



5 Discoveries prove Failaka was inhabited in Abbasid period



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24 'Heavy clashes' as US-backed forces in final push against IS



28 Manchester City thrash Chelsea 6-0 to go top of Premier League



Kuwait sets new world record for longest flag

More than 4,000 students carry Kuwaiti flag measuring 2019 meters



KUWAIT: Students carry a Kuwaiti flag, the longest in the world, during an event to set a world record yesterday. — KUNA

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwait registered a world record yesterday for the longest flag, after over 4,000 students paraded with a 2019-meter-long Kuwaiti flag along a road that was blocked to traffic. The feat was recognized by the Guinness World Records. The event coincided with the national celebrations and the 13th anniversary of HHH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's ascen-

sion to power. The celebration was held under the patronage of Education Minister Hamed Al-Azmi.

Various state bodies participated in the event, including the defense ministry, interior ministry, fire department, Municipality, ministry of public works, information ministry and other institutions. The celebration also included a parade by mounted police officers on horses and camels and vehicles of the

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Organizers hold aloft a certificate by Guinness World Records endorsing the record. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)

Taxes in Kuwait 'only possible' with proper laws

DUBAI: In the event a tax law is introduced in Kuwait, it would be "no different" than other legislation, requiring it to pass through parliament as stipulated by the constitution, the finance minister said yesterday. "A prospective tax law in Kuwait has been a recurring topic of discussion among our partners in the region," Nayef Al-Hajraf told

KUNA in an interview on the sidelines of an Arab financial forum. He said the constitutional law in Kuwait should be respected, meaning that taxes will only be levied under legislation that "follows proper procedure".

The minister added that any discussion over taxes in Kuwait is merely conjecture at this point, emphasizing that proper laws need to be enacted in the first place. On the types of taxes currently under discussion, he mentioned a value-added tax (VAT) agreement between Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, which has become the subject of heated debate in the National Assembly.

In response to a question on an increase in wages and more monetary bonuses, Hajraf said

the situation is assessed on an "individual basis", citing efforts to remedy any irregularities in the payment of salaries, "which could take a while to materialize". The spate of financial reforms seen in Kuwait aims to ensure steady economic development, he explained, pinpointing more job opportunities and anti-corruption efforts as among the measures taken.

Hajraf also touched on Kuwait's newly-unveiled budget for the fiscal year 2019-2020, which sees government spending slashed by 26 percent as part of a tighter expenditure policy. The minister highlighted the forum as a valuable opportunity for Kuwait to gain some insight into the experiences of some of its neighbors in dealing with financial reforms. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf and Central Bank Governor Mohammad Al-Hashel attend an Arab financial forum yesterday. — KUNA

News in brief

Highest daily garbage collection

KUWAIT: Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi yesterday said Kuwait removes 4,000 tons of garbage daily, the highest daily garbage collection rate in the world. Responding to an inquiry about cleaning services in various areas, Manfouhi said the total value of current cleaning contracts has surpassed KD 285 million. — A Saleh

Turkey slams treatment of Uighurs

ANKARA: Turkey on Saturday condemned China's treatment of its Muslim ethnic Uighur people. "The systematic assimilation policy of Chinese authorities towards Uighur Turks is a great embarrassment for humanity," Turkish foreign ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said in a statement. "It is no longer a secret that more than one million Uighur Turks - who are exposed to arbitrary arrests - are subjected to torture and political brainwashing in concentration centers and prisons," he said. Aksoy also said Turkey had learned of the "tragic" death in custody Saturday of Uighur poet and musician Abdurehim Heyit. — AFP

Bouteflika to seek fifth term

LGIERS: Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika is to seek a fifth term in April elections, state media announced yesterday, despite health issues that have kept him largely out of the public eye for years. The 81-year-old head of state, in power since 1999, declared his widely expected candidacy in a message to the nation. The president said he would set up an "inclusive national conference" to address "political, economic and social" issues and "propose an enrichment of the constitution", Algeria's official APS news agency reported. — AFP

Muslim lawmakers' criticism of Israel pressures US Dems

WASHINGTON: The support for a boycott of Israel by the first two Muslim women in the US Congress has opened a breach in the Democratic Party and threatens to create a fissure in the ironclad US-Israeli alliance. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib made their debut in the House of Representatives in January openly declaring their support for the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement, or BDS.

The movement, launched more than a decade ago and modeled on the 1960s movement to pressure South Africa over apartheid, calls for people and groups to sever economic, cultural and academic ties to Israel,

and to support sanctions against the Jewish state. But for Israel partisans - including many Democrats and Republicans in Congress - BDS smacks of anti-Semitism and poses a threat to Israel.

Tlaib, 42, has Palestinian roots and represents a district of suburban Detroit, Michigan that is home to thousands of Muslims. She argues that BDS can draw a focus on "issues like the racism and the international human rights violations by Israel right now". Omar, 37, is the daughter of Somali refugees who was elected to represent a Minneapolis, Minnesota district with a large Somali population. She accuses Israel of discrimination against Palestinians akin to apartheid, but denies that she is anti-Semitic.

Her remarks in January to Yahoo News however sparked anger among the large pro-Israel contingent in Congress, the powerful, largely Democratic US Jewish community, and Israel itself, where BDS is seen as a national threat.

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WASHINGTON: US Representatives Ilhan Omar (left) and Rashida Tlaib are seen at the US Capitol. — AFP

Kagame steps down as Sisi takes AU helm

ADDIS ABABA: Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who led an active, reformist tenure as African Union chair, yesterday passed the baton to Egypt, seen as more likely to focus on security issues than expanding the body's powers. Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi officially took over the rotating post of ceremonial head of the AU at the start of a two-day summit in Addis Ababa. The meeting highlighted the "links between the Mediterranean and Lake Victoria", as a metaphor for sub-Saharan Africa.

"Egypt has an interest in Africa, they

want to strengthen their position on the African continent and they don't want to be seen as a country only focused on the Arab world," said Liesl Louw-Vaudran, an analyst at the Institute for Security Studies. Kagame's leadership of the AU focused on institutional and administrative reforms. Sisi however is expected to focus more on security, peacekeeping and post-war reconstruction, issues closely tied to the AU's 2019 theme of "Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons".

"The road is still long" in terms of reaching the AU's goal of "silencing the guns" by 2020, Sisi told delegates yesterday. He announced he would hold a "forum for peace and development" in the town of Aswan, southern Egypt, in 2019. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Saturday that

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ADDIS ABABA: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (right) speaks with outgoing African Union Chairman and Rwandan President Paul Kagame after Sisi was elected the new chairman during the 32nd AU summit yesterday. — AFP

Local

Amir receives record-breaking officers, meets with senior state, foreign officials

Amir patronizes 'Al-Fahad.. Spirit of Leadership' exhibition today



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Lieutenant Colonel Fahad Al-Yaqoub, Lieutenant Colonel Salem Al-Mell and Major Nasser Fawaz Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Fahad Al-Yaqoub, Lieutenant Colonel Salem Al-Mell and Major Nasser Fawaz Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with envoy of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Yasser Abbas.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Nicaragua's Minister for Foreign Affairs Denis Colindres.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the outgoing Ambassador of Nepal Yagya Bahadur Hamal.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with envoy of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Yasser Abbas.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, who asked for His Highness Sheikh Sabah's approval to head to Jordan for an official visit. Moreover, His Highness the Amir separately received President of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Constitutional Court and President of the Cassation Court Justice Yousef Al-Mutawaa, and Acting National Assembly Speaker Essa Al-Kandari.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir met First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser

Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, accompanied by Lieutenant Colonel Fahad Al-Yaqoub, Lieutenant Colonel Salem Al-Mell and Major Nasser Fawaz Al-Sabah who registered a new record in the Guinness Book of World Records for the world's longest flag carried while skydiving in free fall, as they broke the record while carrying a Kuwaiti flag in Qatar. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad accompanied by the officers, as he praised their achievement and the ability of Kuwaitis to raise the name of Kuwait during regional and international forums wishing them more success and progress.

His Highness the Amir also received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah

Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, accompanied by Nicaragua's Minister for Foreign Affairs Denis Colindres. Colindres handed His Highness a letter from Nicaragua's President Daniel Ortega on boosting bilateral relations on all levels. Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled held a separate meeting with his Nicaragua's counterpart, and they discussed bilateral relations as well as the latest regional and international developments of common concerns. In the meantime, His Highness the Amir also met the outgoing Ambassador of Nepal Yagya Bahadur Hamal.

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir hosted envoy of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Yasser Abbas, who handed His Highness a letter from the

Palestinian President on boosting bilateral ties on all levels. The Palestinian President's envoy also met with His Highness the Crown Prince. In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Acting Speaker Kandar, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

In other news, His Highness the Amir is set to patronize the 'Al-Fahad.. Spirit of Leadership' exhibition, and the 'Deep-rooted Brotherhood' operetta today at 10:30 am at Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. His Highness the Crown Prince is deputized to attend the event. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Over 4,000 students from the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Governorate carried a huge Kuwaiti flag that measured 2.19 km, and walked along the Fahd Al-Malik Road (208) yesterday, setting a new world record. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and KUNA

Local

Calls for providing more protection for women in Kuwait against violence

'Empowering Narratives: Addressing Women's Security in Kuwait'

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Manara coalition organized a series of discussions entitled 'Empowering Narratives: Addressing Women's Security in Kuwait' on Saturday at the Promenade Cultural Center. During the discussion, Sundus Hamza, one of the founding members of Abolish 153 Campaign, said: "Thanks to MP Omar Tabtabaei, five members of parliament signed to abolish article 153 and we are currently waiting for the parliamentary voting session."

She added that a lot of Kuwaiti women have been killed because of article 153. According to this article of Kuwait's penal code, if a man catches a female member of his family in an unsavory sexual act with a man and kills her or him or both, the crime will be treated as a misdemeanor punishable by a maximum of three years jail time and/or a fine. According to a recent study conducted by the Campaign to Abolish Article 153 in 2018, it was found that 51.2 percent of Kuwaiti men and women are affected by violence.

In another earlier study carried out by the OrangeQ8 campaign in early 2017, 60.8 percent of Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis have suffered from life-threatening violence. "The campaign is about women and their families, men included. Controlling violence and trying to help people who are victims of violence is our duty. Living without violence is not just a woman's right, it's the right of humanity," Soroptimist President Dr Amar Behbehani said.

Behbehani noted that statistics show women's security and personal safety on the national level in Kuwait. "Our Soroptimist Kuwait project is a local campaign corresponding with the United Nations Orange the World event. It is a local NGO that is a branch of Soroptimist International, a global volunteer movement striving to improve the lives of women and girls, comprised of around 50 remarkable Kuwaiti and expatriate professionals and businesswomen," Behbehani said.

Soroptimist Kuwait focuses on action and awareness in five areas: Economic empowerment, education, environment, food security and health, and ending violence against women. Soroptimist Kuwait joins the global efforts

of Soroptimist International and the United Nations to eliminate violence against women and girls, and support women to speak up and take a stand against violence.

Lawyer Azraa Al-Rifai pointed out that the provision of shelter and other services is a key part of Kuwait's commitment to protecting victims of violence and ensuring women's right to security, safety and human dignity. "We call on the Ministry of Social Affairs to work urgently to operate shelters to protect women in Kuwait who are suffering from violence," she said.

"There should be a hotline for cases to investigate and provide protection within their families. The shelter is temporary - to qualify the women psychologically and provide them appropriate work to rely on themselves. This is what we need in Kuwait - we do not need a hotel accommodation where women sit without rehabilitation, but centers to reengage them in society," she added.

Malak Jassim Al-Rasheed, Professor of Social Work at Kuwait University, said that the vision is to envision a future in which all women in Kuwait are free from physical, emotional and economic abuse. "I am presenting the governmental part, where I am a member of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs and head of the team that is in charge of the establishment of shelters," she said.

"We need every girl and woman to believe that she has the full right to a safe life. There are a lot of cases and families that refuse to retake their daughters fleeing violence by their husbands and force them to return to their husbands, broken and humiliated. Creating a shelter for these women is the best solution to ensure their rights in Kuwait," she added.

Rasheed explained that Kuwait was the first country to sign in the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) agreement, but the applying for creating a shelter is taking a while. "Better late than never. Kuwait now is implementing a full strategy to create the shelter." The event discussed the challenges and opportunities to promote effective change for women in Kuwait, legal actions against violence, women's physical and mental health, education and its role in empowering women and real stories of resilient women.



KUWAIT: (From left) The discussion's moderator Dr Ebtihal Al-Khateeb, a professor at Kuwait University, Lawyer Azraa Al-Rifai, Soroptimist President, Dr Amar Behbehani, Malak Jassim Al-Rasheed, Professor of Social Work at Kuwait University, and Sundus Hamza, one of the founding members of Abolish 153 Campaign.



Living without violence is a human right

Maker Faire awards fourteen projects

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Fourteen projects were awarded out of a total of 147 participating at the Maker Faire Kuwait 2019 during the concluding ceremony held on

Saturday at the Kuwait International Fair Ground. The fair was visited by around 75,000 people. This was the third version of Maker Faire Kuwait, organized by the Kuwait Investment Company (KIC) and held under the patronage of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The total value of prizes was \$30,000. Nine of the 14 prizes went to Kuwaiti projects, while the other five winning projects were from the GCC region. The participating projects were from various fields including technology, arts, education and music.



KUWAIT: The first prize winner is awarded.

On the occasion of opening the newly designed, constructed and furnished
Expansion of Al-Amiri Hospital
with a capacity of 415 beds

We extend our sincere congratulations to

His Highness the Amir of Kuwait

Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

His Highness the Crown Prince

Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

Speaker of the National Assembly

Mr. Marzouq Al-Ghanim

His Highness the Prime Minister

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah

Minister of Health

Sheikh Dr. Basel Hmoud Al-Sabah

Undersecretary of Ministry of Health

Dr. Mustafa Reda

And Government officials,
Department of Engineering Affairs and Projects,
Health Administration of the Al-Asimah Governate,
staff of Al-Amiri Hospital,
and the people of Kuwait.



Local

Health Ministry completes performance assessment for 62,513 employees

Municipality approves secondhand vehicles market location

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health's (MOH) assessment department recently completed assessing the performance of 62,513 Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti ministry employees in 2018. Health sources said results are due by mid-March, noting that according to Civil Service Commission (CSC) resolution number 36/2006 amended by resolution number 15/2017, 30 percent of the assessment focuses on commitment to official working hours while 70 percent focuses on other performance issues. The sources added that the assessment will include health zone directors, hospital managers and their deputies, heads of primary care units and heads of nursing staff. The sources explained that all officials responsible for the process are required to note down all positive and negative remarks in their assessment reports so that each employee could work on avoiding the negatives in the future.

Secondhand vehicles

Kuwait Municipality approved a request by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MOCI) to allocate a new market for secondhand vehicles located over a total

area of 500,000 square meters along Salmi highway, well-informed sources said. The new market would not only offer selling and buying used vehicles, but would also include showrooms for these vehicles with technical tests and registration issuance onsite, the sources added.

Interested buyers would have access to auctions and can submit their bids online, the sources noted. "The site will also provide other facilities such as restaurants, rest areas and representatives of various automobile agents," the sources added, noting that the new market will help get rid of brokers. In addition, the sources explained that MOCI is about to form a special committee and offer the project for public bidding to private sector investors.

In other news, MOCI referred the final draft of the bankruptcy, restructuring and preventive settlement bill to the fatwa and legislation department following approval by relevant authorities including the Central Bank which demanded supervising bankruptcy cases. According to the draft, an application can be filed following the death of an indebted person, quitting a business or loss of legal capacity within two years following death or striking off a trader's name from the commercial register.



Solar power plant

Eleven companies and consortiums out of 28 qualified ones have so far purchased the condition handbook for the Al-Debdebeh solar power plant project, well-informed oil sources said. The sources said initial indicators show that the prices given in the bids would competitively vary between KD 200 million and KD 300 million compared to the project's estimated budget of KD 520 million. The sources added that bidders had made around 800 inquiries about the project and that most of them were about the plant itself and power lines.

36 projects

The monthly report issued by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare revealed that the authority managed to accomplish 36 projects till January with a total value of KD 1.3 billion, including 15 projects whose accomplishment is way ahead of schedule. The report explained that 51.98 percent of Mutlaa city's roads and infrastructure project executed by an Italian-Turkish consortium has been completed till January, while the contract states 43.59 percent, while the second contract of building the infrastructure for eight of the city's areas executed by a Chinese contractor is behind schedule with actual accomplishment of 26.92 percent compared to the scheduled 58.99 percent.

Social care

Ministry of Social Affairs' assistant undersecretary for social care affairs Sheikh Al-Adwani said the ministry aspires to build an integrated complex for social care houses including geriatrics and family care houses that provide all tenants' needs. Adwani noted the current buildings need much development.

Kuwaiti official urges double effort against cybercrimes

KUWAIT: Considered one of the most serious crimes of the modern era, cybercrimes require a double effort to be addressed, Deputy Director of Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Dr Fahad Abu Sulaib said. This came in a speech delivered by Abu Sulaib yesterday at the opening of the institute's four-day workshop entitled 'Investigations and Trials of Internet Crimes,' in cooperation with the Public Prosecution and the US Embassy in the country. This workshop is important specially from the international point of view, which is witnessing a profound transformation in various regions of the world, mainly in international concern

about increasing cyber security and the changes imposed on daily life of citizens and their repercussions, he said.

Meanwhile, US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman said in his speech, "enhancing cyber security cooperation is not only a priority of your government, but of the US Embassy. We see cooperation in cyber security to be a real growth area for our bilateral collaboration to make our peoples more secure.

"The cyber world is one that consistently creates investigative challenges, both by virtue of its rapid development and because it is expansive field, upon which malign influences can operate, he added. "Social media platforms provide unprecedented opportunities for the free exchange of ideas," he said, but many users do not understand that the platforms allow malicious actors to deceive them by launching vast influence operations, and this no doubt, creates many crimes and victims.

"Your role is critical because malicious use of technology cannot be deterred without having a credible capacity to impose punishment for committing fraud, hacking into

information systems, stealing data, and disabling computer systems," Silverman confirmed. It is impossible to employ criminal enforcement tools without first identifying the perpetrators, whether they are ordinary criminals, transnational organized criminal organizations, or those acting on behalf and at the direction of hostile governments who choose to engage in criminal activity, he said.

This phenomenon is not anecdotal. Recently the US Department of Justice prosecuted an individual who had been radicalized online and used social media to recruit and train others to plan and carry out attacks against the United States in the name of IS. This workshop provides an opportunity to share experiences with these challenges and provide some insight into overcoming the impediments of complex cyber investigations, he added. "To defeat malicious actors we must collaborate, we must share information and we must educate ourselves to be better equipped to address the national security threats posed to each of our countries by these criminal elements," he said.

Legalese

Intellectual property rights



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

I am really grateful that I get to work with smart entrepreneurs in Kuwait who have a vision and work really hard to see their dreams manifest. More and more people in Kuwait, both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti, young and old, female and male, college-educated and street-smart, are establishing their own businesses and ventures, whether it is a tech startup or small home business that sells a skill set. Keep it up and do not give up on your calling.

One of the legal issues that business owners deal with is intellectual property rights, and although I have written on multiple occasions on intellectual property rights, the processes keep on changing. Therefore, this article discusses the most important intellectual property rights for business owners as of today. Intellectual property can be defined in a very simple way as the creations of the mind.

Three major parts

That could be anything from a photo to a drawing of a necklace design, a book and so on. Intellectual property can be split into three major parts:

1. Copyright: The right a "producer" has to prevent their work from being reproduced. The primary works that can be copyrighted are literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works.

2. Patents: A patent is a protected invention - it has to be new, innovative and capable of industrial application, like a machine or a manufactured article. Fortunately, there is a central office in the Gulf for patents.

3. Trademarks: Trademarks are used as a mark of quality or origin to inspire customer loyalty, like a logo. So essentially, trademarks are only for commercial use.

Process and fees

I have highlighted below the process and fees for trademarks and copyrights in general:

1. Copyrights as mentioned above are very general. A copyright can be anything from written work to a photo or a tune. This can be registered in Kuwait at the National Library. The fees are very minimal and the process is very easy. You will not need a lawyer and I highly suggest this for all artists and business owners.

2. Always register your trademark. You would need a business license first to do so and the process takes some time.

Trademarks are registered at the Ministry of Commerce in KIPCO Tower. Below are the requirements:

A translated copy is needed.
The process takes 6 months.
Manually check for similarities for 18,000 trademarks.

Printed in the newspaper 2-3 times, giving people two months to appeal.

KD 45 once you submit the application online.
KD 25 for publication purposes.

The logo will be published in Kuwait's official gazette for 60 days.

KD 240 to have the logo officially registered.
For questions or queries, please email us at info@ftl-legal.com.



KUWAIT: Participants of Kuwait Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies' workshop, entitled 'Investigations and Trials of Internet Crimes.' — KUNA

Jordan-Kuwait committee convenes

AMMAN: The Jordanian-Kuwaiti higher committee met in Amman yesterday, with senior officials from both sides' public and private sectors attending. The preparatory meeting is mainly aimed at exploring ways of bilateral cooperation and draft agreements, protocols, MoUs and executive programs ahead of a foreign ministerial meeting due in Amman tomorrow. Speaking at the gathering, Kuwait Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Affairs Ambassador Fahad Al-Awadhi, who led the Kuwaiti delegation, said today's meeting came at the behest of both countries' leaderships for promoting bilateral relations. He lauded Kuwaiti-Jordanian brotherly relations as an example for other Arab ties to follow.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of the Jordanian Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply Yousef Al-Shamali stressed deep Jordanian-Kuwaiti relations, saying that the joint committee's meeting targets a follow-up of resolutions adopted during the 2012 session. He appreciated Kuwait for helping Jordan get out of its recent economic crisis and carry out development and economic programs. Trade exchange between both sides hiked up to roughly \$400 million in 2017, up 4.3 percent over 2016, he said, emphasizing that this figure should be further raised.

Deep-rooted ties

In the meantime, Kuwait's



AMMAN: The Jordanian-Kuwaiti higher committee meeting in progress. — KUNA

Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Daihani said yesterday that the Kuwaiti-Jordanian ties skyrocketed in deep-rooted multi-faceted relations. His remark came in prelude to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah's visit to the Hashemite Kingdom today. Daihani said that His Highness the Premier's visit will coincide with the fourth session of the Higher Jordanian-Kuwaiti Committee, co-chaired by the foreign ministers of both countries, which would result in signing 14 agreements, most of which focus on economic, trade and investment. He added that the visit, an invitation by Jordan's Prime Minister Omar Razzaz, will include a reception by Jordanian King Abdullah II and talks with Razzaz. His Highness the Prime Minister is also to inaugurate the new Kuwaiti Embassy building in Amman.

The visit reaffirms deep-rooted

multi-faceted relations between the two countries and is considered an additional step towards buttressing those relations, under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and King Abdullah II, Daihani pointed out. The delegation accompanying His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak comprises Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Finance, Trade, Education and Justice and other senior officials, he noted. The delegation also includes several Kuwaiti businesspersons and representatives of the private sector, which confirms the interest in developing economic ties and opening up wider horizons for trade and investment cooperation between the two countries. Relations between Kuwait and Jordan, established in 1961, have progressed in many domains and the two countries are committed to 57 cooperation agreements covering many areas. — KUNA

News in brief

Celebrations halted in Souq Mubarakiya

KUWAIT: Orders were given to halt public celebrations in Souq Mubarakiya after some considered them contrary to customs and tradition. MP Mohammad Al-Dallal asked the information ministry to act quickly to counter behaviors in Mubarakiya that do not agree with Kuwaiti values and hold violators to account. — Al-Rai

Center reopens

KUWAIT: After a year and two months of closure, Wathakker Center was reopened, as stated by head of the center Sayeed Fuad Al-Refae Al-Husseini. He thanked government officials for this move, as well as those who defended the center.

Corruption charges

KUWAIT: Informed sources said decisions to be issued by Public Works Minister and State Minister for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri on the rain crisis will include the referral of a former director of the Public Authority for Roads and Transport to Nazaha (anti-corruption authority) on corruption charges. — Al-Qabas

Weak inspection

KUWAIT: Eight days after a circular warned against parcels from six countries, a box containing seven kg of Captagon tablets arrived. This made customs officials admit that supervision is weak and this leads to smuggling drugs. Instructions were earlier issued for strictly inspecting parcels arriving from Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, China, Iran and Thailand. Concerned authorities said the weak level of inspection has allowed the entry of banned material into the country. Sources said the Captagon was in containers of sweets and was not inspected. — Al-Qabas

Top Kuwaiti lawmaker raps bids to isolate Sudan

CAIRO: Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday categorically rejected all attempts to

undermine, punish, isolate or unilaterally pressure Sudan. Ghanem made the remark during an Arab parliament sitting held at the Cairo-based Arab League to look into how to lift Sudan from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism. "We were optimistic when unilateral US sanctions on Sudan, which lasted around a quarter of a century, were lifted a couple of years ago. Also, we were optimistic when it was announced two months ago that US-Sudanese talks would be held in order to get Sudan out of the US list of state sponsors of terrorism," he said.

In this context, Ghanem stressed by saying: "We want a

stable, secure and prosperous Sudan. We should encourage and back every step Sudan takes for reform, development and public welfare." The Kuwaiti parliament speaker reiterated a principled position towards all policies that target Sudan, recalling that the Kuwaiti parliament had called on Arab MPs to move to exert pressure on the US Congress to end US sanctions on Khartoum. In late 2017, the efforts had led to an end to the US economic sanctions on Sudan, he said, noting that the US should lift Sudan from its terror list. However, Ghanem called on all Arab countries and their parliaments to seek seriously to help Sudan get out of the US list of state

sponsors of terror. In other news, Ghanem met yesterday with Chairman of Saudi Shura Council Sheikh Dr Abdullah Al-Sheikh. During the meeting, they discussed on ongoing efforts to lift Sudan from the US list of state sponsors of terrorism. They also considered many files related to cooperation between both sides, ways of uniting positions, along with issues to be discussed at upcoming international and continental parliamentary meetings. Meanwhile, Ghanem met with the Speaker of Iraqi Council of Representatives Mohammad Al-Halbousi. They discussed coordination over issues to be discussed during international events. — KUNA

Local

New discoveries prove Failaka Island inhabited in Abbasid period

Kuwaiti-Italian archaeological mission continues efforts to trace island's history



KUWAIT: Members of the Kuwaiti-Italian archaeological mission. — KUNA



Part of excavation works in Failaka.

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti-Italian archaeological mission to Failaka Island has uncovered several proofs, mainly at the village of Al-Qurainiyah, referring that it was inhabited in the early Abbasid Caliphate period. The team is continuing its efforts in making new discoveries in the Island in a serious attempt to trace its history. The mission is exploring for monuments and artifacts that could provide information about the life of the first people who settled in Al-Qurainiyah.

Head of the mission Andrea Di Miceli said in a statement to the press that digging and searching operations in the village had unveiled important evidence of the human settlement of the island that dates back to the early Islamic history. This confirms that the village was inhabited during that period, he added, noting that the archaeological discoveries in the village date back to two different eras. He said that the excavation journey offered rich scientific evidence on populating the villages and the living conditions as well as the activities of the residents. He referred to the latest discoveries dating back to the beginning of Abbasid Caliphate in the 7th and 8th centuries AD.



Findings indicate presence of active port

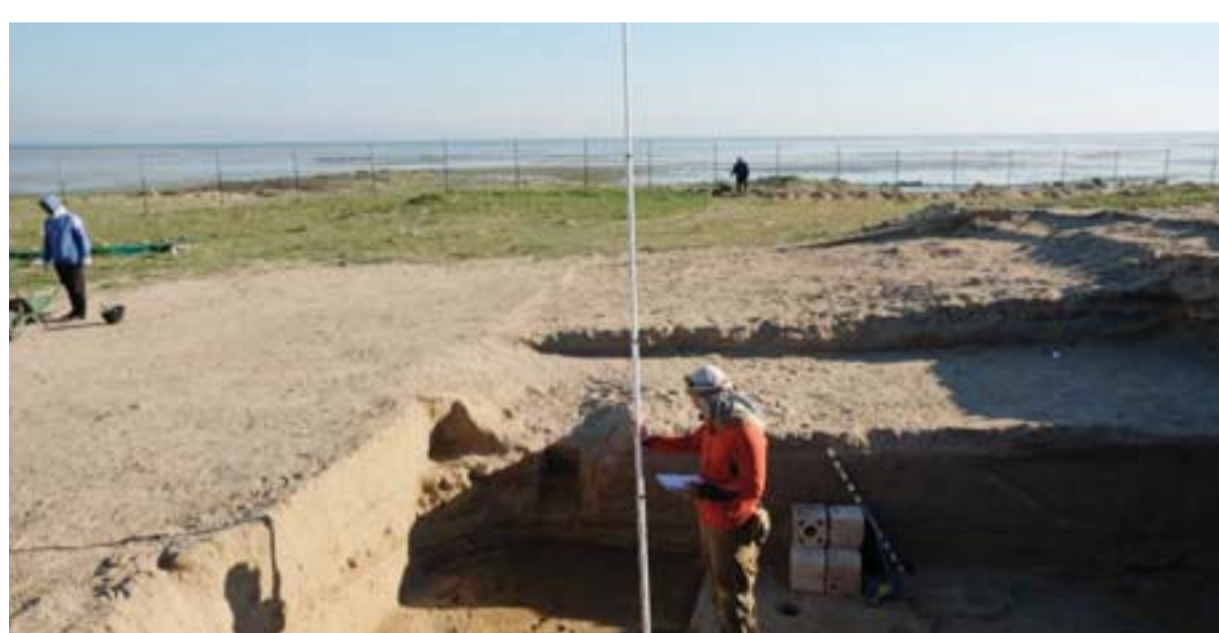
Qurainiyah, he said. He added that the findings indicated that Al-Qurainiyah was an active port.

The coastal village was the only link to outside world in the early Islamic period. The mission could find oysters in large quantities in a house, he made clear, saying that it refers that people were searching for pearls. Bones of fish and cattle were also found by the mission that give an evidence of the existence of cattle and animals at that time. He also pointed to several discoveries in the village that refer to tools used by people who were living there. He spoke about evidence on commercial activities of the village's residents in the late Islamic era that reflects the volume of trade at the time.

The mission also unearthed porcelain brought from China for domestic purposes, glass bracelets from India for decoration as well as Indian pottery, ceramics from Amman and others, he said. He referred to the discovery of two types of tobacco pipes as evidence of the existence of smokers on the village in that period.

Foreign reports

Meanwhile, Hamed Al-Mutairi, an archeological official at National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, said the village was previously mentioned in some foreign archaeological reports that date back to the beginning of the 19th century. These reports claimed that the village was deserted because of an epidemic, according to Mutairi. The village was nearly deserted for unknown reasons and it was re-inhabited at the end of 18th century until the beginning of the 20th century, he confirmed. The archaeological excavations in Kuwait have begun since 1957, before the country's independence, when the Kuwaiti gov-



Ongoing excavation works in Failaka.

ernment assigned a Danish mission to search for archaeological sites at Failaka Island (20 km from the coast of Kuwait City), where there are several archaeological sites.

The Danish team worked in Bahrain in the 1950s and made significant results in the discovery of the Dilmun civilization and the Stone Age there. The mission also worked in Qatar and so the Kuwaiti government was encouraged to ask it in 1957 for working inside Failaka. In 1958, the actual excavation began in Kuwait and continued until 1963. During this period, the mission has accomplished great works. The Danish team was able to bear the first fruit to change the history in Kuwait by discovering many monuments in Failaka, dating back to the Bronze Age and

some ruins dating back to the Stone Age. This refers that Kuwait has been existing since more than 300 years.

In the beginning of the 1970s, the US mission came to Kuwait and then the Italian mission in 1979. Both of them relied on aerial photography to discover archaeological sites and Kuwait has had first maps through aerial photography since that time. In 1983, The French team came to Kuwait and uncovered a temple, which has been a key archaeological monument on the Island. Issuing the Antiquities Law in 1960, which is one of the first laws in the Gulf region, the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters was established. Since 2004, the council has been concerned with cultural heritage in the country. — KUNA

Zain showcases available vacancies to COEP graduates



KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwait Science Club Talal Al-Kharafi and Kuwait University President Dr Hussein Al-Ansari with Zain's team at the company's booth.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of the career conference organized by Kuwait University's College of Engineering and Petroleum's (COEP) Society of Petroleum and Engineering (SEP). The event was held under the patronage and attendance of Chairman of the Kuwait Science Club Talal Al-Kharafi and the presence of Kuwait University President Dr Hussein Al-Ansari.

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 HR 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 showcased its leading experience in the telecommunications industry, as well as the company'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.

عمليات الخفجي المشتركة
AL-KHAFJI JOINT OPERATIONS

الشركة الكويتية لنفط الخليج
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TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

Aramco Gulf Operations Company Limited ("AGOC") and Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (K.S.C.) ("KGOC"), (Al-Khafji Joint Operations) invites bidders to participate for the **Tender No.: HT524MS18 - Provision of Materials to Al-Khafji Joint Operations Hospital.**

Each intending bidder may purchase the tender documents upon payment of **Saudi Riyals Four Thousand (SR 4000) or Kuwaiti Dinars Three Hundred Twenty (KD 320) only** which is non-refundable by visiting our Contracts Department at Al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia, or KGOC's Kuwait Office located in Al-Ahmadi, Tender & Contracts Section. The bidder may visit our KJO website www.kjo.com.sa and follows the path: E-Services, Tendering, Contractors, Ongoing Tenders to review part of tender documents, before purchasing.

The sale of Tender Documents will be effective from **February 10, 2019 until 12:00 noon, March 4, 2019.**

Attending the Pre-Tender Meeting and Site Visit are Mandatory

A Pre-Tender meeting will be held for interested bidders at Medical Services Department (MSD), at **Al-Khafji Joint Operations, Saudi Arabia, at 10:00 AM local time on March 4, 2019.** A site visit will be held soon after the pre-tender Meeting.

The bidder shall note that he shall be required to provide an irrevocable bank guarantee from a bank in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, in the sum of **United States Dollars Four Hundred Fifty Five Thousand (US\$455,000.00/-) only**, to warrant the bid proposal. Such bank guarantee shall be on behalf of the bidder himself and valid for (120) days from the closing date of the tender, any bid proposal received without the said bank guarantee will be rejected.

The bid proposal shall be delivered by hand-delivery or thru courier service to Contracts Department in Al-Khafji Joint Operations, Al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia on or before the closing date **14:00 Hours, Monday, March 25, 2019** by the time stipulated in the tender document.

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Racism and redemption: Virginia 'blackface' row sparks national debate

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French guns on Iraq border aim to pin down IS diehards

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QOM, Iran: An Iranian woman walks past the house of the late founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, in the holy city of Qom, 130 kilometers south of Tehran. — AFP

Iran revolution: Quake still shaking Mideast

Political aftershocks are still being felt 40 years later

TEHRAN: The victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran was an earthquake that upended the political order in the Middle East, and the aftershocks are still being felt 40 years later. When Shiite cleric Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini ousted the shah's last government in February 1979 it was a moment that for many was completely "unthinkable, unexpected", said Clement Therme, a researcher on Iran at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. "The victory was an immense surprise for the Middle East and the world," Therme said. Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi had been seen as a pillar of stability and bulwark of US influence in a region where Cold War tensions were playing out with the Soviet Union.

But the tumult of the revolution soon ended that spectacularly. "One of the founding events for the foreign policy of the new regime was the taking hostage of American diplomats," said Therme. The saga at the US embassy in Tehran ran for 444 days from November 1979 and ruptured ties between Washington and its one-time regional ally. And events in Iran did not just reverberate on the global stage: across the region it fired up political Islam that represented a major threat to monarchies and ruling elites.

"For Sunni Islamist movements and for the Shiite

minorities in the region", the message of the Iranian Revolution was "a source of inspiration", Therme said. According to the official narrative of the Islamic Republic, the revolution did not stop in 1979 with the overthrow of the monarchy but remains a process that is still going on. "The Islamic Revolution has three levels in the view of the Imam (Khomeini): one is Iran, the other is the Islamic world and the last one is the world of the oppressed," said Abdullah Ganji, editor-in-chief of ultra-conservative Javan daily.

War and isolation

"We did not have any plans at the beginning for the Islamic Revolution to go beyond Iran's borders," Ganji told AFP, drawing a distinction with Soviet military interventions abroad. But he said the changes in Iran inspired a string of startling events in the Middle East: attacks against US embassies, protests by Shiites in Saudi Arabia and the assassination of Egyptian president Anwar Sadat in 1981.

The convulsions rattled rulers around the region and fears of Tehran were "among the reasons that led to the invasion of Iran by Iraq" in September 1980, said Therme. The bloody conflict with Saddam Hussein's forces ended in 1988 after hundreds of thousands of lives had been lost.

1979 events fired up political Islam

While it strengthened Islamic rule at home in Iran, it left the country cut off from most of the rest of the world. Except for some key allies: most notably Syria and the Shiite movement Hezbollah that arose after Israel's invasion in 1982. "There was a division in the Arab world between supporters and opponents of the 'axis of resistance' promoted by the Islamic Republic," said Therme.

'New strategy'

Ganji said that after the war with Iraq, Tehran developed a "new strategy" aimed at confronting US influence around the region. "The strategy of the Islamic Republic over the last 30 years has been preventing

America from having a foothold in the Middle East," he said. From Syria to Yemen to Lebanon, the standoff between Washington and its allies and Tehran continues to shape events. The US, Israel and Saudi Arabia see Iran's hand pulling the strings in a raft of hotspots.

Tehran has helped prop up Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad during nearly eight years of civil war, is accused of aiding Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen and maintains Hezbollah as a major threat against Israel. But Iranian officials insist the US is really responsible for the conflicts and that allegations of regional meddling are used as an excuse to target the Islamic Revolution.

Last year, the US pulled out of a landmark 2015 accord on Tehran's nuclear program and reimposed sanctions, citing in part Iran's role in regional conflicts. Conservative Iranian politician and analyst Amir Mohebbian said the West's "massive arms sales" to Arab monarchies in the Gulf are justified because "Iran remains a danger" to US designs in the Middle East. Analyst Therme said that "militant anti-Zionism" has been one of the constants of Iranian foreign policy since Khomeini transformed the country. But now the current geopolitical aims of Tehran seem focused mainly on one goal, he said: "First and foremost to ensure that (the Islamic Republic) endures." — AFP

Mali Muslim leaders call for PM's resignation at mass rally

BAMAKO: Mali's chief Muslim leaders yesterday called for the resignation of Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubeye Maiga at a mass rally, accusing his government of failing to halt jihadist attacks and allowing "moral depravity". Huge crowds packed out a 60,000-seat stadium in the capital Bamako, with many veiled women sitting in stands separated from the male attendees, according to an AFP reporter.

"Muslims can't let things go to waste. From now on, they will be vigilant and mobilise for their country, their religion and their dignity," influential imam Mahmoud Dicko, who presides over the Islamic High Council (IHC), told his supporters. "Mali needs a complete overhaul," said the ultraconservative leader who organized Sunday's event with Bouye Haidara, another leading Muslim.

Over the past decade, Dicko has emerged as one of Mali's most prominent public figures, playing a key role in negotiations between the government and Islamist extremists. He is also a proponent of Wahhabism which he studied extensively in Saudi Arabia, the cradle of this strict Sunni doctrine. "We must fight corruption... We must fight moral depravity. We are the guardians of morality," added Issa Coulibaly,

Dicko's spokesman, speaking on the sidelines of the gathering.

In 2015, Dicko stirred controversy when he called militant attacks "divine punishment" for Mali adopting more liberal Western traditions. "Our guide, our leader, is Mahmoud Dicko," said minibus driver Moussa Dicko (no relation), adding that he had taken the day off to join the gathering at the stadium. Last year, Prime Minister Maiga sparked outrage for supporting a plan to introduce sex education school books promoting a more tolerant view of homosexuality.

Homosexuality is not illegal but remains taboo in the Muslim-majority country. Members of the LGBT community often face discrimination and even physical punishment, according to civil society groups. Dicko and his followers had slammed the Dutch-financed proposal for "wanting to teach homosexuality to school children". The government eventually bowed to the pressure and dropped the project in December. "Our country is faced with a governance problem. This rally wants to draw attention to that. People need to talk to each other," Dicko told AFP ahead of the event.

The imam's political profile was boosted when he became a key mediator between the government and militants who took control of large swathes of the country's north in 2012. Despite French military intervention and a 2015 peace deal, militant attacks have continued and vast stretches of the landlocked Sahel nation remain out of state control, with violence also spilling into neighbouring Burkina Faso and Nigeria. Dicko, 64, has repeatedly pushed for dialogue to help solve the security crisis plaguing Mali, one of the world's poorest countries. In yesterday's speech, he denounced the "terrorist attacks", saying jihadism "has no place in Mali". — AFP

New Zealand flight turns back mid-air

SYDNEY: An Air New Zealand flight to Shanghai turned back several hours into its journey yesterday after discovering it did not have permission to land in China, the airline said. Flight NZ289 carrying about 270 passengers left Auckland shortly before midnight on Saturday only to return about 10 am yesterday (2100 GMT Saturday). It turned around several hours into the flight. "A technicality meant the particular aircraft operating this service did not have Chinese regulatory authority to land in China," the airline said.

China's foreign ministry did not make any immediate comment when contacted by Reuters. Calls to the civil aviation administration were not answered. Air

New Zealand apologized to passengers and said a special service would fly them to Shanghai at 11 pm yesterday (1000 GMT). "We know customers will be deeply disappointed and frustrated by this situation and we are very sorry for the disruption to their travel plans," Air New Zealand said.

Disgruntled passengers voiced their disapproval on social media. One posted a picture on Twitter of the onboard flight map showing the aircraft turning around over Papua New Guinea. "I've just experienced a new level of China Bad: midway through our flight from Auckland to Shanghai, the pilot informs us that Chinese authorities had not given this plane permission to land, so we needed to turn around. A permitting issue, supposedly," the passenger commented. The same flight, NZ289, was turned back on a flight to China on Aug 24 last year, although an airline spokeswoman said that was due to an engineering issue, not a permitting one. — Reuters



International

French guns on Iraq border aim to pin down IS diehards

Howitzer-guns deployed in Euphrates Valley desert

AL-QAIM: French howitzer-guns deployed in the Euphrates Valley desert just inside Iraq stand ready to pour fury on Islamic State group diehards in their last holdout across the border in Syria. Warplanes flash through the sky, followed seconds later by explosions on the Syrian side that send up a mushroom cloud. "We're less than 10 kilometers (six miles) from the frontline here," points out Colonel Francois-Regis Legrier.

He is the commander of Task Force Wagram, a French artillery group within the US-led military coalition that backs up Iraqi soldiers and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) against the jihadists. Dozens of 155-mm shells are lined up ready to be loaded onto three green-and-black Caesar gun-howitzers with a range of 40 kilometers (25 miles).

The SDF, a coalition of Kurdish and Arab fighters, announced a final push to retake the jihadist pocket in and around the village of Baghouz near the Iraqi border late Saturday, after a pause of more than a week to allow civilians to flee. "The end is near," is the message from France's Defense Minister Florence Parly who visited the Task Force Wagram site in Al-Qaim from Baghdad aboard an American V-22 Osprey military aircraft. "The terrorists are leaderless, without communications, in disarray, on the verge of collapse. So let's finish off this

fight," the minister tells a group of some 40 French soldiers manning the outpost alongside 100 US troops. Legrier, whose 68th regiment took part in the 2016 recapture from IS of the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, says

Troops pound IS fighters in Syria

there are "a few hundred fighters left in Baghouz, not more". "Mosul, that was a nine-month battle and 10,000 shells. On this front, it's been four months and we're at 3,500 rounds," he says. He points to challenges caused by frequent sandstorms and heavy rains. Weather conditions have often grounded warplanes but artillery has been largely unaffected. "At the end of last year, the pace was intense, we didn't get much sleep," explains Valentin, a 27-year-old lieutenant on his maiden overseas deployment.

'Not completely over'

The lieutenant and his comrades are being rotated out next week, probably for the last time, as the mission winds down. "The territorial caliphate, which has not yet been wiped out, is being defeated," Parly had said in the Iraqi capital last week, referring to the swathes of territory straddling Syria and Iraq seized by a rampant IS in 2014.

"We must continue the fight against IS and terrorism in the region because IS is probably in the process of reorganizing underground and spreading out," she said on her visit. Since the launch of its Al-Qaim operations,



AL-QAIM: A picture taken near Al-Qaim, a few kilometers away from the last scrap of territory held by IS in eastern Syria, shows wheeled 155 mm gun-howitzer CAESAR system (trucks equipped with an artillery system) used by French soldiers engaged in the "Operation Chammal." — AFP

codenamed Chammal, French forces have fired off more than 18,000 shells and conducted 1,500 air strikes in support of anti-IS fighters on the ground. "Our forces have been playing their part in full," Parly says in the

desert. But "the fight is not completely over," she warns. "What we want to avoid at all costs is for Daesh (IS) to regroup in clandestine forms, threaten the region, disrupt its stabilization, and also menace our countries." — AFP

Caught in Syria, foreign jihadist suspects may face trial in Iraq

BAGHDAD: Their home countries don't want them and holding trials in Syria isn't an option: now suspected foreign jihadists could end up facing tough justice over the border in Iraq. Both countries have suffered for years at the hands of the Islamic State group and Iraqi courts have already meted out hefty sentences to hundreds of foreigners detained on its soil, often after lightning-quick trials.

As the final shred of the once-sprawling jihadist "caliphate" crumbles in eastern Syria, Kurdish-led forces backed by the US have captured hundreds more diehard foreign fighters. The American military—which spearheads an international coalition fighting IS—has in the past shown itself willing to hand those captured in Syria to the authorities in Iraq. In August AFP attended the Baghdad trial of 58-year-old French citizen Lahcene Gueboudj, who said he had been spirited from Syria to Iraq by US troops.

Bekis Wille of Human Rights Watch said the organization knows of at least five instances in which US forces handed foreign detainees over to Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service. They include Australian and Lebanese citizens transported out of Kurdish-controlled areas, at least one of whom was eventually sentenced to death in Iraq. Iraqi justice can be harsh and its courts have doled out death or life sentences to hundreds of foreigners accused of being IS members, including some 100 women. Others who come from Syria can expect similar treatment. "They are at risk of torture and unfair trials in Iraq," Wille warned.

'Secret deal'

The fate of foreign fighters in Syria has come into sharper focus since President Donald Trump's announcement in December that the US will withdraw

its troops from the war-torn country. Washington has stepped up pressure on its reluctant allies to bring home hundreds of jihadists, but the issue is politically sensitive in countries like Britain and France. Governments have been grappling for weeks with the question of foreign fighters detained by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, who have warned that they may not be able to guard their jails once US troops leave. France, hit by repeated deadly IS attacks, has so far opposed returning jihadists. But since Trump's announcement, Paris has said it is studying "all options".

On a visit to Iraq this week, French Defense Minister Florence Parly warned of the need "to avoid some jihadists ending up in the wild and dispersing". Hisham al-Hashimi, a researcher on jihadist movements, told AFP that a deal appears to have been struck with Iraq "at the very highest level and in secret" to tackle the issue. Such a pact allows foreign fighters' countries of origin to avoid politically fraught repatriations; in exchange, Iraq will receive "ultra modern arms and crucial military equipment", Hashimi said. "Iraq can put anyone on trial who passed through its territory, even if they didn't fight there and just headed to Syria," he said.

'Not settling problem'

But while such a deal might solve a headache for politicians, it has raised serious concerns among relatives and representatives of those detained. French lawyer Vincent Brengarth, who is handling the cases of some of those detained, questioned "how it could be justified that Iraqi courts would have jurisdiction" over crimes committed in Syria. French officials say Kurdish forces in Syria are currently detaining some 60 adult French citizens. Veronique Roy, a member of a group of around 70 French families with relatives who went to IS territory, said it would be "tragic" if captives were handed over to Baghdad.

Iraqi law means that anyone found guilty of joining a "terrorist group" can face the death penalty and its justice system has been accused of providing scant chance for a fair trial. A number of foreign fighters have already been sentenced to death in Iraq, although three



AL-QAIM: A gunner mans a machine gun at the back of a US Marine Corps V-22 Osprey flying near a French artillery base near Al-Qaim in Iraq's western Anbar province opposite Syria's Deir Ezzor region. — AFP

French jihadists tried so far have been handed life terms that equate to 20 years in prison. The families of those in Syria insist that their home countries

should take responsibility. "We are pushing the problem back but not settling it," said Roy. "France should not subcontract this out." — AFP

Afghanistan president offers Taliban office

KABUL: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani yesterday offered the Taliban the possibility of opening an office in Afghanistan but the proposal was swiftly spurned by the group that is determined to keep his government out of accelerating peace talks. Ghani has expressed alarm at the Taliban shutting his administration out of negotiations with the United States as well as recent Moscow talks with Afghan opposition politicians, and repeated earlier offers to give the group a secure official address to aid any future diplomacy between the two sides.

"If the Taliban want an office, I will give it to them in Kabul, Nangarhar or Kandahar by tomorrow," Ghani said while visiting the province of Nangarhar, a hotbed of insurgent violence on the border with Pakistan. "We will bring a lasting and honorable peace to the country," he said. Nangarhar is a stronghold of the Taliban, the hardline Islamist movement that now controls or contests districts across nearly half the country, more than 17 years since they were toppled from power.

Taliban officials in Moscow last week stressed the importance of a formal office among a string of demands that included the removal of Western sanctions and travel bans on Taliban members, prisoner releases and an end to "propaganda" against the group. Taliban spokesman Sohail Shahin later told Reuters that the focus was international recognition of their existing site in Doha, Qatar. Yesterday he said Ghani was trying to harm the peace efforts with his latest offer.

"Our demand about having an official political office is clear, we want that our office in Doha is recognized by the international community and the United Nations," Shahin said. "By this, Ghani is try-

ing to change the topic and harm the on-going peace efforts." Taliban negotiators are due to meet US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad for another round of talks in Qatar on Feb 25. The talks are expected to centre around a ceasefire to end America's longest war and the withdrawal of foreign troops. Some 14,000 US troops are based in Afghanistan as part of a US-led NATO mission to train, assist and advise Afghan forces. Some US forces also carry out counter-terrorism operations. — Reuters



NANGARHAR: An Afghan balloon vendor rides his bicycle as he looks for customers on the outskirts of Jalalabad. — AFP

Journalist critical of Pakistan's govt beaten and seized

LAHORE: A Pakistani journalist under scrutiny for anti-government social media posts was beaten and seized outside his home on Saturday, his son said, in the latest sign of pressure on media. Rizwan Razi, who worked for private Din TV in the city of Lahore, was being investigated for "defamatory and obnoxious" comments about the judiciary, government and intelligence services, according to Pakistan's law enforcement agency. However, there was no official confirmation he had been arrested. "My father went out of home to see off friends," his son Osama told Reuters of the incident on Saturday morning.

"When the friends left, unknown persons, riding a black Honda Civic car, thrashed and dragged him in the car and fled away ... I ran after the car but could not do anything." Pakistani journalists say they face an increasingly hostile climate since the vote last year that saw Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) take power. A report from the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), dated Saturday and seen by Reuters, said Razi had previously been questioned about his Twitter comments. It said authorization had been granted to register a case against him.

His account @RaziDada appeared to be offline on Saturday. FIA officials in Lahore referred questions to the main office in Islamabad, where officials could not be reached. Khan's government replaced the party of ousted former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was at odds with the powerful military and is currently serving a seven-year prison sentence for corruption. The increased official pressure has come at a difficult time for the media in general as advertising revenues have plunged and newsroom budgets been slashed. Government officials say Pakistan has an independent media and the military denies pressuring journalists.

In a separate case, Ammar Ali Jan, an academic also based in Lahore, was arrested over his involvement in a protest at the death of Arman Loni, a regional leader of the Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement. He was later released on bail. A message on Ammar's Facebook page on Saturday said he was taken at 4 a.m. "I am a law-abiding citizen and will not be deterred in the fight for justice," it said. Police official Azhar Naveed confirmed the brief detention and bail, which followed other arrests over the protests earlier this week. He said Ammar was charged with taking part in a rally, blocking a road and making "anti-state" speeches. — Reuters

Malaysia, Singapore tensions flare

KUALA LUMPUR: A Malaysian government vessel has collided with a ship in waters disputed by Singapore and Malaysia, sparking a fresh flare-up of maritime tensions yesterday between the neighbors. Malaysian authorities impounded the Greek-flagged bulk carrier, the Pireas, and detained its crew after the collision Saturday with the Malaysian boat Polarix.

The neighbors have had testy relations since Malaysia evicted the island from the Malaysian Federation in 1965, ending a brief and stormy union of the former British colonies. Ties have gone up and down over the years but have been shaky since Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad—who has long had a prickly relationship with Singapore—returned to the premiership with a shock election victory last year.

Maritime tensions began rising late last year when Singapore accused Malaysia of extending its claims in the strait that separates the neighbors into what had long been accepted as the city-state's territorial waters. The city-state, one of the world's busiest cargo ports, said Malaysian vessels were repeatedly encroaching into its waters—an accusation

denied by Malaysia. Both sides claimed that Saturday's collision off Tuas, in western Singapore, had happened in their own waters. The accident did not cause any injuries or lead to an oil spill.

"The collision between MV Pireas and Malaysian government vessel Polarix took place in Singapore territorial waters," a Singapore foreign ministry statement said. "Singapore reiterates its call for Malaysia to withdraw its vessels from the area, as the persistent presence of its vessels clearly poses a threat to safety of navigation in the area," the statement said, adding Malaysia would be responsible for any "unlawful situations" that arise. In a statement released earlier, Malaysia's foreign ministry said: "Malaysia is committed to take appropriate measures to safeguard its territorial integrity, interests and safe navigation of vessels".

Singapore maritime authorities said the incident happened as the Greek vessel was headed to a port in southern Malaysia, and it was allowed to continue its journey as the accident was not serious. According to Malaysia's foreign ministry, the boats communicated before the accident, and the Greek carrier had said it would steer clear of the Malaysian boat. Tensions eased briefly last month when foreign ministers from both countries agreed during a meeting in Singapore to take steps to calm the maritime row, and a separate dispute over airspace. — AFP

International

Racism and redemption: Virginia 'blackface' row sparks a debate

Virginia governor caught up in a row

RICHMOND: Can a politician come back from revelations about racist behavior in their past? What if that behavior evoked the darkest chapters of American history, from slavery to segregation? That's a question the state of Virginia has been grappling with since last week when its governor, Ralph Northam, was caught up in a row over blackface: the caricaturing of African Americans by crude methods of skin darkening as a means of entertaining white people since the minstrel shows of the 1830s.

The 59-year-old has so far refused to resign after first admitting he appeared in a yearbook photograph showing a person in blackface and another wearing Ku Klux Klan robes, only to deny a day later that either individual was him. Northam's deputy has since become embroiled in a sexual misconduct row while the next official in succession for the top job has admitted to engaging in blackface in college too.

Virginians-and Americans as a whole-are now asking themselves how to weigh the transgressions from a public official's past against their record as a whole, and whether even an authentic apology can help regain voters' faith. For James "JJ" Minor, president of the Richmond chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the episode has brought to the fore the painful legacy of the state's past. "Black face is dehumanizing, it's evil," Minor, who is black, told AFP in an interview at the state capital's railway station in the Shockoe Bottom district, once home to a booming slave auction industry that featured in the film "12 Years a Slave."

'Old Dixie'

Sometimes known as the "Cradle of America," Virginia was home to four of the country's first five presidents. But it was also one of the most significant regions for the Atlantic slave trade, the main battleground of the mid-19th century Civil War that was fought over slavery, and later one of the states most resistant to the civil rights movement that brought an end to segregation. In 2017, the Virginia city of Charlottesville hosted an alt-right rally which saw a neo-Nazi ram his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, killing one and wounding 28. The Northam episode has shown "that Sweet Old Dixie is still around,"

Minor, 44, said, using a nickname for the Southern states of the Confederate era.

The NAACP's position is for Northam to resign immediately, a stance shared by the state assembly's powerful Black Caucus. "The legacy of slavery, racism, and the Jim Crow era remains an albatross around the necks of African Americans," the lawmakers said in a statement. "We can no longer hide behind a facade of unity, we must fiercely and intentionally combat the hatred of the past that still lives today."

But a Washington Post-Schar School poll showed Virginians deadlocked on the issue with equal numbers for and against his resignation-and support for him staying in office higher among African Americans than among whites. Some like Reverend Dwayne Whitehead, the African American pastor of Richmond's World Overcomers Church, argue forcefully against punishing Northam for decades-old wrongdoings. "I'm not as devastated by blackface and neither will I hold a person accountable for what they did 35 years ago, when this election for him as governor was not based upon who he was 35 years ago," said the grey-suited 52-year-old.

"To do so, would violate any principles I have of faith that says a person cannot change," he told AFP. For Whitehead, the impulse to oust the governor stems from a bandwagon mentality, and weakens the Democratic Party at a time when racial violence has spiked nationwide-linked by critics to incendiary rhetoric and policies by Republican President Donald Trump. "I know that sometimes," Whitehead argued, "it's a case of 'I'm supposed to respond like this.' And this is what's expected of me."

'Different person'

The blackface controversy has exploded into a full blown crisis for Northam's Democratic Party after it emerged his deputy Justin Fairfax had been accused by two women of sexual misconduct, likely ruling him out of contention should his boss bow to calls to step down. The third-in-line to the governorship, Attorney General Mark Herring, has since preemptively announced he too wore brown makeup and a wig to imitate a rapper while in college in 1980. Jasmine Leeward, a spokeswoman for the New Virginia Majority



VIRGINIA: A local newspaper the Richmond Free Press, with a front page featuring top Virginia state officials embroiled in controversies, sits for sale in a newsstand near the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, Virginia. — AFP

progressive advocacy group, said Herring's open admission of what appeared to be a "one time incident" and the "authenticity in his approach" left more room for forgiveness. On that basis, her organization wants the governor to resign but Herring to stay. "He has been a very articulate champion of some of the issues," the 25-year-old black woman said, citing work fighting for migrants from several Muslim countries when the Trump administration announced its travel ban. "It makes the case that he has made the effort to become a very different person."

Where Northam is widely seen as having failed was his reaction to the yearbook revelation: a confused sequence that saw him first admit, then deny, appearing in the photo, only to apologize instead for wearing blackface on another occasion while imitating the late Michael Jackson. Yet despite that, Reverend Whitehead said he continued to support him because of initiatives like a yearlong dialogue about racial justice, announced days before the blackface row. Northam has since told The Washington Post he plans to dedicate the rest of his term to the same cause. — AFP

News in brief

Journalist shot dead

MEXICO CITY: A Mexican radio journalist was shot dead Saturday in a restaurant in Tabasco state, east of the capital, the latest victim in what has become one of the world's deadliest countries for the press. Jesus Ramos Rodriguez was killed in the town of Emiliano Zapata, an official from the local prosecutor's office said. According to local media, Ramos had hosted a news bulletin for the 99.9 FM radio station for more than two decades. The El Universal daily quoted witnesses as saying his assailant got out of a car and headed straight towards him, shooting him more than eight times at point blank range. The killing comes weeks after a community radio station director was murdered in the northern state of Baja California Sur, in the first such case of 2019. Rafael Murua, who had received death threats for his work, was found dead in a ditch on January 20, after being reported missing. — AFP

Conjoined twins die

SANAA: Newborn Yemeni conjoined twins whose plight sparked a plea for urgent medical treatment overseas died in Sanaa Saturday, rebels in the blockaded capital said. Abdelhaleq and Abdelrahim were born outside Sanaa around two weeks ago and shared a kidney and a pair of legs but had separate hearts and lungs. The head of paediatrics at Sanaa's Al-Thawra hospital, Dr Faisal al-Babili, said his department lacked the facilities to treat or separate the newborn boys and appealed on Wednesday for help from abroad. Houthi rebels, who have been fighting the Saudi-backed government since 2014, blamed a Riyadh-led military coalition for the deaths after "refusing to open Sanaa airport to allow them to get treatment", according to the rebels' media statement on Saturday. The head of Saudi Arabia's King Salman Aid and Relief Centre, Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, said he had a team that was prepared to treat them. — AFP

Armed with new power, Democrats push for stricter US gun laws

NEW YORK: Democratic lawmakers are pushing stricter gun laws in statehouses across the country, emboldened by sweeping electoral victories in 2018 and confident that public opinion is on their side a year after the school shooting in Parkland, Florida. Last year's wins handed Democrats control of the governorship and legislature in several more states, including New Mexico, New York, Colorado, Maine and Nevada, and lawmakers are using their new power to draft or pass gun laws.

In Colorado, Tom Sullivan spent years urging lawmakers to tackle gun violence after his 27-year-old son, Alex, was killed in the 2012 movie theater shooting there. Now Sullivan is helping write those bills after winning a state Assembly seat, part of a Democratic wave in November that gave the party full control of Colorado's government for the first time in five years.

"People are standing up and having their voices heard," said Sullivan, who wears his son's leather jacket to the capitol. "Now they have to see me every single day." Polls show Americans favor tougher gun laws after decades of mass shootings, including the Feb. 14, 2018, massacre at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School that killed 17 students and staff members. But the political might of the National Rifle Association - and its deep coffers - made supporting gun restrictions a risky proposition for many officials.

That changed last year, when Democratic candidates ran on the issue of gun violence in unprecedented numbers. At the federal level, where Democrats captured the US House of Representatives after eight years of Republican control, nearly 80 percent of the 62 freshman Democrats elected in November included gun safety in their campaign platforms, a Reuters analysis found. That

far outstripped the proportion of candidates who did so in 2016. House Democrats have introduced a bill requiring criminal background checks for private and gun show firearm sales, closing what advocates call a deadly loophole in federal law.

But with Republicans, who typically oppose gun restrictions, still in control of the US Senate, the legislation's prospects appear dim. Republican US Senator Pat Toomey said a Democratic House could put pressure on the Senate to reconsider a bipartisan background checks measure he sponsored after the 2012 school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, that killed 20 first-graders. The bill narrowly failed to get the 60 votes needed for passage. Now, he said, "there is a distinct possibility that we could have enough Republicans to get to 60, but that's still an open question."

Shift to states

National gun safety groups are more optimistic about making progress outside Washington, with nearly 20 states poised to take up gun safety bills this year, they said. Lawmakers are focusing on bills with widespread approval in public polling, including background checks, "red flag" bills that allow judges to confiscate guns from dangerous people and bans on domestic abusers owning guns. Several states passed similar laws last year, including some with Republican governors or legislatures, and advocates say they hope to draw Republican votes in numerous states this year.

Gun rights groups also are pursuing new state laws. South Dakota in January began allowing residents to carry concealed handguns with no permit, while other states are considering arming teachers. "We continue to defeat gun control legislation across the country while passing gun rights legislation," said NRA spokeswoman Jennifer Baker. So far this year, gun safety advocates have found success in several states while encountering roadblocks in others, including from some Democrats.

New York last month passed a red flag law, extended waiting periods and prohibited armed teachers in schools. In Nevada, where the deadliest mass shooting in U.S. history occurred at a 2017 music festival in Las Vegas, Democratic leaders have vowed to implement the background checks approved by voters in a 2016 referendum. The state's former Republican attorney



WASHINGTON: Aalayah Eastmond, a survivor of the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, testifies to the House Judiciary Committee in the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill. — AFP

general had refused to do so. "It's a high priority," said Jason Frierson, speaker of the state Assembly. "We have a new class of candidates who feel passionately about this issue."

In New Mexico, newly elected Democratic Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham has called for red flag, domestic abuser and background check bills. The Democratic-led legislature is expected to pass all three within weeks, said Speaker of the House Brian Egolf. Some Democratic lawmakers in Maine, which has a strong hunting culture, introduced a raft of measures including a large-capacity magazine ban, a background check bill and a red flag law. But newly elected Democratic Governor Janet Mills has said she opposes the background check bill after voters rejected a similar measure in 2016. Gun safety advocates privately concede they do not expect any of the major legislation to become law.

Perhaps no state better encapsulates the political volatility around guns than Colorado, which has both a deep tradition of gun ownership and a history of mass shootings, including the 1999 Columbine school massacre and the Aurora movie theater killings. In 2013, after the Aurora attack, the legislature passed background checks and a high-capacity ammunition magazine ban. — Reuters

Brexit: What will happen in British parliament on February 14?

LONDON: The British parliament is set to hold a debate on Brexit on Feb 14 but this is not a re-run of a vote last month on whether to approve the exit deal Prime Minister Theresa May's negotiated with the European Union. May is seeking changes to her deal with Brussels after it was rejected by a record majority in parliament on Jan 15. She has said she wants to bring a revised deal back to parliament for a vote "as soon as possible" but has not yet set a date for doing so. She has promised that, if she has not brought her deal back for a so-called "meaningful vote" by Feb 13, lawmakers will get to debate Brexit on Feb. 14. Below is what will happen on that day:

What will they debate?

May will make a statement to parliament on Feb. 13 updating lawmakers on her progress so far in seeking changes to her deal. The debate on Feb 14 will be on a motion-a proposal put forward for debate-about Brexit more generally. The previous similar debate on Jan. 29 was on a motion which simply asked lawmakers to agree that they had considered May's latest statement on the Brexit negotiations.

Can MPs propose changes?

Yes. As with the Jan 29 debate, lawmakers will be able to propose changes, known as amendments. It is likely that many amendments similar to those debated on Jan 29 will be proposed, including attempts to shift control of the process away from government and give parliament a chance to define Brexit. As with Jan. 29, if these are successful they could have a profound effect, giving lawmakers who want to block, delay or renegotiate Brexit a possible legal route to do so.

With the EU saying so far that they are not willing to reopen talks on the Withdrawal Agreement, other lawmakers are likely to propose alternatives to May's deal to gauge support for them and persuade the prime minister to change course by seeking closer EU ties or holding a second referendum. An attempt by Labor lawmaker Yvette Cooper and Conservative Nick Boles to give parliament the power to request a delay to Britain's March 29 exit was defeated by lawmakers on Jan. 29, but Boles said he would renew that effort on Feb 14 if a deal has not been passed by then. The government persuaded many lawmakers not to support that previous attempt by promising them that it would not be their last chance to seek to stop a "no-deal" departure from the EU as they would get to debate Brexit again on Feb 14. On Wednesday, a Conservative lawmaker involved in discussions with the government about changes to the deal said that if May could demonstrate that the EU was willing to renegotiate, she would buy herself some more time and avoid a potential flash-point in parliament on Feb 14.

Will there be votes?

The Speaker, John Bercow, will decide whether to select any of the amendments for a vote. Lawmakers will vote on each of the selected amendments one by one, before voting to give final approval to the wording of the motion itself. Before the debate begins, lawmakers will have to agree to



BRUSSELS: British Prime Minister Theresa May speaks to the press after a meeting with the President of the European Council at the European Council in Brussels. — AFP

the proposed timetable for the debate, currently just one day. If lawmakers believe that more than one day is needed, the votes could in theory be pushed into the following week.

Will it definitely go ahead?

If May succeeds in winning changes to her Brexit deal in the next few days she could bring it back for a debate and vote before Feb. 14, and this more general debate would not go ahead. However she is not expected to secure any changes before then. British media have reported a fresh vote on May's deal is most likely to happen in the week of Feb 25 at the earliest. The government will give parliament another chance to debate the issue by Feb. 27 using the same format described above, if a deal has not been agreed before then. — Reuters

Rich or penniless, Venezuelans flock to Madrid

MADRID: Fleeing the political, economic and humanitarian crisis in their country, Venezuelans have arrived in Spain in their thousands, some of them penniless, others so rich they are buying sumptuous flats. Fran Leal, 36, came to Spain from Maracay in northern Venezuela two months ago with his wife and two children. "Do you have a small suitcase? I'm going to Toledo, I've found a job," he asks as he enters the Casa Venezuela, an association that helps struggling Venezuelans in Madrid.

An electrician, he is going to the city south of Madrid to work illegally for six months. "I don't have a choice as I don't yet have ID papers and I have no more savings," he says, as the crisis in Venezuela deepens with opposition leader Juan Guaido's self-proclamation as interim president. Unlike Leal, Juan Leonardo Lopez has not found a job since he arrived three months ago. "Before the crisis, I wasn't a millionaire but I lived fine, I had a great car and everything I needed," he says at a Venezuelan opposition protest in Madrid. He says he saw children die of dehydration in the hospital in Maracay where he worked.

Spain's statistics agency says some 255,000 Venezuelans have settled in the country. But that figure is likely to be closer to 300,000 if illegal immigrants are taken into account, according to Tomas Paez, head of the Venezuelan Diaspora Observatory. Venezuelan asylum requests have nearly doubled in Spain over the year, with close to 20,000 in 2018, according to the interior ministry. — AFP

International

Humanitarian aid used as weapon as Venezuela political crisis rages

US and Russia push rival United Nations actions on Venezuela

CARACAS: Desperately needed aid being stockpiled at Venezuela's door is at the heart of a political duel between the two men fighting to lead the oil-rich nation: Juan Guaido and Nicolas Maduro. Guaido, recognized as Venezuela's interim president by around 50 countries, has pressed the all-critical military to allow the mostly American humanitarian aid to reach the most vulnerable population, or around 300,000 people.

Maduro insists the shortages plaguing the country are caused by Washington's punitive sections, and he has vowed to stop the "spectacle of fake humanitarian aid." The aid "is at the heart of the struggle between two pillars of power," political scientist Luis Salamanca told AFP. "This struggle is playing out as concerns the future of the armed forces. Guaido is trying to get the military on his side, while Maduro tries to keep it behind him." Using a tanker truck, two container trucks and barriers, the army has been blocking the Tien-ditas border bridge since Thursday.

Several hundred meters (yards) from there on the Colombia side are the hangars where the emergency aid is being stockpiled. For John Magdaleno of the Polity consultancy, the confrontation between the two men is a "major event" that "is inevitably leading toward an escalation" between the government and the opposition, as well as between Maduro and the countries supporting his adversary. "In the end, it's in the hand of the United States. They are the ones who can use force," Magdaleno said.

President Donald Trump's administration, which has insisted that "all options are on the table" - has frozen the accounts of Venezuelan leaders and unveiled fresh sanctions to bar Maduro from access-

ing revenues from oil his country sells in the US. Before possibly resorting to force, Washington is exploring "all other options" first, Magdaleno said, adding that "this chapter on humanitarian aid foreshadows a far more significant escalation that could trigger a military intervention." However, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Kimberly Breier has insisted that the US has no intention of entering Venezuelan territory by force to distribute food and medicine.

Politicized aid

The United Nations said it's ready to send emergency aid to Venezuela, but only if Caracas agrees. "Humanitarian aid should never be used as a political pawn," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Thursday. Venezuela has faced a major political and economic crisis in recent years. Expropriations have hurt industry and oil production, which finances 96 percent of the national budget, thus reducing imports of basic goods.

More than 80 percent of medicine and medical equipment are missing in a country that has the world's largest proven oil reserves, according to the pharmaceutical federation. There are constant cuts of basic services such as water and electricity, Maduro accuses the United States of setting up an "international coalition... to intervene militarily in Venezuela under the pretext of a non-existing humanitarian crisis." For the National Assembly's former president and opposition lawmaker Henry Ramos Allup, the government's refusal to allow humanitarian aid to enter the country "reveals once more to the world the regime's human rights violations."

The anti-Maduro camp has also denounced the regime's decision - while Venezuela grapples with

such a dire situation - to send 100 tons of humanitarian aid to Cuba to assist the communist island in the wake of a recent hurricane. The government faces a "strategic dilemma" because "regardless of its decision, it loses," Magdaleno said. If Maduro relents and allows the aid in, this means he finally acknowledges that there is, in fact a humanitarian crisis. "Maduro is going to put his foot down. It doesn't matter much anymore to him. He is playing a game that seems to be entering its last phase," which threatens his hold on power, said Salamanca.

Rival UN actions

Meanwhile, the United States is pushing the UN Security Council to formally call for free, fair and credible presidential elections in Venezuela with international observers, diplomats said, a move that prompted Russia to propose a rival draft resolution. Moscow and Washington have been at loggerheads over a US-led campaign for international recognition of Venezuelan opposition leader and head of the country's elected National Assembly Juan Guaido over President Nicolas Maduro. Guaido last month declared himself interim head of state.

Diplomats from the 15 Security Council members met privately on Friday afternoon to discuss the U.S.-drafted resolution, seen by Reuters, that would express "full support for the National Assembly as the only democratically elected institution." Russia, China, Equatorial Guinea and South Africa last month blocked the Security Council from issuing a statement with the same language. But the same four countries failed in a Russian-led bid to stop the council from publicly discussing Venezuela, at the request of the United States, on Jan. 26.



CUCUTA: Venezuelan Maria Florez cries during an interview with AFP in the La Parada neighborhood in Cucuta, Colombia, near the Simon Bolivar International Bridge, on the border with Tachira, Venezuela. Venezuelans cross to Colombia to buy groceries due to the shortages in their country. —AFP

During talks on the US draft resolution on Friday, Russia - which has accused Washington of backing a coup attempt in Venezuela - proposed an alternative text, diplomats said. The Russian draft would express "concern over the attempts to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction." It would also express "concern over the threats to use force against the territorial integrity and political independence" of Venezuela. US President Donald Trump has said military intervention in Venezuela was "an option." It was unclear if or when either draft Security Council resolution could be put to a vote. A council resolution needs nine votes and no vetoes by the United States, Britain, France, Russia or China to pass. —Agencies

Bangladesh makes record drugs seizure amid crackdown

DHAKA: Bangladesh seized a record 53 million methamphetamine pills in 2018 - up 33 percent in a year - amid a deadly nationwide crackdown on the trade, officials said yesterday. Nearly 300 suspected drug dealers were killed last year, according to authorities, who insisted the seizure figure was proof that their campaign was working. Rights groups said the record haul showed the deaths had failed to make an impact on the trade. The government Department of Narcotics Control said the drug - popularly known as 'yaba', a Thai word meaning 'crazy medicine' - was seized across the South Asian nation of 165 million people.

"It is the highest amount seized in a year," Bazul Rahman, a department deputy director, told AFP. Masum-e-Rabbani, another senior official at the department, said the record haul was proof that a crackdown launched in May last year was yielding "positive" results. He said there has been a significant decline in the use and sale of yaba. Nearly 300 suspected drug dealers were killed by security forces in the campaign and some 25,000 arrests made, according to Rabbani.

Human rights groups say many of the deaths amount to extrajudicial killings however. More than 40 were killed in the town of Teknaf, which borders Myanmar's troubled Rakhine state and is close to the refugee camps housing about one million Rohingya Muslims. Bangladesh has struggled to control a surge in yaba imports crossing the border from Myanmar, where the pills are manufactured by the millions. —AFP

Japanese PM vows to tackle growing child abuse

TOKYO: Prime Minister Shinzo Abe yesterday vowed to crack down on the increasing number of child abuse cases in Japan after the death of a 10-year-old girl, allegedly killed by her abusive father, shocked the country. Mia Kurihara was found dead in the bathroom of her home in Chiba near Tokyo last month after authorities failed to respond to her repeated pleas for help. Her parents have been arrested on suspicion of assaulting their daughter after her father reportedly abused her regularly and refused to allow her to go to school.

The tragedy came more than a year after she asked her teacher to help stop her father from "beating and kicking" her. She was temporarily protected by child welfare officials but returned to relatives about two months later. She was then brought back to her parents in March last year. Police have found a video on her father's mobile phone showing him hitting her, local media said, adding that she cried in the footage saying: "Dad, I'm sorry." The high-profile case has drawn huge media attention, prompting the government to take action amid growing public awareness over child abuse.

Abe told members of his ruling Liberal Democratic Party that his government had ordered child welfare centers across the nation to confirm within a month the safety of all children suspected to have been abused. Abe also said the government would raise the number of child welfare workers by some 1,000 for



TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (center) delivers a speech at the national rally to demand the return of the Northern Territories, a group of islands held by Russia. —AFP

the next fiscal year starting in April from the current 3,200. "It was a painful case which is all too regrettable," Abe said. "Protecting children's lives is our adults' responsibility," he added. Police reported the

suspected abuse of a record-high 80,104 minors to child welfare authorities in Japan in 2018, Kyodo News said. The figure rose by 22.4 percent from a year earlier, it said. —AFP

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 • 1.8L Bowl
 • 2 Speed

• Power Level
 • Defrost Settings
 • White Outside & Inside

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 Hawalli (Tunis St.) | Hawalli (Bin Khaldoon St.) | Al-Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak St.)
 Al-Salmiya (Boulevard Mall) | Al-Farwaniya (Behind the Police Station)
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Wary hope for French families awaiting returns from Syria

After years of waiting for his son to come home from Syria, Jacques Le Brun is cautiously hoping that day may be nearing - along with the chance to meet three grandchildren who have never seen France. "He'll certainly go to prison, and he knows that. He probably even deserves it a little," Le Brun says at the family home in Labastide-Rouairoux, a village tucked in a forested valley of southern France.

The important thing, he says, is that Quentin makes it home alive after taking his wife and infant daughter in 2014 to join the Islamic State group in Syria - where he later appeared in a chilling IS propaganda video burning his passport. About six weeks ago Le Brun learned that his son, now 30, was stranded near the Euphrates river in the last pocket of IS-held territory, besieged by Kurdish forces and targeted by coalition airstrikes.

Then last month reporters from the magazine Paris Match found Quentin and his family as they were surrendering, raising the possibility they could be among the roughly 130 French nationals who may soon be repatriated to France from Kurd-controlled prison camps in northern Syria. The government is weighing the move after President Donald Trump announced in December that he would withdraw US troops from the war-torn country.

That prompted fears of a security vacuum in the north of Syria, in particular if Kurdish forces abandoned their surveillance of the captured fighters to defend against a potential assault by Turkey, which considers the Kurds a terrorist threat. For Quentin's family, along with dozens of others across France, it's a chance to be reunited after years of anxiety over his fate. "Our life has changed," said his sister, asking not to be identified by name. "Before we woke up each morning wondering if they were alive. It was hell."

'Glimmer in the night'

French government sources say 70 to 80 children are among the citizens being held by Kurdish forces, and around 15 women - half of whom are considered "dangerous". An additional 250 men, as well as accompanying wives and children, are thought to be elsewhere in Syria. An estimated 300 French militants are thought to have been killed during the years-long coalition fight to eradicate IS' self-proclaimed caliphate.

France had long insisted that captured French fighters must be tried locally, either in Syria or Iraq, a hard-line stance which nodded to fears that returned fighters could stage attacks on French soil upon their release from prison. "We, their families, just want them to be able to return to France and be judged fairly, sentenced only for what each of them has done - and not have to pay for all the IS crimes," said the mother of a 30-year-old woman now in Syria with her four children, aged 10 months to nine years old.

While calling their potential return "a glimmer in the night", she worries they could be killed before any decision is made to bring them back. "We've heard of at least four French women killed in the past few months, along with their husbands and 18 children in total" during the coalition bombings, the woman said. Like several family members who spoke with AFP, she asked that her name be withheld, fearing harassment or ostracization in a country deeply scarred by the wave of deadly jihadist attacks since the Charlie Hebdo and Bataclan massacres of 2015.

'Get them away from all that'

Despite reports that repatriations could begin in the coming days, Jacques Le Brun says he has had "no information, no official contact" from French authorities. The 58-year-old retired truck driver says he is still trying to understand how his son, who later took the name Abou Osama Al-Faransi, became caught up in extremist Islamic ideology. Quentin began attending a local mosque before falling in with the "Artigat" network, named for a village near the southwestern city of Toulouse.

The village was the home Olivier Corel, a Syrian-born Salafist imam suspected of mentoring several militants including Mohamed Merah, who was shot dead by police after he murdered seven people, among them a rabbi and three Jewish children, in Toulouse in a 2012 killing spree. Albert Chennouf-Meyer, father of one of Merah's seven victims, has called on President Emmanuel Macron to keep the jihadists out. "Mr President, you will in the coming weeks (...) bring back 130 French jihadists, some of whom have the blood of our children on their hands," he said in an open letter seen by AFP on Saturday. "I intend to use all my strength against this criminal decision," he added.

Le Brun wants to believe his son wasn't involved in any violence or killings, but the release of the IS propaganda video has been a heavy burden on his family. Quentin's mother finds it hard to hold down a job, and his youngest brother has been hounded by high school classmates. Many in the village make no secret of their hostility to Quentin's return. "It's not necessarily a good idea to bring back these jihadists, they might start again," said Laurent Montagou, a 53-year-old pizzeria owner in Labastide-Rouairoux. "They'll scare people if they come back here." Jacques Le Brun knows the suspicions will be hard to bear, but he is determined to recover his grandchildren and "get them away from all that". — AFP



Commuters are seen in a filled commuter train heading for the city on Jan 29, 2019 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. — AFP

Zimbabwe's only commuter train is packed

Crushing through townships, maize fields and scrubland as the sun rises, Zimbabwe's only commuter train is cheap and reliable - two qualities that its passengers cherish in a downwards-spiralling economy. Each morning sleepy travellers walk to the tracks and clamber aboard before the train leaves the Cowdray Park settlement at 6:00 am on its 20-km journey into Bulawayo, the country's second city.

The hugely popular service was only revived in November after being suspended for 13 years as the rail network collapsed under President Robert Mugabe, who ruled for nearly four decades until ousted in 2017. At Cowdray Park, there is no platform, and no station except for a makeshift ticket office made out of an old carriage sitting in a field. En route, the train stops several times in the open to pick up more passengers who stream in from surrounding homes, climbing up the steps and squeezing into 14 packed carriages. Soon after 7:00 am, it pulls into Bulawayo's grand but dilapidated station and disgorges about 2,000 workers, uniformed school children and other travellers into the city center, ready for the day ahead.

Infrastructure investment

"The prices for kombis (minibuses) went up to two dollars, and that's just too expensive," said Sipeka Mushoma, 61, a heavy vehicle driver at a Bulawayo steel manufacturer, who managed to grab a precious early seat. "The train is 50 cents. My children have to get the kombi to go to school, but this saves me a lot of money to buy vegetables and bread. Zimbabweans are hurting badly, some of us are really starving now."

The government last month announced that fuel prices would more than double - triggering violent protests, a security crackdown and further pressure on minibuses to hike prices. Bulawayo once had two commuter train lines carrying workers in from either side of the city, while the capital Harare had three lines - all of them dubbed "Freedom Trains" as they allowed passengers to avoid higher road costs. The services were scrapped around 2006, and the Cowdray Park line is the only one to be re-launched in a \$2.5-million project funded by the state-owned National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ).

Mugabe's successor President Emmerson Mnangagwa has backed railway investment as part of his plans to turn around the economy. But the outcome of the commuter train is a rare success in his efforts, which have struggled to produce concrete results. "The president and new government are very supportive of the railways," said Nyasha Maravyanika, the railways' press relations chief, adding that talks were under way for an international consortium to fund a full-scale re-launch of the whole rail network.

"We had to re-furbish old carriages to get this service going, and it has been a huge success," Maravyanika told AFP. "The old commuter trains were suspended as the coaches and the signalling became more and more rundown. People know that when they are on the train, they are on their way to work," he added. "It is an answer to their transport blues. We are here to attract commuters as kombi fares rise - that's our job."

Former 'heartbeat' of the region

Maravyanika says just \$10 million would put the

other four commuter lines back in operation. "We hope to re-open the other Bulawayo line next and, despite all the challenges, revive Zimbabwe's railways," he said. "They were the heartbeat of the southern African rail network." Zimbabwe's rail network - which includes the dramatic line across the Victoria Falls into Zambia - was built under British colonial rule, and at its peak in the 1990s had 600 locomotives and 3,000 passenger carriages.

Today it has less than 100 locomotives and a few hundred carriages, running a threadbare schedule between major cities, and a much-reduced freight service carrying sugar, chrome and quarried stone. The main line between Harare and Bulawayo - opened in 1907 - was once electrified, but vandalism stripped it of its copper cables, signalling system and track motors. Today diesel-powered trains on the line are often heavily delayed and drivers are often forced to communicate using text and WhatsApp messages, Maravyanika said.

On the Bulawayo commuter train, some windows on older carriages are even still marked "RR" for "Rhodesian Railways" - Zimbabwe's name before independence in 1980. Rattling along on her return journey home, Ashley Sinda, 40, was weary after a long day working as a cleaner at a pharmaceutical company. "I live 300 metres from the last stop, so it is easy for me," said the single mother of two, sitting among nurses, teachers, office workers staring at mobile phones and laborers who swilled cheap local beer. "It is impossible to afford the kombis, even if they are faster," she said. "I am glad of this train, it is a good thing for us." — AFP

Turks and Caicos overwhelmed by Haitian influx

Handmade wooden boats and the artisans who craft them line a lengthy stretch of Haiti's north coast. Under a sun rising over water as smooth as glass, it makes for an idyllic vignette. Ask any of the boat builders what their vessels' purpose is and "fishing" is the standard response. But the port district of Cap-Haitien is a hub for a people smuggling trade that has claimed numerous lives and plunged the nearby British territory of Turks and Caicos into chaos.

"We have begged the UK to help. I don't think they realize how urgent the situation is," said the archipelago's housing minister, Goldray Ewing. "As a British territory we don't have our own defense force. We told them it's an invasion and a national crisis. There's no other way to describe it."

Each year, thousands of young Haitians try to escape the poorest economy in the Caribbean, where 60 percent of the population of 11 million people live on less than \$2 a day. High inflation, endemic corruption and a perilous drop in the value of the currency have further immiserated the locals. Turks and Caicos officials say almost all of the boats landing in the island chain depart from Cap-Haitien, 200 km away. With migrants willing to pay anything from \$300 to \$1,000 to reach the territory of 35,000 people in the hope of a better life, this is big business. At least five boats have arrived in the last month, carrying 50 to 200 people each. But journeys aboard these rickety, overcrowded vessels too often end in disaster. A boat that sank on Feb 2 near the Bahamas, which is also struggling with an influx of undocumented migrants, killed at least 28 people.

'Existential threat'

Turks and Caicos officials say inadequate resources limit them to intercepting just half of the boats that arrive. Several thousand Haitians are thought to be hiding in the bush and in shantytowns across the island of Providenciales, the chain's tourism hotspot, with a population of 24,000. Undocumented arrivals are nothing new but recent unrest in Haiti and new job opportunities in Providenciales have triggered a dramatic surge. Ewing, the housing minister, says repatriation costs for a boat carrying 187 people that



Captured boats reportedly used by Haitian immigrants litter a cove in Turks and Caicos on Jan 28, 2019. — AFP

landed on the island of Salt Cay on January 17 topped \$300,000. Opposition leader Washington Miskic argued the Haitian government could not be counted on to stem the flow of migrants - while noting that its economy benefited from the remittances they send home. "The situation poses an existential threat to our islands and our way of life," he said.

But the Haitians prepared to make the treacherous voyage say it is their only hope for a better future. "I need work," said one Cap-Haitien man, "and I know people there who can help me find it." A British government delegation is due to visit next month to assess maritime security needs, a spokesman for Governor John Freeman told AFP, adding that London deployed the Royal Navy last year, funded helicopter patrols and paid for repairs to the radar system.

Seeking a better life

President Donald Trump's effort to end "temporary protected status" for Haitians who fled the 2010 earthquake, currently being challenged in court, has sparked fears over a possible escalation of the crisis. Meanwhile the 14 shantytowns across the Turks and Caicos grow every day, said Ewing. Newcomers cause difficulties for long-term residents, one shantytown dweller said. "The area gets flooded with people coming in fresh off the boats and they're not always friendly," he told AFP. "They sometimes bring guns with them - it's frightening for us. People just keep coming."

Efforts to identify people who are on the islands illegally include a police practice of stop-and-search, along with visits to workplaces to view employees' papers. Since April 2016, anyone caught harboring illegal immigrants has faced a \$20,000 fine and four years in prison. Some Haitian officials have lamented a lack of communication with Turks and Caicos authorities. — AFP

Modest praise for US reform of visa program

The Trump administration's new rules for a US visa program widely used for technology workers are getting cautious praise from Silicon Valley amid surging demand for high-skill employees. The H-1B visa program, which admits some 85,000 foreign nationals each year, will give higher priority to people with post-graduate degrees from US universities, under a final rule published in January by the Department of Homeland Security.

"US employers seeking to employ foreign workers with a US master's or higher degree will have a greater chance of selection in the H-1B lottery" under the new rule, said Francis Cissna, director of US Citizenship and Immigration Services, in announcing the change on Jan 30. The changes come with the tech industry pleading for more immigrants to fill key skilled positions, and responds in part of concerns that the program has been exploited by some tech giants and outsourcing firms to depress wages and displace US employees.

"The changes are, on the whole, a positive step in the right direction," said Todd Schulte of the immigration reform group FWD.us backed by Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, Microsoft founder Bill Gates and others in the industry. Ed Black of the Computer & Communications Industry Association, which represents several major tech firms, said the program has not always been administered as well as it could have been. "We are hopeful something in the newly announced revisions will improve efficiency, but it's too soon to say what the impact will be in practice," Black said.

The H-1B program, in place since 1990, has been used for a variety of skilled occupations including nurses and pastry chefs, but in recent years two-thirds have been for computer-related jobs and three-fourths of the employees have come from India. Because visa-holders can stay up to six years, the number currently living in the United States is estimated at more than half a million.

Pressing needs?

Ron Hira, a Howard University political scientist who has followed the visa program for two decades, said it has been exploited by some large tech companies and outsourcing firms to keep wages down and in some cases displace American employees. Hira said the visas have not been allocated to the "most pressing needs" of the labor market and that "the typical H-1B employee is working in a back office through an outsourcer". He said that the reform "inches us a little closer to a better quality pool, but it's still not selecting the 'best and brightest' - you could reform it much better."

Hira said the system has been disappointing up to now because of large outsourcing firms that flood the system with thousands of applications, and some Silicon valley firms that use it to keep wages down. A US Labor Department complaint alleged that Oracle discriminated against some Americans by bringing in large numbers of H-1B visa holders, who were paid less than US nationals.

The new DHS rule reverses the order of two lotteries for H-1B visas, by selecting the first 65,000 from the pool of all applications, and subsequently choosing 20,000 with advanced degrees. Officials expect this will mean an increase of some 5,000, or 16 percent, for advanced degree-holders. Hira said this potentially changes the mix of visa holders to positions with higher pay and skill levels. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019

12 Trade war worries dictate markets as Trump speech rattles investors**13** High-stakes US-China trade talks resume as deadline approaches**14** ABK - Egypt reports 62% rise in net profit for 2018

Saudi Arabia plans to set up a \$10 billion oil refinery at Pakistan's deep water port of Gwadar, which is being developed with the help of China, the Saudi energy minister said on Saturday. — Reuters

Saudis plan huge investments in Pakistan

\$10bn refinery and oil complex in strategic Gwadar Port among investment deals

DUBAI: A record investment package being prepared by Saudi Arabia for Pakistan will likely provide welcome relief for its cash-strapped Muslim ally, while also addressing regional geopolitical challenges, analysts say. At the heart of the investment is a reported \$10 billion refinery and oil complex in the strategic Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea, the ultimate destination for the massive multi-billion dollar China Pakistan Economic Corridor, which lies not far from the Indo-Iranian port of Chabahar.

Two Saudi sources have confirmed that their apparent to the Gulf kingdom's throne, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, will visit Islamabad shortly, without giving a date.

And a number of major investment deals are expected to be signed during a visit, officials from both countries have told AFP. Riyadh and Islamabad, decades-old allies, have been involved for months in talks to hammer out details of the deals in time for the high-profile visit.

"The outcome of the talks so far has been very positive and this is going to be one of the biggest-ever Saudi investments in Pakistan," a Pakistani senior finance ministry official said.

"We hope that an agreement to this effect will be signed during the upcoming visit of the Saudi crown prince to Pakistan," said the official, requesting anonymity.

The Wall Street Journal reported last month that both Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Islamabad's biggest trading partner in the Middle East, have offered Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan some \$30 billion in investment and loans.

Saudi lifeline

Riyadh investments are expected to provide a lifeline for Pakistan's slumping economy which was downgraded in early February by S&P ratings agency from a B to a B-, Saudi economist Fadhil al-Bouenain said. "Saudi investment to Pakistan comes within an economic aid package aimed at relieving the stress of external debt and a shortage of foreign currency, besides boosting the sluggish economy," Bouenain said.

The OPEC heavyweight also aims to achieve strategic and commercial goals with investments in infrastructure and refinery projects, he said. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf partner, the UAE, have already deposited \$3 billion each in Pakistan's central bank to help resolve a balance of payments crisis and shore up its declining rupee.

They have also reportedly deferred some \$6 billion in oil imports payments as Islamabad has so far failed to secure fresh loans from the International Monetary Fund.

Khan has already visited Riyadh twice since taking

office in July and in October attended a prestigious investment conference.

Khan also visited Qatar and Turkey, as well as China seeking investments. "One of the goals for Saudi Arabia expanding investments in refining worldwide is to secure market share and sustainable exports in the face of international competition," Bouenain said.

Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih visited Gwadar in January and inspected the site for the proposed oil refinery at the deep sea port, just 70 kilometers (45 miles) away from its Iranian competitor, Chabahar. He was quoted by local media as saying the kingdom was studying plans to construct a \$10 billion refinery and petrochemicals complex in Gwadar.

Cutting supply times

Like most oil suppliers, the world's top crude exporter has been investing heavily in refinery and petrochemicals projects across the globe to secure long-term buyers of its oil. A pipeline from Gwadar to China would cut the supply time from the current 40 days to just seven, experts say.

Developed as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative with investments worth some \$60 billion, Gwadar is being billed as a regional industrial hub of the future, easily

accessible for Central Asia, Afghanistan, the Middle East and Africa. "Pakistan needs a rich partner to enter as a third party besides China, capable of injecting needed cash," Bouenain said.

But so far China has rejected other partners for the corridor that seeks to connect its western province Xinjiang with Gwadar, including Saudi Arabia and UAE, said James M. Dorsey, a senior fellow at Singapore's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies. This is despite calls by Khan "for the Chinese investments to be restructured to include agriculture and job-creation sectors and not only in infrastructure", Dorsey said. Any Saudi investment in Gwadar will also have geopolitical dimensions, Dorsey said. Iran late last year inaugurated Chabahar which provides a key supply route to landlocked Afghanistan and allows India to bypass its historic enemy Pakistan.

India has seen Chabahar as a key way both to send supplies to Afghanistan and to step up trade with Central Asia as well as Africa. But Riyadh is not expected to get involved in any Indo-Pakistani rivalry and the kingdom also has major strategic energy deals with New Delhi, where demand for oil is growing fast. Indeed in April, the Saudis signed a \$44 billion deal to build a huge refinery and petrochemicals complex in western India. — AFP

Gushing profits for oil majors on crude price

PARIS: The world's top energy companies booked enormous profits last year thanks to higher oil prices and keeping a tight lid on spending, even if that risked limiting their medium-term production capacity.

The five "supermajors"—US firms Chevron and ExxonMobil, Britain's BP, Anglo-Dutch Royal Dutch Shell and Total of France—earned nearly \$80 billion in net profits last year. They all boosted their bottom line, with some hitting levels not seen since a plunge in crude prices from their perch above \$100 per barrel in 2014.

Higher oil prices didn't hurt, of course, although the fourth quarter was marked by strong volatility.

Overall, the price of Brent crude was \$71 per barrel last year, compared with \$54 in 2017. But that's not the whole story. The supermajors have also maintained the financial discipline—cost-cutting and reducing

investments—that they adopted following the 2014 crash in crude prices.

They tightened their belts enough to become profitable even when oil prices were low. And when crude prices rise again, their profits surge.

"Total's job is to be profitable and to lower the break-even point no matter what the price of oil is," said chief executive Patrick Pouyanne this past week.

"We're going to maintain discipline, there's volatility" in the market, he added.

The rollercoaster that crude prices have been on in recent months, due in large part to geopolitical uncertainty as the United States and China face off in trade dispute with major repercussions for the global economy, means that the supermajors can't rest on their laurels. BP chief Bob Dudley expects, like his fellow oil chiefs, oil prices "to remain volatile, with many uncertainties, including how markets respond to evolving sentiment around ongoing trade discussions" as well as a crisis situation in Venezuela.

Under-investment

The investments will thus remain limited. While investments in exploration and production rose seven percent last year to \$382

billion, according to IFP Energies Nouvelles research group, they are still 40 percent below their 2014 peak. Moreover, they remain concentrated in North America where they are targeted at exploiting shale oil and gas. IFP Energies Nouvelles expects a modest increase of three to eight percent in investment spending this year. The oil services sector—made up of firms contracted to carry out lots of the exploration and production work—were hit hard as the supermajors cut back and tightened financial discipline.

While the number of tenders for work has increased, the "market recovery is slow", said Gael Bodenès, chief executive of Bourbon which offers marine services for offshore oil and gas projects.

But this restraint in investment also poses a risk over the medium term as oil installations need regular injections of cash to continue producing and new ones need to be brought online to replace fields that are exhausted. "Each year the world needs to replace 3 million barrels per day of supply lost from mature fields while also meeting robust demand growth. That is the equivalent of replacing one North Sea each year," the International Energy Agency warned.

While some supermajors are still increas-



The outlook is bright for the oil industry, for now. — AFP

ing production, sometimes considerably, that is the result of investments launched years ago, not of a recent effort.

The long lead time to build new oil and gas installations means the effects of low investment now may not be felt in terms of supply shortfalls for several years.

"This industry has invested little for four years", since the collapse of crude prices, said Total chief Pouyanne. "One day we'll see that the capacity not launched risks being missed on the market" if US shale production fails to fill the gap. He said this could happen sometime between 2021 and 2023. — AFP

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Trade war worries dictate markets as Trump speech rattles investors

BoE policymakers slash British growth outlook

KUWAIT: President Trump delivered his State of the Union address last week. Trump's speech revealed he would meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at the end of February, send more troops to the US-Mexico border. He also spoke about the investigation into the 2016 presidential campaign. Moreover, Trump said he will not meet Chinese President Xi Jinping before the 1st of March deadline and said that they will "maybe" meet later. In January Trump told reporters that he is planning on meeting President Xi in late February and there was a "good chance" of striking a deal. The clock seems to be running down on both countries and negotiators to reach an agreement before the deadline. The Trump administration is set to double tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods, however an extension to the March 1 deadline is still on the table.

Equities, fixed income and forex

Trump's speech in the State of the Union provided very little for markets to lean on, the S&P 500 gained a mere 0.05 percent and the Dow Jones Industrial Average finished the week flat with 0.17 percent higher. Companies reported earnings which drew mixed responses. Electronic Arts and Take-Two Interactive - the two biggest fallers for the S&P 500 - shed more than 13 percent after revealing disappointing sales forecasts. General Motors rose 3.7 percent after profits fell less than expected for the final quarter. Safe haven US Treasuries were the asset of choice for investors after trade-war rhetoric came back on the table with rising uncertainties. The 10 and 30 year treasury yields both fell by 4 basis points by the end of the week as a result.

Nevertheless, the dollar index had a bull-run last week after opening the week at 95.600 and continued to gain against a basket of currencies on every trading session heading into Friday. The dollar gained as much as 1.15 percent during the week as weaker data kept surfacing from Europe and the UK.

US services sector

US service industries began 2019 on a softer note as a gauge of new orders dropped sharply in January to a one-

year low, though a gain in employment signaled support for demand. The ISM-non-Manufacturing PMI index fell to 56.7 in January from a 57.6 reading in December of last year and well below the forecasted reading of 57.2. January's reading is the lowest since July 2018, and economists attribute it to the tax-cut boost fading and the renewed worries of trade wars weighing on business plans.

BOE cuts growth forecast

The Bank of England held its latest meeting last Thursday where members of the Monetary Policy Committee voted unanimously (9-0) to keep policy unchanged and interest rates at 0.75 percent. It also kept QE and corporate bond purchases unchanged at GBP 435 billion and GBP 10 billion respectively. The members of the MPC also highlighted their concerns over the looming uncertainty over Brexit, which in their opinion, had intensified since November leading to a hit on investment spending. The committee also noted that despite higher wage growth, UK consumers will act more cautiously as a measure to the development of the Brexit rhetoric.

When it comes to growth forecasts, the Bank of England slashed their outlook on growth this year to the lowest since 2009; the BOE expects growth to be only at 1.20 percent. The weaker near-term outlook appears to largely reflect two factors. First, the MPC has lowered its forecast for world GDP growth over the next two years. This is unsurprising given the weakness in the data, particularly across Europe, over the past couple of months. Second, the MPC estimates Brexit-related uncertainty - which has shown up in business investment in particular - is restraining demand by more than previously thought.

The Sterling pound had a volatile week opening the week at 1.3109 and started losing ground to the US dollar. The cable depreciated to as much as 1.94 percent to reach 1.2854 during Thursday trading session after the BOE meeting and closed the week at 1.2944.

A slide in UK services sector

The UK's service sector in January grew at the slowest pace since July 2016 at 50.1, down from 51.2 recorded in



December. A reading below the 50 threshold indicates a contraction in the sector. Overall, the data advocates that the British service sector is flat-lining and the recent figure burdened the Bank of England officials as they met last Thursday to decide on their monetary strategy.

Brexit deadline and the EU

The United Kingdom is moving closer and closer towards its deadline to leave the EU on March 29. Unless Prime Minister May manages to convince the bloc to reopen the divorce agreement she reached in November and finds a way to sell it to the skeptical British lawmakers, the UK seems to be going on the path towards a no-deal Brexit. European Council President Donald Tusk last Wednesday revealed blunt language which showed that European leaders are frustrated over the rejection of May's divorce deal by the British Parliament. Tusk said that he had abandoned the hope he has often expressed that Britain's exit might be stopped, and that his priority now is to avert a "fiasco" when it leaves.

Europe's weaker economic data

After the recent alarming GDP figures from Italy put the economy in recession mode, all eyes were on the economic data of the EU. Europe's composite PMI edged lower to 51.0 in January from 51.1 reading in December. Additionally, activity in France and Italy were at alarming deteriorating levels of 48.2 and 48.8 respectively. Manufacturing was the primary source of output weakness during January. Whilst service sector growth was



unchanged since December at around a four-year low, production in manufacturing rose only slightly and at the weakest rate in over five-and-a-half years of growth.

RBA holds monetary policy

The Royal Bank of Australia kept its cash rate unchanged at 1.5 percent in February's monetary policy meeting (as it has done since August 2016 - a record low for the RBA). The Central Bank also downgraded its GDP growth forecasts over the next two years; citing risks for both domestic and global economies have increased. The RBA expects inflation to eventually return to 2.5 percent - the midpoint of its 2-3 percent target - despite a list of indicators suggesting momentum in the economy is slowing. Currently, inflation is at 1.9 percent compared to 2.1 percent in the previous month. Financial markets seem unconvinced, pricing in around a 50 percent chance that the cash rate will be reduced by 25 basis points by the end of 2019.

Last Wednesday, RBA's Philip Lowe delivered comments that a rate cut was likely due to growing concerns over the local economy. For months, Lowe had maintained a lift in the cash rate was the most likely move, and the shift in tone has devastated the Australian Dollar. The AUD saw its largest one-day percentage decline in over 2 years.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar
USD/KWD opened at 0.30340 yesterday morning.

Bayt.com weekly report

Here's how to have a stress-free job search

It is very well known that each person responds to stress in a different way, and as a matter of fact, stress while job hunting can be quite helpful, to a certain extent. Not mental breakdown level stress, but the kind of stress that keeps you on your toes. It just goes to show that you care, and being stressed can help you increase your attention to detail during the whole process from getting your CV ready to filling out an application form.

However, stress can certainly have a negative effect on you as well. It can make you take the wrong decisions and even put you off the whole job hunt. Stress can cause anxiety and anxiety can cause procrastination. A crippling cycle that everyone must avoid being sucked into.

So, experts at Bayt.com have prepared a list of 4 ways you can have a stress-free job search:

1. Organize yourself

If you want to feel less anxious about your job search, one of the first things you can do is to get your act together, get organized and form a schedule. You can get this done by getting a calendar and/or agenda and spread out your tasks according to your goals for the week. For example, Sunday and Monday can be for searching and applying for jobs, Tuesday can be for following up with jobs that you have previously applied to, Wednesday can be for

reviewing and editing your CV and cover letter, and so on. Also, give yourself a break as well, employees get the weekend off, and you should too? Not to mention that, getting organized can also get you prepared for a call at any moment.

2. Prioritize your job search

With over 20,000 jobs on Bayt.com job seekers can get overwhelmed by the amount of jobs there are out there in the market and start applying to as many as possible to increase the chances of getting hired, which can lead to stress. In order for job seekers to reduce their stress they should review all the jobs that they are actually interested in, form a shortlist and prioritize the jobs that they see fit for them and that actually are within their skill reach. This way they can spend their effort and time on the ones that matter.

3. Go easy and be patient

You should always remember that you're not a robot, you can't expect to achieve all that you want from the get-go. Job hunting can be a lengthy process that includes a lot of learning on the go. The more jobs you search and apply for, the more familiar you are with the process and the faster and more relaxed you will be with the whole process. Also, there are different stages of the job search process and each needs different amounts of time, you can't do it all at once.

4. Give yourself credit

You're trying to enhance your job search. You're putting in the effort and you should be proud of yourself for doing that and appreciate the fact that you're actually getting something done. Not to mention the fact that appreciating yourself can make you feel more motivated to put in even more effort.

Infiniti Al-Babtain invites customers to benefit from exclusive leasing offer

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, continues to offer its loyal fans exclusive leasing deal that accompanies the purchase of models ranging from Infiniti Q50 to QX80 at the Al-Rai showroom.

Starting at a leasing price of KD 169 per month, the Q50 is driver centric, powerfully elegant coupled with a striking performance and is available with 2.0-liter 20SHIP turbo-charged engine. The Infiniti Q50 is also available at 3.0 liter Turbo generating 300 HP. The INFINITI Q50's fuel efficient engine is designed to offer enhanced performance while maintaining high levels of efficiency. The steering wheel is sleeker and more performance based than ever, ensuring flawless drivability that triggers the senses. The Q50 delivers a confidence-inspiring and personalized experience behind the wheel, which epitomizes INFINITI's dedication to developing innovative driving technologies.

A family-friendly, high performance car - the QX60 starts at a leasing rate of KD 275 per month - it reflects the concept of high-end hybrid cars, and is designed to be a masterpiece of all standards. This innovative icon is equipped with a Rear Entertainment System with dual 8-inch monitors and wireless headphones followed by a 295-horsepower, 3.5-LITER V6 direct injection engine. From the double-arch grille to the LED taillights that accentuate the D-pillar, the confident curves captivate attention not usually given to a 7-passenger SUV.

Now starting at KD 369 per month, the QX80 has a refined and spacious cabin that features high-quality materials, a hand-crafted finish and advanced drive-assist technologies. With a taut yet comfort-oriented suspension, and ample performance from its 5.6-liter V8 engine, the QX80 gives drivers an assured feeling of control and confidence at the wheel. The rear entertainment system has also been upgrad-



ed. Higher-resolution screens provide the interface for connectivity and entertainment devices. The system also now supports 31 languages, up from three in the outgoing QX80.

Infiniti Al-Babtain encourages its customers to explore the advantage of the exclusive deal by visiting the designated showroom located in Al-Rai.

About Al-Babtain Group:

Al-Babtain Group was founded in 1948 to present a model of honesty, integrity and total dedication and to gain bright reputation in Kuwait and the Middle East area. Today Al-Babtain Group has licensing rights for some of the world's leading brands stretching the globe from the USA to the Far East. For 70 years Al-Babtain Group has experienced continued success, and large measure of this success came from the Group's advanced flexible management style and long term vision. These astounding results were achieved due to a versatile strategic formula focusing on growth amongst its sphere of activities: including automotive, technology, investment, information, industrial and Finance. The automotive sector is the main structure of the Al-Babtain Group's business, which owns some of the best selling and demanded brands in Kuwait, in addition to heavy equipments. The Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co. and Trading and Contracting Company is proud to be the authorized agent and distributor of many Japanese, Chinese, and European (French) vehicles in Kuwait such as Nissan, Infiniti, Renault, Citroen.

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.250
Euro	348.520
Sterling Pound	397.200
Canadian dollar	231.110
Turkish lira	59.080
Swiss Franc	306.860
US Dollar Buying	296.950

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.774
Indian Rupees	4.276
Pakistani Rupees	2.220
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.706
Nepali Rupees	2.663
Singapore Dollar	225.960
Hongkong Dollar	38.775
Bangladesh Taka	3.576
Philippine Peso	5.839
Thai Baht	9.700
Malaysian ringgit	77.813

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.187
Qatari Riyal	83.620
Omani Riyal	790.773
Bahraini Dinar	808.420
UAE Dirham	82.891

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.850
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	303.890
Canadian Dollar	229.580
Sterling Pound	395.595
Euro	346.565
Swiss Frank	306.710
Bahrain Dinar	808.155
UAE Dirhams	83.140
Qatari Riyals	84.380
Saudi Riyals	81.935
Jordanian Dinar	429.905
Egyptian Pound	17.284
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.707
Indian Rupees	4.262
Pakistani Rupees	2.198
Bangladesh Taka	3.622
Philippines Peso	5.838
Cyprus pound	18.080
Japanese Yen	3.770
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.669
Malaysian Ringgit	75.570
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.530
Thai Bhat	10.650

Turkish Lira	58.310
Singapore dollars	223.154

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.387417	0.401317
Czech Korune	0.005377	0.014677
Danish Krone	0.042174	0.047174
Euro	0.337924	0.351624
Georgian Lari	0.131976	0.131979
Hungarian O.001147	0.001337	
Norwegian Krone	0.031367	0.036587
Romanian Leu	0.065191	0.082041
Russian ruble	0.004641	0.004641
Slovakia	0.009092	0.019092
Swedish Krona	0.028852	0.033852
Swiss Franc	0.298158	0.0309158
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.207824	0.219824
New Zealand Dollar	0.199503	0.209003
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.224094	0.233094
US Dollars	0.300150	0.305450
US Dollars Mint	0.300650	0.305450
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003051	0.003852

Chinese Yuan	0.043604	0.047104
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037017	0.039767
Indian Rupee	0.003726	0.004498
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002689	0.002869
Korean Won	0.000261	0.000276
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070951	0.076951
Nepalese Rupee	0.002608	0.002948
Pakistan Rupee	0.001567	0.002337
Philippine Peso	0.005780	0.006080
Singapore Dollar	0.219139	0.229138
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001340	0.001920
Taiwan	0.010155	0.010335
Thai Baht	0.009352	0.009902
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.792459q	0.808959
Egyptian Pound	0.017108	0.019708
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000021	0.000021
Jordanian Dinar	0.424827	0.433827
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021728	0.025278
Omani Riyal	0.783942	0.789622
Qatar Riyal	0.079280	0.084220
audi Riyal	0.080047	0.081347
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001610
Tunisian Dinar	0.095680	0.103680
Turkish Lira	0.051375	0.062875
UAE Dirhams	0.081411	0.083111
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

Business

High-stakes US-China trade talks resume as deadline approaches

Trump's aggressive strategy fails to cut US trade gap with China

WASHINGTON: With a March 1 deadline fast approaching, US and Chinese officials resume negotiations next week to prevent escalation of a trade dispute that has major implications for the global economy. China's economy already has shown signs of slowing, while the trade war has shaken the confidence of US businesses, as retaliatory tariffs have raised prices and helped choke off a key export market.

And President Donald Trump's aggressive strategy has failed to produce a reduction in the US trade deficit with China, which he set as a primary goal. Under the looming threat of a surge in tariffs once the 90-day truce expires, financial markets worldwide have lost ground in recent days as comments about the status of the talks turned more cautious.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin will lead the US delegation for the third round of talks on Thursday and Friday in Beijing. While officials seemed optimistic after talks last week in Washington, more recent comments have jarred financial markets, amplifying concerns about how the dispute will affect global growth.

US President Donald Trump said Thursday he did not expect to meet his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping before a March 1 deadline for the two economic superpowers to reach a deal.

Trump had said final resolution of the trade dispute would depend on the meeting with Xi "in the near future" but told reporters it had not yet been arranged. And top White House economist Larry Kudlow said Thursday that while Trump was "optimistic" about

prospects for a deal, there remained a "sizable distance" separating the two sides.

Deadline extension?

While China has offered to buy more US soybeans and beef, officials have yet even to agree on a draft of a deal that would address key US concerns, according to media reports. Washington is demanding far-reaching changes from China to address unfair practices it says are deeply unfair, including theft of American intellectual property and the massive Chinese trade surplus.

The dispute has escalated to encompass \$360 billion in trade between the two economic superpowers, and without an agreement by the start of March, the Trump administration is poised to more than double the punitive duties on \$200 billion in Chinese goods. However, amid pressure from the business community for the two sides to resolve the dispute, CNBC cited a senior administration official saying the March 1 deadline could be pushed back. "Right now it is in place but that is right now," the official told CNBC. "It could change via telephone."

The White House said there would be a preparatory meeting of senior officials beginning February 11 and the talks would include officials from the Agriculture, Energy and Commerce Departments.

The main delegation also includes David Malpass, whom President Donald Trump has nominated to be president of the World Bank and who has worked to limit the bank's assistance to Beijing. However, strident White House China critic Peter Navarro was not listed as part of the US team. —AFP



HONG KONG: A ship is seen berthed at the Kwai Chung container port in Hong Kong. —AFP

Renault denounces Nissan over Ghosn probe

PARIS: Lawyers for French carmaker Renault have criticized their Japanese alliance partner Nissan for its handling of an internal probe into the Carlos Ghosn scandal, a Sunday newspaper has reported.

In a letter to Nissan dated January 19, the lawyers said they had "serious concerns about the methods used" by the company and its legal team, including the way they treated some Renault employees, according to France's *Le Journal du Dimanche*. Former head of the alliance Ghosn is being held in Japan on charges he under-reported millions of dollars in pay as head of Nissan. "Renault has gathered sufficient evidence to understand and regret the methods used by Nissan and its lawyers

to seek interviews with Renault employees through the Japanese public prosecutor's office," they said. Nissan was seeking "evidence to support allegations against Carlos Ghosn after his arrest" and failed to consult its French partner, according to the newspaper.

The firm also tried to search Ghosn's apartments in Brazil, Lebanon and the Netherlands without informing Renault, the letter added. A Nissan spokesman said yesterday that the letter which they received weeks ago has "already been reviewed and fully addressed in a series of verbal and written responses from Nissan's external attorneys."

"The communications in question do not reflect the current state of discussions with Renault and its lawyers," said Nissan spokesman Nicholas Maxfield.

"Nissan... has always welcomed an open and direct dialogue with its partners to help uncover relevant facts", he added. The executive's arrest in November has exposed rifts between Renault and Nissan, which some analysts say was bristling at Ghosn's efforts to bring the two automakers' operations even closer together. Ghosn was the linchpin of the three-way alliance, which



PARIS: A Renault Alpine (front) and a Hispano Suiza are displayed during the Retromobile auto show in Paris. —AFP

also included Mitsubishi Motors, earning industry plaudits for driving together a sometimes fractious threesome with headquarters 10,000 kilometers apart.

Much of the tension between the

partners stems from a complex ownership structure that gives Renault 43 percent of Nissan, whereas Nissan owns just 15 percent stake in the French company—and no voting rights. —AFP

IMF chief says ready to support Pakistan after meeting Khan

ISLAMABAD: International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde yesterday met Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and assured him that IMF stands ready to support his country. The meeting took place on the sidelines of the World Government Summit in Dubai, hosted by the United Arab Emirates, both IMF and prime minister Imran Khan's office said.

"I reiterated that the IMF stands ready to support

Pakistan," Lagarde said in a statement following meeting with Khan. A team from the International Monetary Fund visited Pakistan in November to discuss a possible bailout with officials, though the talks ended without agreement, but since then the government official said talks were still ongoing on a possible bailout. Pakistan — which has gone to the IMF repeatedly since the late 1980s — is facing a balance of payments crisis. "I also highlighted that decisive policies and a strong package of economic reforms would enable Pakistan to restore the resilience of its economy and lay the foundations for stronger and more inclusive growth," said Lagarde, calling the meeting "good and constructive". Pakistan — a regular borrower from the IMF since the 1980s — last received an IMF bailout in 2013 to the tune of \$6.6 billion. Forecasts by the IMF and World Bank suggest the Pakistani economy is likely to grow between 4.0 and 4.5 percent for the fiscal year ending June 2019, compared to 5.8 percent

growth in the last fiscal year. Khan has launched a highly publicized austerity drive since being sworn in, including auctioning off government-owned luxury vehicles and buffaloes, in addition to seeking loans from "friendly countries" and making overtures to the IMF. The United Arab Emirates, Pakistan's largest trading partner in the Middle East and a major investment source, recently offered \$3 billion to support Pakistan's battered economy. Islamabad also secured \$6 billion in funding from Saudi Arabia and struck a 12-month deal for a cash lifeline during Khan's visit to the kingdom in October. It has also received billions of dollars in Chinese loans to finance ambitious infrastructure projects. Despite the pledges, the ministry of finance said Pakistan would still seek broader IMF support for the government's long-term economic planning. In January, Pakistan launched a new investment certificate for overseas citizens, aimed at easing the country's balance of payments crisis. —AFP

Venezuela moves to replace US executives on Citgo board

CARACAS: Venezuelan state-run oil company PDVSA is taking steps to remove at least two American executives from the board of directors of its US refining subsidiary, Citgo Petroleum Corp, according to people close to the matter.

Citgo is facing unprecedented challenges to its finances and management after the US government last week imposed tough sanctions on Petroleos de Venezuela designed to prevent oil revenue from going to leftist President Nicolas Maduro. The United States and dozens of other nations have refused to recognize Maduro, viewing his reelection last year to another six-year term as fraudulent.

Venezuela's self-proclaimed president Juan Guaido is setting up bank accounts with US help that would take income accrued by Citgo, Venezuela's top foreign asset, to finance an interim government. Maduro has denounced Guaido as a US puppet who is seeking to foment a coup.

The board of Houston-based Citgo includes at least two US citizens, Art Klein and Rick Esser, as well as Venezuelans Asdrubal Chavez, Frank Gygax, Nepmar Escalona, Simon Suarez and Alejandro Escarra, according to one of the people familiar with the matter.

PDVSA and Citgo did not respond to requests for comment. Esser and Klein did not immediately reply to emails and phone calls seeking comment on their status.

It was unclear if PDVSA's board has already approved the changes at Citgo's board and who would replace the American executives. Citgo also has an executive board that includes the refiner's general managers, its corporate treasurer and the controller, and other vice presidents. Esser was among a team of Citgo executives who met with US officials last month in Washington amid efforts by Guaido and the US government to appoint a new Citgo board of directors. Citgo operates three US refineries that supply about 4 percent of total US fuel production and is PDVSA's largest US customer for its oil exports. Sanctions have forced Citgo and other US refiners to seek crude oil supplies from other nations. Delaware-registered Citgo operates plants in Texas, Louisiana and Illinois that are capable of processing a combined 750,000 barrels per day



LEMONT, ILLINOIS: Smoke rises from a refinery owned by Citgo, a subsidiary of PDVSA, the Venezuelan state owned oil company, in Lemont, Illinois. —AFP

of oil. It distributes fuel through about 5,500 independent retail stations in 29 US states.

Citgo, which has been owned by PDVSA for three decades, has not publicly detailed the composition of its current board since late 2017, when Asdrubal Chavez, a cousin of the late Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez, was nominated by Maduro to run the busi-

ness unit. Asdrubal Chavez, Escalona and Escarra have been working from an office in the Bahamas since the US sanctions were issued, according to the sources. On Friday, Venezuelan oil minister and PDVSA President Manuel Quevedo held a meeting with his deputy ministers and directors, one of the people said. The agenda was not revealed. —Reuters

How Venezuela turns its useless bank notes into gold

EL CALLAO, Venezuela: Venezuela's most successful financial operations in recent years have not taken place on Wall Street, but in primitive gold-mining camps in the nation's southern reaches.

With the country's economy in meltdown, an estimated 300,000 fortune hunters have descended on this mineral-rich jungle area to earn a living pulling gold-flecked earth from makeshift mines.

Their picks and shovels are helping to prop up the leftist government of President Nicolas Maduro. Since 2016, his administration has purchased 17 tons of the metal worth around \$650 million from so-called artisan miners, according to the most recent data from the nation's central bank.

Paid with the country's near-worthless bank notes, these amateurs in turn supply the government with hard currency to purchase badly needed imports of food and hygiene products. This gold trade is a blip on international markets. Still, the United States is using sanctions and intimidation in an effort to stop Maduro from using his nation's gold to stay afloat. The Trump administration is pressuring the United Kingdom not to release \$1.2 billion in gold reserves Venezuela has stored in the Bank of England. US officials recently castigated an Abu Dhabi-based investment firm for its Venezuela gold purchases, and have warned other potential foreign buyers to back off.

The existence of Maduro's gold program is well-known. How it functions is not. To get a glimpse inside, Reuters tracked Venezuela's gold from steamy jungle mines, through the central bank in the capital of Caracas to gold refineries and food exporters abroad, speaking with more than 30 people with knowledge of the trade. They included miners, intermediaries, merchants, academic researchers, diplomats and government officials. Almost all requested anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly, or because they feared retribution from Venezuelan or US authorities.

What emerges is the portrait of a desperate experiment in *laissez-faire* industrial policy by Venezuela's socialist leaders. US sanctions have hammered the nation's oil industry and crippled its ability to borrow. The formal mining sector has been decimated by nationalization. So Maduro has unleashed freelance prospectors to extract the nation's mineral wealth with virtually no regulation or state investment. The Bolivarian Revolution now leans heavily on ragtag laborers such as Jose Aular, a teenager who says he has contracted malaria five times at a wildcat mine near Venezuela's border with Brazil. Aular works 12 hours daily lugging sacks of earth to a small mill that uses toxic mercury to extract flecks of precious metal. Mining accidents are common in these ramshackle operations, workers said. So are shootings and robberies.

"The government knows what happens in these mines and it benefits from it," said Aular, 18. "Our gold goes into their hands." Maduro has also received a crucial assist from Turkish President Recep Erdogan, a fellow strongman who has likewise sparred with the Trump administration.

Venezuela sells most of its gold to Turkish refineries, then uses some of the proceeds to buy that nation's consumer goods, according to people with direct knowledge of the trade. Turkish pasta and powdered milk are now staples in Maduro's subsidized food program. Trade between the two nations grew eightfold last year. But scrutiny is intensifying as Venezuela's politics reach the boiling point. In recent days, many Western countries have recognized Venezuela's opposition leader Juan Guaido as the South American nation's rightful president. —Reuters

Business

Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt posts 62% increase in net profit for 2018

Result a testament to ABK-Egypt's effective growth strategy

KUWAIT: Building on its strong performance since entering the Egyptian market, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait - Egypt (ABK-Egypt) yesterday reported a significant increase of 62 per cent in net profit for 2018. The result is a testament to ABK-Egypt's effective growth strategy, as net profit reached 537 million Egyptian Pounds for the financial year 2018.

ABK-Egypt's operating profit for 2018 was 735 million Egyptian pounds, a 44 per cent increase compared to 511 million Egyptian pounds in 2017. The bank's customer deposits increased by 36 per cent to reach 24 billion Egyptian pounds compared to 17.6 billion Egyptian pounds in 2017, while gross customer loans grew 45 per cent in 2018 to reach 16 billion Egyptian pounds. Asset quality remained strong with non-performing loan (NPL) ratio reaching 2.8 per cent with a coverage of 78.76 per cent. Capital adequacy ratio was robust at 14.66 per cent.

Commenting on the results, Ali Marafi, Chairman of

ABK-Egypt said, "The year 2018 has proved to be a successful one for ABK-Egypt and this is reflected in our achievement of record net profit. ABK-Egypt has made important strategic strides and we have continued our geographic expansion within the Egyptian market. In addition to our improved financial performance, ABK-Egypt was recognized as the 'Fastest Growing Bank in Egypt' last year and the 'Most innovative Bank in Egypt' earlier this year. Our capital base remains robust, and we look forward to further accelerating our growth in Egypt."

Khaled El Salawy, CEO and Managing Director said, "ABK-Egypt excelled in 2018, improving our returns and realizing our strategic business goals. We have aligned our services and touch points in line with customer preferences through innovative tools that make the banking experience more accessible, easier and convenient. Going forward, we aim to set new mile-

stones, which will play an important role in strengthening our relationship with the country's Fintech community. We will continue to focus on growing our market share and footprint in the country, develop our human capital within the bank and further enhance our competitive advantage across all sectors."

Aligned with the Group's growth strategy, ABK-Egypt has established two specialized hubs for trade finance services covering East Cairo and Alexandria, with plans to add a Central Cairo hub in 2019, to cater to the needs of its corporate customers. The Bank aims to expand its regional footprint to reach 57 branches by the end of 2021, which will offer modern and simplified retail services to individuals. This will be supported by advanced customer service offerings such as high-speed customer response, e-services, and innovative upgrades on ATM machines that will continue to grow in number across the country.



Ali Marafi



Khaled El Salawy

Al-Tijari announces winner of Al-Najma prize program

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the winner of the weekly draw as follows:

Weekly draw prize KD 5,000 - Salem Obaid Al-Salamah. The draw was conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

Now CBK existing customers can open Al-Najma Account through Al-Tijari Online and enter all draws without visiting the Bank's branch. However, CBK non-customers can submit an account opening application via the Bank's website where the Bank's Sales Unit will call them to arrange a visit to the customers to complete the account opening formalities.

Talal Al-Jeri receives German Ambassador

KUWAIT: The Chairman and CEO of Al-Jeri Holding Group, Talal Al-Jeri, received at his office at the company's headquarters the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the State of Kuwait Karl Bergner. The two sides discussed how to benefit from German expertise in the group's schools

as well as topics of mutual interest.

The German Ambassador expressed his happiness with this visit, confirming his keenness to cooperate with the Kuwaiti private sector not only at the educational level, but also in all other commercial sectors.

Talal Al-Jeri stressed the importance of these meetings, which emphasize the deep brotherly relations between Kuwait and Germany and the importance of joint coordination to exchange experiences and enhance cooperation between the two parties.

He also thanked the German Ambassador for his visit and invited him to hold other meetings to make the most of the German experience in the field of education and other fields.



Talal Al-Jeri (left) with German Ambassador Karl Bergner

Souk Al-Salmiya holds ordinary general assembly

KUWAIT: Souk Al-Salmiya Real Estate Company's ordinary general assembly for the fiscal year 2018, held last Tuesday, approved all the items on its agenda including recommendations to distribute cash profits equal to 10 per cent of the capital to shareholders. The meeting approved the board report for the fiscal year ending on December 31, 2018, the auditor's report, general budget and profit and loss account. The general assembly also agreed to approve the board members.

Speaking after the general assembly meeting, Board Chairman and CEO, Marzouq Khaled Al-Marzouq said that the company made 63 fils profit per share and that book value of the shares increased from KD 0.365 to KD 0.422.

Al-Marzouq added that the company was currently constructing a luxurious residential complex with a sea view comprising 36 floors with a total value of KD 23 million at Sabah Al-Salem area. He added that 80 per

cent of the construction was completed and that the complex is scheduled to be completed by July 2019.

Al-Marzouq stated that the company had worked on diversifying its activities by building a new complex at Sabah Al-Ahmed Marine City known as The Grey and that all the stores had been fully rented.

In addition, Al-Marzouq said that Souk Al-Salmiya managed to assume a prestigious place amongst other real estate companies that had started operating in the country years ago adding that the Souk Al-Salmiya project has become one of the most outstanding properties in Kuwait market attracting thousands of visitors on daily basis. "The market management is keen on cooperating with various investors", he underlined. Al-Marzouq also thanked Nof Real Estate General Trading and Contracting Company as the partner and manager of the Souk Al-Salmiya project.

Souk Al-Salmiya General Manager Mohammed Ali Al-Sabhan said that the company is currently studying various investment opportunities and taking part in developmental projects offered by the government for the private sector through BOT or other investment fields.

"In collaboration with Nof Real Estate Company, Souk Al-Salmiya succeeded in executing the huge

market project", he added noting that 98.2 per cent of the market was rented by the end of 2018. Commenting on Sabah Al-Salem project, Al-Sabhan said that all the complex apartments would have a sea view and expected that the project would make a substantial shift in the company's work once opened in July 2019.

Notably, Souk Al-Salmiya hosted several social activities in 2018 including the national cancer awareness campaign, the Awqaf ministry's eighth summer festival and Al-Anbaa' celebration on the national anniversaries. The market also hosted an awareness campaign on blood pressure and diabetes organized by the voluntary team 'Fakhr Al-Watan' (Nation's Pride), an exhibition for producing family products, charity festivals and cancer awareness campaigns — all free of charge and comes within its corporate social responsibility.



Marzouq Khaled Al-Marzouq

Turkish Airlines to launch its first flight to Mexico

KUWAIT: Turkish Airlines, flying to more countries and international destinations than any other airline in the world, will launch its inaugural flight to Mexico on August 21, 2019 with a triangle route from Istanbul (IST) to Mexico City (MEX) and Cancun (CUN).

The entire route will use one flight number, TK181, to be operated three times a week. Passengers will be the first to experience the airline's new B787-9 aircraft, which debuts a new Business Class offering. The Mexico City - Istanbul route will be operated from Turkish Airlines' new home at Istanbul Airport, slated to be the world's largest once all phases are completed. The newly-opened hub, that will welcome up to 200 million passengers its later phases, will play an important role in the future of Turkey's aviation sector as global aviation shifts eastwards, with Istanbul at the center. The smart and innovative design of the airport, already the recipient of many design awards, will allow a streamlined travel experience for travelers flying with Turkish Airlines to enjoy the widest global network.



For travelers flying with Turkish Airlines to enjoy the widest global network.

Turkish Airlines' Chief Marketing Officer (CMO), Ahmet Olmstur stated, "We are very pleased to announce this service to Mexico on Turkish Airlines. As the flag carrier of Turkey, we are continuously looking to expand our network in order to present our quality-focused and service-centric concept to new destinations. Mexico is a country that has been on our radar for some time, and this new route marks a very exciting milestone for us."

In addition to Mexico, Turkish Airlines will launch flights to six new destinations in 2019:

- Marrakesh
- Sharjah
- Port Sudan
- Bali
- Luxor
- Rovaniemi

Last year, the airline introduced flights to Freetown, Samarqand, Aqaba, Krasnodar, Moroni, Banjul and Lusaka.

Mozambique NGOs call on Credit Suisse to write off debt

MAPUTO: Several non-governmental organizations in Mozambique on Saturday called on Credit Suisse to write off debt their government contracted with the Swiss bank as part of a massive "hidden debt" scandal. In a letter addressed to Credit Suisse CEO Tidjane Thiam seen by AFP, 21 civil society groups said the scandal over allegedly illegal loans totalling \$2 billion was "a direct result of fraudulent illegal collusion between Credit Suisse, contractors and Mozambican government officials".

The letter was co-signed by Graca Machel, a humanitarian activist and widow of Nelson

Mandela. "Having considered all available information in our possession, we demand that Credit Suisse publicly declares that the Mozambican people should not pay a single cent of these debts, and that recovery of any money should come from the companies and individuals who, instead, have benefited from this chaos," the letter said. The call came only days after Mozambique President Filipe Nyusi sacked deputy finance minister Isaltina Lucas who has been implicated in the widening scandal.

AS national treasury director signed guarantees in 2013 and 2014 for the loans to three state-owned security companies. An independent audit has found that \$500 million of the loans, which were deliberately hidden from the country's parliament as well as international donors, was diverted and remains unaccounted for.

When the hidden debt was revealed, Mozambique—which relies on donor aid and is one

of the world's poorest countries—was plunged into the worst financial crisis in its history.

The US alleges that at least \$200 million was spent on bribes and kickbacks, including \$12 million for former finance minister Manuel Chang, who also signed off on the debt guarantees.

Chang was arrested in South Africa in December on a US extradition request for his alleged involvement in the loans. The US has alleged that Chang received the \$12 million to agree to sign loan deals for supposed financing for a tuna-fishing fleet and a maritime surveillance project.

Chang is facing extradition requests from both US and Mozambican authorities on suspicion of financial misconduct. Court hearings are to resume in South Africa on February 26.

Seven suspects including Mozambicans and ex-Credit Suisse bankers are accused by the US of fraud, conspiracy to financial security fraud, conspiracy to launder money. —AFP

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

- Sana Ahamd Abdhussain Albustan
- Asam Jaffar Jasem Abdulrahim
- Majedah Ibrahim Mulla Abbas Albuloushi
- Mahmoud Abdullah Abou Amer
- Suad Ahmad Salem Abu Hbail

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

The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning.

If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

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

What's On

Spread the love this Valentine's Day at the Hilton Kuwait resort

Spoil loved ones this Valentine's season with a luxurious and relaxing getaway at Hilton Kuwait Resort, where a selection of bespoke offers has been created for the ultimate celebration. Hilton Kuwait Resort's series of activities and events are guaranteed to fill this Valentine's Day with love, fun, and memories to last a lifetime

A room full of love

Celebrate the love season in a place where romance and luxury blend perfectly. Guests can choose from beautifully decorated premier rooms and suites. Couples can choose between a Garden View Chalet or Villa, prices available at request, which offer a private Terrace and breath-taking romantic views of the Arabian Gulf.

Guests who want to shower their loved ones with extra attention with a beautifully decorated room can choose between two packages. A special Valentine's Day package includes two welcome drinks, chocolate covered strawberries, a chocolate or vanilla heart-shaped cake, and flowers, all upon arrival in your room. The Love Birds Package is an upgrade on the Valentine's Day package, adding a large fruit basket, and a private, romantic in-room breakfast. The prices of two packages are available at request.

Dine in Cupid's Nest

Leave your loved one light on their feet after an excep-

tional romantic beach dinner in a private tent overlooking the Arabian Gulf. Make a reservation at Palm Court Terrace and enjoy a delicious Three-course meal including a bottle sparkling juice, heart shaped cake, juice, tea, coffee and shisha for two persons in addition to an elegant flower and candles arrangement laid on your table.

EnterDATEment

Specially created from the heart, Teatro's talented team of chefs will be preparing a special dinner buffet at the Hilton Kuwait's main restaurant. The exclusive Valentine's buffet will be accompanied by decorative heart-shaped balloons, live romantic music, an incredible pink blush chocolate fountain, and a Valentine special welcome drink for each couple.

Calling all love birds

Valentine's Day is a day for a guilt-free sweet tooth. Hilton Kuwait Resort's Song Bird Cafe is offering a unique range of flavored cakes perfect for the love season. Big enough to be savored by 4-6 people.

Hearty relaxation

Guests can melt into relaxation and tranquility at The Spa this Valentine's season and take advantage of a 50% discount off any kind of massage from 10th to 16th February 2019.



Under the auspices of Farwaniya governor, Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malek Al-Sabah, the Kuwait Market recently held a special ceremony at Kuwait Zoo in Omariya to celebrate the 58th national day anniversary and the 28th liberation day anniversary. The ceremony witnessed participation from a number of communities including the Jordanian community in Kuwait. It was held on Saturday from 10:00 am till 5:00 pm.

Mubarak ELT holds 4th School Scrabble Competition

By Hassan Abdul Bari

Mubarak Al-Kabeer ELT supervision recently organized the fourth annual school scrabble competition for the area's male high schools. The event was hosted at Abdullah Al-Mubarak Secondary School for boys where a student represented each of the area's seven male high schools. The organizing committee was headed by Mubarak ELT Senior Supervisor, Hadeel Al-Kandari and included ELT supervisors, Mahmoud Al-Najjar, Habib Rezzouk and Mohammed Sallam in addition to English teachers, Mulham Adnan, Bakeer Bin Zarrouq and Hassan Abdul Bari as judges.

The students played three qualifying rounds before the final game where student



Hassan Shamkhi Al-Shemmary, from Imam Malek school won the first place, followed by Waleed Khaled Al-Sonni from Jaber Al-Ali School in the second place and Yousif Al-Sharrah from Khaled Soud Al-Zaid in the third place. Accordingly, Al-Shemmari will represent the area in the second round of the competition amongst all educational areas in Kuwait. Notably, scrabble was introduced as a school activity three years ago and ever since the game has been attracting more and more students' interest and participation.



NAFO Kuwait holds family get-together

National Forum (NAFO) Kuwait conducted 'Kudumbasangamam' (family get-together) on 01st February, 2019, at Indian Public School auditorium, Salmiya. The event which started at 10:15 am and concluded at 3:00 pm was attended by a large number of NAFO members and their families. The day started with lighting the ceremonial lamp by elder members in NAFO family followed by a beautiful invocation song by a group of NAFO Gurukulam disciples.

After the welcome note, Jayaraj Edathil while paying homage to the victims, who lost lives during the floods in Kerala, briefed the audience an abstract account of relief work undertaken by NAFO during the peak days of flood as first phase and the monetary supports granted to deserving families' towards the re-

instating of their damaged houses among five districts, the catastrophe was peak to the core.

R Vijayakrishnan, NAFO President presided the meeting. General Secretary MS Nair updated the meeting with the main events organized by NAFO last year. Ameya Prabhatkar, Rithika Sajeew, Prithvi Menon were honored with NAFO gold medals and appreciation certificates and meritorious students who excelled in the last 10th grade CBSC examinations were also awarded with medals, gifts and certificate of excellence.

"NAFO Young Achievers Award" was bestowed on Rohitha Nair along with other four out-standing contenders. Spectacular dance-drama "Nama Ramayanam" staged by the talent bank of NAFO Gurukulam was the main attraction of the meeting. Series of semi-classical dances, electrifying fusion/cinematic dances and melodious song performances had enthralled the audience. Kudumbasangamam venue also witnessed the first release of program flyer and entry coupon of up-coming mega cultural event 'NAFO NAVANEETHAM.'



Japanese Cultural Week

Sunday : February 17, 2019

Lecture: Basic Information Before Traveling to Japan

Language: Arabic By: Mr. Saad Al-Hajeri
Time: 6 P.M Venue: Embassy of Japan in Mishrif
Registration required, Limited Seats
Send Name, I.D, and Mobile to:
dana.zibar@kw.mofa.go.jp

Monday: February 18, 2019

Origami Workshop for Adults
Time: 6 P.M - 8 P.M
Venue: Yarmouk Cultural Center
Free Entry, No Registration

Tuesday: February 19, 2019

Movie Night:
Nobody to Watch Over Me
Language: Japanese Subtitle: English
Time: 7 P.M
Venue: Yarmouk Cultural Center
Free Entry, No Registration



At Lake Victoria, a vast green stain spreads across Africa's blue heart

The thick green carpet of water hyacinth is again choking Kisumu bay

KISUMU: With nets piled onto wooden boats, a group of fishermen joke while gazing out across Lake Victoria and the vast green weed clogging up the waterway. But their laughter has a worried edge as the sun sets. The thick green carpet of water hyacinth is again choking Kisumu bay, floating on the surface and blocking Kenya's main entry to the largest body of water in Africa.

Leggy egrets are delighted, high-stepping through the invasive vegetation in search of food — but the fishermen are downcast as it is unclear when the weed will clear. "If we go fishing now we'll be stuck in the hyacinth," says Maurice Omondi, 40, who heads the Kichinjio Fishermen's Association on one of Kisumu's beaches. "All we can do is wait for the wind to turn and take the hyacinth with it." "In the past we tried to make it through but it's very, very hard and the risk is too great: once, we had to get a helicopter to rescue some fishermen stuck in the hyacinth," he says.

Hyacinth is an aquatic floating plant native to South America that has become a global freshwater scourge after being inadvertently transported world-

wide. It is believed to have first reached Lake Victoria in the 1990s, floating down the lake's western tributary, the Kagera. Since then it has seriously complicated the movement of fishing boats and other vessels on Lake Victoria, hitting the local economy hard. "Sometimes we go out fishing and can't come back because the hyacinth blocks access to the beach. At other times, the hyacinth takes our nets," says Thomas Ouma, 40, a tall fisherman in a football shirt.

Tangled troubles

Lake Victoria is shared with Tanzania and Uganda, but on the Kenyan side alone hyacinth covers around 17,000 hectares (42,000 acres) — roughly five percent of Kenya's lake water surface — a figure that fluctuates with efforts to control the stubborn weed using insects, machines or manual removal. "The problem is that it is impossible to eradicate the water hyacinth, you can only try to control it," says Christopher Aura from the Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute.

"Seeds can hibernate in the lake bed for between 15 to 21 years," he says, adding that the water

hyacinth thrives on chemicals including phosphorus which is found in high quantities in Lake Victoria due to fertilizer run-off from nearby farms. Hyacinth also reduces the amount of oxygen absorbed in the water, to the delight of species such as catfish, but to the chagrin of others like the more appetizing tilapia which is a mainstay of the region's fishing economy. "I wish hyacinth was our only problem!" says George Otieno, a 34-year-old fisherman in a plaid shirt. "The fishing is not as good as before."

Agricultural pollution, illegal fishing in spawning grounds and global warming are all affecting fish reproduction and fishermen are seeing their catches evaporate, Aura said. In 2013, the Kenyan fishery industry in Lake Victoria landed 140,000 tons of fish, mostly Nile perch, white bait and tilapia. By 2016, the figure was down to 98,000 tons.

Chinese fish

At the market in Kisumu, the gap between local demand and the lake's supply is filled by frozen tilapia fillets — imported from China. The incongruity makes fishmongers cringe. "It's absurd," says Dickson

Oduor, 22, as he slices up some locally-caught fish. "But there are poorer people who prefer to buy Chinese tilapia, which is cheaper." President Uhuru Kenyatta announced late last year that imports of frozen Chinese tilapia would be banned. But for Aura the solution is not so simple. Some 500,000 tons of fish is required in Kenya, he says, and Kenya fish production cannot meet demand.

"That is why Kenya imports fish from neighboring countries, but also from China," Aura says. "If we want to do without Chinese fish we absolutely need to find other solutions, like changing our feeding habits." On the beach of Kichinjio, 34-year-old boat captain Dismas Odhiambo has returned with his catch, the only one of the fishermen to have made it through the hyacinth and back. "The wind turned during the night and at around 3:30 in the morning, we could go out," he says. The catch is better than nothing, but Odhiambo's nets are full of small fry, not the more valuable big fish, and he cannot hide his disappointment. "To be honest, the fishing has really not been good, I don't think I'll even cover my expenses." — AFP

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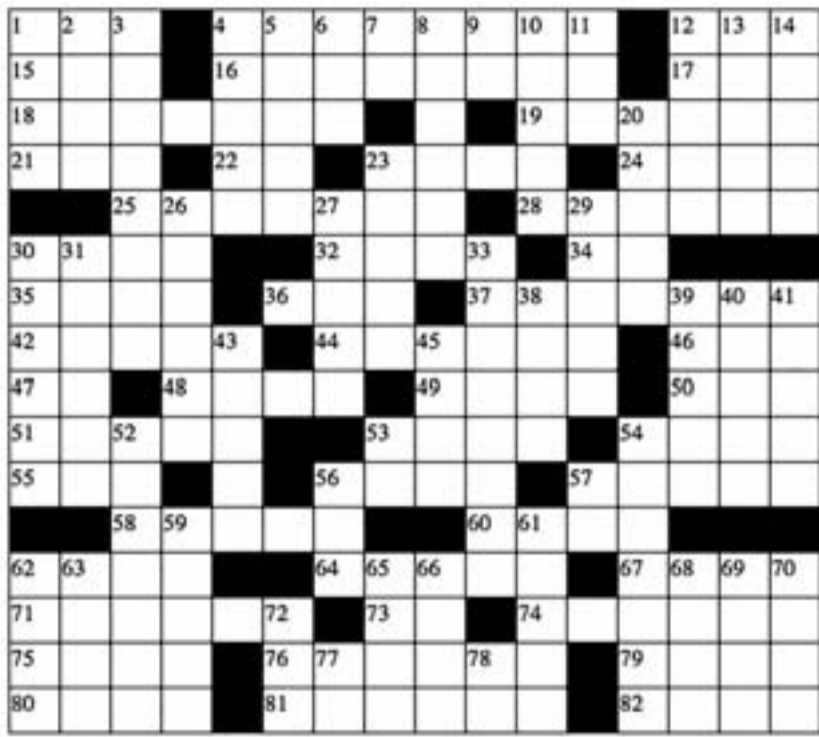
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2133



ACROSS

1. A cry or noise made to express displeasure or contempt.
4. Of or relating to or characteristic of the Bahama Islands or their inhabitants.
12. A tax levied on the difference between a commodity's price before taxes and its cost of production.
15. Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
16. The state capital of South Australia.
17. The United Nations agency concerned with the interests of labor.
18. Relating to ocean depths between 200 and 2000 meters (corresponds to the continental slope).
19. Away from the mouth or oral region.
21. (Babylonian) The sky god.
22. In operation or operational.
24. (used especially of vegetation) Having lost all moisture.
25. Short and fat.
28. An ascocarp having the spore-bearing layer of cells (the hymenium) on a broad disklike receptacle.
30. The chief solid component of mammalian urine.
32. A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
34. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
35. The dressed hairy coat of a mammal.
36. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
37. The trait of lacking restraint or control.
42. A deity or nymph of the woods.
44. Equipped with or connected by gears or having gears engaged.
46. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
47. That is to say.
48. A Hindu prince or king in India.
49. Type genus of the Anatidae.
50. A recurring sleep state during which dreaming occurs.
51. The civil and religious leader of a Muslim state.
55. The capital and largest city of Japan.
58. Type genus of the Phocidae.
60. Old World wild swine having a narrow body and prominent tusks from which most domestic swine come.
62. A district in southwestern Manhattan noted for its shops and restaurants and galleries and artist's lofts.
64. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
67. Extremely robust.
71. (used of arms and legs) Bent outward with the joint away from the body.
73. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
74. Eurasian perennial bulbous herbs.
75. Consistent with fact or reality.
76. A journey by a large group to escape from a hostile environment.
79. The sediment from fermentation of an alcoholic beverage.
80. Posing no difficulty.
81. An unnaturally frenzied or distraught woman.
82. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.

DOWN

1. A small cake leavened with yeast.
2. A port city in northwestern Algeria and the country's 2nd largest city.
3. In a stupid manner.
4. A swampy arm or slow-moving outlet of a lake (term used mainly in Mississippi and Louisiana).
5. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
6. Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
7. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
8. A constitutional monarchy in southeastern Asia on Borneo and the Malay Peninsula.
9. Being one more than one.
10. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
11. A long projecting or anterior elongation of an animal's head.
12. Any of various small insectivorous American birds chiefly olive-gray in color.
13. Fear resulting from the awareness of danger.
14. A genus of delicate ferns belonging to the family Osmundaceae.
20. An Oscan-speaking member of an ancient people of Campania.
23. A poplar that is widely cultivated in the United States.
26. Of or concerning Qatar.
27. God of wealth and love.
29. A large number or amount.
31. Read anew.
33. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
38. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
39. A unit of elastance equal to the reciprocal of a farad.
40. Excessively fat.
41. A person who gives a name or names.
43. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
45. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
52. Type genus of family Lophidae.
53. The use of bacteria or viruses of toxins to destroy men and animals or food.
54. Bushy plant of Old World salt marshes and sea beaches having prickly leaves.
56. A boy or man.
57. A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.
59. Having a feeling of home.
61. The cardinal number that is the sum of seven and one.
63. Long green edible beaked pods of the okra plant.
65. English prelate noted for his pessimistic sermons and articles (1860-1954).
66. Water falling in drops from vapor condensed in the atmosphere.
68. The basic unit of money in Cambodia.
69. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
70. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for aviation and spaceflight.
72. A unit of electrical resistance equal to the resistance between two points on a conductor when a potential difference of one volt between them produces a current of one ampere.
77. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
78. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Getting your ideas across today might take some explaining. It's not because you don't know what you're talking about but rather that the words just aren't making it out of your mouth in the manner you expect. That's because you're thinking in more psychic terms right now. Aries, you know things without knowing how you know them. Your mind is faster than your mouth. Good ideas are being formulated but not being enunciated correctly. This might cause a confrontation with someone younger than you. Take your time. Keep frustration at bay.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

The problems you had yesterday are gone today, thank goodness. You're mentally sharp and can give good answers to any question. Your only problem today is your mind might wander. So those good answers might take a while getting out and about. Close relationships of partners, lovers, friends and family are more important than ever today. Taurus. If you're not in a special relationship with a lover, then today is the day you'll look. Make this day a beautiful memory for someday. Enjoy a special time with loved ones.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today you could appear stand-offish but that's far from the truth. You've made up your mind to items you were thinking over yesterday. And you've had the help of intuition to come to some great decisions. Work will benefit from these decisions as will your love life. Family is closer now and everyone sees you as a person full of confidence who knows what they're talking about. So, you guessed it, the questions will come because all know you have the answers. Revel in today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may find coworkers and friends asking if you're psychic today. You'll hear things like, how did you know that and where did that come from? After a few people mentioning it, it'll really come to your attention and you'll wonder how you did it. This isn't a bad issue. You get the answers you need at the time. Your added sense of peace allows most events, good or bad, to move right past you today. Unless someone calls your attention to a matter it's not addressed. It's a good day for whatever you please. Add being with people you love to top the day off and make it an even greater time.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Right now it's easy to ignore what others consider facts and roll on with your own thoughts and ideas. That's pretty unconventional and right now people are looking for the tried and true. But you don't let that bother you today. Leo. You're at peace. Things are going the way you intend and you're wanting to reap the rewards from loving life, your work, your home and any close relatives too. You feel it can't get better. Your spouse or lover will enjoy those feelings from you later. At least go to dinner first.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today you could have a feeling that someone is being dishonest. Listen to yourself. The universe, God, or whatever the power that be, is giving you the correct information. If you don't follow your gut, you could be in trouble at work. Not everyone considers honesty to be the best trait in others. This is a good time to rethink your values, your opinions and your needs. Keep this to yourself until you discuss with your family your thoughts. Don't be rash. Be careful. You may be considering the fact that you don't want to be around others who don't have a problem with being a little untruthful.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your gut and acting on instinct is at the top of your mind today. You've decided and now you're doing what you desire. What's funny is this very well could be just what you've needed. Patience is short now for anything not contributing to your desires. Others need to be careful of this and watch their tongues. Money is coming and you know it. What's more you're probably right because you're reflecting on money and how to get it. You've got a clear head and make good thoughtful decisions although it appears you haven't. Revel in this time of your life, Libra. Enjoy.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Be careful of those who say they're bringing you a good deal. It could be a Trojan Horse that's going to hurt you quickly. At work watch the coworker who seems to good to be true. They probably are. Be thoughtful of your health today, Scorpio. You could be sensitive to that mess that's going around. Preventive measures are better than an illness. If you want a day off, take it and read a book or study something you love. Take care of you.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Thank goodness, some peace of mind. Now, aren't you glad you kept your job. The stability and reliability of working at something you love brings that sense of peace but it's more than that. Your intuition or psychic insight has returned with a bang. You woke up this morning knowing you have the capability of creating your best life and you're right, Sagittarius. You find yourself dancing to a song you've not thought of in a while. You may even buy a song that stirs your soul. Life is good and you are too. Enjoy a walk in the park with some early spring flowers. Be thankful.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Stability and the act of permanence in life is making you feel better today. This is because you feel you have most of what you desire and are well on your way to acquiring the life you desire. This includes gross amounts of material prominence. You like to be seen as someone to come to if they desire any information on how to better achieve their desires in life. You're not too keen on being best friends with anyone who thinks they may be yours. Others, you feel, may take up too much time when you need that time to promote your needs. One good thing today, Capricorn, is that you just "know" the answer when a question arises. And, you can give it.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Don't argue with your boss even when you think you're right. Customers and bosses are always right even when they're not. This is the way your day may go until you turn loose the will to be right. Your opinions are correct for you but maybe not for others. They may be having a hard day as well. Pick your battles. Even if you don't appreciate others today, Aquarius, you'll find yourself feeling more at peace with your situation as the day goes on. When you go home today, settle in, feel secure and plan ways to get rid of any lasting debt.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are being noticed in the workplace. It may become very obvious to your superiors at work that you are talented beyond the title you hold. You may find that you are in line for a promotion or you will be assigned a special project due to your leadership abilities. Everyone has their eye on you. From your personal life to your career, you are beginning to outshine those around you. You may find your analytical skills are in top shape and you are not only able to solve every problem you come across but may be finding satisfaction in spending your spare time solving puzzles or playing word games. You are in the mood to exercise your mind.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Tools

Find and circle all of the Tools that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Henry David Thoreau quotation

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

BAND SAW FILE POLISHER SPRAY GUN
BOLT CUTTER GRINDER PROTRACTOR SQUARE
BRUSH HAMMER PRY BAR STAPLE GUN
BUFFER HAND SAW PUNCH STUD FINDER
CALIPER HEX KEY RASP TABLE SAW
CHALK JIG SAW RATCHET TAPE MEASURE
CHISEL JOINTER ROUTER TAPS AND DIES
CLAMP KNIFE SANDER TINSNIPS
COPING SAW LATHE SAWHORSE VISE
CROWBAR MALLET SCREWDRIVER WOOD RULE
DADO MITER BOX SCROLL SAW WRECKING BAR
DIVIDER PLANE SOCKETS WRENCH
DRILL PRESS PLIER

Yesterday's Solution

The Raven

ANGELS DOOR GRIM NAPPING QUOTH
BEAK DREAMS HEART NEVERTHE RADIANT
BERD DREARY HORROR NEVERMORE RAPPING
BLACK ENTRANCE LENORE PALLAS RUSTLING
BLEAK EYES LORE PALLID SHADOW
BURNING FEATHER MAIDEN PERCHED SHUTTER
BUST FEND MELANCHOLY PLACID SOUL
CHAMBER FLITTING MIDNIGHT PLUME TAPPING
CROAKING FLUTTER MORTAL PLUTONIAN VISITOR
DARKNESS FOWL MYSTERY PROPHECY WEARY
DECEMBER GHASTLY NAMELESS QUAFF WIND

Hidden sentence: WITH ME POETRY HAS NOT BEEN A PURPOSE, BUT A PASSION

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2019



A dog dressed up for a show sits backstage at the 16th annual New York Pet Fashion Show in New York City. — AFP

'Hitler' paintings fail to sell at Nuremberg auction

Five paintings attributed to Adolf Hitler failed to find buyers at an auction Saturday held amid anger at the sale of Nazi memorabilia. High starting prices of between 19,000 and 45,000 euros (\$21,000 and \$50,000) and lingering suspicions about the authenticity of the artworks were thought to have scared off potential buyers. The Weidler auction house did not comment on the reasons for the failure but said the paintings could yet be sold at a later date. Nuremberg's mayor Ulrich Maly had earlier condemned the sale as being "in bad taste".



A picture shows the watercolor entitled "Ortschaft an Vorgebirgssee", a scene of a village near a mountain lake, signed "A. Hitler", which is on display at the Weidler auction house in the southern city of Nuremberg.

Among the items that failed to sell were a mountain lake view and a painting of a wicker armchair with a swastika symbol presumed to have belonged to the late Nazi dictator. The Weidler auction house held the "special sale" in Nuremberg, the city in which Nazi war criminals were tried in 1945. Days before the sale a number of the artworks were withdrawn on suspicion they were fakes with prosecutors stepping in.

Sales of alleged artworks by Hitler—who for a time tried to make a living as an artist in his native Austria—regularly spark outrage that collectors are willing to pay high prices for art linked to the country's Nazi past. "There's a long tradition of this trade in devotional objects linked to Nazism," Stephan Klingens of the Central Institute for Art History in Munich told AFP. "Every time there's a media buzz about it... and the prices they're bringing in have been rising constantly. Personally, that's something that quite annoys me."



A picture shows a wicker armchair, bearing a swastika, and a vase which are presumed to have belonged to late Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler. — AFP photos



A picture shows the signature "A. Hitler" on a watercolor entitled "Im Wald" (In the forest) displayed at the Weidler auction house.

'Ambitious amateur'

In Germany, public displays of Nazi symbols are illegal but exceptions can be made, in educational or historic contexts for instance. To comply with the law, the auction house pixellated the swastikas on the wicker chair and a blue-and-white Meissen porcelain vase in catalogue photos, and covered them up on-site. But none of the paintings included any of the totalitarian party's insignias. According to Klingens, Hitler had the style of "a moderately ambitious amateur" but his creations did not stand out from "hundreds of thousands" of comparable works from the period-making their authenticity especially hard to verify.

The watercolours, drawings and paintings bearing "Hitler" signatures featured views of Vienna or Nuremberg, female nudes and still life works, the auction house said. They were offered by 23 different owners. Prosecutors on Wednesday collected 63 artworks from the Weidler premises bearing the signature "A.H." or "A. Hitler", including some not slated to go under the hammer.

Nuremberg-Fuerth prosecutor's office said it had opened an investigation against persons unknown "on suspicion of falsifying documents and attempted fraud", chief prosecutor Antje Gabriels-Gorsolke told AFP. "If they turn out to be fakes, we will then try to determine who knew what in the chain of ownership," she said. Weidler said in a statement that the paintings' withdrawal from sale did "not automatically mean they are fakes". — AFP

Louvre Abu Dhabi introduces Rembrandt, Vermeer

The Louvre Abu Dhabi, the first museum to carry the famed name outside of France, announced yesterday it will roll out works by Dutch masters Rembrandt and Vermeer this month. Works by the two artists are part of the gallery's first exhibition this year, entitled "Rembrandt, Vermeer and the Dutch Golden Age: Masterpieces from The Leiden collection and the Musée du Louvre". The exhibit, on display in the United Arab Emirates capital from February 14 to May 18, is dedicated to Rembrandt, Vermeer and the famed "fijnschilders"—fine painters known for their detailed work-of-the-Netherlands.

"Rembrandt is a master of the Golden Age," museum head Manuel Rabate told AFP. "He's a universal genius, he's connected to the world." The exhibition features 95 works, including Vermeer's "Young Woman Seated at a Virginal" alongside Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Man" and "Study of the Head and Clapsed Hands of a Young Man as Christ in Prayer". The museum has also acquired Rembrandt's "Head of a young man, with clasped hands: Study of the figure of Christ" as part of its permanent collection.

The Louvre Abu Dhabi was inaugurated with great pomp in November 2017 — nearly five years behind schedule-by French President Emmanuel Macron and Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan. It was marketed as "a universal museum" celebrating cultural



A picture shows a painting entitled "Study of the head and clasped hands of a young man as Christ in prayer", oil on oak panel, by Dutch painter Rembrandt on display at the Louvre Abu Dhabi, in the Emirati capital. — AFP photos

exchange and tolerance. The museum has reportedly cost the UAE around \$1 billion, including upwards of \$500 million to use France's "Louvre" brand. Officials have not confirmed the price tag. — AFP

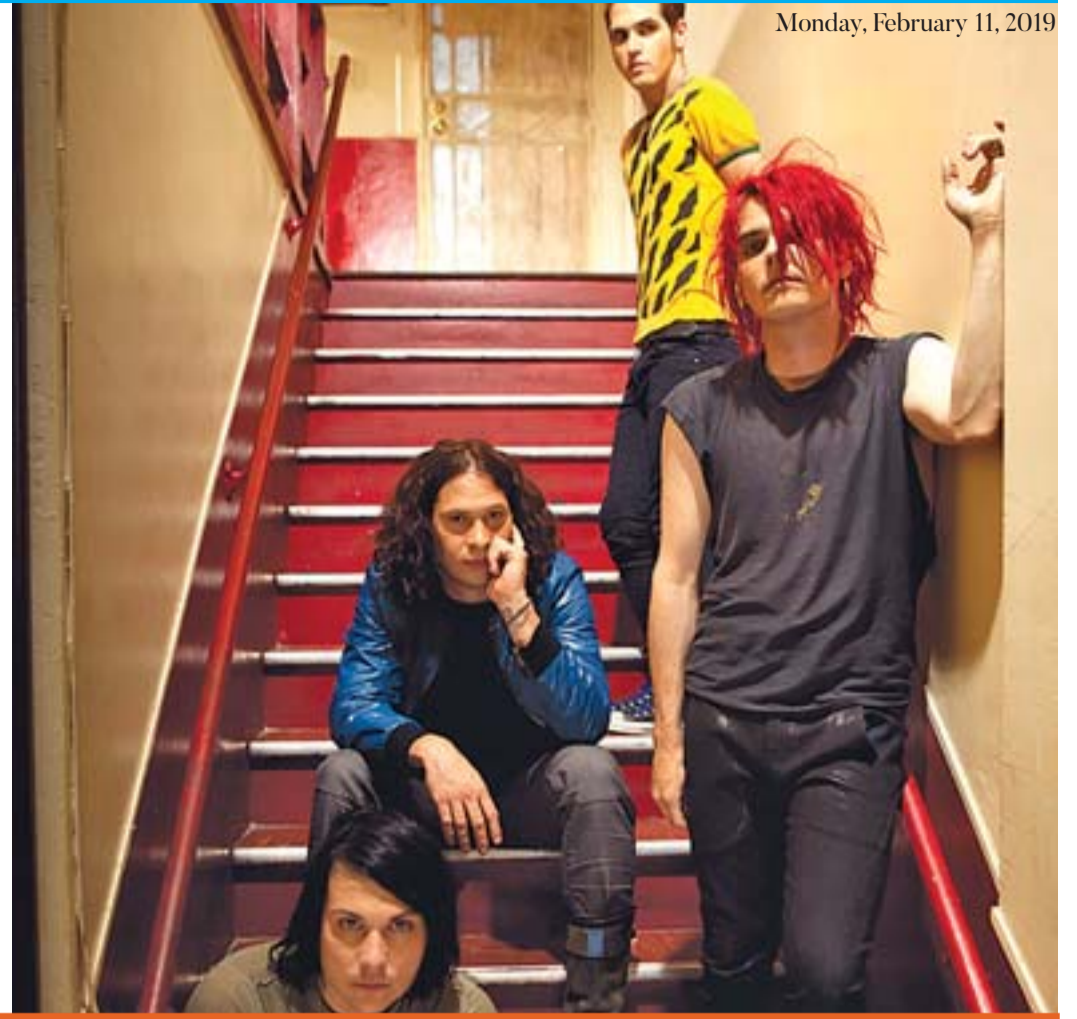


A picture shows people inspecting a painting entitled "Study of the head and clasped hands of a young man as Christ in prayer", oil on oak panel, by Dutch painter Rembrandt.

Gerard Way rules out My Chemical Romance reunion

Gerard Way has ruled out a My Chemical Romance reunion. The 'Teenagers' rockers went their separate ways in 2013 and though they have been inundated with offers to get back together and the singer "misses" working with his bandmates, he's admitted it is unlikely to happen. He said: "We definitely get offers regularly to reunite - it's a constant thing...It's flattering, it's really nice of people...I miss playing with the guys, but I don't think so." When the group split, the 41-year-old singer claimed the band weren't needed anymore because Barack Obama was in power and he admitted the changing political climate in the US made him consider a reunion, but ultimately decided against it because he is such a different person now. He told the Guardian newspaper "That's stuff I thought about when the world started to get super again...It definitely came into my head, but I'd changed so much as a person. I didn't know how I'd fit into it any more, I didn't know how the band would fit into it any more. But you're right, the world is definitely in need of something positive." However,

the 'Na Na Na' hitmaker doesn't seem to have ruled out a reunion entirely as he also spoke of how he'd do things differently if the group got back together. He said: "I think if we ever did MCR again, we wouldn't be in that machine any more. It would literally just be like: 'Here's a new piece of music, we're putting this out and that's it, this is not up for debate.'" Gerard admitted one of the reasons why the group split up was because they stopped having "fun" and felt under a lot of pressure while making their 2010 album 'Danger Days: The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys'. He said: "When things start to succeed and go really well...that's when a lot of people start to have an opinion and that's when you run into struggle...everybody had an opinion about what MCR should be. So it made it difficult to figure out what direction to take next. You get caught up in this trap of 'Is it ever gonna be good enough?' "It wasn't fun to make stuff anymore. I think breaking up the band broke us out of that machine."



Aloe Blacc: Avicii cared more about music than fame and fortune

Aloe Blacc says Avicii "cared deeply" about his music rather than focusing on fame and fortune. The singer teamed up with the Swedish DJ - who tragically passed away in April, aged 28 - when he wrote and sang on his chart topping hit 'Wake Me Up!', and he reflected fondly on their time in the studio together. He told Music Feeds: "I mean, he was super-nice; he was a nice guy and very focused on music. You know, when I'm around other musicians, a lot of time all we talk about is music (laughs) - and he was one of those guys. "And, when we worked together, we were extremely intent and focused on the sound and idea that were in his head; that he wanted to get out. "Working with him, I could see that he truly cared deeply about the music that he was making and not really so much about everything around it - the stardom and the fame and the money. It was really about the craft; the art." His emotional words come after Aloe recently revealed the late DJ had "several songs" which hadn't been unveiled before his death, and there have been discussions about letting fans hear them. He recently said: "There are several songs left. I believe the record label is working with his parents and the estate to find a way to bring these unreleased songs to the public. "But for me there's no rush - I would leave that with his parents." The star also took time to reflect on 'Wake Me Up!', which topped the charts in 22 countries. He said: "It's still a song of celebrations and nostalgia, and hope for the future. I think the hope for the future part is even stronger. 'Avicii's death has been a call to a lot of young folks for people to take better care of themselves and surround themselves with people who are looking out for their best interests."



Skin has written 'two happy songs' in her whole career

Skunk Anansie lead singer Skin has written "two happy songs" in her entire career. The 51-year-old rocker, whose real name is Deborah Anne Dyer, revealed that she often writes more sober songs as she doesn't find happy tunes "inspiring" and when she feels unhappy "most of the songs come out". In an interview with Diva magazine, she said: "I think I've written one, maybe two happy songs in my career because it's just not inspiring for me. Everything in my songs has happened to me or someone close to me. "When I'm happy I have a great time and I'm into it. But when I'm unhappy that's probably when most of the songs come out." The 'Secretly' hitmaker is set to release a new Greatest Hits collection called '25LIVE@25' which marks 25 years of the British rock band and features a host of the group's biggest hits such as 'Weak' and 'Hedonism' and the star praised her bandmates Mark Richardson, Ace, Richard Lewis and Robbie France and insisted they're her "family". She said: "They've seen everything, all the changes all the lovers all the girlfriends all the wives. They've been there to pick me up when I've made my biggest mistakes and I feel closer to them than my family, to be honest. "I think you're born with family and there's another family you choose. I've never been close to my family. The 'Brazen' singer added that she doesn't regret attempting to conform to her family norms while growing up. She said: "I have three brothers and a really Christian family. I think most people try and conform at first and then after a while you grow up and realize, 'Why am I doing that?' "It's actually quite good to make that mistake because then you realize what freedom feels like."

Buckingham suffered vocal cord damage during heart surgery

Lindsey Buckingham's vocal cords have been damaged during emergency heart surgery. The former Fleetwood Mac star underwent open heart surgery last week and while he is now recuperating at home, his wife Kristen Buckingham has revealed that he suffered damage to his vocal cords. She wrote in a statement: "Each day he is stronger than the last. While he and his heart are doing well, the surgery resulted in vocal cord damage. While it is unclear if the damage is permanent, we are hopeful it is not. "This past year has been a very stressful and difficult year for our family to say the least. But despite all of this, our gratitude for life trumps all obstacles we have faced at this moment. We feel so fortunate that he's alive. As does he. He looks forward to recovery and putting this behind

him. Needless to say, all touring and shows currently scheduled have been put on pause for the moment as he gathers the strength to heal completely." Lindsey, 69, was ousted from Fleetwood Mac in January 2018 and he later filed a lawsuit alleging breach of fiduciary duty and breach of oral contract. He recently revealed that he and the band had settled the lawsuit. He said: "We've all signed off on something. I'm happy enough with it. I'm not out there trying to twist the knife at all. I'm trying to look at this with some level of compassion, some level of wisdom." He also admitted that he has not spoken to any of his former bandmates - Mick Fleetwood, John McVie, Christine McVie, and Stevie Nicks - since he was sacked but said that Christine recently reached out to him. He said: "I have had, only in the last couple of weeks, I have gotten an email, which I expected to get, from Christine McVie. She wrote me an email and basically said, 'Dearest Lindsey, just know that I had nothing to do with any of this. Know that I miss you so much.' She said, 'I believe deep in Stevie's heart that she would like you to come home.'" The 'Chain' group enlisted Crowded House's Neil Finn and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers guitarist Mike Campbell to replace Lindsey. Fleetwood Mac previously stopped short of saying Lindsey was fired but admitted they "hit a brick wall" with him that wouldn't allow the band to "go forward" if he stayed. Mick said: "Words like 'fired' are ugly references as far as I'm concerned. "Not to hedge around, but we arrived at the impasse of hitting a brick wall. "This was not a happy situation for us in terms of the logistics of a functioning band. To that purpose, we made a decision that we could not go on with him. "Majority rules in terms of what we need to do as a band and go forward."



Grande's comments 'surprised' Grammy producer

Grammy Awards producer Ken Ehrlich was "surprised" when Ariana Grande accused him of "stifling" her creativity. The 25-year-old singer pulled out of performing at the annual ceremony, which takes place at Los Angeles' Staples Centre yesterday, over a dispute with organizers about her song choice, and after the '7 Rings' hitmaker recently spoke out to slam the producer for "lying" about her, he's dismissed suggestions he isn't "collaborative". He told Rolling Stone magazine: "I saw those tweets and what she said. I guess it was a surprise. "I will say this, and they don't want me to say it but I'm going to say it: The thing that probably bothered me more than whatever else she said about me is when she said I'm not collaborative. "The fact of the matter is-and I actually wrote a little thing in the middle of the night that I'm not going to do anything about, but, I mean. You can ask Christina Aguilera, who I asked to do 'It's a Man's World' for James Brown. "You can ask Melissa Etheridge, who finished her cancer treatment and I put her out on stage, bald, doing Janis Joplin. You can ask Ricky Martin who overnight became the creator of the Latin music revolution. "Ask Mary J. Blige, who was scared s**tless to go out there and do 'No More Drama.' I basically worked with her to mold it. Ask H.E.R. who's in this show." Ken admitted he never spoke to Ariana directly but worked with her management team and insisted he usually "does not have this happen". He added: "I don't know if I'm good at anything else, but I understand artists and I can hear other artists in an artist. "I don't say to people, 'This is what you should do.' I approach it casually and say, hey, this might be a good idea, let's find something in the middle." Ariana took to Twitter a few days ago to share an interview with Ken, in which he claimed she couldn't "pull something together" in enough time. The 'Thank U, Next' singer then wrote on Twitter: mhm... here it is! too late for her to pull something together..... "I've kept my mouth shut but now you're lying about me. i can pull together a performance over night and you know that, Ken. it was when my creativity & self-expression was stifled by you, that i decided not to attend."



i hope the show is exactly what you want it to be and more. "i offered 3 different songs. it's about collaboration. it's about feeling supported. it's about art and honesty. not politics. not doing favors or playing games. it's just a game y'all... and i'm sorry but that's not what music is to me. (sic)" Ariana is nominated for two awards at the prestigious music event - Best Pop Vocal Performance for 'God Is a Woman' and Best Pop Vocal Album for 'Sweetener' - and says that whilst she won't be attending the ceremony, she's still "grateful" to be nominated. She wrote in two separate tweets: "passed a Grammy's bus with my face on it typing those. "hope that helps everyone understand my decision. i am still grateful for the acknowledgement this year. (sic)"

Ball set to release solo album in March

Michael Ball is set to release his solo album 'Coming Home To You' on March 22. The 56-year-old singer - who is also the co-producer on the album - will release his highly-anticipated record via Decca Records next month, and the star has revealed that he has never been "more proud" and "excited" by the "results" of his upcoming musical project. In a statement, Michael said: "Making this album was such a labour of love, I have never been so closely involved with every aspect of the creative process and I can't ever remember being more proud and excited by the results of so many months hard work, long days, huge laughs and genuine good fellowship." The upcoming LP - his first solo effort in four years - follows the success of Michael's last two albums with his friend and fellow singer, Alfie Boe, which helped the musical pair bag two Classic Brit Awards and over a million album sales. Taking to Twitter, Michael added: "Coming Home To You, my new album is coming out on March 22nd! Making the album was such a labor of love. "I've never been so closely involved with every aspect of the creative process and I'm so excited! Pre-order now! The 'Love Changes Everything' star will also embark on a 23-date UK tour later this year in April and May to celebrate the release of his album. 'Coming Home To You' will be available from March 22 2019."



Take That get 'tour depression' when they're not on the road

Take That suffer from "tour depression" when they get back from being on the road. The trio - made up of Gary Barlow, Mark Owen and Howard Donald - are preparing for an upcoming series of concerts and they love the fact they have no "responsibilities" other than performing, with their every need catered for. Gary told OK! magazine: "Part of the reason we're going on tour is because we feel like we're 19 again. All the responsibilities disappear. "We have chefs and we get really looked after - it's like being in the best mobile hotel. We all have tour depression afterwards that lasts for days. "[We message each other], 'Ain't it horrible here? Let's get back on the road.' Having toured as long as we have, we've picked all the best people. They stay with us, they're our mates." The 48-year-old singer - who has children Daniel, 18, Emily, 16, and Daisy, 10, with wife Dawn - wishes he had "enjoyed" the band's early success more instead of worrying so much about what the future held. He admitted: "I'm not big on regrets. But I wish I'd enjoyed it more. I try and appreciate what's going on every day now because it's insane to do this, to be who I am - how dare anyone not enjoy it? "I used to worry a lot as it was new and I thought it wouldn't last forever. Now I think, why did I worry so much?" Even after so many years in the spotlight, Gary is still very ambitious and he is "grateful" as he thinks his drive helps the band maintain a fan base. He said: "I'm still ambitious. I always feel motivated and I'm grateful for that. It keeps our audience interested in what we're doing. We've got a big army of fans and they stick with us."



Lifestyle | Gossip

Rachel Weisz doesn't stay in character between scenes

Rachel Weisz no longer stays in character between scenes. The 'Favorite' star - who has son Henry, 12, with ex-boyfriend Darren Aronofsky and a five-month-old daughter with husband Daniel Craig - used to try and stay "focused" even when the cameras weren't rolling, but as she's got older, she's learned to appreciate the importance of letting go. She told OK! magazine: "I think when I started out, I tried to stay in character, whatever that would mean, or stay focused on the scene after the director said 'cut' - and I never do that now. "For me now, it's really important to 'cut' and then it's gone and I just think about anything else but the fiction." While preparing for 'The Favorite', director Yorgos Lanthimos had Rachel and her co-stars Emma Stone, Olivia Colman, Nicholas Hoult and Joe Alwyn, doing a number of "ridiculous" things in order to feel comfortable with one another. She revealed: "We did ridiculous

things together for three weeks. It was the court of Queen Anne, so it was all the characters of the inner court - we spent three weeks playing games. "And we were taken to the edge, the very edge, and then maybe pushed over the edge into the most ridiculous things that you could possibly do and be. "Totally silly, like foolish, ridiculous, absurd. So that when we were on set, nothing could ever be as ridiculous again." The 48-year-old actress is proud that the movie offered so many "very complex" portrayals of women. She said: "The thing we've heard a lot from people is how surprising it is that there's a film where there are three women who are complicated, layered, powerful and not likeable. "And it surprised me, sadly, that there have been very few films in the last decade that have not one or two but three very complex female roles."



Lily James has directing dream

Lily James wants to become a director in the future. The 29-year-old actress is keen to move behind the camera eventually, initially by getting involved in the production side of the film business before moving on to make her own movies because she wants to have complete artistic control over a big screen project. Speaking to the new issue of Harper's Bazaar magazine - of which she is the cover star - she said: "Maybe I'm meant to be a producer? Produce first, and then if I find the right book, direct. I'm always trying to find books. A lot of actors feel, once they've made the film, that's it, my job's done. But I get jealous of the director in the edit. It tortures me and I really try to contribute. I'm a real perfectionist - which probably limits me - but I do feel I'd be quite good in the edit." Lily's directing ambition was partly inspired when she worked on 'Little Woods' under the guidance of female director Nia DaCosta. She said: "For our wrap gifts, we all got caps saying 'The Future is Female'. We're already on that vibe, you know?"

The 'Baby Driver' star has followed the progress of the #MeToo and Time's Up campaigns closely and she believes both movements have brought about more equality in the movie industry but she still thinks there's a long way to go for genuine quality between the sexes in Hollywood. She said: "Of course, there have been times when I can relate to attitudes and behavior. But I think things are definitely changing. People are more likely to speak out and know they will be listened to. "When you see [the statistics] in black and white, you can't believe how imbalanced it is." While the 'Cinderella' actress has previously been reluctant to insist on inclusion riders in her contract, which request a certain level of diversity in the cast and crew, because she was worried about being perceived as difficult, but she thinks she needs to take a different stance. She said: "I guess everyone needs to be doing it. Screw agreeability, screw feeling like you're not worthy of demanding what is right."



Anne Hathaway not expecting film popularity

Anne Hathaway isn't expecting "everybody" to like her new movie. The 36-year-old actress stars opposite Matthew McConaughey in 'Serenity' - a thriller in which she begs her fisherman ex-husband to kill her current, abusive, spouse for the sake of her son and her own wellbeing - and though she was a big fan of the film, she understands why it may not be universally popular. She said: "I love it, but I don't think everybody's going to. There's a pretty toxic cocktail going on and, without running the risk of spoilers, the ending doesn't sit well with a lot of people." Anne was attracted to the role because she wanted to portray a broken woman. She told Sunday Times Style magazine: "I wanted to show a woman who had her identity crushed and handed a new one that was entirely the making of a man consumed by the male gaze." The Oscar-winning actress tries to find roles that are very different to her own self, dismissing advice she was given early in her career. She said: "At the beginning of my career, an actor told me, 'We basically play ourselves.' No, I do this because I want to leave myself behind." Since Anne and her husband Adam Shulman became parents to their son Jonathan, now two, the 'Les Misérables' actress admitted she has started to think differently about her career because it's no longer her main priority. She said: "Leaving him is hard. I don't want to complain. I love what I do and I'm not ready to stop doing it. I was told that once I had kids, I wouldn't care about my career any more. I was, like, 'Nah.' But I love something so much more now."



Emily Blunt's awards snub

Rob Marshall says Emily Blunt was robbed during awards nominations. The 'Mary Poppins Returns' director is livid that Emily did not receive any major acting nominations for her role in the update of the classic film and believes her performance will stand the test of time, according to The Sun. Speaking as he picked up the Cinematic Imagery Award at the ADG Excellence in Production Design Awards, Rob said: "Well, I will say that it was disappointing, there's no question, and I think people felt that. "She really did the impossible by taking on this role and doing such extraordinary work with it. "But I will say that after the soon-to-be-forgotten awards season, which will be a few weeks from now, her performance will last the test of time and it will live forever, because it's so extraordinary. "And I will say Emily, like me, is a sort of very positive person and just sees that??.?.?.? sees the good, sees what she did, sees how people are responding to the film and her performance, and that's what you really carry with you." Rob also claimed there is an unfair bias against musicals, saying: "I don't feel that they're given the same weight or attention in a way as other films, because they don't feel as politically relevant. "But to me, they're 100 times harder to make and what she did on this film was so extraordinary." Meanwhile, Emily looks set to play the practically perfect nanny again. Director Rob Marshall has said another movie based on the books by P.L. Travers is in the "early stages". He said: "It is early stages, but I will say right now that there were eight books, so there's a lot of great material still to mine. "That's what we worked from, those incredible eight books of P.L. Travers. So, you know..." Due to there being so many novels in the series, Marshall has hinted there could be multiple films to come, which could see the franchise go on for as long as the 'Star Wars' and James Bond series. He added: "Listen, how many 'Star Wars' films have there been, you know what I mean? Or James Bond films. "If there's a great character and story to tell, why not?" Producer John DeLuca said: "Emily does light up when she speaks to me about it. And if the people want it, I think it will happen."

Joanna Lumley recalls awards show nerves

Joanna Lumley always felt like she was about to "lose [her] mind" whilst waiting to find out if she'd won an award for her acting. The 72-year-old actress hosts the BAFTAs yesterday and after scooping three honors and the BAFTA TV Fellowship in the past, she knows how the shortlisted nominees will be feeling when they wait to find out who has successfully been chosen to receive a prize for their work. She said: "You almost lose your mind, trying to sit calmly and put on a smile to show you don't care if you win or lose. Inside, your heart is absolutely drumming." When she won her first BAFTA for her work on 'Absolutely Fabulous' in 1993, Joanna admits she just wasn't expecting her performance as champagne swilling socialite Patsy Stone. She said: "It really knocked me sideways. It was completely overwhelming. To be recognized by your peers for such a funny and thrilling show, written by the ineffable Jennifer Saunders, was just wonderful. I went as cold as ice. I felt quite calm walking up [to collect it] but I was so shocked. It was like a walk of death. The first cut is the deepest. Nothing matches that." The former 'New Avengers' actress keeps her awards "around the house" but they're not all on display. She said: "Sometimes on a bookshelf or upstairs or around the place. "Some I have to keep in a cupboard because they are quite a lot."



Rebel Wilson had toenails glued on



Rebel Wilson had her toenails "glued" back on in between filming love scenes for 'Isn't It Romantic'. The 38-year-old actress stars opposite Liam Hemsworth in the upcoming movie and she tried hard to conceal the pain she was in during their intimate moments after suffering an injury while shooting a stunt. She said: "I just admitted to Liam this morning something very embarrassing that happened to me in the scene where Liam comes out of the shower and I'm in bed. Um, two of my toenails had come off because of a stunt earlier in the week, and in between takes, my makeup artist was supergluing them back onto my foot because I then had to run out of the bed and jump on Liam, or whatever." Liam replied: "Did it hurt a lot? That must've really hurt..." The 29-year-old actor recently tied the knot with Miley Cyrus so Rebel joked she was very "respectful" of his new wife when they had intimate scenes to film. Speaking at 'Build Series' in New York City, she quipped: "Liam is such a gentleman, and obviously I respect Miley [Cyrus], like, a hundred [percent], so, you know, it was all PG-13." But the actress admitted it was a "brutal" filming experience because she is on screen so much and she tried her best not to make love scenes "awkward" by simply not thinking about them. She said: "When we would film, we would film 16 hours a day, and it was kind of brutal, and I just had to keep going because I am in every scene of the movie. "The scene where we're making out in the hallway-awesome, that one-somebody said to me, 'We only have three shirts for Liam,' so we only had three takes. So then I was like, 'OK, I'm going for it.' "It is awkward if you think about it, but if you just go for it ... obviously our movie was PG-13, so nothing full on was going to happen." And for Liam, he has learned to keep things "nice and light" between romantic scenes to stop things becoming uncomfortable. He said: "It's always good in-between takes to keep it nice and light, because it's always-when you do a kissing scene with someone that you've been working with-now all of a sudden you have to make physical contact with their lips, that's always a little nerve-wracking. "You're doing it in front of a lot of people, but it was really fun. We kept it light and fun."

EDGAR WRIGHT KEEN ON KINKS BIOPIC



Edgar Wright wants to make a Kinks biopic. The 'Baby Driver' filmmaker has revealed he was at one point in talks to direct Queen movie 'Bohemian Rhapsody' - which originally had Bryan Singer at the helm before he was fired and replaced by Dexter Fletcher - and although he didn't get that job, he is interested in telling a different musical tale and thinks the British group's rise to success and the tempestuous relationship between brothers and bandmates Ray and Dave Davies would be a very interesting subject for a film. Speaking to Empire magazine, he said: "I did go in and have a meeting about the Queen film a couple of times. It wasn't like I was offered it, and ultimately, it was something where I couldn't do both that and 'Baby Driver' so it didn't go very far. I'm obviously a fan of the music. "In terms of people who haven't had one done, I think The Kinks would be an interesting movie because

they've got an interesting story. "What song would I use for the title? Maybe 'All Day and All of The Night.' " The 44-year-old director has been kept busy with another musical project, a feature-length documentary on Sparks and though it's presented him with a different way of working, he's enjoying spending hours and hours doing research on the 'This Town Ain't Big Enough for Both of Us' hitmakers. He said: "It's a very different process. I've really enjoyed doing the interviews - I think I've done about 30 and not just with members of Sparks and colleagues of them, but other artists that Sparks has inspired. Everyone from members of the Sex Pistols to Sonic Youth to Duran Duran to Squeeze to Red Hot Chili Peppers. "I interviewed Todd Rundgren and that was amazing but I was sort of overwhelmed by that. Because there's so much career of his - if something came up, I wanted to make sure I'd done my due diligence."

Renowned French author and illustrator **Tomi Ungerer** dies at 87

The renowned French cartoonist, author and illustrator Tomi Ungerer, a lifelong activist who protested against racial segregation, the Vietnam war and the election of US President Donald Trump, has died at the age of 87 in Ireland, his former adviser told AFP on Saturday. "He died in the night and his wife called me this (Saturday) morning on the phone," Robert Walter, his former adviser and a friend "for 35 years" said, adding that Ungerer died at his daughter's home. "He was an all-around genius, a man who was talented in everything. He loved literature. He used to say 'I write about what I draw and I draw what I write,'" he said. Originally from Alsace in eastern France, Ungerer lived in the United States and Canada before settling in Ireland.

He was obsessed with books from an early age. "For me, if there was a heaven it would be a library," he told AFP in a 2016 interview, adding that he was "brought up on reading". Ungerer's oeuvre ranged from globally celebrated children's books like *The Three Robbers* and *The Moon Man* to erotic drawings as well as satirical paintings and political posters. He wrote in three languages: English, French and German. He published over 140 books which have been translated into 30 languages.

'Subversive'

Ungerer's social activism and his often irreverent writings led to some of his work being branded "subversive"



In this file photo taken on October 26, 2007 French cartoonist, artist and illustrator Tomi Ungerer poses upon his arrival at the Tomi Ungerer's Museum dedicated to his work, prior to its inauguration in Strasbourg. — AFP photos

by critics. Born into a family of watchmakers in 1931 in the Alsatian city of Strasbourg, Ungerer lost his father when he was three-years-old. He witnessed the annexation of Alsace by Germany during World War II and the subsequent imposition of German and Nazi ideology in schools, which he recounted later in autobiographical works.



In this file photo taken on December 21, 2010 French cartoonist, artist and illustrator Tomi Ungerer poses in front of some of his drawings shown in an exhibition entitled "Politrics, le dessin politique de Tomi Ungerer" (Ungerer's political drawings) at the Ungerer museum in Strasbourg, eastern France.

After failing the second part of the baccalaureate exam in a school report, his headmaster described him as a "wilfully perverse and subversive individualist". Ungerer hitchhiked to the North Cape in Norway. After the end of the war, Ungerer travelled across Europe and in 1956, he left for New York with 60 dollars in his pocket

and what he later described as a "trunk full of drawings and manuscripts".

The following year, after meeting the children's book editor Ursula Nordstrom at Harper and Row, his first children's book *The Mellups Go Flying* was published and became an immediate success. A range of works followed from the complete Mellup series to several prize-winning books and satirical works including *Horrible* and *The Underground Sketchbook*.

He then worked for *Playboy* magazine as its food editor and also did several political posters including drawings for the election campaign of former German chancellor Willy Brandt's SPD party. Ungerer donated more than 11,000 original works of art, sculptures, books and toys to a museum devoted to his work and life, which opened in 2007 in his birthplace Strasbourg.

Since then, the Tomi Ungerer Museum has been voted as one of the ten best museums in Europe by the Council of Europe. He was awarded the Legion of Honor by France in 1990 and was elevated to Commander of the Legion of Honor in 2018. — AFP

China entertainment endures 'bitter winter' after crackdowns

Chinese film and television are reeling from what industry insiders call a "bitterly cold winter" of sharper government scrutiny that is expected to lead to more Communist Party-friendly content. The entertainment sector had blossomed in recent years, with official encouragement by a government keen to replace foreign content with home-grown fare and develop the industry as a global "soft power" asset.

But a nationwide push for more party-approved material across media, music and entertainment has combined with a clampdown on spiraling screen-star salaries to cloud the outlook. "It's been a cold winter, a bitterly cold winter," said Yu Zheng, screenwriter and producer of the hugely popular series "Story of Yanxi Palace". The period drama set amid Qing dynasty court intrigue drew 18 billion views on Chinese platform iQIYI and was the most "Googled" TV show in the world last year, due in part to popularity among the Chinese diaspora.

Cloudy future

The program, since concluded, was filmed at Hengdian World Studios in the eastern province of Zhejiang. Widely considered "China's Hollywood", the



In this photo tourists explore a vast film set replica of Beijing's Forbidden City at Hengdian World Studios in Dongyang. — AFP photos



Cast and crew of a Chinese TV series prepare to film a scene at Hengdian World Studios in Dongyang.



Actors film a scene for a Chinese TV series at Hengdian World Studios in Dongyang.

sprawling studio complex has around a dozen film sets including faux versions of Beijing's Forbidden City and, soon, Shanghai's Bund riverfront. Around 70 percent of China's film and television shows are shot there, Chinese newspaper *Economic Observer* reported in 2017.

But studio chairman Sang Xiaoping told AFP in an interview that Hengdian is bracing for a slowdown, particularly after tax authorities late last year targeted A-list actress Fan Bingbing in a crackdown on alleged widespread tax dodging and exorbitant pay for big-name stars. "Judging from the current situation, (the entertainment industry) will be in the process of slow recovery in 2019," Sang said.

"Some crew have postponed their shooting plans and some have even cancelled. The business operations of film and television companies were also impacted by the strengthened tax reform," Sang said he expects to see a shift to more films or TV programs focused on the revolution that brought the Communists to power in 1949, particularly as this October will mark the event's 70th anniversary.

Krypt Chen, a Shanghai-based media analyst, said: "(Government) scrutiny has been stricter year after year since 2016. It was already quite harsh last year and may be even stricter this year." China's film industry earned a record of nearly 61 billion yuan (\$9.1 billion) in box-office revenue last year, up nine percent from 2017, state-run Xinhua news agency reported, though growth slowed from the previous year. Radio and TV revenue, meanwhile, rose 20 percent in 2017.

But the tightened scrutiny has Chinese studios feeling the heat. Entertainment giant Huayi Brothers Media Corporation's share price was almost halved last year, and Hengdian stock shed more than 20 percent. President Xi Jinping is waging a campaign to sanitize media content, which has resulted in a crackdown on art forms like rap, while even tattoos are believed to have been banned from television.



Actors film a scene for a Chinese TV series at Hengdian World Studios in Dongyang.

Investment 'bubble'

Historical shows like "Yanxi Palace" had seemed safe as they don't deal with contentious contemporary issues. But a commentary by Beijing Daily, an official Communist Party newspaper, last month touched off a debate by criticizing period dramas for glamorizing lavish imperial lifestyles and palace intrigue instead of promoting "the core values of socialism". Since then, similar shows appear to have gone into hiatus. "Yanxi" producer Yu said he felt his show was in line with Xi's goals of promoting and exporting Chinese culture.

"I think criticism is ok. But please don't cut (all period dramas) across the board," he told AFP in a phone interview. "China finally has a TV show that has been recognized by the world... Why can't we bring out China's good, luxurious things and let foreigners pay their respects?" Hengdian chairman Sang said optimistically the newspaper commentary could result in content with more "positive energy", while Chen, the analyst, said this will mean more traditional values.

Sang said demand remains high and he expects to see a shift toward better-developed plots, finely tuned production quality, and less reliance on big-name stars. "There was excessive, bubble-like, investment," Sang said. "Now, as people become rational and have calmed down, many good companies will have the opportunity to distance themselves from competitors." — AFP

Bollywood superstars test taboos with hip-hop blockbuster



Two of Bollywood's biggest stars have premiered "Gully Boy", a still rare female-directed blockbuster that pokes at enduring taboos, at the Berlin film festival. Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt threw their sizeable industry clout behind the tale, unveiled Saturday, of a couple yearning to break out of their Mumbai slum and traditional Muslim families to realize their dreams. "It's got commentary on the class divide, it's got commentary on choices young people make—whether they want to be stuck in something that gives them no fulfillment versus pursuing their passion," said Singh, whose character Murad has a meteoric rise after posting his first rap video online.

"I think it's got a whole variety of stuff embedded between the lines that may just have a positive social impact." Bhatt's character Safeena wears a traditional Muslim headscarf but resists her family's attempts to arrange her marriage and wants to become a surgeon. Murad and Safeena have loved each other since childhood but have to keep their relationship secret from their parents so they meet for illicit trysts.

"You can't really be so sure about who may get offended or who may not," Bhatt said of the film's touchier subjects. "My character Safeena, I don't think that she has a problem wearing her hijab and I don't think she has a problem with her culture. What she does have a problem with though is not being able to be honest with her parents."

'Flammable and volatile'

Singh, who does the rapping in the film inspired in part by Mumbai hip-hop stars Divine and Naezy, said it took nine months before he felt camera-ready. "I've been into rap and hip-hop since I was a little kid," he said. "I started out listening to MC Hammer and Vanilla Ice and Will Smith and graduated to a little bit harder gangsta rap like Tupac and Wu-Tang Clan and NWA then Eminem." The film sees Murad honing his talent and turning the squalor and tension of his home life into poetry until a popular local rapper convinces him to try hip-hop.

But soon Murad and his mother get kicked out of their home by his violent father, who forbids him to perform and has taken a much younger second wife. In a stunning scene, Murad's father tells his mother that she is useless in bed and she shouts back: "You have never learned to touch a woman properly." "To me, him getting married the second time is not as flammable and volatile to me as the fact that his first wife cannot afford to leave," director Zoya Akhtar told AFP.

"Because she's not fiscally empowered to leave and there's nowhere to go. That to me is the bigger problem."



Indian Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh showcases a creation of the "Love Jain" collection during the promotion of his upcoming Hindi film "Gully Boy" at the Lakmé Fashion Week (LFW) Summer Resort 2019.

"The fact is, they shouldn't be taboo subjects because they exist and it happens." Akhtar, who recently made an episode of the Netflix series "Lust Stories" exploring female sexuality, said she was a "huge fan of hip-hop" as a music of liberation.

"When I was editing my last film, my editor showed me a video of a 21-year-old kid called Naezy and he had recorded this track on a phone and it was put up on YouTube and he was singing about his life, his socio-economic space, his family and he had an insane flow, an incredible writing style and it was legit," she said. "I just realized there's an entire movement called Gully Rap—gully meaning street, lane. This urban youth is not represented in the mainstream at all and they're telling stories." "Gully Boy" culminates in a rap battle to be the opening act in Mumbai for US rapper Nas, who served as an executive producer on the film.

'A revolution'

Akhtar and her stars hailed a growing generation of female filmmakers in India. They also welcomed the gradual arrival in Bollywood of the #MeToo movement against sexual misconduct as well as the "Time's Up" campaign against industry sexism. "It's nothing short of a revolution and I think it's amazing. It really exploded and in that explosion there was some collateral damage," Singh said. "But I think it's a very significant point in history especially for a culture that has been patriarchal for eons." Bhatt agreed but said she feared a chilling effect in the industry.

"Maybe now a man will think not twice, maybe 15 times before even suggesting inappropriate conversations or inappropriate gestures," she said. "(But) I hope now people don't start looking at this as an excuse to not work with a woman or not give a woman a position." Akhtar said the debate, which has recently seen major names in the industry face accusations, was a "conversation that had to happen". "I think that the women that came out and spoke were very brave. They did suffer a backlash but they shifted the consciousness and I thank them for that." — AFP



Indian Bollywood actor Ranveer Singh and British actress Alia Bhatt pose on the red carpet before the premiere of the film "Gully boy" presented in the special gala section at the 69th Berlinale film festival in Berlin. — AFP photos

Classifieds

Monday, February 11, 2019



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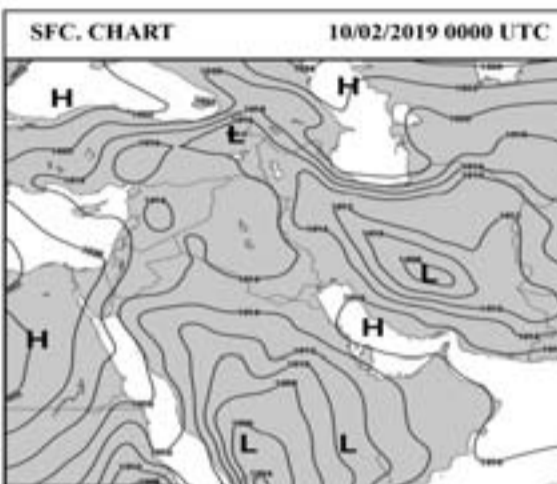
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 Fax: (+965) 24348714
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Visibility will improve gradually with light to moderate north westerly wind to variable wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Cold and Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate variable wind to north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 10/02/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	15 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	14 °C			
ABDALY	20 °C	12 °C			
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C			
JAHRA	22 °C	14 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	20 °C	14 °C			
SALMIYAH	19 °C	15 °C			
AHMADI	19 °C	16 °C			
NUWAISIB	23 °C	16 °C			
WAFRA	24 °C	15 °C			
SALMY	20 °C	12 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	02/11	Cold and with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	17 °C	11 °C	NW-SW	15 - 40 km/h
Tuesday	02/12	Cold with a chance for rising dust over open areas	18 °C	10 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Wednesday	02/13	Cool and some high clouds will appear	19 °C	10 °C	NW-SE	08 - 28 km/h
Thursday	02/14	Cool and Clouds will increase gradually with a chance for rising dust over open areas with a	20 °C	09 °C	SE	20 - 50 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:11
Sunrise	06:31
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:10
Sunset	17:33
Isha	18:51

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
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

LOST

69941055. (C 5444)
 11-2-2019

My Original Marks Certificate and Migration Certificate of Senior Secondary Examination of Year 2018, Roll No. 9104164 issued by CBSE has been actually lost. Walid Mohammed, holder of Passport No. BN0813411, Fahheel, Block 10, Building No. 10, Al Ahnaf Bin Quas Street, Kuwait / 66260751 &

Original document policy No. 633003889 Saghir Ahmed DV the State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan, Gulf Zone is reported to have been lost. Anyone finding the same or claiming any interest in it should communicate with the Manager Kuwait State Life Office - Ph: 22452208. (C5443)

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

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

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION



Arrival Flights on Monday 11/2/2019				Departure Flights on Monday 11/2/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10
THY	766	ISL	00:30	JZR	103	Bahrain	14:40
JZR	254	Amman	00:40	RBG	554	Alexandria	14:45
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	IRA	666	Esfahan	15:10
KAC	102	London	00:50	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KAC	743	Dammam	15:55
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:30
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	646	Muscat	16:35
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
JZR	502	Lahore	03:35	SAW	706	Damascus	17:00
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	613	Colombo	17:35
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:00
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	KAC	621	Doha	18:25
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	JZR	253	Amman	18:40
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
BAW	157	London	07:05	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
KAC	204	Lahore	07:10	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	357	Kochi	20:30
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:35
KAC	304	Mumbai	08:20	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	20:40
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:55
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	DLH	624	Dammam	21:30
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:50	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
JZR	702	Asyut	11:05	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15
JZR	122	Dubai	11:10	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
MSC	415	Sohag	11:15	AZQ	4566	Baku	22:30
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	KAC	303	Mumbai	22:30
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	383	Delhi	22:30
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	JAI	573	Mumbai	23:00
KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	QTR	1083	Doha	23:25
RBG	553	Alexandria	14:05	SVA	515	Riyadh	23:30
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	SVA	503	Jeddah	23:45

'Heavy clashes' as US-backed forces in final push against IS

OMAR OIL FIELD, Syria: US-backed forces were locked in fierce fighting yesterday as they pressed the battle against the last shred of the Islamic State group's "caliphate" in eastern Syria. The militants overran large parts of the country and neighbouring Iraq in 2014, but various military offensives have since reduced that territory to a patch on the Iraqi border. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), supported by a US-led coalition, announced a final push to retake the militant pocket late Saturday, after a pause of more than a week to allow civilians to flee.

SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali yesterday afternoon said his fighters had battled their way forwards against the militants, capturing 41 positions from them. "Our forces are relying on direct combat with light weapons," he told AFP. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor group said the SDF had advanced across farming land, backed by coalition air strikes and artillery fire. Earlier, an SDF field commander reported "heavy clashes" as his fighters gained ground.

The SDF launched an offensive to expel IS from the oil-rich eastern province of Deir Ezzor in September. The Kurdish-led alliance has since whittled down militant-held territory to a scrap of just four square kilometres between the Euphrates and the Iraqi border. Up to 600 militants could still remain inside, most of them foreigners, Bali said. Hundreds of civilians are also believed to be inside, he said.

Baghdadi 'not in Syria'

But Bali added the extremist group's elusive leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was likely not in the last pocket. "We do not think he is in Syria," Bali said, without adding further details about the whereabouts of the man who declared a cross-border IS "caliphate" in 2014. On the Iraqi side of the border, French members of the coalition on Saturday stood ready to pour fury on any militants trying to escape. Dozens of 155-mm shells were lined up ready to be loaded onto three

green-and-black Caesar gun-howitzers with a range of 40 km.

Coalition deputy commander Christopher Ghika last week said Iraqi forces had sealed their border with Syria. Since September, more than 1,270 IS militants, more than 670 SDF fighters, and around 400 civilians have been killed in the fighting, the Observatory says. At the height of their rule, the militants imposed their brutal interpretation of Islamic law on a territory roughly the size of Britain. But military offensives in both countries, including by the SDF, have since retaken the vast bulk of that "caliphate".

On Saturday, Bali said he expected the battle for the last patch of IS territory to be over in days. The militants however retain a presence in Syria's vast Badia desert, and have claimed a series of deadly attacks in SDF-held areas. Since December, more than 37,000 people, mostly wives and children of militant fighters, have fled out into SDF-held areas, the Observatory says. That figure includes some 3,400 suspected militants detained by the SDF, according to the monitor, which relies on sources inside Syria for its information.

US withdrawal

The SDF holds hundreds of foreigners accused of belonging to the extremist group in its custody, as well as members of their families. They have urged Western governments to repatriate their nationals, but politicians abroad have been reluctant. Relatives at home fear alleged foreign militants may end up facing tough justice in Iraq, where Human Rights Watch warned they could face "torture and unfair trials".

Yesterday, a Russian diplomatic source says Russia was repatriating 27 children whose mothers are being held in Iraq for belonging to IS. The issue of militant repatriation from Syria has come into sharper focus since the United States in December announced its military withdrawal from Syria. That announcement has seen the



QAMISHLI, Syria: Fighters from the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) attend the funeral of a fellow fighter from the Kurdish women's protection units (YPJ), who was killed while fighting against the Islamic State (IS), in this northeastern Syrian Kurdish-majority city on Saturday. — AFP

Kurds warn they may struggle to keep militants in jail, and pushed them to seek a new ally in the Damascus regime to prevent a long threatened Turkish offensive.

While the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) have been a key US ally in the

fight against IS, Ankara views them as "terrorists". Syria's Kurds have largely stayed out of the country's civil war, instead building semi-autonomous institutions in northern and northeastern regions they control. The conflict has killed more than 360,000

people and displaced millions since starting in 2011 with a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests. The regime has made a military comeback with Russian military support since 2015, and now holds almost two-thirds of Syria. — AFP

Palestinians walk pupils to school after monitors quit

HEBRON: Palestinians in the occupied West Bank city of Hebron walked children to school yesterday, saying protecting them from Israeli settlers was necessary following the withdrawal of international monitors. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced last month he would not renew the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), accusing it of bias. The mission left on Jan 31.

It was established after a massacre of Palestinians in 1994 and Palestinian officials warned the withdrawal of the international monitors could increase abuses by settlers in the city. Palestinians from the Youth Against Settlements organization accompanied children to schools in vests with the word "observer" written in English, Arabic and Hebrew, an AFP photographer said. "Today we started a local campaign to document

violations that children going to school are subject to in this area where there are always settlers and the occupation army," Issa Amro from the organization told AFP. "We will not replace the international observers, but we try as much as we can to make sure that the children go to school."

Small scuffles broke out between Israeli settlers, the Palestinians and Israeli soldiers during the walk, the AFP journalist said. TIPH was created after 29 Palestinian worshippers in a mosque were gunned down by an American-born Israeli settler. Observers carried out daily patrols and document rights abuses they witness, although they were not allowed to intervene.

The mission reported its findings to its member countries - Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and Turkey - as well as the Israeli and Palestinian authorities. Hebron is holy to both Muslims and Jews and has been a flashpoint in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. At least 600 Jewish settlers live under heavy military guard in the city, which is home to around 200,000 Palestinians. Israeli settlements are seen as illegal under international law and a major obstacle to peace, as they are built on land the Palestinians see as part of their future state. — AFP

Muslim lawmakers' criticism of Israel...

Continued from Page 1

"When I see Israeli institute laws that recognize it as a Jewish state and does not recognize the other religions that are living in it, and we still hold it as a democracy in the Middle East, I almost chuckle," she told Yahoo News. "Because I know that if we see that in another society we would criticize it - we do that to Iran, any other place that sort of upholds its religion."

Omar and Tlaib sparked the BDS controversy during a period when Donald Trump's administration has strengthened relations with Israel and slashed aid to the Palestinians. But Republicans saw their support for BDS as both a threat to Jews and an exploitable rift among Democrats. "Democrats have made it clear that hateful, bigoted rhetoric toward Israel is not confined to a few freshman members. This is the mainstream position of today's Democratic Party and their leadership is enabling it," Republicans said in a statement on Jan 29. Republican Congressman Lee Zeldin urged his colleagues "to reject the anti-Israel and anti-Semitic hatred that we are starting to see infiltrating American politics

and even the halls of Congress".

The worry about the still small but growing support for BDS in the United States predates Tlaib's and Omar's political rise. A number of states have passed or proposed constitutionally questionable legislation and policies that would penalize supporters of the boycott movement. But the arrival of Tlaib and Omar in Congress was greeted with the first proposed federal law to fight to that end, in the Senate.

Senator Marco Rubio argues that BDS aims to eliminate the state of Israel, and said his legislation would protect states' rights to exclude from public contracts any supporters of BDS. Republicans, the majority in the Senate, along with more than half of the Democrats approved the legislation. But a significant number of Democrats opposed it, because, they said, it violates constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression.

That has left Democrats vulnerable to charges of anti-Semitism. To fight that, in January prominent party members formed the Democratic Majority for Israel, touting themselves as "The Voice of Pro-Israel Democrats," which for some came across as a rebuke of Omar and Tlaib. After Omar joined the influential House Foreign Affairs Committee, according to The New York Times, Jewish committee Chairman Eliot Engel privately made it clear that he would not ignore any "particularly hurtful" remarks she might make. "You hope that when people are elected to Congress, they continue to grow," he reportedly told her. — AFP

expresses loyalty and love for our country, and I hope they enjoyed the celebration," he noted. The ceremony concluded with the national anthem by the military musical band, followed by a salute by two Apache helicopters.

Kuwait previously set a record for the world's longest flag in Feb 2016, after a remote-controlled plane pulled the flag during a show held in Mina Abdullah. Kuwait has recently set other flag-related world records. In December last year, three Kuwaiti army officers broke a Guinness skydiving world record after leaping 13,000 feet while carrying a 63-sq-m Kuwaiti flag. In the same month, Chevrolet achieved a Guinness World Records title for the largest flag flown by a vehicle after a pickup pulled a Kuwaiti flag measuring 433 sq m for more than 100 m without any part of it touching the ground.

Indian politician's murder sets stage for poll bloodshed

KOLKATA: Several thousand activists paraded through a West Bengal town yesterday with the body of a politician whose killing opened a campaign of violence ahead of India's general election. Satyajit Biswas, a lawmaker from the eastern state's ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC), was shot dead at point blank range by unidentified gunmen as he attended a ceremony for a Hindu goddess late Saturday.

His party blamed the arch rival Bharatiya Janata Party of Prime Minister Narendra Modi but its leaders denied any involvement. "We suspect a political link to the killing," said West Bengal deputy police chief Anuj Sharma. He added that two people had been arrested but would not say if they were from a party. Followers marched with the 38-year-old legislator's body from a hospital in Nadia district, about 120 km from Kolkata, to his home village.

Nadia, which borders Bangladesh, was a battleground between the TMC and BJP during civic polls last year. There were dozens of deaths during the campaign. Modi must soon announce a national

election expected to start in April and which will almost certainly see new bloodshed. Biswas "had been actively trying to prevent the BJP's foray into the community," said TMC general secretary Partha Chatterjee as he blamed the rival party for the "shocking killing".

West Bengal BJP chief Dilip Ghosh blamed the murder on splits in the TMC. "When there is a political killing, they accuse my party. Let there be a Central Bureau of Investigation inquiry, everything will become clear," he told AFP. West Bengal witnessed gruesome political murders around past elections with victims hacked to pieces and some burned alive along with entire slums.

There is a close link between criminal networks and political groups in the state, according to Sabyasachi Basu Roy Chowdhury, vice-chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University in West Bengal. "This has complicated the problem," he said. According to the Indian Express newspaper, in 2013 the Communist Party accused the TMC of killing 142 political opponents ahead of the last national election.

Political killings are rife across India. While National Crime Bureau data said there were more than 100 political murders in 2016, political experts said the figure is much higher. Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar states in the north are the worst for political murders, the government data shows. — AFP

Kagame steps down as Sisi...

Continued from Page 1

peaceful elections in DR Congo, Mali and Madagascar, peace deals in South Sudan and Central African Republic and the truce between Ethiopia and Eritrea, were however signs of a "wind of hope" on the continent.

Guterres also hailed the solidarity shown in Africa, where countries house nearly a third of refugees and displaced people in the world. "Despite the continent's own social, economic and security challenges, Africa's governments and people have kept borders, doors and hearts open to millions in need," he said. "Unfortunately, this example has not been followed everywhere."

The chairmanship of the AU rotates between the five regions of the continent, and South Africa will take over from Egypt next year. While multiple crises on the continent will be on the agenda of heads of state from the 55 member nations, the summit will also focus on institutional reforms, and the establishment of a continent-wide free trade zone. While the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) was agreed by 44 nations in March 2018, only 19 countries have so far ratified the agreement. It requires 22 to ratify it for it to come into effect.

The single market is a flagship of the AU's "Agenda 2063" program, conceived as key to transforming the continent's economies. Cairo is backing the initiative, but analysts say it will be less likely to focus on the financial and administrative reforms pushed by Kagame. Kagame, who has been leading institutional reforms since 2016, pushed for a continent-wide import tax to fund the AU and reduce its dependence on

external donors, who still pay for more than half the institution's annual budget.

But member states have resisted both this and moves to strengthen the powers of the AU Commission, its executive organ. In November 2018, most states rejected a proposal to give the head of the AU Commission the power to name deputies and commissioners. Egypt, like fellow regional heavyweights Nigeria and South Africa, is not keen on a powerful AU, one African diplomat told AFP. Cairo has "never forgotten" its suspension in 2013 after Egypt's army deposed Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, who had in 2012 become the country's first democratically elected president, the diplomat said.

"Traditionally, leaders of big powers have not really helped the position of AU chairperson, as they don't want an AU which is too strong or too intrusive," said Elissa Jobson of the International Crisis Group. Kagame suffered a setback after expressing "serious doubts" on behalf of the AU about the results of the Democratic Republic of Congo's recent presidential election, which was officially won by Felix Tshisekedi. The country's Catholic church had also questioned the result.

But the DRC's constitutional court validated the results anyway and continental heavyweights South Africa, Kenya and Egypt acknowledged Tshisekedi's victory. "This whole thing was an embarrassment for the AU, it showed the limitations of what the AU chairperson can do," said Jobson.

Amnesty International expressed fears that Egypt's chairmanship could undermine human rights in the AU. "During his time in power President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has demonstrated a shocking contempt for human rights," said Najia Bounaim, Amnesty's North Africa Campaigns Director. "Under his leadership the country has undergone a catastrophic decline in rights and freedoms," she added. — AFP

Kuwait sets new world record...

Continued from Page 1

fire department. Elementary students presented folk dances and other students addressed poems.

Mansour Al-Dihani, Director General of the Mubarak Al-Kabeer educational area, said the record is another addition to many previous records registered by Kuwaitis in various fields. "We worked on this project for a long time and it took lots of efforts. I thank all those who participated in this great achievement. The huge participation and attendance of the public

Sports

Pettersson's shootout goal leads Canucks past Flames

Atkinson's two goals tie it, win it for Blue Jackets

VANCOUVER: Jacob Markstrom stopped 44 shots through overtime and all three attempts in the shootout as the host Vancouver Canucks claimed a 4-3 shootout win over the Calgary Flames on Saturday night. Rookie Elias Pettersson scored the lone goal in the shootout as the Canucks snapped a three-game losing skid. Pettersson also collected two assists, giving him eight points in four games against the Flames this season and 50 overall on the season. The last three first-year players to collect 50 points or more through the first 45 games of their career are Alex Ovechkin, Evgeni Malkin and Sidney Crosby. Vancouver's Bo Horvat opened the scoring just 44 seconds into what turned into a see-saw affair. Shortly after the face-off, Chris Tanev sent the puck to Horvat alone at the side of the net, and Horvat quickly tallied his 19th goal of the season.

FLYERS 6, DUCKS 2

Sean Couturier collected one goal and two assists to lead the attack as surging Philadelphia rode a four-goal first period en route to a thrashing of visiting Anaheim. Carter Hart made 30 saves for the Flyers, who are on a 9-0-1 run. Couturier has netted four goals and nine points in a six-game point streak. Phil Varone started the party by opening the scoring 2:44 into the affair. With the Flyers up 3-0, the Ducks made a game of it with a pair of power-play goals, the first by Adam Henrique 51 seconds into the second period and the second by Nick Ritchie 4:57 into the third period, but Nolan Patrick's goal with 7:45 left quashed any comeback hopes.

MAPLE LEAFS 4, CANADIENS 3 (OT)

John Tavares scored at 2:17 of overtime as visiting Toronto defeated Montreal. Tavares scored his 33rd goal of the season on a backhand shot from the slot after a pass from Mitch Marner. It was the 12th career overtime goal for Tavares, who also had an assist in the game. Andreas Johansson, Nikita Zaitsev and William Nylander also scored goals for the Maple Leafs. Morgan Rielly added two assists. Andrew Shaw had a goal and assist, Tomas Tatar and Brendan Gallagher each scored a goal, and Max Domi added two assists for the Canadiens.

BRIUNS 5, KINGS 4 (OT)

Patrice Bergeron scored a power-play goal 2:34 into overtime as host Boston skated to victory over Los Angeles, as Boston made Los Angeles pay for Ilya Kovalchuk's tripping penalty in overtime. Bergeron wired a shot from the right circle that sailed inside the far post. The goal was the 20th of the season for the four-time Selke Trophy recipient, marking the 10th time he's reached

that scoring plateau. Brad Marchand, Danton Heinen and defenseman Charlie McAvoy each collected a goal and an assist for the Bruins. Kings captain Anze Kopitar scored his team-leading 17th goal, and Alex Iafallo added a power-play tally for the Kings.

PANTHERS 5, CAPITALS 4 (OT)

Mike Hoffman scored a power-play goal 1:31 into overtime and gave goalie Roberto Luongo a victory in his 1,000th career start as Florida defeated host Washington. Keith Yandle (one goal, one assist) made a cross-ice pass to Hoffman on the right side, and he had an open net for the extra-man goal. Luongo finished with 26 saves and reached two milestones. He also tied Patrick Roy for second place on the all-time list for games played by a goalie (1,029). Luongo needs one more win to tie Ed Belfour (484) for third place all-time in that category.

LIGHTNING 5, PENGUINS 4

Third-period goals by Tyler Johnson and J.T. Miller lifted Tampa Bay over visiting Pittsburgh as the Lightning picked up their 40th win—the sixth straight season with 40-plus victories for the franchise. Johnson scored at 4:54 and Miller at 14:03, each from the left circle. Lightning goaltender Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 28 Penguins shots. Anthony Cirelli had a goal and an assist, Yanni Gourde and Erik Cernak also scored, and Alex Killorn had two assists for Tampa Bay, which avoided its first three-game losing streak of the season.

BLUE JACKETS 4, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3

Cam Atkinson scored two goals in the third period, including the game-winner with 2:39 remaining, and Artemi Panarin had a goal and two assists to lead Columbus over Vegas in Las Vegas. They were the 30th and 31st goals of the season for Atkinson, who hit the 30-goal mark for the second time in the last three seasons. Josh Anderson tied his career-high with his 19th goal for the Blue Jackets, who extended their winning streak to three games by sweeping their western road trip, which also included victories at Colorado (6-3) and Arizona (4-2).

ISLANDERS 4, AVALANCHE 3 (OT)

Ryan Pulock scored 2:23 into overtime, and New York rallied to beat Colorado in Brooklyn, N.Y. Pulock finished with two goals. Jordan Eberle had a goal and an assist, and Josh Bailey also scored. Robin Lehner had 25 saves for New York, and Pulock got the winner when Casey Cizikas fed him at the right circle and he beat Semyon Varlamov for his fifth goal of the season. Carl Soderberg had a goal



VANCOUVER: Erik Gudbranson #44 of the Vancouver Canucks checks Matthew Tkachuk #19 of the Calgary Flames off the puck in NHL action on Saturday at Rogers Arena in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. — AFP

and two assists, Erik Johnson and J.T. Compher also scored and Varlamov stopped 37 shots for Colorado. The Avalanche have lost six straight, the last two in overtime, and are 1-10 in games decided after regulation.

SHARKS 5, OILERS 2

Kevin Labanc recorded his first career hat trick to lift visiting San Jose over Edmonton as Joe Thornton set up Labanc's first and third goals to tie Hall of Famer Gordie Howe for ninth place on the NHL's all-time assists list with 1,049. The 39-year-old Thornton was playing in his 1,540th game, tying Shane Doan and Hall of Famer Johnny Bucyk for 15th place in NHL history. Evander Kane scored his eighth goal in eight contests to reach the 400-point plateau for his career, before adding an assist on Labanc's power-play tally in the second period.

SENATORS 5, JETS 2

Mark Stone scored twice and Anders Nilsson made 44 saves as Ottawa earned a win over visiting Winnipeg as Stone's 25th goal of the season put him just one behind his

single-season career high. After allowing 53 shots in a 5-2 loss to the Montreal Canadiens on Thursday, the Jets came out flat for the second consecutive game. Multiple turnovers in the opening minutes gave the Senators the early advantage, including a Rudolphs Balcers takeaway that set up Stone's first goal. Matt Duchene marked his 700th NHL game with both an assist and a goal, getting the final touch on a scramble in front of Winnipeg's net 12:39 into the second period.

SABRES 3, RED WINGS 1

Buffalo's Casey Mittelstadt and Kyle Okposo scored on power plays in a decisive three-goal second period as the Sabres downed visiting Detroit. Conor Sheary also scored a goal for the Sabres, who improved to 5-1-0 in afternoon games this season. Buffalo is 7-2-1 against Detroit since the start of the 2016-17 campaign. Dylan Larkin scored for the Red Wings, who dropped their second straight and have lost both meetings against Buffalo this season. Thomas Vanek and Andreas Athanasiou each registered assists. — Reuters



Amir's 8th International Shooting Grand Prix begins

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah 8th International Shooting Grand Prix opened on Saturday evening. Representative of HH the Amir, Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malik Al-Sabah, said after the opening ceremony he was proud to represent HH the Amir in this event which has 420 shooters representing 42 countries participating.

He said the patronage of HH the Amir of this tournament reflects the keenness and interest of the political leadership in youth in various fields. He said the large international participation shows how important and precious this tournament is.

Director General of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh said Kuwait Shooting Sport Club

Organization of this tournament comes as a continuation of its outstanding performance be it in housing the largest sports events or achieving good results in various places.

Fulaiteh urged local federations and clubs to care for improving the technical level of national teams in order to make more achievements.

Meanwhile, President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi lauded the Amiri patronage of this championship for making it one of the important championship in Asia.

The official competitions began yesterday with the competition of 10m air rifle for men and women, 50m men pistol and 10m air pistol that in addition to official training for men and women's trap.

President of Egyptian and African Shooting

Federation and First Deputy of Arab Shooting Federation President Maj Gen Hazim Hosni lauded the opening ceremony, adding that all expect surprises by Kuwait Shooting Federation. He said Kuwait has the best ranges at world level.

Italian shooter Ferrari Petroni lauded the shooting complex, adding that his participation won due to its reputation. He said that he recently won third place in World Cup, and this pushes him to win a medal in the Grand Prix. Kazakhstan shooter Emilia said she has lots of information about Kuwait shooting in general and the Grand Prix in particular, as Kazakhstan is keen on participating in the Grand Prix, which includes many world shooters. She said the timing of the tournament is ideal and provides a good opportunity to get ready for the season.



Vonn in bronze as Stuhec defends world downhill

ARE: US ski star Lindsey Vonn brought her illustrious career to a close with a hard-fought bronze at Sunday's world downhill which was won by defending champion Ilka Stuhec of Slovenia. Vonn, the most successful women skier of all time with a record 20 World Cup titles to her name and 82 victories on the circuit, clocked 1min 02.23sec, briefly leading before slipping behind Stuhec and Swiss silver medalist Corinne Suter in the Swedish resort of Are.

"It was so fun, I was literally the most nervous I've ever been in my entire life," Vonn told Eurosport. "I wanted to come down and be in the lead for one last time and to hear the crowd roar and to not crash."

"I'm always full tilt and always on the limit. I was worried that I'd charge too hard and not make it down for my last race - that's my worst nightmare." While all the build-up had been about Vonn, Stuhec became the first skier to successfully defend the women's downhill world title since Swiss Maria Walliser (1987, 1989), with only three others having previously won twice in a row.

"It's been high, it's been low, now I'm here again," said Stuhec. "There are a lot of girls who are skiing super great and every race is super tight and everyone has a lot of chances. "I knew I could ski fast, I just needed to get confidence and stop putting too much pressure on myself, just ski and enjoy."

Vonn herself joined Kjetil Andre Aamodt (seven separate years), Marc Girardelli (six), and Aksel Lund Svindal (nine) as the only skiers to have collected a medal at six World Ski Championships. At 34 years and 115 days old, she also became the oldest world medalist, performing in front of an onlooking Ingemar Stenmark, the Swedish skiing legend whose record of 86 World Cup victories Vonn will not now break. For her final downhill, the American donned a blue and grey helmet and white catsuit, with blue and yellow lines around her sleeves, lower leg and midriff in what she said was both a nod to host country Sweden and to honour nemesis Stenmark. Racing with bib number three, Vonn, who admitted this season that her "body is broken beyond repair" and faces a knee reconstruction in the near future, had laid out her mindset in an Instagram post just before the race.—AFP



ARE: Third placed US' Lindsey Vonn (R) poses with former Swedish ski champion Ingemar Stenmark during the flowers ceremony after the Women's Downhill event of the 2019 FIS Alpine Ski World Championships at the National Arena in Are, Sweden yesterday. — AFP

Sports

George's 45 tops Harden's 42 as Thunder eke out win

Absent Antetokounmpo, Bucks routed by Magic

HOUSTON: Paul George outgunned James Harden in a matchup of MVP candidates, and the Oklahoma City Thunder erased a 26-point deficit to escape with a 117-112 win over the host Houston Rockets on Saturday. George finished with a game-high 45 points plus 11 rebounds, torching the Houston defense with six 3-pointers plus 15-for-18 free throws. Westbrook matched an NBA record set by Wilt Chamberlain with his ninth consecutive triple-double: 21 points, 12 rebounds, and 11 assists. The Thunder posted a 53-39 edge on the glass. Harden totaled 42 points, his 29th consecutive game with at least 30, but he missed a contested 3-pointer after Westbrook pushed the Thunder ahead.

MAGIC 103, BUCKS 83

Orlando took advantage of the absence of Giannis Antetokounmpo, snapping host Milwaukee's six-game winning streak. Jonathan Isaac led the Magic in scoring for the first time this season with 17 points. Eric Bledsoe led Milwaukee with 19 points, 11 rebounds and five assists, and Malcolm Brogdon added 14 points. It was Milwaukee's most lopsided loss and the fewest points they've scored all season. Orlando has won four of its last five and is now 2 1/2 games out of the eighth seed in the Eastern Conference.

CLIPPERS 123, CELTICS 112

Landry Shamet made four 3-pointers in the fourth quarter and scored 17 points off the bench in his debut for Los Angeles, which rallied from a 28-point deficit to knock off host Boston. It's the third time in the past five games the Clippers have come from at least 20 points down to win, with the 28-point rally setting a franchise record. It was also the largest comeback by any NBA team in the last two seasons. Montrezl Harrell led Los Angeles with 21 points off the bench, and Danilo Gallinari had 19 points and 10 rebounds. Gordon Hayward scored 19 points off the bench to lead the Celtics, who lost leading scorer Kyrie Irving to a right knee sprain with about four minutes left in the first half.

HORNETS 129, HAWKS 120

Kemba Walker was 13-for-27 from the field and 9-for-17 on 3-pointers in reaching the 30-point mark for the fourth straight game, scoring 37 as Charlotte

defeated host Atlanta. It was the 40th time that Walker has topped 20 points and the 17th time he's scored at least 30 this season. He added seven assists. Charlotte's Marvin Williams came back to haunt his former team with 27 points. Atlanta was led by John Collins with 21 points, and rookie Trae Young added 20 points and 11 assists.

PACERS 105, CAVALIERS 90

Bojan Bogdanovic led a balanced offense with 23 points, the fifth time in his last six games he has topped 20 points, as host Indiana avenged a home loss in December to the Cavaliers. Cory Joseph came off the bench to finish with 10 points, nine rebounds and 10 assists. Domantas Sabonis did not score in the first half, but finished with 13 points and 10 rebounds, also off the bench. Reserve Jordan Clarkson scored 18 points to lead Cleveland, which has lost four straight and 10 of its last 12.

GRIZZLIES 99, PELICANS 90

Joakim Noah had 19 points and 14 rebounds as host Memphis, playing its first home game since making two trades at Thursday's deadline, defeated New Orleans. Justin Holiday added 15 points, rookie Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 14, newcomer CJ Miles had 13, Mike Conley II and Ivan Rabb 10. Miles and Delon Wright, who were part of the trade that sent Marc Gasol to Toronto, made their debuts, as did guard Avery Bradley, who was acquired in a separate deal with the Clippers. Julius Randle led the Pelicans with 21 points, Jrue Holiday had 15, Anthony Davis had 14 points and 16 rebounds and rookie Kenrich Williams had 10 points and 13 rebounds.

WIZARDS 134, BULLS 125

Jabari Parker and Bobby Portis made a triumphant return to Chicago, helping Washington win its second straight game. The meeting was the first since Washington acquired Parker and Portis from Chicago at the trade deadline for Otto Porter Jr. All three played significant roles when their two new clubs won the front end of back-to-backs on Friday, with the Wizards beating Cleveland at home, while the Bulls surprised Brooklyn on the road. Parker had 20 points, and Portis had a game-high 12 rebounds in Saturday's win, during



HOUSTON: James Harden #13 of the Houston Rockets handles the ball against Russell Westbrook #0 of the Oklahoma City Thunder on Saturday at the Toyota Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

which the Wizards built a 15-point lead in the first half and kept the Bulls at arm's length the rest of the way. Porter, who made a pair of 3-pointers, finished with 17 points for Chicago.

RAPTORS 104, KNICKS 99

Kyle Lowry scored a game-high 22 points and hit a 3-pointer with 7:03 remaining that gave Toronto the lead for good in fending off host New York. Serge Ibaka registered a double-double (15 points and 13 rebounds) for the Raptors, who have won four consecutive games. Marc Gasol, playing his first game for the Raptors since he was acquired from the Memphis Grizzlies on Thursday, scored seven points and pulled down six rebounds in 19 minutes as a reserve. Kevin

Knox scored 20 points, and DeAndre Jordan posted a double-double with 10 points and 18 rebounds for the Knicks, who tied a franchise record by losing their 16th straight game.

JAZZ 125, SPURS 105

Donovan Mitchell scored 23 points and Rudy Gobert added 21 points and 13 rebounds to lead host Utah to its second straight win while sending San Antonio to its fourth straight loss in Salt Lake City, Utah. Royce O'Neale matched his season-high with 17 points off the bench as the Jazz had six players score in double figures. DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points and LaMarcus Aldridge added 15 to lead the Spurs. — Reuters

Reprieved Stokes and Buttler lead England recovery

GROS-ISLET: Jos Buttler and Ben Stokes featured in England's best partnership of a deeply disappointing series as they lifted their team to 231 for four at stumps on the opening day of the third and final Test against the West Indies on Saturday.

Put in to bat by West Indies stand-in captain Kraigg Brathwaite, and seeking to regain some lost prestige after already surrendering the series and the Wisden Trophy, the fifth-wicket pair played with increasing fluency through an extended final session in putting on 124 runs to the close of play at the Darren Sammy Stadium.

It was England's first century partnership of the series with Buttler getting to 67 and Stokes reaching 62 at the close. Both made the most of lucky escapes. Buttler's first scoring shot was an edge off Shannon Gabriel to which a leaping Shimron Hetmyer at second slip could only get his fingertips.

Stokes was caught and bowled on 52 by Alzarri Joseph and was already in the England dressing room when he got the call to return to the middle as the lanky fast bowler had delivered a no-ball.

"We've been disappointed with the

way we've played," said Stokes at the end of the day in reflecting on defeats by 381 runs and ten wickets in the first two Tests. "This is still a challenging wicket so to come off (the field) four wickets down, we're pleased with that."

England's contented mood at the end of the day was in sharp contrast to the situation just three hours earlier as Joe Root's personal tale of batting woe on this disastrous Caribbean campaign continued.

He fell to Joseph for the third consecutive innings just before the tea interval, wafting at an innocuous delivery from Joseph to give a simple catch to wicket-keeper Shane Dowrich. Root's painstaking innings of 15 off 54 deliveries leaves him with a tally of just 54 runs from five innings, typifying England's desperate struggles with the bat from their first innings of the series when they were routed at Kensington Oval for just 77 on the way to a 381-run mauling.

Gabriel, the fastest of the West Indies bowlers, was the other wicket-taker in the afternoon session, removing Joe Denly with an lbw decision that again highlighted the technical deficiencies of many of England's top-order batsmen.

Yet while he lacks the pace of Gabriel, Joseph and Kemar Roach, Keemo Paul was the star with the ball for the hosts on day one, making an immediate impact with a wicket with the first ball he bowled in the morning.

Drafted into the final eleven as replacement for regular skipper Jason Holder, Paul ended Keaton Jennings' tortuous occupation of the crease when the opening batsman fell for the third time in



GROS ISLET: Ben Stokes (L) of England and Roston Chase (R) of West Indies collide during day 1 of the 3rd and final Test between West Indies and England at Darren Sammy Cricket Ground, Gros Islet, Saint Lucia. — AFP

three innings in the series to catches in the slip cordon.

Dropped earlier by Roston Chase at third slip off Roach, Jennings failed to make the most of the reprieve as the left-hander drove loosely at the seam bowling all-rounder's opening delivery midway through the session to depart for eight off 43 balls via a Darren Bravo catch at first slip.

Paul then removed the other opener, Rory Burns, leg-before for 29 early into the afternoon session. Jennings was

dropped from the England eleven after failing in both innings of the first Test in Barbados, which allowed Denly to make his Test debut in Antigua.

He is one of two changes to the tourists' eleven as left-handed all-rounder Sam Curran was omitted in preference for fast bowler Mark Wood. West Indies' only change to the victorious team from the first two matches was forced by the International Cricket Council's decision to ban Holder for a slow over rate. —AFP

US WCup defender, veteran coach Clavijo dead

CHICAGO: Fernando Clavijo, a US 1994 World Cup defender who became a top coach, has died at age 63 after a battle with cancer, his family announced Saturday.

Uruguayan-born Clavijo died Friday at his home in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, after a five-year fight with multiple myeloma, cancer of plasma cells (white blood cells). A career that spanned more than 45 years as a player, coach and technical director led to Clavijo being inducted into the US Soccer Hall of Fame in 2005.

"All of us in the US Soccer family are deeply saddened by the passing of Fernando Clavijo, one of the pioneers of soccer in the United States," said US Soccer Federation president Carlos Cordeiro.

"As a player, a coach, a mentor and a friend, Fernando impacted the lives of generations of people involved in the sport to which he dedicated his life.

Our thoughts today are with his family and friends as we reflect on his great legacy."

No details regarding funeral and memorial services were announced. "It is with deep sadness that we share the news of Fernando Clavijo's passing on February 8 after a courageous battle with cancer," the Clavijo family said in a statement.

"The support and encouragement he received from friends and the entire soccer community throughout his fight will always be appreciated. "At this time the Clavijo family requests privacy as we mourn the loss of a great man."

Clavijo, who played indoor soccer from 1981 through 1992, had 61 caps for the United States from 1990 through 1994. He served as coach of Major League Soccer's New England Revolution from 2000-2002 and the Colorado Rapids from 2005-2008, serving as coach for the Haiti national team in between.

Since 2012, he served as technical director for MLS side FC Dallas, stepping down last September to focus on health issues. "Major League Soccer deeply mourns the passing of Fernando Clavijo, a gifted player, coach and sporting director," MLS commissioner Don Garber said.

"Fernando was an important leader with three MLS clubs and he played a key role in the league's



Fernando Clavijo

player development strategy. More importantly, he was a joy to everyone who knew him and inspired countless young players.

"Fernando fought cancer with strength, courage and grace, and we are all heartbroken by the news of his passing." — AFP

Australia can win World Cup with Smith and Warner: Ponting

MELBOURNE: Australia can successfully defend its World Cup title in England this year with Steve Smith and David Warner back in the fray, newly-appointed assistant coach Ricky Ponting said yesterday.

His upbeat assessment comes despite the misfiring team losing its two most recent ODI series at home, to India and South Africa. "Absolutely, I actually do," said Ponting when asked in Melbourne if Australia could win the World Cup.

"India and England are probably the two standout teams right now but if you add Warner and Smith back into that lineup, I think that team looks as strong as any. "Conditions in England will suit our style of play," added Ponting, who was appointed on Friday as assistant to coach Justin Langer for the World Cup, focusing on the batting group.

The former national captain is hugely experienced in the one-day game, playing at five World Cups and winning at three. "I think I have a pretty good grasp on what it takes for tournaments like that," he said. "Hopefully I can have an impact right from the start. The feedback from the boys has been positive."

Ponting, a close ally of Langer, will start after Australia's upcoming one-day tours against India and Pakistan. Smith and Warner are available for selection again from March 29, when their one-year bans for ball-tampering expire. Cameron Bancroft, who was suspended for nine months, is already back playing.

"Once we get Warner and Smith and Bancroft back into the fray, and looking ahead to the World Cup, I don't think they'll be too many better teams on paper. "You've got a lot of experience as well as a fair bit of youth going into that tournament," he added.

"Any team I've been a part of, we've always had a really good mix of youth and experience and this current group will certainly have that going into the World Cup." Ponting, who played 375 one-dayers and 168 Tests, previously worked as an assistant with Australia's Twenty20 side in 2017 and 2018.

He also accompanied Langer during his first tour to England—after taking over as head coach from Darren Lehmann last April following the tampering scandal in South Africa. Ponting suggested he could be available for the Twenty20 World Cup next year, although his commenting duties during the Australian summer made it hard for him to commit to Test cricket. —AFP

Sports

Spurs sink Leicester to stay in Premier League title hunt

Leicester have lost four of their last five league games

LONDON: Tottenham kept alive their bid to gate-crash the Premier League title race as Davinson Sanchez's first goal for the club and Hugo Lloris's penalty save inspired a 3-1 win over Leicester yesterday.

Mauricio Pochettino's side took the lead through Sanchez's first half header, but they were indebted to Lloris for keeping out Jamie Vardy's spot-kick after the interval at Wembley.

Christian Eriksen netted moments later and although Vardy got one back, Son Heung-min's late strike ensured third-placed Tottenham clinched a fifth win in their last six league games.

The north Londoners are five points off the top of the table as they try to catch pace-setters Liverpool and Manchester City. While Tottenham are still outsiders to win their first English title since 1961, their ability to stay in contention, despite injuries to key players Harry Kane and Dele Alli suggests they should not be completely written off.

This gritty success was the ideal preparation for hosting Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League last 16 first leg on Wednesday. Leicester have lost four of their last five league games, increasing the pressure on under-fire boss Claude Puel.

Puel has reportedly lost the support of several influential players, including England striker Vardy, who was left on the bench for the first 60 minutes before coming on to miss the penalty with his first touch.

With the Dortmund clash looming on Wednesday, Pochettino tweaked his team, leaving out Toby Alderweireld and Lucas Moura and recalling Fernando Llorente. Llorente was caught napping early on when Harry Maguire evaded the Spanish striker's marking and met James Maddison's free-kick with a towering header that Hugo Lloris tipped over.

That chance was symptomatic of a disjointed start

from Tottenham. Leicester's Harvey Barnes was allowed too much space in the penalty area as he raced onto Yuri Tielemans' pass, but a poor finish wasted a gilt-edged chance.

Finally piecing together an incisive raid, Tottenham were furious when Son's penalty appeal ended in a booking for diving after Maguire stuck out a leg to halt the South Korean.

Pochettino's men channelled their frustration into a sustained assault on the Leicester goal.

Danny Rose's surging run ended with a close-range effort that brought a good save from Kasper Schmeichel. Tottenham kept pressing and were rewarded with a well-worked 33rd minute opener.

Trippier's short corner found the unmarked Christian Eriksen and he whipped a pin-point cross towards Sanchez six yards from goal. Leicester called for off-side, but their protests were in vain as Sanchez launched himself into a diving header that flashed past Schmeichel.

Replays showed the Colombia defender was just outside as he scored his first goal for Tottenham since his 2017 move from Ajax. Demarai Gray should have done better than head Ricardo Pereira's cross tamely at Lloris from 10 yards out soon after the interval.

Leicester's positive start to the second half brought a golden opportunity to equalise with their 60th minute penalty. A rapid exchange of passes opened up a chance for Maddison, prompting Jan Vertonghen to rashly bundle over the midfielder.

Vardy had been warming up in preparation and was immediately introduced, jogging forward to take the ball from Maddison. But Lloris came to Tottenham's rescue, plunging to his right to keep out Vardy's spot-kick. Tottenham made the most of their escape as Eriksen doubled the lead three minutes later. Llorente



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's South Korean striker Son Heung-Min (R) scores his team's third goal during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Leicester City at Wembley Stadium in London. —AFP

pounced on Pereira's poor clearance and teed up Eriksen for a superb strike from the edge of the area for his first goal since January 1.

Vardy gave Leicester hope in the 76th minute,

pouncing from close-range to convert Pereira's cross in typically predatory fashion. But Son had the last word in the 90th minute as the winger raced clear to slot past Schmeichel for his 15th goal of the season. —AFP

Six of world's top 10 to play in Qatar

DOHA: Despite the loss of world number one Naomi Osaka through injury, six of the women's top 10 players descend on Doha this week for the Qatar Open. Australian Open champion — and the sport's new superstar-Osaka withdrew last week due to a back injury, leaving a big hole to fill for tournament organisers, which they have done with a strong field including three former world number ones.

Simona Halep is now the top seed and the Romanian will be joined by the Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova

and Germany's Angelique Kerber as the top seeds. All three were formerly at the top of the women's rankings, Halep only being ousted by Osaka last month after Melbourne.

Halep, now ranked three in the world, and Kerber, sixth, are both Grand Slam winners. Pliskova, the world number five, is a former US Open finalist. Kerber is the first of these to arrive in Doha as she seeks to erase the memory of her crushing straight sets fourth round defeat against Danielle Collins in Australia.

"It's a tough draw [in Doha]," Kerber told reporters yesterday. "But this is a challenge, and I'm always looking forward to coming here." All three top seeds have a good record in Qatar.

Halep and Kerber met in the 2014 final, with the Romanian winning, and Pliskova won the title two years ago. World number seven Elina Svitolina of Ukraine-a

wildcard replacement for Osaka-is the fourth seed.

Also in Doha from the top 10 will be world number eight Kiki Bertens of the Netherlands and Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki, ranked tenth. The Dane was the runner-up to Pliskova in 2017.

Svitolina said she had changed her mind about playing in Doha after initially deciding she needed more rest after Australia where she struggled with a shoulder and neck injury. But the 24-year-old now feels she is ready to return to the court earlier than anticipated.

"This tournament, you know, here is always tough," she said. "Everyone wants to play, everyone wants to play well. That's why it makes it not easy at all." The top four seeds are expected to be in action from tomorrow.

Halep and Pliskova could meet in the final in Doha, just days after the pair were set to meet against each other this weekend in the Fed Cup. —AFP

PSG's Cavani out of Man Utd game with torn thigh muscle

PARIS: Edinson Cavani will sit out the first leg of Paris Saint-Germain's Champions League encounter with Manchester United, French sports daily L'Equipe and the daily Parisien newspaper reported yesterday, while club coach Thomas Tuchel described his participation as highly unlikely.

L'Equipe reported that a medical on Sunday had revealed a torn thigh muscle and suggested Cavani, known as El Matador for his clinical finishing skills, would also miss the return leg March 6. Earlier yesterday Tuchel described Cavani's situation, stemming from a fiercely converted penalty on Saturday, as bleak.

"There is no good news for Edi this morning, there are still examinations today at our training centre, the club will speak a little later, but in my opinion the news is not going to be very good," Tuchel said.

"It will be very difficult for him to play." The Uruguayan centre-forward has scored 17 times in the French league and twice in the Champions League this season. PSG visit Old Trafford on Tuesday for the first leg of their encounter in the round-of-16, the stage at which the French champions went out in the last two seasons. Cavani suffered what L'Equipe reported Sunday as a torn thigh muscle, probably when blasting home the 42nd minute penalty that gave PSG a 1-0 victory in Bordeaux. He did not play the second half. "We always hope but the first exams are not good," Tuchel said. He said the club would make a statement later in



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Uruguayan forward Edinson Cavani jumps for the ball during the French L1 football match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and FC Girondins de Bordeaux at the Parc des Princes Stadium, in Paris, on Saturday. —AFP

the day. PSG will already be missing superstar striker Neymar, sidelined until at least April with a foot injury. Tuchel said there was good news for another of his key players, midfielder Marco Verratti who started against Bordeaux after three weeks out with an ankle problem.

"Verratti can play and will play," said the German coach. "I'm worried because we are missing key players," said Tuchel. "For the big games in the Champions League, it is absolutely necessary to have key players with a lot of experience". —AFP

Matches on TV		
Live		
(Local Timings)		
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Wolverhampton Wanderers v Newcastle United	23:00	
<small>beIN SPORTS HD 2</small>		
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Deportivo Alaves v Levante	23:00	
<small>beIN SPORTS HD 3</small>		

Davis destroys Ruiz to retain WBA super featherweight title

LOS ANGELES: Gervonta Davis retained his World Boxing Association super featherweight world title with a vicious first-round knockout of former world champion Hugo Ruiz on Saturday. Unbeaten Davis lived up to his knockout-artist reputation with his 20th win inside the distance out of his 21 victories.

The powerful southpaw hurt Ruiz with a straight left and then followed up with a three-punch combination capped by a right hook to the side of Ruiz's face that dropped the challenger to a knee.

Ruiz, blood streaming from his nose, was able to rise but referee Jack Reiss called a halt at 2:59 of the first round. "Tonight I just wanted to put on a great performance," said Davis, who posted his 12th straight knockout.

Ruiz was a late replacement for three-division champion Abner Mares, who withdrew from the bout two weeks ago with a detached retina in his right eye. Ruiz, a former super bantamweight world champion, was coming off a unanimous 12-round decision over Alberto Guevara on the undercard of Manny Pacquiao's 12-round demolition of Adrien Broner and took the fight on 10 days' notice.

Reiss said he stopped the fight when Ruiz failed to say if he felt he could continue. "Ruiz didn't answer me," Reiss said. I told them clearly in the dressing room that you've got to show me you want to be in this fight.

"When I asked him 'Can you continue' in Spanish he kind of just looked down and didn't answer. He was really hurt, that nose was broken earlier and then he got hit on it again." —AFP

Big spenders under pressure to deliver Champions League returns in last 16

MANCHESTER: One of Europe's traditional financial powerhouses Manchester United meet the nouveau riche Paris Saint-Germain as the Champions League last 16 gets underway tomorrow with both sides hoping to finally reap some reward on the biggest stage from record levels of investment.

Despite splashing hundreds of millions on new players since taking over in 2011, PSG's Qatari owners have not been able to buy success in the competition they crave the most with four successive quarter-final exits

between 2013 and 2016 the furthest they have progressed.

Barcelona and Real Madrid have ended the French champions' dreams at this stage in each of the past two seasons. Once again in the last 16 PSG must face one of the few clubs in the world that can boast greater revenue than they can thanks to United's commercial power and the riches of the Premier League's TV contracts.

But, unlike the two Spanish giants who have used their financial muscle to win seven of the last 10 Champions League titles between them, United have made even less of an impression on the competition than PSG since making three finals in four years between 2008 and 2011.

Both clubs can be accused of being too star struck in their transfer policy, more focused on big names that reign in lucrative commercial deals than striking the right balance on the field to compete with the best when the margins become fine in the knockout stages of the Champions League.

Hitting form and finding fortune at the right time of the season is also key as PSG have found to their cost in the case of the world's most expensive player Neymar.

The Brazilian will miss both legs of the tie against United due to a metatarsal injury in his right foot, the same problem that forced him to miss the second leg of PSG's defeat to Madrid last year.

Should Thomas Tuchel's men not make it past a United rejuvenated under caretaker boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer, Neymar, the man signed to lead PSG to Champions League glory, will have played one knockout game in two years since his 222-million-euro (\$252 million) move from Barcelona.

Uniting Neymar in a stellar forward line alongside Kylian Mbappe and Edinson Cavani has also left PSG short-handed in other areas due to financial fair play restrictions, particularly in central midfield.

United have made similar mistakes in the six years since Alex Ferguson retired and only now under a former pupil of the Scot in Solskjaer are recovering some of the principles that once made them a dominant force in Europe. "That is what we have to strive for. If we don't dream and we don't have that vision of where we are going, then we will just falter," said Solskjaer.

"So for us, or me, I am only used to this club challenging for trophies so that is where I see us."

Angel di Maria's return to Old Trafford as a PSG player is a reminder of his one underwhelming season for United after joining for a then British record £60 million (\$78 million).

Romelu Lukaku and Alexis Sanchez have failed to make a sustained impact despite big-money moves and have fallen behind a homegrown talent in Marcus Rashford in Solskjaer's pecking order. And even Paul Pogba has only begun to deliver on his £89 million fee in the two months since Solskjaer took charge after a long-running feud with previous boss Jose Mourinho.

However, United and PSG are not alone in funding the arms race to Champions League glory. Juventus spent 112 million euros on a 33-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo in July to take them one step further after reaching the final in 2015 and 2017, when Ronaldo scored twice in a 4-1 win for Madrid.

Ronaldo returns to the Spanish capital in the last 16, but at Atletico Madrid, who have also stretched their financial resources in the transfer market and increased wages to keep hold of Antoine Griezmann in the hope of winning the competition for the first time in their own stadium come June's final.—AFP

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Kiwis beat India to claim T20 series

Munro's explosive 72 set up a four-run win for New Zealand



HAMILTON: New Zealand players celebrate winning the third Twenty20 international cricket match between New Zealand and India in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

HAMILTON: Colin Munro's explosive 72 set up a four-run win for New Zealand over India in a cliff-hanger finish to yesterday's Twenty20 match in Hamilton, handing the hosts a 2-1 series victory. India looked to be on the ropes when they needed 47 off the last three overs.

But Dinesh Karthik and Krunal Pandya together plundered 32 off overs 18 and 19 before Tim Southee restricted the duo to 11 in the 20th. "It was obviously touch-and-go there for us," said Munro whose whirlwind knock at the start of the match laid the platform for New Zealand's 212 for four with India 208 for six at the close.

The morale-boosting victory for New Zealand gave captain Kane Williamson something to smile about after they were whipped 4-1 by India in the earlier one-day

international series. "It came down to the last couple of balls and it's nice to come out on the right side," he said.

It was a more sombre mood in the India dressing after Rohit Sharma had won the toss and defied convention by not batting first in a series decider, saying his team preferred to chase regardless. "It was pretty disappointing to not get over that finishing line but I thought we fought really well till the end," he said.

"We started off really well with the ODI series and we wanted to do well here with the T20." It was a vital knock from Munro, whose position in the New Zealand side ahead of the World Cup had been in question after a string of failures in the ODI and Twenty20 matches against India.

But he was on song from the start of the decider,

charging down the track to smack Bhuvneshwar Kumar over the rope with the first ball he faced to kick off a flying partnership with Tim Seifert.

The pair raced to 80 in the eighth over when the lightning hands of MS Dhoni had Seifert stumped by a hair's breadth for 43. Munro's belligerence saw him face just 40 balls in his innings, faying the bowling with five fours and five sixes. He was removed by Kuldeep Yadav when he skied a ball to Hardik Pandya running in from long-on. Kane Williamson (27) fell in the next over when he pulled a rising delivery from Khaleel Ahmed to Yadav at fine leg. Colin de Grandhomme chimed in with 30 off 16 to ensure New Zealand passed the critical 200 mark for the second time in the series.

Vijay Shankar took an equally aggressive stance at

the start of India's chase and the visitors were up at the required run rate through the first half of their innings, but were unable to establish partnerships. Rishabh Pant belted a four and two sixes with his first three scoring shots and raced to 28 off 12 before he became debutant Blair Tinkner's first victim, swiping at a full toss that was caught at mid-wicket.

Sharma made 38, Hardik Pandya's brief cameo produced 21 while MS Dhoni, feted as the master finisher, could only make two in a brief stay at the crease. With the game slipping away from India, Dinish Karthik pounded the boundaries with 33 off 16 deliveries while Krunal Pandya made 26 off 13 but they ended up four runs short. New Zealand next host Bangladesh in a series of three ODIs and three Tests. — AFP

City hit humiliated Chelsea for six to go top once more

MANCHESTER: Sergio Aguero grabbed a hat-trick as Manchester City scored four times inside 25 minutes to thrash Chelsea 6-0 and leapfrog Liverpool again to top spot in the Premier League on goal difference yesterday.

Aguero should have had even more than three as the Argentine missed a glorious early chance and hit the bar in the second-half in a humiliating afternoon for Maurizio Sarri's men.

Raheem Sterling started and ended the scoring and Ilkay Gundogan also netted in the first quarter of the game as City ended what could have been a testing week with a trip to Everton in between the visits of Arsenal and Chelsea with maximum points.

Jurgen Klopp's men maintain the advantage of a game in hand, but handed a reprieve by Liverpool's draws against Leicester and West Ham in recent weeks. City look determined to become the first side in a decade to retain the Premier League.

Chelsea on the other hand slip to sixth with the scale of the defeat sure to raise further doubts over Sarri's future. A 4-0 defeat to Bournemouth in their last away game was Chelsea's heaviest league defeat since 1996.

And this was their worst loss in any competition since 1991 after failing to recover from Sterling's fourth-minute opener. Eden Hazard went to sleep from Kevin de Bruyne's quickly taken free-kick and Bernardo Silva had acres of space to cross for the England international to fire home.

Pep Guardiola had described this match as a "final" for his side given that Chelsea had a week to prepare, while City ground out a 2-0 win at Everton on Wednesday.

Guardiola fell to the floor in exasperation when Aguero somehow side-footed wide with his easiest chance of the game moments later. But the Catalan coach need not have worried that would prove a costly miss as Aguero made amends in stunning fashion by blasting into the top corner from 25 yards to double City's after just 13 minutes.

Aguero had a simple task to make it 3-0 six minutes later when he pounced on Ross Barkley's slack header towards his own goal. And Gundogan's shot from the edge of the area then had too much power for the world's most expensive goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga to compound Chelsea's woes.

Such was the defensive collapse at the other end, Gonzalo Higuain had little chance to shine but the Argentine striker was unfortunate not to score his third goal in as many league starts for Chelsea when Ederson turned over his dipping volley five minutes before the break.

That was as much of a response as Chelsea mustered, though, and it only got worse for Sarri's chances of keeping his job in the second period. Aguero missed his first chance to seal a second hat-trick in two games



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Argentinian striker Sergio Aguero (R) vies to head the ball against Chelsea's Brazilian defender David Luiz (C) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Burnley at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, yesterday. — AFP

when he headed against the crossbar.

But when Sterling was too quick for Cesar Azpilicueta and chopped down by the Spaniard inside the area, Aguero coolly slotted home from the penalty spot to move level with Liverpool's Mohamed Salah as the Premier League's top scorer on 17 for the season.

Even after Aguero went off to a standing ovation, City's strength in depth shone through as Gabriel Jesus, Riyad Mahrez and David Silva came off the bench. And Silva's pass opened the visitors up again for the sixth as he picked out Oleksandr Zinchenko who crossed for Sterling to tap home. — AFP