline

Researchers hope to halt this decline by partnering herdsman with entrepreneurs needing fresh milk for an emerging line of boutique products made from the milk including chocolates, cheeses, ice creams, and skin creams.

Even the bones salvaged from dead camels are being utilized—they are transformed into trinkets and souvenirs for tourists.

Camel milk is being touted by some as the latest superfood with supermarkets in the US and the UK, as well as online retailers such as Amazon, also tapping into growing consumer interest. Hitesh Rathi, an earlier investor in the market, said his three-year-old business purchased up to 7000 litres of camel milk a month. "This market and demand for camel milk and associated products is definitely growing. But it's a challenge having to both create

awareness around these products, while also marketing our line of goods," he told AFP.

Camel milk can be a tough sell in a majority-Hindu country where cows are worshipped as mother figures and their milk closely linked to food and faith. It also has a fatty, saltier flavor profile—something that could prove a challenge in India, where people have grown used to the taste of traditional dairy options. But there are positive signs.

Amul, one of India's biggest dairy companies whose mascot is a national treasure, starting selling bottled camel milk in January for city supermarkets in Gujarat, extolling its health benefits. It already sells a boutique chocolate line that includes a camel milk variety. Ensuring supply and quality control are challenges when dealing with semi-nomadic tribespeople and a new, emerging industry, businesses say.

But PK Sawal, a senior official at the government-owned camel research Centre, insisted there was a viable future for the sector. "These traditional communities will have an economic incentive to keep their herds, as demand for the milk and other camel products increases and the sector matures," he said. Raika's son Rakesh, a ninth-generation camel tribesman, has been collecting and selling milk from the family herd, making a small profit while keeping traditions alive.

"If not for him, we would have already sold the herd," Rakesh said, gesturing to his father seated nearby enjoying the desert sun. He explained: "We do really hope this market for camel milk flourishes. It will be really helpful for communities like ours." — AFP



Rakesh Raika, 34, takes his camels for grazing in Rani village.



Camel herdsman Rakesh Raika, 34, talks on a phone in Rani village.



Rakesh Raika, 34, takes his camels for grazing in Rani village.



Camel herdsman Rakesh Raika, 34, sits next to his camels in Rani village.



Camel herdsman Lakshman Raika, 75, smokes a chillum pipe at his farm in Rani village.

Shredder in partially destroyed Banksy 'disabled'

The shredder that partially destroyed a Banksy canvas moments after it was sold at auction last year has been "disabled", a German museum said on Monday, ahead of the piece going on display. "We wanted to avoid having, in three or four days, a visitor who, just as in London hides a button... and the shredding continues," said Henning Schaper, director of Frieder Burda museum in Baden-Baden. The work, now called "Love is in the Bin", will be shown on Tuesday for the first time since it was created in a theatrical stunt at Sotheby's in London in October.

"We opened the frame, we looked at everything

and we saw that the mechanism (the shredder) had been disabled," said Schaper, without specifying who had done it. Moments after the painting "Girl with Balloon" sold for £1,042,000 (\$1.4 million, 1.2 million euros) — a joint record for the maverick artist—it literally went through the shredder hidden in the frame. The buyer went through with the purchase, and some art experts said it was probably now worth more than it had been before the stunt. The work will be on display at the Frieder Burda museum for four weeks, until March 3. — AFP



Employees hang up the artwork "Love is in the Bin" by British street artist Banksy at the Frieder Burda Museum in Baden-Baden, southwestern Germany. — AFP photos



Two women look at the art work "Love is in the Bin" by British street artist Banksy at the Frieder Burda Museum.

Facing deportation, rapper 21 Savage vows fight to stay in US

21 Savage's lawyer confirmed Monday that the Grammy-nominated rapper had overstayed his visa as a child, but vowed he would fight for his right to remain in the United States after his arrest by immigration agents. The 26-year-old chart-topper—real name Sha Yaa Bin Abraham-Joseph—was detained in the southern city of Atlanta Sunday by the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE), which says he is a British citizen. "As a minor, his family overstayed their work visas, and he, like almost two million other children, was left without legal status through no fault of his own," the rapper's attorney Charles Kuck said in a statement.

"The continued detention of Mr Abraham-Joseph serves no other purpose than to unnecessarily punish him and try to intimidate him into giving up his right to fight to remain in the United States," Kuck said his client has a pending application for a U visa, which is for victims of crimes who have faced mental or physical abuse in the United States. "Mr Abraham-Joseph has never hid his immigration status from the US government," Kuck said. "The Department of Homeland Security has known his address and his history since his filing for the U Visa in 2017, yet they took no action against him until this past weekend."

21 Savage has long said he is a local act from Atlanta, the state capital of Georgia, which is considered the home of hip hop innovation. According to Bryan Cox, a spokesman for the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE), he came to the US legally as a minor in 2005 but "became unlawfully present in the US" when his visa expired a year later. Cox said the artist was convicted of felony drug charges in October 2014. "Mr Abraham-Joseph is presently in ICE custody in Georgia and has been placed into removal proceedings before the federal immigration courts," the statement said.

Kuck said his client should be released on bond, saying he "is not a flight risk, as he is widely recognizable, and a prominent member of the music industry." The lawyer also said 21 Savage supports his three children, who are US citizens, which makes him eligible for deportation relief.

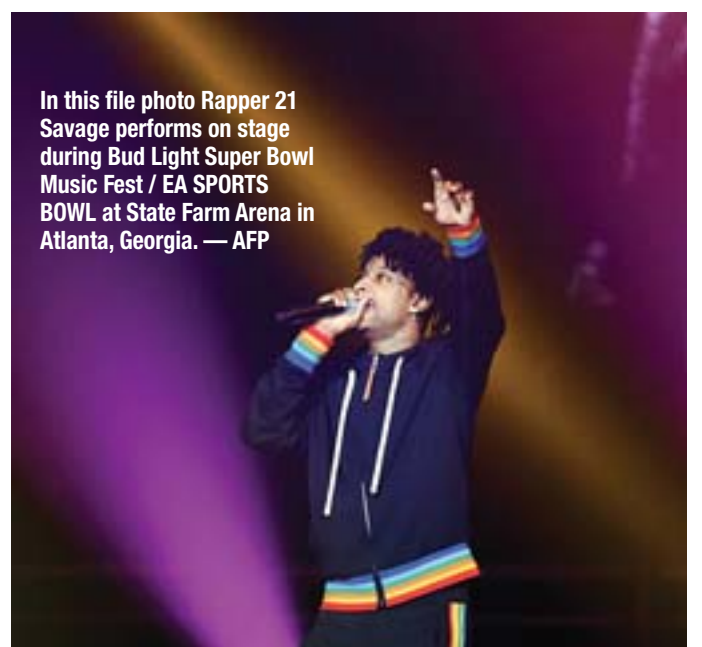
'Free 21'

The musician's arrest sent shockwaves through social media, with a number of top artists and industry insiders backing the young rapper. "SUCCESSFUL BLACK MAN," tweeted Offset, one third of the Atlanta hip hop trio Migos. "THEY ALWAYS TRY SOME WAY TO BRING US DOWN." "Free 21," tweeted hip hop artist Meek Mill, who was released from prison last year after his unexpectedly heavy sentence for a parole violation sparked protests over racial bias in US probation laws.

Rappers Lil Yachty and Vince Staples echoed that call, along with Alex Tumay, a mix engineer who regularly works with Atlanta artists. "Abolish ICE," Tumay tweeted. "ICE arresting celebrities to divert attention from the fact they just admitted they can't reconnect kids with their parents." The agency has come under fire for its aggressive enforcement of the "zero tolerance" immigration policies of President Donald Trump, including guidelines implemented last summer that led to Latin American children being separated from their parents at the US-Mexico border.

Murky origins

21 Savage, known for his conversational, subdued rap delivery and no-nonsense demeanor, released his debut studio album in 2017. His lyrics touch on everything from drugs and violence to systemic racism and police brutality. His second album, "I Am > I Was" debuted at the top of the Billboard 200 in December 2018, holding the number one spot for two weeks. The rapper is up Sunday for two Grammys for his work on fellow rapper Post Malone's smash hit "Rockstar," including for the major Record of the Year award. Throughout his rise to fame he has toured the United States but does not appear to have performed abroad.



In this file photo Rapper 21 Savage performs on stage during Bud Light Super Bowl Music Fest / EA SPORTS BOWL at State Farm Arena in Atlanta, Georgia. — AFP

In public interviews he has not explicitly called himself American, but regularly references his upbringing in Atlanta. Many of the artist's supporters were quick to note his contributions to the community. "Mr Abraham-Joseph is a role model to the young people in this country, especially in Atlanta," another of his lawyers, Dina LaPolt said, adding that he is "actively working in the community, leading programs to help underprivileged youths in financial literacy."

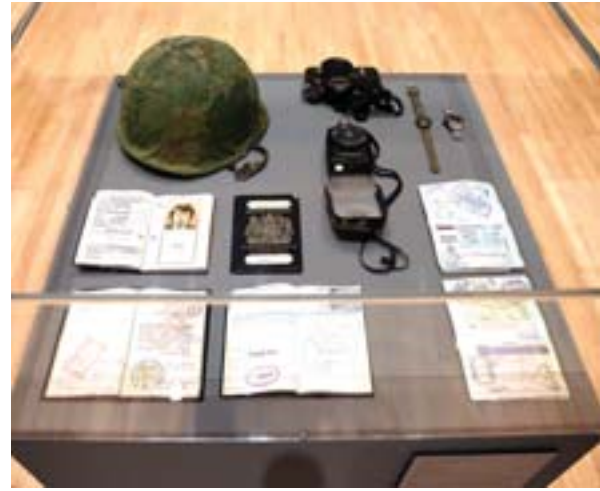
Since the news of 21 Savage's arrest broke British reports have indicated he originally is from Newham in east London, a detail neither ICE nor his entourage have commented on. In 2016 the rapper—who speaks with a thick southern American accent—gave an interview to urban news YouTube channel VladTV, listing a number of Atlanta neighborhoods he has called home. "I done grew up in all Atlanta really, everybody know me," he said. "If you don't, you ain't from this city." — AFP



British photographer Don McCullin poses for a picture in front of his photographs including 'Shell-shocked US marine, the Battle of Hue 1968' (left), during a press preview of a retrospective exhibition of McCullin's work at Tate Britain in London. — AFP photos



Visitors look at photographs by British photographer Don McCullin.



A US Army helmet, light meter, watch, passport, compass, press passes and Nikon camera body with bullet hole are seen on display during a press preview.



A Nikon camera body with bullet hole is seen on display during a press preview.



A light meter is seen on display during a press preview.



A gallery assistant poses next to a photograph entitled 'Homeless Irishman, Spitalfields, London, 1970' by British photographer Don McCullin.

Don McCullin, chronicler of human suffering

A woman weeps helplessly in a street in Cyprus, her hands clasped together in desperate prayer; a shellshocked US marine in Vietnam, his face blackened, stares vacantly; a starving, stick-thin albino child in Biafra, hunched over, clutches an empty tin. These are some of Don McCullin's most iconic photographs, among thousands that have provided an unflinching visual record of some of the most harrowing conflicts of the 20th century. The photographer, who is being honored with a retrospective at Tate Britain opening this week, was named by Harper's Magazine as "our era's greatest living war photographer".

He is "the Goya of war photography," it said, echoing a comparison made by renowned photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson. The bleakness of McCullin's job was offset by his belief that his images could act as some bulwark against the world's forgetting or denying difficult events. "Because there were photographs, you can't pretend that we didn't know that these things happened," McCullin said in 2013, quoted in The New York Times. He wanted to show the eyes of his subjects, "the eyes that are all telling, and the eyes that are all accusing," he said in a BBC interview in 2015.

Bad start

Don McCullin was born on October 9, 1935 in north London. His father worked occasionally as a fishmonger, but mostly he was an invalid. "It was a place of ignorance, bigotry, poverty and violence," McCullin told The Guardian in 2005, referring to his Finsbury Park neighborhood. "We were a family of five living in two basement rooms of a tenement block with no indoor loo." He was a teenager when his father died and family responsibilities fell on his shoulders, so he left school and gave up an art college scholarship.

"I had a bad start which turned out to be the place to start from in life because it taught me

about poverty and misery and unhappiness and all those things which I later encountered in countless occasions on battlefields, hospitals and places of awful tragedies," he told The Economist in 2010.

Life-changing Sunday

McCullin worked in railway dining cars and at an animation studio before doing his national service with the Royal Air Force, where he was a photography assistant. When he returned to Finsbury Park and the animation studio, he had a little camera bought with all his savings. In a derelict building at the end of his street on a Sunday afternoon in 1958, McCullin pictured in one of his first images—a violent neighborhood gang known as "The Guvvners", its members in dark suits and with slicked-back hair.

"That one picture changed my life," McCullin said in his 1992 autobiography "Unreasonable Behavior". It was printed in The Observer in 1959 and resulted in a run of photojournalism offers.

Deep wounds

McCullin went on to cover many of the world's conflicts and tragedies including Cyprus, the Congo, Lebanon's Sabra and Shatila, Northern Ireland's "Troubles", Iraq's wars, famine in Africa, the AIDS crisis. He spent prolonged spells at British newspapers, notably The Observer and The Sunday Times. From it all, he has not emerged unscathed. "He has been shot and badly wounded in Cambodia, imprisoned in Uganda, expelled from Vietnam and had a bounty on his head in Lebanon," says the biography on his official website.

"Sometimes it felt like I was carrying pieces of human flesh back home with me, not negatives. It's as if you are carrying the suffering of the people you have photographed," he says on the website of London's Hamilton Gallery, which represents him. "You sleep with the

dead, you cradle the dead, you live with the living who become the dead," he wrote in the autobiography.



Photos with a purpose

In later years, McCullin retreated to his home in Somerset with his third wife and their child, his fifth. He continued to take photos. "The Landscape" published in 2018 takes his English surroundings as his subject—bucolic, serene, but still shot in stark black and white, like all his work.

In 2017, he was honored with a knighthood. "I took photographs which are about human beings suffering and I wanted you to look at those photographs and I wanted you to try and persuade yourself even if you didn't want to look at them that they had a purpose," he told The Economist in 2010.—AFP



A visitor looks at two photographs taken in Biafra 1968 during a press preview.



A visitor takes a picture of the photographs entitled: 'Turkish defenders waiting for the attack, Limassol, Cyprus, 1964' (left) and 'The Cyprus civil war, Limassol, Cyprus 1964' (right) during a press preview.

Ambition still burns in art star Soulages at 99

He has been called "the world's greatest living artist"—and he is still painting at 99. Pierre Soulages attacks his blacker than black canvasses in his bare studio overlooking the Mediterranean in Sete in southern France every day his legs will carry him there. His step has slowed but there is a real urgency these days about the old master. For Soulages is preparing a massive retrospective at the Louvre in Paris in December to mark his 100th birthday. "Pierre is working on a huge new canvass," he wife Colette, only a few months his junior, told AFP. "He thinks it through at night. A space has been left free for it" on the walls of the great Paris museum.

Soulages is to black what the great French artist Yves Klein is to blue. You get an idea of his sheer longevity when you realise that Klein, born nearly a decade after him down the coast at Nice, died in 1962. Soulages' star rose shortly after World War II and he is venerated in France and much of Europe as the Rothko of black—the "master of noir"—even if his fame has faded in the English-speaking world. Naturally, he and Colette are dressed head-to-toe in black when they welcomed AFP into their villa. And he is much amused at the amazement that he is still painting. "But I have always worked," he said.

'I burn the mediocre'

Nor has his legendary perfectionism dimmed. If Soulages is not 100 percent happy with a painting "I burn the canvass out-

side. If it is mediocre, it goes," he told AFP. He even still makes his own tools to get the precise effect of the paint on canvasses he wants. In Sete, a sun-soaked port with a long spit of beach, Soulages likes to cut himself off to plunge into the depths of his obsession with black. For him no other colour can compete with its dark dazzle. "It's a very active colour. It lights up when you put it next to a dark colour... Black isn't the colour of mourning; white is," he insisted.

As a child obsessed by the dark sheen of ink, Soulages would make his mother laugh at his black "snow". "But I was serious. I made the white of the paper even more white with my black. I loved winter trees without their leaves. With all his "black marks on paper", his mother would tease him that he "was already mourning her death". But what Soulages was doing was asking basic questions about art that go back to prehistory.

"Why did man need to make marks on a wall?" How did art start? "We hardly talk about it—it is very badly taught," the painter said. "What is extraordinary," said one of Soulages' friends who was visiting that day, "is not just that he is still painting but that he is continuing to search and to think. He sees things that we don't."

Into heart of blackness

Still a bear of a man despite his age standing 6ft 2ins (1.90 meters), Soulages likes to work in scrupulously empty spaces.

"My studio is bare while those of other artists are often overflowing. I have to detach myself from anything which could hold me back." Soulages admitted that he "knows very little about contemporary artists". Instead he prefers to explore the heart of blackness in Sete "behind a few ramparts". He puts a stone from the beach wound with string outside the door when he wants to be "left in peace".

But it can be a struggle. Two months ago the painter "could not get up because of my back" but he shook the problem off, and intends to "return to my (bigger) Paris studio when I can," he said. With a whole museum dedicated to his work in his home town of Rodez in south central France, his dealer Emmanuel Perrotin is planning "a crazy project for my 100th birthday" in the US. "He wants to bring all my works at the Fabre Museum in Montpellier to his new gallery, which is magnificent, in New York," Soulages said.

"Financially it's madness. I don't know how he'll manage. I doubt if it will happen," said the man who former French president Francois Hollande called "the world's greatest living artist". Another ex-president Jacques Chirac is also a fan and last year the current occupant of the Elysee Palace, Emmanuel Macron, and his wife Brigitte visited him. "I was impressed by how cultured and open they were," said Soulages, "and how they knew how to make friends immediately."—AFP



French painter, engraver and sculptor, Pierre Soulages, seen here in 2014, is still painting at age 99 as he prepares a massive retrospective in the Louvre. — AFP

Classifieds

Wednesday, February 6, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 10 - 32 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 26 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 05/02/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	11 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	07 °C		
ABDALY	21 °C	05 °C		
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C		
JAHRA	21 °C	08 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	19 °C	10 °C		
SALMIYAH	19 °C	12 °C		
AHMADI	19 °C	11 °C		
NUWAISIB	20 °C	07 °C		
WAFRA	20 °C	07 °C		
SALMY	19 °C	04 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	02/06	Fair	20 °C	07 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Thursday	02/07	Fair and some high clouds will appear	21 °C	08 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 24 km/h
Friday	02/08	Warm and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered rain later on	24 °C	12 °C	SE	15 - 38 km/h
Saturday	02/09	Warm and Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundersy at times	25 °C	16 °C	SE	20 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:14
Sunrise	06:36
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:07
Sunset	17:29
Isha	18:48

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	00 °C
MIN. Temp.	00 °C
MAX. RH	00 %
MIN. RH	00 %
MAX. Wind	N 00 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
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	22924455
Jet Airways	22414400
FlyDubai	22423888
Qatar Airways	22425747
KLM	22418064/5/6
Royal Jordanian	22425635
British Airways	22430224
Air France	22921555
Emirates	22438184
Air India	22424444
Sri Lanka Airlines	22421578
Egypt Air	22421516
Swiss Air	22426306
Saudia	22423073
Middle East Airlines	22422493
Lufthansa	22421044
PIA	22452977/8
Bangladesh Airlines	

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

Flight Schedule

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 6/2/2019					Departure Flights on Wednesday 6/2/2019				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
FEG	341	Sohag	00:05	KNE 231	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40	
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	SVA 500	KAC	521	Al Najaf	13:55	
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC 672	IRC	6553	ABD	13:55	
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC 286	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10	
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC 364	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15	
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	GFA 221	RBG	527	Asyut	14:25	
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	KAC 512	IRC	218	Mashhad	14:30	
MSC	403	Sohag	01:30	KAC 618	RBG	554	Alexandria	14:45	
MSR	618	Alexandria	01:40	KAC 412	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00	
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KNE 529	KNE	382	Taif	15:00	
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC 788	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10	
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	ETD 303	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25	
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	OMA 645	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40	
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	KAC 562	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45	
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC 304	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50	
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	UAE 857	KAC	743	Dammam	15:55	
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR 732	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00	
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	JZR 152	KAC	619	Doha	16:10	
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	SVA 504	ETD	304	Amman	16:10	
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	SAW 705	KAC	283	Abu Dhabi	16:20	
JZR	502	Lahore	03:35	ABY 127	OMA	646	Dhaka	16:30	
QTR	076	Doha	04:00	KAC 118	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:35	
IGO	751	Chennai	4:10	JZR 212	KAC	128	Sharjah	16:40	
KAC	796	Madinah	04:10	KAC 502	KLM	446	Bahrain	16:55	
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC 542	OMA	644	Damascus	17:00	
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	QTR 1072	THY	765	Madinah	17:00	
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	FDB 051	QTR	1087	Beirut	17:15	
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	KAC 522	ETD	306	Colombo	17:35	
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC 514	MSR	613	Dubai	17:40	
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	JZR 114	JZR	701	Kochi	17:45	
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	SVA 510	KAC	103	Dubai	17:50	
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	GFA 215	IGO	1752	Chennai	18:00	
JZR	112	Doha	05:15	JZR 214	QTR	1077	Doha	18:00	
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:20	UAE 875	FDB	070	Dubai	18:00	
KAC	344	Chennai	05:25	JZR 302	KAC	303	Mumbai	18:00	
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:40	FDB 063	JZR	713	Sohag	18:00	
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:05	JZR 124	JZR	721	Dubai	18:10	
KAC	678	Dubai	06:25	QTR 1080	THY	771	Istanbul	18:15	
BAW	157	London	06:55	MSR 620	KAC	167	Paris	18:20	
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:05	KAC 744	GFA	212	Bahrain	18:35	
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	RJA 640	JZR	115	Doha	18:40	
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	ABY 123	KAC	171	Frankfurt	18:40	
KAC	384	Delhi	07:50	KAC 156	KAC	165	Rome	18:45	
KAC	358	Kochi	08:00	GFA 217	KAC	511	Mashhad	19:20	
UAE	855	Dubai	08:05	KAC 776	FDB	054	Dubai	19:20	
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:35	FDB 057	KAC	501	Beirut	19:30	
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:45	KAC 104	JZR	787	Jeddah	19:30	
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	JZR 106	KAC	613	Bahrain	19:30	
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KNE 381	JZR	731	Cairo	19:30	
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC 166	BAW	156	London	19:30	
IRC	6511	Lamerd	09:50	KAC 620	KAC	541	Cairo	19:30	
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	OMA 647	KAC	561	Amman	19:30	
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:10	KAC 674	KAC	101	London	19:30	
SAW	703	Damascus	10:30	DLH 1088	ABY	126	Dubai	19:30	
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	DLH 624	UAE	856	Mashhad	19:30	
JZR	702	Asyut	11:05	RBG 217	JZR	151	Dubai	19:30	
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	KAC 172	UAE	856	Dubai	19:30	
JZR	122	Dubai	11:10	JAV 621	JZR	301	Istanbul	19:30	
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	ETD 307	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	19:30	
QTR	1074	Doha	11:10	ALK 229	KAC	773	Riyadh	19:30	
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	11:15	KAC 402	FDB	056	Dubai	19:30	
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC 168	KAC	617	Doha	19:30	
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	KAC 616	JZR	211	Jeddah	19:30	
MSC	415	Sohag	12:10	UAE 859	IRC	6512	Lamerd	19:30	
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	GFA 219	KAC	155	Istanbul	19:30	
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	KLM 445	QTR	1071	Doha	19:30	
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC 564	IRA	664	Shiraz	19:30	
IRC	6552	ABD	13:00	JAI 574	GFA	214	Bahrain	19:30	
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	QTR 1082	KAC	117	New York	19:30	
IRC	526	Mashhad	13:30	ETD 309	SAW	704	Damascus	19:30	
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	AIC 975	JZR	213	Jeddah	19:30	
RBG	213	Sohag	13:45	SVA 514	AXB	890	Mangalore	19:30	
KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	KAC 786	MEA	405	Beirut	19:30	
RBG	553	Alexandria	14:05	SVA 502	IAW	158A	Al Najaf	19:30	
				MSC 501	QTR	1075	Doha	19:30	
				JZR 128	AHY	120	Baku	19:30	
				FDB 071	MSC	416	ohag	19:30	
					JZR	113	Doha	19:30	

Kidneys grown in rats could pave way for human transplant options

TOKYO: Scientists said yesterday they have successfully used mice stem cells to grow kidneys in rat embryos, using a technique that could one day help grow human kidneys for transplant. But the researchers cautioned that their success was only a first step and that "serious technical barriers and complex ethical issues" remain before the process could be used for human organs. The technique has previously been used to grow mice-derived pancreases in rats, but the new study is the first evidence that it could one day provide a solution to the massive shortage of donor kidneys for people with renal disease.

The research, published today in the *Nature Communications* journal, began with the development of a suitable "host" in which the kidneys could be grown. The researchers collected rat embryo structures that had been genetically modified so they would not develop kidneys on their own. The embryos were then injected with pluripotent stem cells from mice and implanted into rat wombs so they could be carried to term.

Pluripotent stem cells are a kind of "master" cell that

can develop into any of the cells and tissue that make up the body. The researchers found that the mice stem cells produced apparently functional kidneys in the rats. But the same did not hold when rat stem cells were injected into similarly modified mice embryos.

Short-lived subjects

"Rat stem cells did not readily differentiate into the two main types of cells needed for kidney formation," said Masumi Hirabayashi, an associate professor at Japan's National Institute for Physiological Sciences, who supervised the study. Conversely, "mouse stem cells efficiently differentiated... forming the basic structures of a kidney," he told AFP. The reason for the difference is still not entirely clear, but the researchers believe "environmental cues" inside the mice are likely to blame, rather than the stem cells or technique.

But even in the rat embryos, the technique was not without problems. While the rats developed apparently functional kidneys, including with proper connections to

the ureter - tubes that link the kidneys to the bladder - they died shortly after birth because they did not suckle properly. Removing the genes that allow kidneys to develop in utero appears to have also removed their sense of smell, so the newborns failed to detect milk and died.

Their short lives meant limited testing could be done on their kidney function, but Hirabayashi said the organs appeared functional "based on anatomical observations". There are other concerns: growing a kidney in a host from another species could lead to "contamination" of the organ with cells from the host.

Ethical concerns

And the process of growing human organs in animals poses an ethical conundrum because human stem cells could develop into brain or reproductive organ cells in the host. "The main ethical concerns are the risk of consciousness and/or gamete (reproductive cell) production," said Hirabayashi. "There are serious technical barriers and complex ethical issues that must be discussed

and solved before producing human organs in animals," he added.

In the short-term, additional research is likely to focus on ways to genetically modify host rats without lethal side effects. If successful, researchers will then want to run more tests on the stem cell-derived kidneys, and try to transplant them from the hosts to other animals. Eventually, tests could involve trying to grow human organs. Pigs are usually considered the best hosts for human organ regeneration, but pig embryos only develop for 25 weeks, unlike the 40 weeks that human babies grow, meaning the species might not be suitable for growing organs in embryos.

Cattle, with a 40-week gestation, could be another option. Hirabayashi said he was hopeful he would see human organs grown in animal hosts in his lifetime. "I don't know exactly the end of my lifetime - tomorrow? Thirty years? But I very much expect to hear news regarding the practical application of animal-hosted organs." — AFP

US death row inmate battles to have imam by his side to the end

WASHINGTON: A Muslim death row inmate in the conservative southern US state of Alabama is racing against time to have his final wish granted: For an imam to accompany him into the execution chamber Thursday. Domineque Ray, 42, is scheduled to receive a lethal injection nearly 20 years after being sentenced to death for the 1995 rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl in Selma. Ray - who has also been convicted over the double murder of two teenage brothers a year before - has converted to Islam since his arrest.

His attorneys say their client's faith is of "the utmost importance" in his life: He added Hakim as a middle name, keeps a full beard and wears the traditional kufi - a brimless, short and rounded cap. As his scheduled execution draws near, Ray asked Alabama prison authorities to grant his last wish. But the state says such a move would violate execution protocol, which allows inmates the right to have the spiritual advisor of their choice at their side up to the chamber's door - but not inside.

Alabama law does allow for a state prison chaplain to be present inside the death chamber - but that chaplain

is also seen as a "member of the execution team". Ray filed an 11th hour motion with the courts last week, but on Friday, a federal judge refused his request. The state of Alabama "cannot permit even a slight chance of interference with an execution", Judge Keith Watkins said in his ruling. "Ray's private spiritual advisor is untrained, inexperienced, and outside the State's control."

'A Christian event'

Ray's attorneys have appealed and are hoping for success before Thursday. They say Alabama authorities are denying Ray his First Amendment right to freedom of religion. "The State of Alabama allows the inmate of Christian faith to have a spiritual advisor guiding them in the transition to the after-life," said Hassan Shibly, an attorney and member of the Council on American Islamic Relations. "In giving this advantage to Christians and denying it to citizens of other faiths, it violates the Constitution."

As for the practical considerations mentioned by the federal judge, Shibly dismisses them, saying, "I am an attorney and an imam - I am willing to volunteer" to help Ray, while respecting prison rules. Each of the 20 US states that use capital punishment sets its own parameters for executions, according to Robert Dunham, executive director of the Death Penalty Information Center. In most cases, the condemned inmate can ask for someone to accompany them to the chamber door, so refusing Ray's request in that case could be justified. — AFP

told AFP. Another local, who gave his name as Nicolas, said he initially thought a fight had broken out when he heard a woman screaming. "She was screaming, screaming and we went outside and the building was already on fire," he said.

Rescue efforts were initially hampered by the fact that the blaze was ripping through apartments facing an inner courtyard which had no vehicle access. "They had the trucks, the big ladders, but they couldn't do anything," Nicolas told AFP. Only once they had fitted extenders to their equipment were the firefighters able to begin rescue operations. "The building was very difficult to access," Daniele Giazzi, mayor of the 16th district, told BFM television. "Thoughts for the victims. Thank you to the firefighters whose courage helped save many lives," President Emmanuel Macron tweeted.

Standing at the police cordon, Jose Emilien was anxiously seeking news of his cousin and nephew who live on the sixth floor of the building. "I called both of them," the 46-year-old builder told AFP. "They're not picking up and I don't have any news." The wealthy neighborhood of both modern and classic Haussmann buildings is located on the edge of the Bois de Boulogne park, close to the Parc des Princes stadium of football club Paris Saint-Germain.

The fire is the most deadly in Paris since 2005 when an arson attack on a building in the southeastern 13th district killed 17 people, 14 of them children. The worst fire in Paris since World War II was in April of the same year when 24 people perished inside a building used for temporary accommodation after a fight between two residents. Tuesday's blaze follows a powerful gas explosion last month that killed four people in the city's central 9th district and is likely to renew debate about fire safety in the City of Light, where few old buildings have fire escapes. — AFP

company for the recruitment of maids but it has failed, because the recruitment offices are more powerful than the government. Dallal said that the issue is important and deserves to be escalated, and the government should be held to account because it concerns every Kuwaiti home.

During the debate, the assembly agreed to extend the duration of the public funds protection committee to continue its investigation into alleged violations in Al-Zour refinery. Lawmakers then approved a government-sponsored amendment to the housing law, in which houses of martyrs will be registered in the names of their widows. The Assembly meets again today.

declared free of highly pathogenic avian influenza on July 21, 2007.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition yesterday said that the ministry of commerce and industry has placed a ban on the import of all kinds of poultry meat (fresh and frozen) and their derivatives from India due to the outbreak of bird flu (H5N1). The ministry decided to lift the ban on the import of all poultry meat (fresh and frozen) and their derivatives, including eggs, from Mexico, which was placed due to the outbreak of bird flu. The ministry also decided to lift the ban on the import of all types of meats (fresh and frozen) from Italy due to the end of the anthrax disease outbreak.

Dutch anti-Islam ex-MP says he's become a Muslim

THE HAGUE: A Dutch former far-right MP and right-hand man of anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders set tongues wagging in the Netherlands yesterday after revealing he has converted to Islam. Freedom Party (PVV) leader Wilders compared the conversion of ex-ally Joram van Klaveren to a "vegetarian working in a slaughterhouse". For years Joram van Klaveren fought a relentless campaign in the Lower House against Islam in the Netherlands as a lawmaker for Wilders' party.

At the time, the "hardliner pleaded for banning the burqa and minarets, saying 'we don't want any Islam, or at least as little as possible in the Netherlands,'" the daily tabloid *Algemeen Dagblad* (AD) said. But the 40-year-old Van Klaveren said he had changed his mind halfway through writing an anti-Islam book. The work "became a refutation of objections non-Muslims have" against the religion, he told the respected NRC daily yesterday. "If everything I wrote up to that point is true, and I believe that, then I am a de facto Muslim," he told the NRC.

Van Klaveren converted to Islam on Oct 26 last year, the NRC added in the interview piece ahead of the release of Van Klaveren's book titled: "Apostate: From Christianity to Islam in the Time of Secular Terror." The former politician who grew up in a Protestant Christian environment said of his conversion that he "has been searching for a long time". "It feels a bit like a religious homecoming for me," he told Dutch newspapers. Van Klaveren could not be immediately reached for comment yesterday.

"What a story... it's like a vegetarian going to work in a slaughterhouse. I have no words," Wilders told RTL television news. "It's up to him of course. But it's good that he left the PVV five years ago, otherwise it would have been time for him to go now. I expect a lot but I didn't see this coming." Van Klaveren split with Wilders in 2014 after the PVV leader's controversial comments that year when asking supporters whether they wanted "fewer or more Moroccans in your city and the Netherlands". Wilders in 2016 was found guilty on discrimination charges. The sentence is cur-



Joram van Klaveren

rently being appealed.

Van Klaveren went on to form his own far-right party called "For Netherlands" (VNL) but left politics after failing to win a single seat in the 2017 elections. "If this really isn't a PR stunt to promote his book, then it really is an extraordinary choice for somebody who had a lot to say about Islam," his former VNL co-founder Jan Roos told the AD. "But we have religious freedom in the Netherlands. He can worship whomever he wants," Roos added.

Said Bouharrou, who serves on the Board of Moroccan Mosques in the Netherlands, praised Van Klaveren. "It is great when somebody who has been so critical of Islam... realizes that it is not so bad or perverse," he told the AD. "It is brave that he's prepared to do it in public," Bouharrou said. Around five percent of the Dutch population of 17 million people, or some 850,000, are Muslim, according to the Dutch Central Statistics Bureau (CBS).

Despite Wilders' objections, the religion is growing, with experts expecting that number to double by 2050. The Netherlands also last year introduced a partial burqa ban in some public places such as schools and hospitals, ending years of discussions on the hot-button issue. Van Klaveren is not the first high-profile PVV member to convert to Islam. He follows in the footsteps of Arnoud van Doorn, a former Hague-based PVV city councilor who switched in 2013. — AFP

Pope holds historic public mass in UAE...

Continued from Page 1

"But the Lord is faithful and does not abandon his people."

Pope Francis' trip has been warmly welcomed by Filipino and Indian Catholics among the UAE's huge migrant workforce. About one million Catholics live in the country, or about one in 10 of UAE residents.

Asian nationals make up some 65 percent of the population and are crucial to all sectors in the oil-rich Gulf state, from construction to services and hotels. The son of Italian immigrants who was raised in Argentina, Jorge Bergoglio - or Pope Francis - has paid particular attention to migrants and refugees during his papacy.

Inside the stadium yesterday, 50,000 Catholics with tickets to the mass cheered the pope on, with one small group hoisting a pink poster which read: "We the Catholics of Yemen love you". Another 120,000 gathered outside, watching via video link on large screens. Parishes across the UAE said 135,000 tickets to the pope's mass were distributed to parishioners. Some 4,000 tickets had been given to Muslims to attend the mass, according to the local churches.

A choir sang hymns as the pope, joined by priests of different nationalities, began the service at around 10:30 (0630 GMT), broadcast live on Emirati television. The UAE invited the pope to visit as part of its 2019 "Year of Tolerance" which has its own designated ministry. Tolerance Minister Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak greeted the crowd at the stadium.

On Monday, the pope called for an end to wars in the turbulent Middle East, including in Yemen and Syria, at a meeting with a top sheikh and rabbi in the UAE. All religious leaders had a "duty to reject every nuance of approval from the word war", he told the interfaith meeting. "I am thinking in particular of Yemen, Syria, Iraq and Libya," he said. Yemen is in the grip of what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis, triggered by the intervention of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and their allies in a civil war between the government and Shiite Muslim rebels.

While the pope did not openly discuss politics, he called for "the full recognition" of the rights of people across the Middle East, a potential reference to Christian minorities and communities including Shiites in Saudi Arabia, refugees, migrants and stateless peoples. "I look forward to societies where people of different beliefs have the same right of citizenship and where only in the case of violence in any of its forms is that right removed," he said.

At their meeting Monday, the pope and Sheikh Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the imam of Cairo's Al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's prestigious seat of learning, signed a document on "human fraternity for world peace", hailed by the Vatican as an "important step forward in the dialogue between Christians and Muslims". It called for "freedom of belief", the "promotion of a culture of tolerance", the "protection of places of worship" and "full citizenship" rights for minorities.

"For me as a Christian, this is one of the most important days of my life," said Thomas Tijo, a 44-year-old from India's southern state of Kerala, who lives in the UAE and travelled by bus in the early hours to get to the stadium. "We are a long way from home and this is like a comforting blanket," he said, holding his three-year-old son, Marcus. "The pope has made pleas for ending the Yemen war, greater tolerance and more," said Lina Ghattas, a 48-year-old Egyptian who had travelled from Bahrain. "I am not sure what will change: time will tell - hope, hope," she said.

"This pope's voice is heard, so our hope and prayer is that this historic visit brings peace to this strife-torn region," said Clitus Almeida, an Indian engineer who works in Dubai. "Given the number of Catholics there is a dire need for more churches in the UAE," he said, voicing hope that Saudi Arabia would also allow them. Although there has been no official comment from Riyadh, the pope has featured on the front pages of some of the main newspapers, which ran pictures of Francis' meetings with the grand imam of Al-Azhar in Abu Dhabi on Monday and UAE officials.

An opinion piece in Saudi-owned, pan-Arab daily *Asharq Al-Awsat* praised the visit and its message of tolerance and coexistence, which it said confronted a discourse of extremism in the region. "The Arab region... for a very long time allowed rigid voices to hijack religious discourse, and it is time to correct the error." — Agencies

10 dead in Paris building blaze...

Continued from Page 1

arrested," a police source told AFP. A 22-year-old neighbor told *Le Parisien* newspaper that his girlfriend had asked the woman to turn down her music late on Monday, prompting a flurry of insults that led them to call the police.

The couple later left their apartment while the police intervened, and upon their return bumped into the woman in the hallway. "She wished me good luck.. then I smelled smoke and realized she had set the entire floor on fire," he told the paper, asking not to be identified by name. "She must have set the fire outside my apartment to get revenge." A judicial source said that after questioning, the woman had been placed in a psychiatric facility.

By yesterday afternoon, police were still gingerly searching through the building's blackened remains for any survivors with firefighters worried that structural damage might cause the top floor to collapse. Police captain Valerian Fuet said around 50 people had been rescued from the block, some of whom had climbed on to the roofs of adjacent buildings to escape the inferno. "Unfortunately, we could still make some unpleasant discoveries," Fuet said.

The fire started at about 1:00 am (0000 GMT) and it took around 200 firefighters more than five hours to bring it under control. "At windows, people were yelling 'Help, help!' - everyone was panicking," witness Humberto Ribas, who works in an adjacent building,

Hashem calls for taxing expatriates...

Continued from Page 1

about maid recruitment offices, which have "become like gangs and a state within a state", adding he suspected that influential people back these offices because neither the ministry of commerce nor the social affairs ministry are capable of taking any action against them. He said the government established a

All birds at Rai pet market culled over...

Continued from Page 1

Disease control measures were implemented beginning Feb 18, 2007, including control of poultry movement, vaccination, disinfection of infected premises and culling of 500,000 birds. The final case of subtype H5N1 was detected on April 20, 2007, and all restrictions were lifted on May 12, 2007. Kuwait was

Sports

James Harden finishes with 44 points as Rockets top Suns

Bagley leads Kings' bench in win over Spurs

NBA results/standings

Brooklyn 94, Milwaukee 113; Sacramento 127, San Antonio 112; Phoenix 110, Houston 118; New Orleans 107, Indiana 109; Detroit 129, Denver 103; Washington 129, Atlanta 137.

Eastern Conference

	W	L	PCT	GB
Milwaukee	39	13	0.750	-
Toronto	38	16	0.704	2
Boston	34	19	0.642	5.5
Philadelphia	34	19	0.642	5.5
Indiana	34	19	0.642	5.5
Brooklyn	28	27	0.509	12.5
Charlotte	26	26	0.500	13
Miami	24	27	0.471	14.5
Detroit	23	29	0.442	16
Washington	22	31	0.415	17.5
Orlando	22	31	0.415	17.5
Atlanta	18	35	0.340	21.5
Chicago	12	41	0.226	27.5
Cleveland	11	42	0.208	28.5
New York	10	42	0.192	29

Western Conference

Golden State	37	15	0.712	-
Denver	37	16	0.698	0.5
Oklahoma City	33	19	0.635	4
Portland	32	20	0.615	5
Houston	31	22	0.585	6.5
San Antonio	32	23	0.582	6.5
Utah	30	24	0.556	8
LA Clippers	29	25	0.537	9
Sacramento	28	25	0.528	9.5
LA Lakers	27	26	0.509	10.5
Minnesota	25	27	0.481	12
Dallas	24	28	0.462	13
New Orleans	23	31	0.426	15
Memphis	21	33	0.389	17
Phoenix	11	44	0.200	27.5

PHOENIX: James Harden extended his streak of consecutive 30-point games to 27 as the Houston Rockets defeated the host Phoenix Suns 118-110 on Monday. Harden finished with 44 points, eight rebounds, six assists and three steals. His 30-plus-point scoring streak is the third-longest in NBA history, behind two by Wilt Chamberlain. It was Harden's 20th 40-point game on the season. Houston's Kenneth Faried wound up with a double-double (17 points, 14 rebounds), while James Ennis III added 13 points and Chris Paul chipped in with 18 points, five rebounds, five steals and four assists. The Suns, who stumbled to their season-worst 11th consecutive setback, got 25 points from Josh Jackson and 23 from Kelly Oubre Jr.

PISTONS 129, NUGGETS 103

Andre Drummond piled up 27 points, 12 rebounds, three assists and three blocks in 25 minutes, and host Detroit snapped Denver's six-game winning streak. Stanley Johnson had 21 points and seven rebounds off the bench for the Pistons, while another reserve, Langston Galloway, supplied 18 points. Blake Griffin contributed 17 points, seven rebounds and four assists. The Nuggets were missing Jamal Murray (ankle), Gary Harris (groin) and Paul Millsap (ankle). Denver, which fell a half-game behind the Golden State Warriors for the best record in the Western Conference, was led by reserve Trey Lyles with 20 points.

BUCKS 113, NETS 94

Giannis Antetokounmpo totaled 30 points, 15 rebounds and nine assists as Milwaukee concluded a five-game road trip with a victory over Brooklyn in New York. Malcolm Brogdon added 16 points for the Bucks while Eric Bledsoe contributed 15 after sitting out Milwaukee's win at Washington on Saturday with a sore left Achilles. The Nets, who got 18 points from D'Angelo Russell, dropped a third straight game for the first time since their eight-game skid from Nov. 21-Dec. 5. Brooklyn also lost for the second time in its past 15 home games.

PACERS 109, PELICANS 107

Darren Collison scored 22 points to lead a balanced scoring attack as visiting Indiana held off short-handed New Orleans. Collison was joined in double figures by Domantas Sabonis (16 points and 13 rebounds), Myles Turner (15 points, nine rebounds), Thaddeus Young (14



PHOENIX: James Harden #13 of the Houston Rockets goes to the basket against the Phoenix Suns on Monday at Talking Stick Resort Arena in Phoenix, Arizona. — AFP

points) and Bojan Bogdanovich (14 points) as the Pacers won their second straight game to finish a 2-2 road trip. Jahlil Okafor had 25 points and 13 rebounds, and Jrue Holiday added 19 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists to lead the injury-riddled Pelicans, who lost for the sixth time in seven games.

HAWKS 137, WIZARDS 129

Taurean Prince scored 21 points, Kevin Huerter had 19, and Atlanta won at Washington. Nine Atlanta players scored in double figures, including all five starters. Omari Spellman (16 points, 10 rebounds), John Collins (15 points, 11 rebounds) and Trae Young (10 points, 10 assists) made multifaceted contributions for the Hawks. Collins got his double-double in just 17 minutes in the first half. He left in the second quarter with what the team

called a facial laceration and did not return. Bradley Beal led the Wizards with a game-high 27 points, while Jeff Green added 26 and Trevor Ariza had 25.

KINGS 127, SPURS 112

Marvin Bagley III (24 points), Yogi Ferrell (19) and Harry Giles III (11) scored in double figures off the bench as host Sacramento used superior depth to defeat San Antonio. Starters De'Aaron Fox (20 points), Buddy Hield (18) and Iman Shumpert (13) also scored in double figures for the Kings. Sacramento moved within a half-game of the Los Angeles Clippers for the eighth playoff spot in the Western Conference. DeMar DeRozan scored 24 points and LaMarcus Aldridge finished with 22 for San Antonio, which saw its five-game winning streak end. — Reuters



Abdo Feghali



The winners



Fahad Al Jedei hits pedal to gold medal for the first time

KUWAIT: In front of 2,500 spectators, Fahad Al Jedei, managed to secure the 2019 Kuwait King of Drift title in an outstanding manner. Second place went to Abdulhadi Hjalailan, followed by Saad Al Foudari who rounded the podium.

In celebration of eleven years since the first ever Red Bull Car Park Drift event in Lebanon, drifters competed to clinch the crown. Having had hosted a successful adrenaline-filled Series Final in 2017, Kuwait was, no doubt, in the position to impress thousands of drifting and motorsport fans alike.

Red Bull Car Park Drift was organized by Basel Salem AlSabah Motor Racing Club and sponsored by Falken Tyres, Motul, Al Sayer Engineering, Platinum Gym, KTM and Acqua Eva. The day started with motorsport spectators lining up to witness the high adrenaline spectacle and throw-thirsty drifters going head to head for the coveted title.

The drifters then began the first heat consisting of 14 drifters on a challenging track concocted by Abdo Feghali, previous Guinness World Book Record holder for the longest drift.

In an expected turn of events, Ali Makhseed was unable to qualify to the 2nd round due to an unfortunate technical failure. The top 8 who broke through to round 2 were Fahad Al Jedei, Abdulhadi Hjalailan, Saad Al Foudari, Mohammed Abdulrazzaq, Saad Al Mutayri, Dari Al Shammari, Mohammed Al Sabah and Ali Mussawi. This time, only four would make it to the next round.

Spectators and drifters anxiously awaited the final round and action to resume, to ultimately crown the winner. The final four from round 2, Fahad Al Jedei, Abdulhadi Hjalailan, Saad Al Foudari, and Mohammed Abdulrazzaq all went head to head, with one aim; to be crowned the 2019 Kuwait King of Drift.

Consisting of top motorsport and drifting experts and athletes, the judging panel was assigned the task of evaluating the competitors. This year's judging panel table was rounded up by Fouad Abu Arja, experienced motorsports organizer, Mishari Al Sabti, International Relations manager at BMRC, and Issam Al Najadi, rally veteran.

This year the drifters' performance was determined based on car look & design (40 points), drifting skills (120 points), boxes (50 points), spiral (20 points), gate (20 points), flipper (60 points), pendulum (50 points), car sound (20 points), and tire smoke (20 points).

Ultimately, Fahad Al Jedei, edged past the competition and clinched the title with a jaw-dropping performance collecting an impressive 270 points. He was beaming with pride as he held the trophy. Al Jedei will go on to represent Kuwait at the Series Final in September.

Al Jedei will face a fierce challenge for the King of Drift title, competing against drifters from eleven other countries that have participated in the series. The 2019 series kicked off in Kuwait on February 1 and the competition will continue with qualifiers in Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Algeria, Mauritius, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Georgia, and Jordan. With only one drifter from each participating country, Turkey will welcome the 2019 Kuwait King of Drift at the Series Final this September 1 where he will compete to claim the Series Final throne.

The competition, first hosted by Red Bull in Lebanon, provides drifting amateurs and professionals with the opportunity to highlight their skills and compete for the crown, while capturing the crowd's attention. Last year's Kuwait qualifier witnessed an exciting turnout with Ali Makhseed claiming Kuwait's King of Drift title and continuing to the Series Final in Lebanon. Lebanese competitor, Oliver El Kik, secured the 2019 King of Drift crown after a stellar performance, at the Series Final, hosted in Lebanon.

On a global level, the story of drifting goes back to the 1960s on winding Japanese mountain roads. A bunch of likeminded racers set out to beat their A to B times by exceeding the grip limit of their tires when taking sharp corners. It did not do much to help their racing times but instead evolved into an entirely different discipline. Drifting was born, and a Red Bull manager discovered the sport in 2005 and decided to spark a fire in the Middle East, a fire that still burns to this very day.



Million fans stream for Patriots Super Bowl parade

BOSTON: More than 1 million people were expected to pour into Boston by car, train and ferry yesterday, preparing to celebrate the New England Patriots' record-tying sixth Super Bowl win.

A parade of World War Two-era amphibious duck boats will carry players including quarterback Tom Brady, tight end Rob Gronkowski and cornerback Stephon Gilmore, through the crowds celebrating the team's 13-3 victory over the Los Angeles Rams on Sunday. Unseasonably warm weather—with a forecast high of 63 Fahrenheit (17.2 Celsius) — is likely to swell crowd sizes at the city's 12th professional sports championship parade since 2001. Mayor Marty Walsh told reporters on Monday.

"We're anticipating the biggest turnout you could possibly have when you think about public safety," Walsh said. He noted that prior championship parades have drawn 500,000 to 1 mil-

lion fans, with smaller numbers coming in winters like that of the team's 2015 Super Bowl win when Boston streets got some 9 feet (2.7 m) of snow. The parade will kick off at 11 a.m. EST (1600 GMT) at Boston's Prudential Tower and roll down Boylston Street to City Hall. One commuter ferry to Boston was packed with young people skipping school for the parade, some with their parents and many wearing blue, red or white Patriots jerseys bearing the names of stars Brady and Edelman.

Patrick Cronin, an 18-year-old high school student, said he was heading to watch the parade with friends to cheer a team he said was often doubted during its regular season. "So consistently everyone was like, 'They're too old,' or they have some stupid reason why Brady is no good," Cronin said. "It's so satisfying when they're so good again." — Reuters



BOSTON: New England Patriots fans celebrate on the Boston Common after the New England Patriots beat the Los Angeles Rams in Super Bowl LIII. — AFP

Sports

Hosts Flyers down Canucks for eighth straight win

Toffoli scores early in OT as Kings edge Rangers

PHILADELPHIA: Jakub Voracek and Sean Couturier each scored a goal to lift host Philadelphia past the Vancouver Canucks 2-1 on Monday, the Flyers' season-best eighth win in a row. Philadelphia's Carter Hart made 41 saves while becoming the first goaltender in franchise history to win his seventh straight start before turning 21 years old. The Flyers registered their 2,000th regular season win in franchise history. Brock Boeser scored the lone goal for the Canucks, who got 28 saves from Jacob Markstrom.

KINGS 4, RANGERS 3 (OT)

Tyler Toffoli scored 25 seconds into overtime Monday night to cap a frantic comeback by Los Angeles, which edged host New York. The Kings, who never led in regulation, forced overtime when Adrian Kempe scored his second goal with 59.6 seconds left in the third period. The Rangers nearly won on their first possession of overtime, when Mika Zibanejad's shot rang off the right post. Zibanejad actually raised his arms for a moment thinking the puck had gone in. Instead, the puck caromed close to center ice, where Toffoli picked it up and raced into the Rangers' zone.



Flyers registered 2,000th regular season win

STARS 5, COYOTES 4

Tyler Seguin scored with 7:32 remaining in a wild third period to lift Dallas to a win over visiting Arizona for its season-high fifth consecutive win. The Coyotes led 2-1 entering the third period, but the first eight minutes were an offensive spectacle, with Dallas scoring three times in the first 3:39 to take a 4-2 lead before Arizona responded with a pair of scores over a 1:01 span to square things at 4-4. That scoring set up Seguin's game-winning goal, when he took a pass from behind the net from Jamie Benn and beat Arizona goaltender Darcy Kuemper high to the stick side.

MAPLE LEAFS 6, DUCKS 1

Andreas Johnsson produced two goals and two assists, Jake Muzzin added one goal and two assists, and Toronto defeated visiting Anaheim. William Nylander and John Tavares each chipped in with a goal and an assist for the Maple Leafs, who have won two in a row and three of four. Connor Brown also scored a goal for Toronto while Zach Hyman added two assists. Rickard Rakell scored for the Ducks, who are 2-12-4 since Dec. 18. — Reuters



NEW YORK: Filip Chytil #72 of the New York Rangers skates against the Los Angeles Kings at Madison Square Garden on Monday in New York City. The Kings defeated the Rangers 4-3 in overtime. — AFP

Paine counts Ashes gains as Australia tick boxes

CANBERRA: Tim Paine had a few wishes coming into the final test of the home summer against Sri Lanka ahead of this year's Ashes and the Australia captain left Canberra with a fair idea of what the team should look like in England in August.

The 34-year-old wanted pace spearhead Mitchell Starc and batting mainstay Usman Khawaja to find form, his batsmen to end Australia's century drought and also change his own luck with the coin toss at Manuka Oval. He wasted precious little time to tick one of the boxes and won only his second toss as Australia's captain, by flipping the coin with his left hand.

Joe Burns then scored the first century since Khawaja's 141 in the drawn Dubai test against Pakistan last October and was soon matched by Travis Head and Kurtis Patterson. It was then left to Starc and Khawaja and the duo did not disappoint either.

The fast bowler picked up a 10-wicket match haul while the left-handed batsman remained unbeaten after completing his eighth test hundred.

With their Ashes rivals getting thumped in West Indies who have clinched the three-test series with a match to spare, Paine could not wait to get to England for the five-match series beginning on Aug. 1.

"I've been dreaming about it actually. I'm happy now that we've got this out of the way I can put everything into it," Paine told reporters after his first series win.

"Every Australian cricketer can't wait to go and play an Ashes series and particularly in England, it's something that I've certainly dreamed of as a kid, I didn't think I'd be going over as the captain.

"In the back of my mind I've been thinking about it, I've been watching England, keeping a really close eye on them, I can't wait to get over there."

Paine's appointment was in difficult circumstances when captain Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner were handed year-long bans for their roles in the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa last March.

The scandal had wide-ranging ramifications as several sponsors withdrew, Cricket Australia heads rolled, and critics flayed the team culture.

"We spoke at the start of the summer about our main priority was to win back the respect of the Australian public and our cricket fans," Paine said. "Sitting here now we've gone a long way toward doing that. "It's in difficult times you see the characters you've got in your group and it's confirmed to us we've got some good characters, some strong characters and some people we can build a really strong Australian cricket future on."

Paine was pleased with the way his team played against Sri Lanka and felt they would have defeated any opposition in the world with those performances.

And Australia will look even stronger in the Ashes series with Smith and Warner back in the side, he said.

"I think everyone has, to a degree, got to earn their stripes. Those two have plenty of runs in the bank," Paine said. "I see us going to the Ashes and them having a huge part in us winning the series. That's how I see how important they are to this team."

"We know how good they are. Hopefully once their bans are up they'll be welcomed back and they'll win test matches like they did beforehand." — Reuters



Tim Paine

Five things we learned from the Premier League

LONDON: Liverpool's lead at the top of the Premier League has been whittled down to three points as Manchester City and Tottenham applied the pressure to Jurgen Klopp's men before they drew 1-1 at West Ham on Monday.

THREE-WAY TITLE RACE?

Less than a week ago Liverpool could have opened up a seven-point lead in their quest to win the title for the first time in 29 years. A week on from Wednesday's 1-1 draw at Anfield to Leicester, City can go top by beating Everton on Merseyside this midweek. Almost forgotten amid City's pursuit are Tottenham who continued to defy the odds to close to within five points of the leaders with a third consecutive late win over Newcastle. "For me they are 100 percent in the race," said Klopp of Spurs' challenge.

NEW MANAGEMENT, SAME OLD ARSENAL

City beat Arsenal 3-1 on Sunday to send the Gunners down to sixth with a familiar failing threatening their chances of Champions League qualification. Arsenal have not won away since November in the Premier League, taking just two points from their last six games away from the Emirates. Despite the changing of the guard from Arsene Wenger to Unai Emery, Arsenal's defensive weakness and open approach has made them easy to pick off, particularly by other members of the top six. Arsenal have not won any of their last 24 combined visits to City, United, Liverpool, Chelsea and Tottenham stretching back five seasons. In contrast, only City have a better home record this season than Emery's men, which has included victories over Spurs and Chelsea at the Emirates. That suggests the talent is there to work with when the mentality and tactical approach is right.

SON SHINES AMID SPURS STRUGGLES

No new stadium, no new signings, no Harry Kane or Dele Alli, but Spurs remain on the fringes of the title race thanks to the return of Son Heung-min from the Asian Cup. South Korea's quarter-final exit to eventual champions Qatar meant that Son missed just three games for his third international tournament in eight months. Spurs lost two of them to Chelsea and Crystal Palace to miss out on League and FA Cup glory for another season. However, they have not lost any ground in the league since Kane and Alli pulled up with injuries thanks to three late winners against Fulham, Watford and Newcastle. After grabbing the equaliser against Watford, Son got the only goal to end 83 minutes of Newcastle resistance for a 1-0 win at Wembley.

HAZARD BACK IN NATURAL HABITAT

Freed from the shackles of Sarri's failed tactical gambit, Eden Hazard was back to his best as Chelsea eased the pressure on their manager with a 5-0 rout of struggling Huddersfield. Out of desperation, Sarri had used Hazard as a central striker for Chelsea several times this season in a bid to pep up his spluttering attack. But Hazard made his name as a playmaker who thrives in the wide open spaces on the flanks and the Belgian never looked

STRONG SPINE KEY TO SOLSKJAER'S SUCCESS

Three weeks on from a 1-0 win at Spurs earned by a Paul Pogba assist, Marcus Rashford finish and goalkeeping heroics from David de Gea, Manchester United used exactly the same formula to win by the same scoreline at Leicester. Both Rashford and Pogba now have six goals in 10 unbeaten games since Solskjaer took caretaker charge, while De Gea's wonder stops are now winning games rather than just keeping his side in them as they were earlier in the season. On the day Jose Mourinho was sacked, the Red Devils trailed the top four by 11 points. That gap is down to two and come next weekend could easily be erased completely as fourth-placed Chelsea visit City a day after United travel to relegation-threatened Fulham. — AFP

Sarfraz to captain Pakistan at WCup

ISLAMABAD: Sarfraz Ahmed will continue as Pakistan captain at the World Cup in May despite serving a suspension for breaching the anti-racism code, Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Ehsan Mani said yesterday.

Sarfraz was suspended for four matches by the International Cricket Council (ICC) when an on-field taunt aimed at South Africa's Andile Phelukwayo was caught by stump microphones. Sarfraz admitted the offence and apologised for his conduct.

"Sarfraz will remain Pakistan captain until the World Cup, I was always clear in my mind that Sarfraz would be the captain," Mani told reporters in Lahore. "He will remain so until any other decision is taken," Mani added, saying Sarfraz's performance as captain would be evaluated only after the World Cup.

The PCB had rallied in support of Sarfraz, saying they were disappointed by the ICC's decision to suspend him after the matter had been resolved, and Mani backed him to lead the team.

The 31-year-old wicketkeeper, who led Pakistan to the ICC Champions Trophy title in 2017, was thankful for the board's support. "The past few weeks have been extremely difficult for me as a person and professional, but I am delighted that the PCB has reassured its confidence and faith in me," Sarfraz said.

"In the lead up to the World Cup, Pakistan will play five ODIs each against Australia and England, which will also allow us the opportunity to further fine-tune our preparations." Pakistan, who last won the World Cup in 1992, will begin their campaign against West Indies at Trent Bridge on May 31. The final of the 50-over tournament is scheduled for Sunday July 14. — Reuters



Dinesh Chandimal

Sri Lanka sacks skipper Chandimal

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's skipper Dinesh Chandimal has been sacked and removed from the Test squad for the upcoming two-match series against South Africa, cricket authorities said yesterday. Chandimal, 29, was replaced by Dimuth Karunaratne, Sri Lanka Cricket said, listing a 17-member squad that did not include the right-handed batsman.

National selectors said in a statement Chandimal was dismissed to help him "regain his form and be ready for future international tours." His sudden sacking came a day after he insisted his team could lift their game during their upcoming tour against South Africa, following a thrashing by Australia.

Under Chandimal, Sri Lanka lost the opening day-night Test in Brisbane by an innings and 40 runs inside three days and followed it up with a 366-run thrashing in the Canberra Test. It extended a dire run of results

for troubled Sri Lanka who have been hit by injuries and off-field scandals.

Besides the defeats in Australia, Sri Lanka also recently lost a home Test series to England 3-0 and suffered a 1-0 loss against New Zealand in an away series. The first Test in South Africa starts on February 13, with the squad flying straight there from Australia this week in a gruelling overseas schedule.

"We are a young team and we are always learning how to play, especially in these tough conditions. We will bounce back in South Africa," Chandimal said in Australia. "South Africa is similar to these conditions and with very good bowlers. We know that as a team we have to play in tough conditions and we need to adjust to those conditions and step up as a team."

Sri Lanka Test squad: Dimuth Karunaratne (stand-in captain), Niroshan Dickwella (vice captain), Lahiru Thirimanne, Kaushal Silva, Kusal Mendis, Kusal Janith Perera, Milinda Siriwardana, Dhananjaya de Silva, Oshada Fernando, Angelo Perera, Suranga Lakmal, Kasun Rajitha, Vishwa Fernando, Chamika Karunaratne, Mohamed Shiraz, Lakshan Sandakan and Lasith Embuldeniya. — AFP

Sports

Klopp points to injuries as Liverpool slip-up again

Victory over Everton today will take City to top of the table

LONDON: Jurgen Klopp pinpointed a mounting injury list as the explanation for Liverpool's sub-par performance in a 1-1 draw at West Ham on Monday that leaves the league leaders just three points clear of Manchester City. Less than a week after missing the opportunity to go seven points clear of City with a 1-1 draw against Leicester, Liverpool again let a lead slip as Michail Antonio quickly cancelled out Sadio Mane's 22nd minute opener.

Victory over Everton today will now take City to the top of the table, while Tottenham are just five points off the top in third. It could have been even worse for Liverpool had Declan Rice and Mark Noble not failed to hit the target with huge chances to claim all three points for West Ham.

Klopp was without the injured Jordan Henderson, Georginio Wijnaldum and Trent Alexander-Arnold meaning James Milner started in an unfamiliar role at right-back, while the German was forced to name an experimental midfield three of Fabinho, Naby Keita and Adam Lallana.

"Last night we trained and after we had to change three positions," said Klopp. "It's just a fact, it's not an excuse. The preparation for the game was far from being perfect and we still got a point." After posting a perfect record against opposition outside the top six in their first 23 league games, Liverpool have now slipped up twice in as many matches to mount the tension in their chase for a first title in 29 years.

However, Klopp played down suggestions it is the pressure and the weight of history that has dragged his players down over the past week. "It's not about pressure, it's about enjoying the situation you are in," added Klopp. "We have 62 points, have lost one game in the whole season so far which is very positive."

"I think from your faces already you (the media) feel sorry for us. We are fine. Tonight was just a tough game." Hammers boss Manuel Pellegrini claimed it was

"impossible to play worse" after his side's 3-0 capitulation to Wolves last week that followed a deeply disappointing FA Cup exit to League One AFC Wimbledon.

Even without the injured Marko Arnautovic, Pellegrini got the response he wanted in West Ham's performance if not their end product and the Chilean was angered that Liverpool's opener was allowed to stand despite Milner clearly being offside when he crossed for Mane to score his 12th goal of the season.

"They have two clear chances, one that is one-and-a-half metres offside where they score a goal, and one in the last minute with (Divock) Origi in front of the linesman again one metre offside."

"Of course, you must be disappointed," said Pellegrini, who recalled a series of controversial calls that went in favour of Klopp's Borussia Dortmund when they beat Pellegrini's Malaga in the 2012/13 Champions League quarter-finals.

"Klopp is used to win with offside goals. He beat me against Malaga with Borussia Dortmund with a goal seven metres offside, so he can't complain about nothing." Liverpool's lead lasted just six minutes as the visitors switched off from a well-worked free-kick and Antonio drilled Felipe Anderson's pass in off the far post. More lax set-piece defending should have cost Liverpool again three minutes before the break when Rice headed wide another wicked Anderson free-kick delivery wide when completely unmarked 10 yards out.

Anderson continued to create problems in the second period and another positive break from the Brazilian should have created the winner when Noble fired over. Origi replaced the ineffective Roberto Firmino 15 minutes from time and the Belgian had a huge chance to make himself a hero as he did with a last gasp Merseyside derby winner against Everton in December. This time, though, Origi shot meekly into Lukasz Fabianski's grateful arms with the final action of the match. — AFP



LONDON: Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk (C) plays the ball during the English Premier League football match between West Ham United and Liverpool at The London Stadium, in east London on Monday. — AFP

Hertha hoping to heap more Berlin misery on Bayern

BERLIN: Hertha Berlin captain Vedad Ibisevic sees today's German Cup clash against Bayern Munich as a "mini final" with the hosts hoping to topple the Bavarian giants again.

Ibisevic scored when Hertha shocked Bayern 2-0 in the Bundesliga last September and the last-16 tie at the Olympic Stadium offers a chance to deal last season's finalists Bayern an early exit.

Ibisevic, 34, is out of contract in June, but the veteran striker has netted 10 goals this season and took heart from seeing Bayern suffer their fourth league defeat of the campaign at Bayer Leverkusen last Saturday. "This feels like a mini final for us," said Ibisevic. "You can see that they have lost points this year that they wouldn't have given away normally." "Of

course, it gives us hope that they could slip up again, so we know what's possible."

Bayern hope to have Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer back between the posts, but playing with a plastic cast on his right hand after damaging his thumb in training last week.

Berlin's Olympic Stadium has been an unhappy hunting ground for Bayern on their most recent visits, losing last May's German Cup final 3-1 to Eintracht Frankfurt before the defeat by Hertha.

Ibisevic firmly sees his team as the underdogs even though Berlin last lost to Bayern in September 2016. "We don't need to talk about being the favourites here, they are an opponent who are one of the top teams in Europe." The Hertha-Bayern clash is the tie of the round, while Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund play at home to Werder Bremen. "If they have a good day, you're 3-0 down," said Hertha coach Pal Dardai, who refused to read too much into Bayern's defeat at Leverkusen.

"Now they have lost once, doesn't mean they are bad." Dardai expects a tight match, but insists penalty practice has not been on the programme in training, saying "we don't practise those extra anymore". — AFP



Hertha Berlin captain Vedad Ibisevic

Cup Clasico tests Madrid resurgence, offers redemption

MADRID: One hundred days will split the last Clasico from the latest one and for Real Madrid the prize in the rematch is more than a place in the Copa del Rey final. When they trudged off the Camp Nou in October, the big screens above them flashed 5-1 to Barcelona, with Luis Suarez scoring three and without Lionel Messi at all, their best player injured and sitting in the stands.

The next day Julen Lopetegui was sacked, owing to what the club said was a "great disproportion between the quality of the staff of Real Madrid and results." Barca were top of La Liga, Madrid ninth.

There will be little comfort then for Madrid that Messi could be missing again today, a niggle in his thigh leaving coach Ernesto Valverde, and Messi, with a decision to make. If Messi plays - and Valverde was optimistic on Sunday - it will be because he is fit. Barcelona have indicated they will not risk their captain with a gruelling month ahead.

The 2-2 draw at home to Valencia last weekend means their lead in La Liga is six points over Atletico Madrid and eight over Real, but with games away to Athletic Bilbao, Sevilla and then Real in the next four weeks, there is little room for complacency.

Dotted between are two legs against Lyon in the Champions League, the holy grail for Barcelona this season, and perhaps the one trophy they really crave after years of underachievement.

Last month, Messi even had to reject claims they would be better off out of the Copa del Rey. "It was said that we had given up in the cup, that we didn't want it," he said. "But in no way is this the case."

The fervour of any meeting with Real Madrid dictates it cannot be taken lightly. As Barca's stirring comeback against Sevilla in the quarter-finals showed, the players picked will not be holding back. But for the club, and their season, it is possible Barcelona need this match less than their opponents.

Revenge is one thing, Madrid's hammering in the autumn was the final humiliation at the end of a miserable run but their trajectory, despite a dip at the start of the year, has been generally upward since.

"It was a complicated time for them psychologically," said Valverde, after the semi-final draw. "Now they are in a different moment." This is a chance for Madrid to wrestle back momentum. They will hope that beating Barcelona over two legs, even in the Copa del Rey, can knock them out of their stride.

After Real's win over Alaves on Sunday, Santiago Solari said his team were ready to fight. He has played up the spirit in the camp and there have been some impressive performances to back it up, most notably against Sevilla.

"The spirit is like a family," Solari said. "I think they are doing phenomenally well." But as coach, this is Solari's biggest test. He has put his faith in youth but how might Alvaro Odriozola, Sergio Reguilon and, in particular, Vinicius Junior handle their first Clasico, at the Camp Nou?

Gareth Bale was quiet against Alaves but could he follow Isco and Marcelo as the next big name made to fight for his place? "I see Gareth focused, connected and plugged in," Solari said last week. "I want him to perform how he knows he can."

Solari's own future is on the line too. He has a contract until 2021 but his position is likely to be reviewed in the summer, when blockbuster games like these will surely spring quickest to the mind of president Florentino Perez. — AFP

FIFA, Qatar set up joint venture to deliver 2022 World Cup

ZURICH: Global soccer body FIFA has set up a joint venture with 2022 World Cup hosts Qatar as part of its effort to streamline organisation of the tournament, it said yesterday. The global soccer body said in a statement that it would hold a 51 percent share of the venture while the Qatar organising committee would hold 49 percent. FIFA president Gianni Infantino said in 2016 that the federation would take more control over ticketing and organisation at the World Cup, adding that the decision was driven by efficiency and not a lack of trust in local organisers.

Until now, local World Cup organising committees

have been left to work largely independently, with FIFA making periodic inspections of their progress, in a pattern that has sometimes led to tension.

In the run-up to the 2014 World Cup, FIFA's then secretary general Jerome Valcke infuriated hosts Brazil by saying the country needed a "kick up the backside" to speed up its preparations. FIFA Secretary General Fatma Samoura said in the statement that the new setup was a "major step" forward in the organisation of the tournament. "The joint venture aims to reorganise the way we work at the operational front and avoid inefficiencies," she said. — Reuters

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Everton FC v Manchester City	22:45	
beIN SPORTS		
SPAIN COPA DEL REY		
FC Barcelona v Real Madrid CF	23:00	
beIN SPORTS		

Ceferin set to guide UEFA through key period for European football

ZURICH: European soccer boss Aleksander Ceferin is set to be re-elected unopposed at a UEFA Congress in Rome tomorrow, putting him in charge for four years which could see fundamental changes to club football on the continent.

The Slovenian lawyer will face a delicate balancing act as he attempts to find a middle ground between Europe's big clubs and the rest, who fear being left behind by their richer peers. Europe's biggest teams are pushing for drastic changes to the region's club competitions, including the flagship Champions League, so they can play each other more often.

UEFA is already looking ahead to the cycle beginning in 2024, and the European Club Association (ECA) has said ECA chairman Andrea Agnelli, the president of Italian champions Juventus, and Ceferin have agreed to work together, although they have not given any more details on their plans. Agnelli suggested in an interview with Britain's Guardian newspaper last year that the 32-team group stage in UEFA's Champions League could be arranged into four groups of eight rather than eight

groups of four.

Such a model would leave less space for domestic matches, but Agnelli suggested that teams playing in the Champions League be allowed to field a number of under-21 or under-23 players in their home leagues. He added that he was just "brainstorming", but it nevertheless gave an insight into how the big clubs may be thinking.

UEFA currently enjoys a near-monopoly on competitions involving top European clubs, but that position is also under threat: FIFA president Gianni Infantino wants to introduce a four-yearly 24-team Club World Cup and says his plans are backed by an investment consortium willing to put in \$25 billion over 12 years in return for 49 percent ownership of such a competition.

The FIFA Council agreed in October to set up a task force and lengthen the consultation process after solid opposition from UEFA and Europe's domestic leagues put Infantino's plans on hold.

Meanwhile, the pre-season friendly tournament organised by US-based Relevent Sports and involving top European clubs continues to grow. After starting out with eight teams in 2013, last year's edition featured 18 sides and saw matches played in the United States, Singapore and various European venues. Each team played three matches and all were then ranked in a single league table based on their results.

Ceferin was elected in September 2016 to replace Michel Platini after the former France midfielder was banned by FIFA for ethics violations. Platini has denied any wrongdoing.

Since then, Ceferin has argued that closing the financial gap between a handful of top clubs and the rest-



Aleksander Ceferin

the so-called "competitive balance" - is the biggest challenge facing European football.

To help achieve this he suggested salary caps, a luxury tax, squad limits and reforming the transfer system, among other measures. However, he has struggled to find concrete measures that would allow, for example, the champions of Switzerland or Serbia to compete on more equal terms with teams from England, Spain, Germany and Italy in the Champions League. "Times have changed and we are planning some reforms, but I can't tell you exactly when that will be," he said, adding that even the big clubs appreciated the problem. "It's clear (to them) that the competition only between the big ones will not happen and would be very boring." "They understand that for the development of football, they have to share some money." — Reuters

25 Million fans stream for Patriots Super Bowl parade

26 Sri Lanka sacks skipper Dinesh Chandimal

27 Klopp points to injuries as Liverpool slip-up again



Shiffrin streaks to super-G gold

American Lindsey Vonn crashes out of world super-G



ARE: (From L) Silver medallist Italy's Sofia Goggia, gold medallist US' Mikaela Shiffrin and bronze medallist Switzerland's Corinne Suter celebrate during the flower ceremony of the women's Super G event of the 2019 FIS Alpine Ski World Championships at the National Arena in Are, Sweden, yesterday. — AFP

ARE: Mikaela Shiffrin took her first step to world domination by storming to super-G gold yesterday, but there were tears for outgoing teammate Lindsey Vonn who crashed out. Shiffrin herself overcame a near-crash halfway down the hard-packed course in temperatures of -18 Celsius (-0.4F) to clock a winning time of 1min 04.89sec, nudging out reigning Olympic downhill champion Sofia Goggia of Italy by two-hundredths of a second.

Switzerland's Corinne Suter claimed bronze, at 0.05sec, herself just two-hundredths ahead of Germany's Viktoria Rebensburg in fourth.

"I don't think this is going to sink in for a long time, it's crazy!" said Shiffrin.

"It's a really tight race, seven hundredths of a second to fourth place, these races are tough. It's a small difference, it's nothing.

"It was a fight, I knew everyone was pushing really hard. The surface is amazing so you could really go for it. "It had to be a really good balance between risk and really nice turns. But I was going really aggressive, there was only one spot at the bottom where I had to

fight to stay in the race."

Shiffrin didn't commit to what her programme might be in the coming week.

"I'm going to take a minute tonight and talk with my coaches to see what we think we could do for the rest of these champs," the 23-year-old said.

Czech Ester Ledecka, who surprised the field to win super-G gold in Pyeongchang before going on to claim the parallel giant slalom in snowboarding, paid the price for two mistakes up high, only finishing in 1:07.69, well off the pace. At least she finished. Vonn, in her final season, had no such luck. The 34-year-old, who has announced she will retire after the championships in Are, Sweden, went down hard, but was able to ski down after receiving medical attention.

"If adversity makes you stronger I think I'm the Hulk at this point..." Vonn tweeted in reference to Marvel Comics' green-skinned humanoid boasting supernatural strength.

Vonn misread a bump high up the course that pitched her forwards into a pole and then slid into the safety netting. Medical staff were quickly on the scene

to help her get gingerly back to her feet, to applause from the crowd around the finish line.

No sooner had the commentator announced that Vonn had form on the hill, having won two world silver medals in Are in 2007, than her skis kicked back off the rise to groans from the crowd.

Shiffrin was shown on the big screen television clutching her head as her teammate, who is just four wins short of Ingemar Stenmark's World Cup record of 86, slid out at pace into the bright red netting.

"Everyone's really relieved she was able to stand up and ski down. It looks like everything's looking good that she can keep going for the next race," Shiffrin said. "I told her I was sorry, but I think at the end of the day there's not much that you can say.

"She's had this amazing, incredible, inspiring career, and she's paved the way for US ski racing and all over the world, but especially in the US for the next generation to come up. We have a lot to be thankful for because of that.

"I hope she can have a clean run in the downhill because she can be really good here and find a way to

have the perfect goodbye, to retire from the sport the best way she can."

It was a case of deja vu for Vonn, who suffered a season-ending injury in the opening super-G of the 2013 world championships in Schladming.

Vonn will bow out after Are following 19 illustrious seasons that have seen her scoop a record 20 crystal globes, including four overall titles. She is also the 2010 Olympic downhill gold medallist, and won the world speed double in Val d'Isere in 2009.

Vonn was not the only casualty on the unforgiving slope. Switzerland's defending world super-G champion Jasmine Flury, Liechtenstein's Tina Weirather, who won Olympic super-G bronze in 2018, and Austria's world downhill silver medallist Stephanie Venier all bombed out. Shiffrin's victory confirmed her rise as the complete all-round skier.

Only three of the multi-medalled slalom specialist's 56 wins on the World Cup circuit have come in the super-G. The super-G gold adds to previous world titles in the slalom (2013, 2015, 2017) and a giant slalom silver (2017). — AFP

Mourinho avoids jail but hit by fine for tax fraud in Spain

MADRID: Ex-Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho has avoided jail for tax fraud as part of a deal with Spanish prosecutors revealed yesterday but will pay a fine of close to two million euros.

The 56-year-old is accused of committing tax fraud in 2011 and 2012 when he coached Spanish giants Real Madrid. According to the agreement seen by AFP, Mourinho accepted a one-year jail sentence immediately commuted to a fine of 182,500 euros.

The Portuguese coach will also have to pay an additional penalty of 1.98 million euros (\$2.3 million). Mourinho already paid 1.14 million euros in 2015 as an

administrative penalty and the deal stipulates that prosecutors won't oppose that this amount be deducted from the overall fine. The agreement still has to be validated by a judge. Mourinho, sacked by Manchester United in December following a string of disappointing performances, is the latest high-profile football figure to be judged over his tax affairs in Spain.

Spanish prosecutors accuse Mourinho, who coached Real Madrid between 2010 and 2013, of failing to declare income of 1.6 million euros in 2011 and 1.7 million euros in 2012. The grounds for the case, as with a series of others involving football stars based in Spain, is how income from Mourinho's image rights was managed and declared.

Prosecutors believe by ceding his image rights to a series of companies based in tax havens, Mourinho committed fraud by not declaring the income those companies made from the rights. Cristiano Ronaldo, now of Juventus, was also found guilty of tax fraud when at Real Madrid.

He was accused of having avoided paying millions in

taxes due on his image rights between 2011 and 2014. He too avoided jail but was ordered by a Spanish court last month to pay more than 3.5 million euros, part of a broader 18.8-million-euro payout agreed between his lawyers and Spain's taxman.

Ronaldo received a two-year jail sentence immediately commuted to a fine of 365,000 euros and another penalty of 3.2 million euros, according to the sentence. Barcelona's Lionel Messi, once Ronaldo's big La Liga rival, paid a two-million-euro fine in 2016 in his own tax wrangle and received a 21-month jail term.

The prison sentence was later commuted to a further fine of 252,000 euros, equivalent to 400 euros per day of the original term. Messi and his father Jorge Horacio Messi were found guilty of using companies in Belize, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Uruguay to avoid paying taxes on 4.16 million euros of Messi's income earned from his image rights.

Barcelona defender Javier Mascherano also agreed a one-year suspended sentence with authorities for tax fraud in 2016. — AFP



Jose Mourinho