

8 Poland shuns Israel summit in row over Holocaust role



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28 Semenya fights gender rule at top sports court



# Central Bank: Less than 1% of debtors have trouble repaying

Govt keen on equality among citizens over consumer loans

## Amir fetes graduating police cadets



KUWAIT: HH the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attends the graduation ceremony of the 45th batch of police cadets at the Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences yesterday. (Right) Cadets rush to meet their families at the end of the graduation ceremony. — Photos by Amiri Diwan and Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 3)

KUWAIT: The government reaffirmed yesterday keenness on enforcing justice and equality among all citizens, while also preventing any measure that would undermine the national economy, following a briefing by the state's top banker. The government was reacting to a briefing by Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Mohammad Al-Hashel on consumer loans, and explained that less than one percent of debtors are experiencing trouble in repayments.

Hashel said the total value of consumer loans is KD 989 million (\$3.253 billion), while the total value of housing loans is KD 12 billion (\$39.5 billion), a statement by Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Anas Al-Saleh said. Hashel said the number of debtors is 552,000 people, but only 4,677 of them, or less than one percent, have trouble repaying their loans.

The Cabinet members also discussed the government's efforts to address the situation of some people who were unable to repay their loans, through the establishment of a special fund through which the government allocated around KD 800 million (\$2.63 billion) to address the financial situation of 34,174 people. In a previous statement, Executive Director of the supervision sector at the Central Bank Waleed Al-Awadhi had said there are 429,000 Kuwaiti debtors, who represent 90 percent of the workforce under the age of 50.

On Saturday, around 400 people gathered in Irada Square opposite the National Assembly to call upon HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to write off their loans. A large number of lawmakers have said they will support such a move when it comes up for debate in the Assembly, while the government insists it will not scrap the loans. On Sunday, MP Thamer Al-Sumait said the living conditions of Kuwaiti citizens must occupy the top of priorities of lawmakers and that the government must carefully understand the message of the Kuwaiti people. — Agencies

### News in brief

#### Pompeo to visit Kuwait next month

CAIRO: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will visit Kuwait next month to hold the third round of strategic dialogue between the two countries, KUNA quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah as saying on Sunday. Pompeo visited several Arab capitals in January, including in Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. He had to cut short his Middle East trip to return to the United States for a family funeral. — Reuters

#### MBS not seeking to buy Man Utd

DUBAI: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is not seeking to buy Premier League football club Manchester United, the kingdom's Media Minister Turki Al-Shabanah said yesterday, denying reports and adding that there had only been a meeting with the Saudi wealth fund regarding sponsorship. On Sunday, British newspaper The Sun said the crown prince was in a £3.8-billion takeover bid for one of football's most popular clubs. — Reuters

#### UAE inks major deals with Raytheon

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates announced yesterday it had signed deals worth more than \$1.6 billion for the purchase of Patriot missile launchers from US arms giant Raytheon, state media said. The deals, inked on the second day of an international military exhibition in Abu Dhabi, come a day after the UAE announced it would buy \$353 million worth of Patriot missiles from Raytheon. — AFP

#### Iran self-sufficient in gasoline

DUBAI: Iran has become self-sufficient in gasoline production, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said yesterday after the inauguration of the third phase of the Persian Gulf Star Refinery in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas. "Fortunately, we do not need to import gasoline anymore. We have reached self-sufficiency. We can export our produced gasoline but have no export plans," Zanganeh was quoted as saying by Iran's state TV. — Reuters

## 308 people of same family hold forged Kuwaiti citizenship

KUWAIT: Those holding forged Kuwaiti citizenship and those who got it using fake documents are being exposed one by one, informed sources told Al-Rai daily. The sources explained that the latest case involves 308 people belonging to the same tribe of Iraqi origins who hold forged citizenships, adding that residency detectives had been working on the case for a while and that four out of the five main suspects involved in it had died, while the fifth is currently in his sixties.

## Saudi crown prince orders 2,100 Pak prisoners released

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has ordered the release of about 2,100 Pakistani prisoners from the kingdom's jails during a high-profile visit to Islamabad, Pakistan's information minister said yesterday. Prince Mohammed arrived in Pakistan on Sunday at the beginning of an Asian tour, which will include China. Saudi Arabia on Sunday signed investment agreements with Pakistan worth \$20 billion.

The crown prince had "ordered the immediate release of 2,107 Pakistani prisoners", after a request by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, Information

The case goes back to when a Kuwaiti - who was infertile - got married to an Iraqi woman who had four children from an earlier marriage to an Iraqi, said the sources, noting that the citizen added them to his citizenship files as his own, and thus they got Kuwaiti citizenship, along with their children and grandchildren, and enjoyed all privileges granted to citizens.

Security sources said residency detectives were tipped off concerning this major case a month ago, and accordingly a citizen in his sixties was arrested and confessed that his Iraqi mother had added him and his three Iraqi brothers to her Kuwaiti husband's dossier, adding that all his brothers had died. However, further investigations showed that the total number of the four fake citizens' children and grandchildren add up to 308, who have been enjoying citizen privileges for decades. — Al-Rai

Minister Fawad Chaudhry said in a post on Twitter. The fate of thousands of Pakistani workers locked up in jails across the Middle East is a sensitive issue in Pakistan, where there is a perception the prisoners are mostly poor laborers who have no real legal recourse. Huge numbers of Pakistanis travel to the Middle East every year, with many working on construction sites or as domestic helpers. The remittances they send back are vital for Pakistan's dollar-starved economy.

Saudi Arabia also vowed to "de-escalate" rising tensions between Pakistan and India as Prince Mohammed prepared to travel from Islamabad to New Delhi. "Our objective is to try to de-escalate tensions between the two countries, neighboring countries, and to see if there is a path forward to resolving those differences peacefully," said Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir. Following the pledge, the crown prince - widely known as MBS - held a series of meetings yesterday afternoon with the Pakistani leadership before flying on to India.

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## Issue of bedoons nears resolution

KUWAIT: The issue of bedoons seems to be nearing a decisive solution following more than four decades of arguments, well-informed sources told Al-Qabas daily, noting that the original nationalities of over 90 percent of bedoons have been identified, and thus they will no longer be considered as stateless. On the other hand, the sources stressed that those who actually deserve Kuwaiti citizenship are much closer to getting it following years of

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ISLAMABAD: Pakistani President Arif Alvi confers the country's highest civilian award, the Nishan-e-Pakistan (Order of Pakistan), on Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the President House yesterday. — AFP

## 9 dead as Kashmir battle heightens Indo-Pak tensions

SRINAGAR: Indian troops suffered new losses yesterday in a battle with Kashmir militants that left nine dead, officials said, just days after a major suicide bomb attack escalated tensions with neighboring Pakistan. The confrontation piled more pressure on the Indian government, which has blamed Pakistan for last Thursday's suicide attack on a convoy that killed at least 41 paramilitaries. Several hours of shooting rocked the Pulwama district, south of

Kashmir's main city of Srinagar, after officials said four soldiers, a policeman, three militants and a civilian were killed in the latest clash.

An army major was among the dead, along with three militants from the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) group which claimed last week's attack, military and police officials said. Six senior army men including a brigadier and a lieutenant colonel were

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PULWAMA: A house in which militants are suspected to have sheltered is in flames after a gunfight between rebels and security forces yesterday. — AFP



## Local

# Pompeo to visit Kuwait in March for strategic dialogue meeting: Jarallah

## Deputy FM reasserts Kuwait's stance against normalization with Israel

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah has stated that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo would visit Kuwait next month to partake in the third session of the Kuwaiti-US Strategic Dialogue. Jarallah made the announcement while speaking to reporters on the sidelines of his participation in Canadian embassy's celebration of the National Flag Day on Sunday.

The third session of the Kuwaiti-US Strategic Dialogue was scheduled on January 15, 2019, but was adjourned when Pompeo cut short his regional tour and cancelled the planned visit to Kuwait to return to the US to partake in the funeral of a family member. In a phone call with Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah after the visit postponement, Pompeo said he was looking forward to visit Kuwait to hold the third Strategic Dialogue Session.

### Agreement signing

According to Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas Reem Al-Khaled, signing an agreement to boost their ongoing Strategic Dialogue and others in defense, security and economic affairs would be on the agenda of Pompeo's visit to Kuwait. The strategic dialogue would also deliberate topics of defense, education, economics, consulate and customs affairs, civil aviation and cyber security - with the matters of trade and scientific research be introduced to the fold for the very first time, Jarallah noted.

Meanwhile, Jarallah affirmed that Kuwait remains firmly against normalization of relations with Israel, as long as there is no justice and a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue. "It is painful that there is still doubt regarding the Kuwaiti position on the Palestinian issue," he said, stressing that Kuwait's position has not changed and continues to be supportive of the Palestinian cause at all levels. He pointed out that Kuwait is a member of the UN Security Council and therefore it is unreasonable to not participate in international conferences, stressing that Kuwait went to protect the rights of the Palestinian people and discuss issues of concern in the region. Jarallah pointed out that there are many issues addressed at Warsaw Summit affecting the Middle East and therefore it is logical to interact and participate in such conferences.

### Improving relation

On relations with Canada, Jarallah hailed the steadily growing and improving relation and cooperation on all levels and realms with the north American country. He disclosed that Kuwait was planning to hold a major economic forum in Canada in April. The forum would tackle important issues relative to investment, economic and energy sectors. Jarallah recalled the supportive stance of Canada during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and



### Jarallah hails 'growing relation' with Canada

its participation in the Kuwait liberation war.

In the meantime, Canada's Ambassador to Kuwait Louis-Pierre Emond said that his country is proud of the strength of the bilateral relationship with Kuwait. "After just four months in Kuwait, I have really gotten to see and understand the breadth of that relationship in terms of commerce, investment, education, defense and diplomacy," he said in a speech at the ceremony. He mentioned the growing number of Canadian companies doing business in Kuwait as part of ongoing efforts to help Canadian companies diversify their export markets are working. "The focus is still on oil and gas but we are working hard on identifying potential projects in new areas such as infrastructure, life sciences, food and agri-food products, and information and communications technology," he pointed out.

### Important investment

In this regard, the Ambassador pointed out an announcement made in early February of an 'important new investment in Canada' by Canada Kuwait Petrochemical Corporation (CKPC), a joint-venture between Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) and the Canada-based Pembina. "This important



**KUWAIT:** Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah (center) and Canada's Ambassador to Kuwait Louis-Pierre Emond (left) cut the cake during the Canadian embassy's celebration of the National Flag Day. — KUNA

announcement showcases the strength of our economy and the confidence it inspires in foreign investors," he said. "This should pave the way for more investment projects in Canada by new players, and expansion for partners already present in the market."

The Ambassador also mentioned that there are nearly 400 Kuwaiti students who joined colleges in Canada this year. "Our education links continue to grow and we are extremely proud to see the number of Kuwaiti students continue to grow every year," he said. Diplomatically, the ambassador mentioned the visit of Canada's Governor

General to Kuwait this past January, saying that "this short but worthwhile visit underlines the importance we put on our bilateral relationship." Furthermore, Ambassador Emond stressed Kuwait's 'important role' that it plays on the world stage advocating for peaceful solutions, for dialogue and communication, saying that this goes in line with Canada's approach. Finally, the Ambassador extended congratulations to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the 13th anniversary of his ascension to power, and to Kuwait on the National Day and Liberation Day.

## Saudi Arabia commemorates Kuwait's National Day

**RIYADH:** King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra) announced Sunday hosting series of events, celebrations, and activities between February 25 and March 2 to commemorate Kuwait's National Day. The events and activities will shed light on Kuwaiti cultural heritage, as well as highlighting various aspects of Kuwaiti art and culture, Ithra said in a press statement. In collaboration with the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, Ithra will host the first-ever theatrical musical performance "Where are you heading this evening? The 80s Show" outside Kuwait, taking the audience back to Kuwait's iconic television programs in the 1980s. It will also host Kuwaiti author Hmoud Al-Shayji for an exclusive book signing of his latest work (Jaleela), in which he highlights the evolution of story and novel in the Gulf region through various social, intellectual, and

musical transformations. Ithra will also organize 'Poetry Diwaniah,' recital interactive sessions of national and folklore poems by some of the renowned Kuwaiti poets and writers, and in participation with the visitors. Other activities include Sadou workshop, in which children are taught the basics of traditional wool weaving in a modern learning environment, and how to make beautiful wool medallions that they can then take home as souvenirs. There will also be a pearl workshop, in which children will learn about the traditional and ancient craft of pearls, and how to extract pearls, group them by size, and make necklaces from them. The events will also include a live cooking session, called 'Al-Shaiba recipe,' by Ismael Murad, the first disabled Chef in Kuwait and Gulf region, who will display traditional Kuwaiti cuisine, in addition to food tasting and making traditional Kuwaiti sweets.

Inaugurated officially in 2017, King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture aims to accelerate potential through encouraging creativity, inspiring minds, and empowering talent. Ithra is an all-purpose cultural center. It has created an environment for transformative experiences to unlock the power of potential through mastery in arts, science, literature, and innovation. — KUNA



**The King Abdulaziz Center for World Culture (Ithra).**

## Zain sponsors 'Kuwait Al-Khair' charity market

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the 45th edition of the 'Kuwait Al-Khair' Charity Market organized by the International Islamic Charitable Organization's Help Your Muslim Brother Committee. The event was held in Sheraton Kuwait Hotel under the patronage and presence of Minister of Social Affairs Saad Al-Kharraz.

Zain's support to this charity event came in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy that closely focuses on supporting national talents who own small businesses as well as in line with the company's commitment towards supporting humanitarian and charity initiatives. The company strongly believes that such initiatives help infuse a sense of responsibility into members of the society, and help support those who are in need of help.



**KUWAIT:** Minister of Social Affairs Saad Al-Kharraz with the event's top guests and Zain officials.

## Top Chinese delegation concludes visit to Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** A high-level Chinese delegation concluded its visit to Kuwait yesterday after two days discussions with senior state officials on bolstering economic cooperation. The visit came to fulfill a memo signed between the two sides concerning the development of Madinat Al-Harir (Silk City) and other five Kuwaiti Islands. The delegation met with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, and First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

During the visit, the Chinese delegation headed by Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China Ning Jizhe held talks with CEO of the

Apparatus for Developing Silk City and Boubyan Island Faisal Al-Medlej, members of Board of Trustees and Secretary General of the Supreme Planning Council Dr Khalid Mahdi. Discussions focused on ways to enhance bilateral economic cooperation between the two countries and activating memorandums of developing Silk City and other five Kuwaiti Islands.

Medlej, accompanied with the Chinese delegation, went on a helicopter tour that was set off from Abdullah Al-Mubarak base to Boubyan, Warba and Failaka Islands, and part of Al-Subbiya to see the location of the Silk City and Mubarak port. The Chinese delegation expressed the keenness to accelerate the implementation of the construction and development of Mubarak port, which will contribute to the creation of a safe crossing and trade zone in the region. The delegation stressed the seriousness of the Chinese companies and institutions in the implementation of the Silk City project which will positively affect the economic and development of Kuwait and neighboring countries. Talks with the Chinese side reviewed the first phase of the Silk City project, which aims to establish a regional trade zone in Mubarak Port, a logistics area for goods, an international airport and railways for transporting goods and people, and an industrial

city to embrace small and medium enterprises. Chinese experts' council members were adopted during the meeting. It included members from China Development Bank, Huawei, Alibaba, Chinese Construction and Communications Companies, Shanghai Ports Corporation and Peking University, as well as other concerned parties in developing the studies and plans required for the implementation of Silk City. The two sides agreed to cooperate with the Chinese Construction and Communications Company to initiate the collection of information, and to develop a work program for the investment, implementation and operation of Mubarak Port for the phase 1, either through long-term leasing or through Public-private partnerships. The 35-member delegation arrived in Kuwait last Saturday on a two-day visit.

The Chinese delegation included officials from state Development and Reform Council, the Chinese Civil Planning Institute, the State Development Bank, State Transport Company of China and government bodies involved in infrastructure and mega projects. Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Sameh Hayat, Chinese Ambassador to the country Li Minggang, and members of the Chinese Embassy were seen off by the Chinese top official and his accompanying delegation. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China Ning Jizhe (right) with Kuwaiti Ambassador to China Sameh Hayat. — KUNA



# Amir patronizes, attends graduation ceremony of 402 police cadets

Graduates to join police force and protect Kuwait's security: Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top state officials attend the graduation ceremony of the 45th batch of police cadets at the Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences yesterday. — Photos by Amri Diwan and Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Nawara Fattahova and KUNA

KUWAIT: The 45th batch of police cadets graduated yesterday from the Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences. The graduation ceremony of 402 cadets - including 23 from Arab countries - was held under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. It was attended by over 2,000 of the cadets' family members. Assistant Undersecretary for Training and Education Maj Gen Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah said the new cadets have graduated to join the police force and protect the security of the country. "The cadets have graduated as lieutenants with a bachelor's degree in Security Sciences, and they look forward to serve our country," he said.

The graduates of the 45th batch then handed over the flag of the academy to the cadets of the 46th batch. The General Director of the Academy Maj Gen Naser Burisli announced the names of the best cadets who

graduated with the highest grades. He also mentioned the names of four cadets who died during their training period at the academy.

The graduates then entered the yard to take the oath in front of His Highness the Amir, who awarded the excelling cadets. The graduation ceremony concluded with the national anthem, after which the graduates rushed outside the main yard to receive greetings of their families, who welcomed them with flowers.

His Highness the Amir was received at the academy by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and a number of top academy and ministry officials. Present with His Highness the Amir during the ceremony were His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, President of the Supreme Judicial Council, chair of the Constitutional Court and Head of the Cassation Court Justice Yousef Jaseem Al-Mutawa'a and senior state officials.



(From left) His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attend the ceremony.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah awards one of the excelling cadets.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memento during the ceremony.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memento during the ceremony.



Graduated officers celebrate with their families.



Newly-graduated police cadets march during the ceremony.



## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A coastguard vessel patrolling Kuwait Bay. — Photo by Mohammad Al-Hadhoud (KUNA)

# Young Leadership Academy initiative to discover, develop future Kuwaiti leaders

## The first of its kind in Kuwait and the Gulf region

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Rawaj Institute announced the launch of the 'Young Leadership Academy' initiative, the first of its kind in Kuwait and the Gulf region, which aims to discover and develop future leaders from among the Kuwaiti youth. The announcement was made during a joint press conference held yesterday at Seif Palace by Rawaj Institute, KAFO Project of the Amiri Diwan and the National Youth Project, in the presence of representatives of IDG, the world's leading developer of leadership development programs.

During her opening speech, Fatemah Al-Moussawi, Project Manager of KAFO, represented by Salma Al-Mutairi, said: "To achieve the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in addition to the launch of the National Youth Project under the slogan 'Kuwait is proud' and to enable the youth to lead the development process to achieve the future vision and developmental goals of Kuwait, we are proud to launch the 'Young Leadership Academy' initiative."

Sulaiman Al-Abduljader, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Rawaj, thanked the sponsors of the initiative, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) and Kuwait Airways, adding: "It is a unique initiative in collaboration with the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom, which is the world's first specialized training center for young people from around the world and IDG, a global leader in developing leadership development programs."

He pointed out that the initiative aims to create an annual program aimed at young people aged 16 to 18 in Kuwait and qualifying those young people for leadership through a unique program. "The program is in line with Kuwait's 2035 vision for the development of Kuwaiti

human capital and coincides with the United Nations goals for sustainable development," he said.

Anfal Al-Radwan, one of the initiators of Rawaj Institute and the official spokeswoman, explained in detail about the initiative. "The academy program consists of five educational and training courses of 17 days. The program is composed of five modules, each focused on a combination of learning and doing. Four modules will be executed



**Aimed at  
young people  
aged 16 to 18**

in Kuwait and the fifth module will be executed in the UK at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Rawaj Youth Leadership Academy program is dedicated only to students in Kuwait between the ages of 16 to 18 years, who believe that they are tomorrow's leaders," she said.

She added that 20 students from among the best performing students in secondary school in Kuwait will be selected to join this program through the application forms that they have started to receive through their website. "It is worth mentioning that the students will not bear any financial burden to participate as this initiative is sponsored by a number of private and public bodies."

Radwan noted that the academy will start implementing its program from March till June 2019, and will be pre-



KUWAIT: (From left) Anfal Al-Radwan, Dr Sulaiman Al-Abduljader, Salma Al-Mutairi and Peter Turpie attend the press conference. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

sented annually, where a number of secondary schools in Kuwait have been contacted to provide a list of the best students to select 20 candidates to participate in this program. The Rawaj Center will also undertake a number of outreach activities to invite and encourage students and their families to participate by submitting through the website [www.rawajyouth.com](http://www.rawajyouth.com).

Peter Turpie, Director of Middle East at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, said: "We are delighted to participate in this press conference. We have a privi-

leged partnership that allowed the program to access the best content for the development and training of leaders because of the history of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, which extends over more than 200 years. The program will reflect the vision and slogan of the academy - 'Serve to Lead'. The principle of service to become an effective leader will be planted in the youth involved, in view of the positive results generated by this principle in all sectors and professions through adoption and living on its basis."

## Gulf Bank recruits nationals at MGRP Career Fair

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank was the Platinum Sponsor of the 2019 edition of the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) Career Fair, for the second consecutive year, hiring Kuwaitis on the day. Held at MGRP Headquarters in Al-Riggaa, the fair took place on Tuesday, February 12, 2019.

During the event, Gulf Bank representatives showcased the bank's expertise, highlighting company policy and culture, and providing students with a comprehensive knowledge of the departments and resources available within the bank. Attracting numerous candidates, Gulf Bank conducted on the ground screenings, as well as interviews of potential employees offering employment contracts to Kuwaitis on the day.

Speaking on Gulf Bank's participation, Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human resources at Gulf Bank said: "Gulf Bank remains committed to empowering the youth of Kuwait, and the continued Kuwaitization of the private sector. The bank's participation in the fair, provides us with the opportunity to support our youth in reaching their potential in all aspects of their lives, highlighting the fantastic career opportunities available to them. By investing in our youth, we inevitably contribute to our country's economic prosperity."

Gulf Bank's participation and sponsorship reaffirms the



Salma Al-Hajjaj

banks continued commitment to the youth of Kuwait and Kuwaitization of the private sector. During the event, in the presence of Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel, Gulf Bank was presented with the Excellence Award for the highest percentage of hires at MGRP Career Fair in 2018. The bank continues to support the Recruitment Screening Program, offering career counseling, and guidance of Kuwaiti nationals seeking employment opportunities to join Gulf Bank family.

Gulf Bank has a long-standing commitment to the Kuwaitization of the private sector, fostering an environment which appeals to Kuwaiti talent and allows them to unlock their full potential. Developing their talent, knowledge and skills in order to contribute to both the banking sector and Kuwait. To date, Gulf Bank has achieved Kuwaitization of 73.4 percent across departments.





# MP calls for raising decade-old cost of living allowance

## Lawmaker proposes establishing new governorate

By B Izzak and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Khaled Al-Otaibi yesterday questioned why the government did not raise the cost of living allowance for the past decade despite a steep rise in prices. In a question to Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf, the lawmaker said that the council of ministers decided in 2008 to grant Kuwaitis with a cost of living of KD 120 monthly to cope with an increase in prices and inflation rate. He said that since then, the government did not consider raising the allowance despite the increase in the cost of living in the country. The lawmaker said that ahead of deciding the allowance in 2008, a government spokesman said that it was based on a comprehensive study conducted by the finance ministry and a number of government departments in cooperation with the World Bank that included revising salaries and other benefits enjoyed

by employees. He asked if the ministry has conducted a similar study in the past 10 years and demanded copies of such studies, and if not he asked for the reasons why the study was not made. Otaibi asked the minister if the existing cost of living allowance has been revised and its value compared with the cost of living at present. He demanded the rates of inflation since 2009 and asked about the ministry's role in facing the continuous rise in such rates and their negative impact on the incomes of middle and low income families. MP Osama Al-Shaheen meanwhile proposed the establishment of a new governorate in the country besides the six governorates to accommodate new areas in the south of the country. He said the new governorate should include Sabah Al-Ahmad City, Wafra and Khairan in addition to a number of neighboring areas. The new governorate should have its own edu-

cational, health and security authorities. Deputy Speaker Essa Al-Kandari submitted a proposal yesterday to set up a national council for women to be entrusted with reviewing proposals and draft laws relating to women affairs before they are approved by the national assembly. Kandari said that the council should consist of a number of female experts who have experience in women's affairs, adding that the council must be consulted before the national assembly approves any draft law relating to women or that could impact their affairs.

### Exemptions

In other news, member of the parliamentary human resources committee Saleh Ashour said the committee asked the government to cancel the exemptions given to certain sectors from setting a specific ratio to appoint Kuwaitis, such as private uni-

versities, hospitals, hotels and touristic companies. Ashour added that government responses concerning replacing expats with citizens are good, but still below par, stressing that the committee will continue following up the Civil Service Commission's performance in this regard. Moreover, Ashour said that the recent rally in Irada Square conveyed a message to the government, showing that people are dissatisfied with the grants and loans given to other countries worth billions of dinars, namely those who stood against Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion, while the Kuwaiti people are overburdened with loan interest. "The government must resolve this social dilemma," he underlined. In the meantime, MP Hamdan Al-Azmi said that the new disability bill is still being studied and demanded that it should include bedoons and children of Kuwaiti women in it.

## Blind citizen releases audio copy of constitution

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A blind Kuwaiti named Abdul Rahman Ghareer Al-Adwani launched volume one of an audio copy of Kuwait's constitution after he managed to record it all with his voice. Speaking at a press conference in Kaifan, Adwani expressed a desire to present his creative idea to HH the Amir himself.

### Allegations refuted

Deputy director of the disabled authority for medical, psychological and social services Hanadi Al-Mebaileesh responded to recent social media videos showing a four-year old girl named Fajr, who suffers from kinetic disability and has allegedly been in Mubarak Hospital for three years after her family abandoned her and stopped visiting her. Mebaileesh said the authority verified the story and managed to contact the girl's father through its 'disabled friends teams', and discovered that the social

media report was false and that the child has a disability certificate issued by the authority. Meanwhile, Kuwait Ports Authority strongly denied accusations on social media networks and accounts concerning allegations of squandering public funds through a tender to utilize and manage the parking lots at the ports' complex building. It stressed that the tender had been legally administered and advertised in the official gazette on May 6, 2018, before Ali Alghanim and Sons won it.

### Years of experience

Chairman of the oil and petrochemical industries workers' confederation Mohammed Hamad Al-Hajeri congratulated all oil sector workers on the approval of the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation chairman to take the previous years of experience of new recruits appointed before April 1, 2018 into consideration on getting promoted to higher positions.

## 15 kg drugs found with Fahaheel dealer

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: A drug dealer was arrested yesterday with possession of 15 kilograms of drugs found inside his Fahaheel residence. Detectives had obtained a warrant to raid the suspect's apartment following investigations in which detectives found evidence of his activity in trading drugs. Ten kilograms of heroin, three kilograms of hashish and two kilograms of shabu (methamphetamine) were found inside the apartment. The Asian man was referred to the proper authorities for further action.

### Sixth Ring Road accident

A motorist was injured when his sedan crashed into a car carrier trailer on the Sixth Ring Road yesterday. Firefighters used special equipment to free the man who became trapped inside his wrecked vehicle, before paramedics rushed him to the hospital. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the accident.



A vehicle trapped under the bed of a car carrier trailer following an accident home yesterday.

### Homicide probe

A homicide investigation was opened in the death of a Kuwaiti man who was found dead inside his Mubarak Al-Kabeer with fatal stab wounds. Police responded to an emergency call made by the victim's daughter who said that she found her father dead in the house's yard. Paramedics pronounced the victim dead on the scene, and the body was recovered by the coroner, Al-Rai reported yesterday.

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Poland shuns summit amid Holocaust row

## India pulls down Imran Khan portraits over Kashmir killings

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BAGHUZ: Vehicles belonging to the US-led coalition drive down a street in the frontline Syrian village of Baghuz. —AFP

# Don't abandon us, Kurds tell Europe

## US will not protect you, Assad warns Syria's Kurds

**PARIS:** A top Kurdish official has called on Europe not to abandon Syrian Kurds once the battle against the Islamic State group is over and to help set up an international force to protect them from Turkey. European powers "have a political and moral responsibility" to the Kurds, Aldar Khalil said in an interview in Paris, warning that the Kurds would seek the protection of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad if failed by Europe and the US.

The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) have been leading the fight against the Islamic State group in Syria for the past four years, backed up by air strikes from a US-led coalition. With IS's self-declared caliphate now in ruins, the Kurds fear being left at the mercy of Turkey after the US declares mission accomplished in the final battle currently underway for the jihadists' last Syrian holdout. Turkey, which has been battling a Kurdish insurgency on its own soil since 1984, views the Kurdish fighters that dominate the SDF as terrorists and has threatened to invade areas under Kurdish control in northeast Syria.

Khalil, who played a key role in establishing Syria's semi-autonomous Kurdish region in 2013, appealed to Europe for protection. "If they (Europe) don't meet their commitments they are effectively abandoning us," Khalil said late on Sunday, calling on France particularly to work at the United Nations for the creation of a buffer zone along the Turkish border. "France can table a proposal to the Security Council on our protection, suggesting an international force between us and the Turks-of which it would be part-or to protect our airspace," he said.

**'Hasty decision'**

The senior political representative said that it could be modeled on the UN peacekeeping force deployed along

Lebanon's border with Israel. But European powers have already rebuffed US proposals for an observer force that would stay on in northeast Syria, fearing they will have to bear the burden once the US pulls out. "They're trying to manage the consequences of a hasty decision and making us carry the responsibility," a French government source said last week.

US President Donald Trump caused shock among America's Western and Kurdish allies in December by announcing plans to withdraw US troops from Syria even before the end of the fight against IS. The withdrawal would leave the Kurds, who control nearly 30 percent of Syria, including the cities of Qamishli, Hasaka and Raqqa, exposed to a long-threatened attack by Turkey. The Kurds fear a repeat of the Turkish offensive that drove Kurdish fighters and civilians out of the northwestern Syrian city of Afrin last year. They have also warned the West that the foreign jihadists currently languishing in Kurdish jails could escape and urged their countries of origin to take them back.

**Fly regime flag**

Yesterday, EU foreign ministers will meet in Brussels to discuss the issue, which has taken on greater urgency as the battle for IS's last redoubt ramps up. The jihadists are trapped in less than half a square kilometer in eastern Syria near the Iraqi border. Khalil said that the Kurds would seek protection

from Assad unless their Western allies stepped up-and he spelled out the terms of a possible deal. "We will be obliged to agree a deal with the (Syrian) regime so that it deploys its troops along the border and protects us," Khalil explained. He said that the Kurds would insist on maintaining autonomy and demand that the border troops be from Kurdish areas. "They would come under the orders of the Syrian army, but be our units," he said, adding that foreign fighters would be kept under Kurdish guard and not handed over to Assad's forces.

In return, the Kurds would offer to give Assad, who is anxious to win restore sovereignty over the biggest area beyond government control, a cut of the Kurdish region's oil revenues. "We can also agree to raise the regime's flag," Khalil added. But Western observers expect Assad, whose forces control about 60 percent of Syria, to take advantage of the Kurds' vulnerability and drive a hard bargain. On Sunday, Assad warned them that the US would not protect them against Turkey. "No one will protect you except your state," he said.

**Assad warns Syria's Kurds**

Meanwhile, President Bashar Al-Assad warned Syria's Kurds Sunday that their ally the United States would not protect them against any Turkish offensive as Washington looks to withdraw it troops. The US is set to pull out its soldiers from Syria after allied Kurdish-led forces capture the Islamic State group's last holdout in the war-torn country. Any withdrawal risks leaving the Kurds exposed to a long threatened attack by neighboring Turkey, which views Kurdish fighters as "terrorists". "We tell those groups who are betting on the Americans that the Americans will not protect you," Assad said in a televised speech. "The Americans do not hold you in their heart... They will put you in their pocket so you can be a bargaining chip." Apart from fighting IS, the Kurds have largely stayed out of Syria's civil war, working towards semi-autonomy in the northeast of the country.

The looming prospect of a US withdrawal, announced in December, has sent them scrambling to rebuild ties with the Damascus regime, but talks so far have failed to reach a compromise. "If you don't prepare yourselves to defend your country and resist, you will be nothing but a slave to the Ottomans," Assad warned, using a historic term for Turks. "No one will protect you except your state. No one will defend you except the Syrian Arab army," he said. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, which has fought IS with backing from the US-led coalition since 2015, on Sunday met to discuss "the future of relations with the Syrian government".

The SDF stressed the need for Damascus to recognize the "special status" of the Kurdish-Arab alliance, as well as the Kurdish semi-autonomous region. In a statement, it also expressed a "willingness to solve problems with Turkey through dialogue," based on "mutual respect". Nearly eight years into a war that has killed more than 360,000 people and displaced millions, Assad's forces control almost two thirds of the country. Just two areas remain beyond its control: the jihadist-held northwestern region of Idlib, and around a third of the country under control of Kurdish-led forces. "Every inch of Syria will be liberated," Assad said in Sunday's speech. —Agencies

## Venezuela expels 5 Europe lawmakers

**CARACAS:** Venezuela has expelled five visiting European lawmakers, an act opposition leader Juan Guaido branded "irrational" as his showdown with President Nicolas Maduro over the arrival of international aid intensifies. The members of the European Parliament were being tossed out with no explanation, said Spanish MEP Esteban Gonzalez Pons, who led the group. "We are being expelled from Venezuela. Our passports have been seized. They have not informed us of the reason for the expulsion," Pons said.

The incident on Sunday is the latest point of tension between the international community and Maduro, who is in the grip of a power struggle with Guaido, the head of the National Assembly who proclaimed himself interim president last month. Guaido has the backing of more than 50 countries including 30 in Europe. Pons' fellow Spaniards Jose Ignacio Salafranca and Gabriel Mato Adrover, as well as Esther de Lange of the Netherlands and Paulo Rangel of Portugal, were also expelled. All are members of the conservative European People's Party (PPE).

Writing on Twitter, Guaido said the MEPs were being "deported by an isolated and increasingly irrational regime." Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza said the Europeans had "conspiratorial aims" and were sent back from the country's main Maiquetia airport. Earlier Sunday Guaido set a goal of enlisting a million volunteers within a week to confront a government blockade that has kept tons of humanitarian aid, most of it from the United States, from flowing into the country where residents can't get enough food and say they are dying because of a shortage of medicines.

**The economy is imploding**

Guaido has given next Saturday-one month to the day after he proclaimed himself acting president-as the date for a showdown with Maduro over the aid. Food supplies, hygiene kits and nutritional supplements have been stockpiled near the Venezuelan border in Cucuta, Colombia. Additional storage centers are supposed to open this week in Brazil and Curacao, a Dutch island off



CARACAS: Venezuelan opposition leader and self declared acting president Juan Guaido (left) greets volunteers of the movement 'Aid and Freedom Venezuela Coalition' who fainted during a rally in Caracas. —AFP

Venezuela's northern Caribbean coast.

"Our principal task is to reach a million volunteers by February 23," Guaido said in a message to the 600,000 supporters who have signed up so far for the push to bring aid in. Caravans of buses are being planned to carry volunteers to border entry points to meet and transport arriving cargo. Guaido has kept to himself how he plans to overcome the border barriers put up by the Venezuelan military, on Maduro's orders. Volunteer groups have begun meeting in "humanitarian camps" in several Venezuelan states to organize and prepare for the aid arrival.

They have started to identify the most vulnerable and have begun caring for the needy in accordance with Guaido's promises. Sometimes working under awnings or tents, doctors, nurses, dentists and pediatricians have attended to local residents who can receive donated medications. Patients arrive with respiratory, skin or other ailments, and suffering from malnutrition. An imploding economy has driven an estimated 2.3 million Venezuelans to migrate from the oil-rich country. Those who remain have been punished by hyperinflation that has put scarce food and medicine out of reach for many. —AFP

## Russia TV fumes after Facebook blocks 'wildly popular' page

**MOSCOW:** Facebook has blocked a popular page run by Russian state TV channel RT, the channel's editor said yesterday, criticizing the move as an attack on media rights. "We had a subsidiary project in English, In the Now. The project was wildly popular - 2.5 billion views and four million subscribers on Facebook alone!" RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan said on her Telegram social network account.

She said a report aired by CNN about the project being financed by the Russian state led to "Facebook immediately blocking us! Without presenting any of the accusations." "We didn't violate any Facebook rules," she said. Simonyan said it should not be an issue that the page did not disclose its Russian funding to visitors. Asked to comment, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said RT "must receive an explanation from Facebook regarding what exactly was the reason" for it being blocked. It was

not possible to access the In the Now Facebook page yesterday.

A YouTube channel describes the project as striving "to build a community of mindful media consumers around important, curious and purpose-driven content." Launched on YouTube in March 2014, it makes no mention of any affiliation with RT or Russia and reports over 2.8 million views. The topics of the most recent videos include cleaning up the oceans, the yellow vest protests in France, the rise of atheism and Russian football hooligans. The EU-funded project EU vs Disinfo, a campaign to "respond to pro-Kremlin disinformation", has said In the Now was launched to attract younger audiences turned off by RT's political stories.

It does this "by adding videos with high emotional and entertainment value" which are used as "bait" to "camouflage" the project's ties to Russia, EU vs Disinfo said. Last month, Facebook said it had removed over 500 pages originating in Russia for engaging in "coordinated inauthentic behavior". Most of the removed accounts were found to be linked to employees of Sputnik, a state news agency launched in late 2014 that is also run by Simonyan. Facebook said at the time that the blocked pages created accounts "to mislead others about who they were and what they were doing". —AFP



International

# Nigerian president orders troops to be ‘ruthless’ with vote-riggers

## Boko Haram kills two soldiers in North East

**ABUJA:** Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari said yesterday he had ordered the police and military to be "ruthless" with vote-riggers, as preparations were made for rescheduled elections. Presidential and parliamentary elections were put off just over five hours before polls were due to open on Saturday, causing widespread anger. New polls have been rescheduled for this Saturday, while governorship and state assembly elections have been pushed back to March 9.

At an emergency meeting of his ruling All Progressives Congress party (APC) in Abuja, Buhari said he intended to make sure the rescheduled ballot proceeds without a hitch. "I do not expect anybody to make any disturbance," he told senior party members. "Anybody who decides to snatch (ballot) boxes or use thugs to disturb it (the vote), maybe this will be the last unlawful action he will take."

Buhari, 76, said he had ordered "the military and the police to be ruthless" to ensure all Nigerians can vote for their chosen candidate. "I am going to warn anybody who thinks he has enough influence in his locality to lead a body of thugs or snatch (ballot) boxes or to disturb the voting system, he will do it at the expense of his life," the president added. Both the APC and the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) have been accused of wanting to rig the result, notably by buying biometric voter identity cards.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) blamed the last-minute delay on logistical difficulties in the distribution of election materials, as well as sabotage. Elections have been delayed before in Nigeria: in 2015, there was a six-week postponement on security grounds linked to the Boko Haram

conflict in northeast Nigeria. In 2011, the election was halted after it had already begun due to problems with the non-delivery of ballot papers, results sheets, and other voting materials. This year's election is the sixth in the 20 years since Nigeria returned to civilian rule after decades of military government. Some 84 million voters are registered.

### Boko Haram kills two

In another development, two Nigerian soldiers were killed and six others injured when Boko Haram jihadists attacked a military post near the Cameroon border, security sources told AFP yesterday, days before rescheduled presidential elections. Fighters loyal to long-time factional leader Abubakar Shekau launched the attack on Sunday evening some 15 kilometers (nearly 10 miles) from the town of Banki.

President Buhari came to power on a pledge to defeat the Islamist militants but despite his repeated claims that they have been weakened to the point of defeat, attacks persist. His failure to end the violence is again a polling issue as Buhari seeks re-election this weekend. "We lost two soldiers to Boko Haram terrorists who attacked Alpha Company location..." a military officer in Banki said on condition of anonymity.

"Six soldiers were also injured in the attack," he said. The account was backed by a civilian militia member in the town. The injured troops were evacuated to a hospital in Mora, across the border in Cameroon. Banki is 130 kilometers southeast of Maiduguri, the Borno state capital, and houses some 45,000 people displaced by the



**ABUJA:** Candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) President Mohammadu Buhari (center) sits as party chairman Adams Oshiomhole (right) speaks while party national leader Bola Tinubu (left) and Vice President Yemi Osinbajo (2nd left) listen, during the party caucus emergency meeting on the postponed general elections yesterday. —AFP

conflict in a sprawling camp. Boko Haram has launched several attacks in and around Banki, targeting troops and the displaced. Last month two soldiers were killed and seven civilians injured in an ambush on a convoy of traders under military escort in Chachile village.

Boko Haram has in recent months stepped up attacks against military targets which have been blamed on or claimed by IS-affiliated Islamic State

West Africa Province (ISWAP). On Saturday, four soldiers and five jihadist fighters were killed when ISWAP fighters attacked a base in the town of Buni Yadi, in nearby Yobe state, the military said. Five civilians were killed and 11 injured in the crossfire. The conflict, which began in 2009, has killed more than 27,000 people and left 1.8 million homeless in northeast Nigeria. The violence has spilled into neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon. —Agencies

## Iran arrests 3 ‘terrorists’ over suicide attack

**TEHRAN:** Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards said yesterday it has arrested three "terrorists" involved in last week's deadly suicide bomb attack on security forces in a region bordering Pakistan. "Safe houses in (the cities of) Saravan and Khash were identified and eliminated, and the terrorists based in them were arrested," the force said on its official Sepah news agency. "Three of the terrorists were arrested and 150 kilograms (330 pounds) of explosives and 600 kilograms of explosive materials as well as weapons and ammunition were confiscated," it said. The Guards said the three arrested had "produced, guided and supported" the vehicle used in Wednesday's suicide bombing.

The attack killed 27 members of

Iran's Revolutionary Guards travelling on a bus in the volatile southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan, which straddles the border with Pakistan. It was claimed by the jihadist outfit Jaish al-Adl (Army of Justice). Iran has provided Pakistani officials with "information on the terrorist groups' hidden and semi-hidden training centers", army chief-of-staff Mohammad Bagheri told Tasnim news agency. In a phone call with Pakistani army commanders, Bagheri asked them to "either confront the groups or allow (Iranian) forces to enter." Islamabad launched an operation against the "terrorists" in its Balochistan border province on Sunday, he said.

Guards commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari has accused Pakistan's army and intelligence agency of sheltering the jihadists. The foreign ministry said Iran "cannot tolerate" Pakistan's inability to stop cross-border attacks on Iran and said Tehran's frustration had been communicated to Islamabad. "We hope the Pakistani government can and wants to prevent such things from happening again,"



**ISFAHAN:** Iranian mourners gather around the coffins of Revolutionary Guards who were killed in a suicide attack, during their funeral in southeastern city of Isfahan. —AFP

spokesman Bahram Ghasemi told reporters yesterday. The ministry has summoned the Pakistani ambassador in

Tehran and urged Islamabad to "seriously confront... the terrorist groups active on its border" with Iran. —AFP

## Libyans mark eight years since uprising

**TRIPOLI:** Thousands of Libyans took the streets Sunday to mark eight years since the uprising that ousted dictator Muammar Gaddafi, despite chronic political and security crises. Waving flags and wearing the country's national colors of red, black and green, marchers poured into Tripoli's Martyrs' Square, where the late autocrat once gave speeches, to continue celebrations kicked off the day before. The day's festivities were filled with fireworks, concerts and music blasted from loudspeakers. In Benghazi, Libya's second largest city and the "cradle of the revolution", celebrations were dimmer.

Only a few dozen people gathered at the Benghazi court square where the first anti-Gaddafi demonstrations began. Once a symbol of the uprising, it now

lies in ruins, bearing the scars of a war against jihadists launched in 2014. "This revolution was born in the streets and squares, carried by the youth... but some are trying to steal the dreams and desires of our people for a dignified life," said 32-year-old Benghazi resident Mohamad Al-Agouri. Libya has been mired in power struggles since the 2011 NATO-backed uprising, with militias and tribes vying for control of the country's resources.

The oil-rich country is torn between rival administrations, with the UN-backed Government of National Accord based in Tripoli and a parallel body in the east backed by strongman Khalifa Haftar and his self-styled Libyan National Army. Basic public services are wanting and continued violence and divisions are fuelling uncertainty and desperation, especially among the country's youth. "I'm impatiently waiting to see Libya stabilize and to be able to live in peace," pharmacist Abdelhamid Al-Maghrabi said. "We've had enough of wars, massacres and destruction," said the father of four. —AFP



**BENGHAZI:** Libyan men on a bulldozer wave the national flag as they gather to mark the eighth anniversary of the uprising in Libya's second city of Benghazi. —AFP

## Hamas takes control of Gaza crossing

**GAZA:** Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas took control of the Palestinian side of the enclave's main goods crossing with Israel, the strip's interior ministry and an official news agency said yesterday. Hamas seized the Gaza Strip in 2007 in a near civil war with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas' Fatah party. But it agreed to hand control of the crossings to the

Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority in 2017, as part of a since-failed reconciliation attempt between the two parties.

The PA administration at the goods crossing said Sunday that Hamas had "expelled (its) employees and banned them from entering the crossing", the official news agency Wafa reported. Known to Israelis as Kerem Shalom and to Palestinians as the Kerem Abu Salem, the crossing in the south of poverty-hit enclave has been a lifeline for Gazans, who have lived under a crippling Israeli blockade for more than a decade. Hamas confirmed PA employees had left the crossing. Security forces "put in place proce-

dures dictated by security imperatives", Gaza's interior ministry spokesman Iyad Al-Bozum said in a statement.

"Palestinian Authority employees at the crossing have refused to cooperate on these procedures for a few days and today we were surprised by their departure," he added. He said goods continued to pass through the crossing as normal. The Israeli defense ministry body responsible for Palestinian civil affairs, COGAT, said "trucks were going through" into Gaza as usual. Last month, Gaza's only crossing with Egypt was partially closed for some 20 days after PA employees withdrew from the border

point, accusing Hamas of interference.

Hamas employees quickly retook control of the Rafah crossing, the only way for Palestinians to leave the enclave that bypasses Israel. Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza, including Hamas, have fought three wars since 2008. Tensions have risen again since March as Palestinians have gathered at least weekly along the border with Israel for often-violent protests, calling for an end to the blockade. At least 250 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since then, the majority shot during clashes, though others have been hit by tank fire or air strikes. Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period.—AFP

## Russia pioneering return of ‘IS kids’

**MOSCOW:** As the end nears for the IS enclave in Syria and the fate of jihadists' family members becomes a prescient issue, Russia can be seen as a pioneer in systematically returning children of Islamist fighters home. A potential homecoming of the many foreign women who have gone to live in the IS "caliphate" and their children, many of whom were born there, has been a subject of debate in Russia, with some security chiefs seeing them as potential threats. Earlier this month, 27 children, from four to 13 years old, were flown from Iraq to the Moscow region. Clutching stuffed toys and bundled in winter jackets, the children were carried off the cargo plane to face the Russian winter after years in the desert.

After health exams, they would be given into the care of their uncles, aunts, and grandparents in the Russian North Caucasus, the majority-Muslim territory in the south of Russia that is home to most of the Russians that had joined the Islamic State group. Another 30 children were brought back in late December. "They attend school and kindergarten. Volunteers work with them and talk to them about what they have been through, explaining how they have been indoctrinated," said Kheda Saratova, an advisor to Chechnya leader Ramzan Kadyrov, who has assumed a central role in the process of repatriating Islamists' relatives.

### An 'honorable' deed

Russian authorities have given sometimes conflicting figures of returnees. Saratova said that about 200 children have been brought to Russia, but nearly 1,400 are still stuck in Iraq and Syria. Kadyrov, a longtime Kremlin protegee with vast resources, began efforts to bring back fighters' children in 2017. Diplomatic negotiations are often led by Aleppo-born Chechnya senator Ziyad Sabsabi. Endorsing Kadyrov's efforts, President Vladimir Putin in late 2017 called the drive to return the children "a very honorable and correct deed" and promised to help. "It's very good for the image of Kadyrov. He seems somebody who doesn't just use violence against terrorists but who builds mosques and hands out humanitarian aid," said Grigory Shvedov, who edits a Caucasus-focused news website Caucasian Knot.

When he began Russia's intervention in Syria in 2015, Putin justified it by the need to kill jihadists before they come to Russia. Although some regions have tried rehabilitation programs for Islamic extremists, these have failed to catch on at the national level. Young men who returned from Syria or Iraq and turned themselves in have faced harsh punishment. This month Russia's Supreme Court confirmed a 16-year-term for a young man who went to Syria as a 19-year-old student and worked as a cook and driver on IS-controlled territory for six months.

### The promise of amnesty

Returning the wives of jihadists is also complicated by the absence of an extradition agreement between Russia and Iraq, where many have been sentenced, sometimes to life, in prison. But there is also reluctance by Russia's powerful security services to bring home adult civilians. FSB chief Alexander Bortnikov in November noted that many women with children exiting conflict zones have been used by jihadists as suicide bombers or recruiters.

"The FSB sees them as dangerous, even though many of these wives purchase their freedom from the Kurds and will eventually return one way or another," said Saratova. Any affiliation with Islamic State jihadists is a crime, since the group is banned under Russian law. "Some sort of amnesty has been promised to many, but it doesn't actually happen," said Shvedov. "They are put on trial, (charges) sometimes trumped up and sometimes real." —AFP



International

# Seven MPs quit UK Labor Party over Brexit and anti-Semitism

## MPs to form a breakaway independent group in parliament

**LONDON:** A group of MPs from Britain's opposition Labor Party broke away yesterday in protest at leader Jeremy Corbyn's support for Brexit and his failure to stamp out anti-Semitism. The seven MPs included Chuka Umunna, who has led a campaign for a second referendum that could stop Brexit and was once seen as a potential leader of the centre-left party. Umunna called for a centrist "alternative" in British politics as the rebel MPs complained about the far-left turn the party had taken under veteran socialist Corbyn.

"The bottom line is this-politics is broken, it doesn't have to be this way, let's change it," Umunna said at a hastily-arranged press conference in London. The seven MPs will form a breakaway independent group in parliament, undermining Corbyn as he attempts to steer the party through the highly divisive issue of Brexit. Many Labor voters, particularly in northern England, chose to leave the European Union in the 2016 referendum-but a majority of Labor MPs and members supported staying in.

The referendum cut across party political allegiances also in the ruling Conservative Party, which is now deeply divided between pro-EU moderates and Brexit hardliners. The Labor rebellion is unlikely to make a major difference in crucial upcoming votes on Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal but the move was welcomed by pro-EU forces. Vince Cable, leader of the opposition Liberal Democrats, said he

was "open to working with like-minded groups and individuals in order to give the people the final say on Brexit, with the option to remain in the EU".

### 'Painful but necessary'

Corbyn said he was "disappointed" by his MPs' decision. "Now more than ever is the time to bring people together to build a better future for us all," he said, pointing to the party's strong result in the last general election in 2017. Corbyn has come under fire from europhiles for failing to push for a second referendum. He has instead called on May to negotiate a customs union with the European Union to ease trade ties after Brexit. Corbyn has also been criticized for months for his handling of cases of anti-Semitism in the Labor Party, and his own past associations with Palestinian militants.

Another of the seven MPs, Luciana Berger, a victim of anti-Semitic online abuse for years, said: "This has been a very difficult, painful but necessary decision." Berger said the Labor Party had become "institutionally anti-Semitic", adding: "I have become embarrassed and ashamed to represent the Labor Party. 'I am leaving behind a culture of bullying, bigotry and intimidation,'" she said. MP Mike Gapes said one of his main reasons for leaving was because he was "furious that the Labor leadership is complicit in facilitating Brexit". His colleague Chris Leslie said he too was leaving because of "Labor's betrayal on Europe". —AFP



**LONDON:** Former Labor party MPs, (From Left) Ann Coffey, Angela Smith, Chris Leslie, Chuka Umunna, Mike Gapes, Luciana Berger, and Gavin Shuker pose for a photograph following a press conference in London yesterday, where they announced their resignation from the Labor Party, and the formation of a new independent group of MPs. —AFP

### News in brief

#### Maldives arrests ex-leader

**MALE:** Maldivian authorities yesterday ordered the arrest of former strongman president Abdulla Yameen over money laundering charges, officials said. The arrest came after a court began a preliminary hearing into allegations that Yameen received nearly \$1.5 million in illicit payments just before he lost his re-election bid in September. "Prosecutors said that Yameen had allegedly attempted to bribe witnesses," a court official said, adding that the former president would be taken to the Dhoonidhoo prison island near the capital. Yameen, who came to power in 2013 and jailed many of his opponents or forced them into exile, had been summoned to the Criminal Court Sunday to formally receive his indictment. During his five-year tenure, Yameen relied heavily on China for political and financial support as he came under criticism over his dismal human rights record. The Indian Ocean archipelago nation of 340,000 Sunni Muslims is heavily in debt to China. —AFP

#### Armed foreigners charged

**PORT-AU-PRINCE:** Haiti has charged several Americans and other foreign nationals with criminal conspiracy after their arrest with assault rifles and other weapons, the national police said. The group was detained in central Port-au-Prince Sunday evening and includes five Americans, a Serb, a Russian and a Haitian, police said. They gave no indication about the motives of the group and said interrogations will continue. The arrests came 10 days after protests began against corruption and poverty in the Caribbean nation. At least seven people have died during demonstrations demanding the ouster of President Jovenel Moise. Police said the men were detained at a checkpoint near the central bank. They are also charged with illegal possession of weapons for allegedly having with them six assault rifles, six pistols, ammunition, bullet proof vests, drones, telecommunications gear and two vehicles. —AFP

#### Oil workers in Libya freed

**TRIPOLI:** Fourteen Tunisian oil workers kidnapped in Libya were freed Sunday night after three days in captivity and are in good health, the Tunisian consul in country said. Armed men seized the 14 Tunisians from a bus on Thursday as they were heading to work at an oil refinery in Zawiya, just to the west of the Libyan capital. The consul, Taoufik Al-Guesmi, did not disclose the conditions for the release of the workers, whose abductors had demanded a man jailed in Tunisia be released from prison. But a security source in Zawiya confirmed the news of their release, saying the hostages had been freed in an operation carried out by the town's security forces. The forces "stormed the place where they were being held and were able to release them without fighting, no casualties," Thamer Mounir, head of the media section of the Zawiya security service said. Mounir was unable to say if any arrests had taken place. —AFP

#### 'Air Cocaine' smuggling trial

**AIX-EN-PROVENCE:** Two former French air force pilots went on trial in France yesterday six years after they fled the Dominican Republic following a spectacular drugs bust on a private jet in the Caribbean nation. In what has become known as the "Air Cocaine" case, Pascal Fauret and Bruno Odos are accused along with seven other defendants of trying to smuggle 680 kilogram of the drug out of the country. Dominican police found the narcotics packed into 26 suitcases onboard a Falcon 50 jet as it prepared to fly from the Dominican beach resort of Punta Cana to Saint-Tropez in the south of France in March 2013. While out on bail, the two men managed to flee the Dominican Republic to French territory in the Caribbean in mysterious circumstances, but were re-arrested upon their return to the French mainland in November 2015. —AFP

## British lawmakers target Facebook 'digital gangsters'

**LONDON:** A scathing British parliamentary report yesterday branded Facebook "digital gangsters" who failed to fight the spread of fake news and violated data privacy. Lawmakers' 18-month investigation into technology companies and disinformation also accused the world's largest social media platform of trying to hide the extent of Russian interference in foreign elections. Facebook is coming under attack over its response to Russia's alleged use of misleading stories and targeted ads to sway the 2016 US presidential election and a series of European votes.

Its executives have further been accused of trying to either hide or suppress emerging evidence of foreign meddling flagged by its engineers. Parliamentary committee chair Damian Collins said Facebook "deliberately sought to frustrate our work by giving incomplete, disingenuous and at times misleading answers to our questions". Facebook co-founder and chief Mark Zuckerberg turned down three requests to appear before the committee. "Companies like Facebook

should not be allowed to behave like 'digital gangsters' in the online world, considering themselves to be ahead of and beyond the law," the 108-page report said.

### Code of ethics

The committee urged a compulsory code of ethics for all tech companies that would be overseen by an independent UK regulator. It said Facebook should be obliged to take down "sources of harmful content". "We further recommend that the Government launches an independent investigation into past elections-including the UK election of 2017, the UK Referendum of 2016, and the Scottish Referendum of 2014 - to explore what actually happened with regard to foreign influence," the report said. Russia has denied either backing Britain's decision to leave the European Union or covertly backing pro-Brexit leaders during the 2016 referendum campaign. Facebook spokesman Karim Palant said executives at the California company "share the committee's concerns about false news and election integrity."

"We are open to meaningful regulation and support the committee's recommendation for electoral law reform," Palant said in a statement released to AFP. But Collins said Facebook has only adopted incremental policy changes that were mostly aimed at fending off regulation making it liable for



**LONDON:** A mousepad with the Facebook logo is seen at Facebook's new headquarters. A scathing British parliamentary report yesterday branded Facebook 'digital gangsters' that knowingly violated data privacy and competition laws. —AFP

the spread of malicious stories. "They have taken a step, largely I think, to offset legislation," Collins told BBC radio. "It shouldn't be down to Mark Zuckerberg to determine what the code is for election advertising in the UK through Facebook."

### Russian interference

The committee had earlier found that

many Poles who collaborated with the Nazis, and like Yitzhak Shamir, whose father was murdered, said: Poles suckle anti-Semitism with their mothers' milk."

The Visegrad Group, often known as the V4, was due to hold its first summit in Jerusalem yesterday and Tuesday for talks with Israeli officials. Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz had been due to replace Morawiecki before he pulled the plug on Poland's participation. Morawiecki said it was up to other central European leaders due to attend the summit, including the prime ministers of Hungary and Slovakia, to decide how they would proceed. Czech premier Babis told reporters that since Poland has cancelled its participation "the trip will change to bilateral talks between the individual countries and there will be no V4 summit with Israel".

### Sensitive subject

The initial row broke out last week when Netanyahu—who was quoted in Haaretz newspaper as saying that "the Poles collaborated with the Nazis"—was condemned in Poland for appearing to accuse all Polish people of cooperating with Nazi Germany during World War II. Warsaw has long been at pains to state that Poland, which was occupied by Nazi Germany, could not have and did not collaborate in the Holocaust although individual Poles gave up Jews to the Nazis. The Israeli prime minister's office said on Friday that Netanyahu had not implicated all Poles in the Holocaust. It insisted that Netanyahu was "misquoted" in Haaretz and other publications that reported different versions of the quote. The clarification came hours after the Polish foreign ministry had summoned Azari over the remarks.



**MUNICH:** Combo picture shows Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki (left) and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Poland's Prime Minister Morawiecki yesterday cancelled Warsaw's participation in a summit in Jerusalem. —AFP

Netanyahu was in Warsaw last week for a two-day summit on the Middle East, co-hosted by Poland and the United States, which focused on isolating Iran while building Arab-Israeli ties. The fresh controversy in Polish-Israeli ties comes after a row last year over a Polish law that made it illegal to accuse the Polish nation or state of complicity in Nazi German crimes. After protests from Israel and the United States, Poland amended the law to remove the possibility of fines or a prison sentence. Poland was occupied by Nazi Germany during World War II and lost six million citizens including three million Jews. —AFP

## Britain rejects Trump's jihadist repatriation call

**LONDON:** The British government yesterday rebuffed US President Donald Trump's call to take back alleged UK jihadists captured in Syria and try them at home. Trump tweeted on Sunday that Washington was "asking Britain, France, Germany and other European allies to take back

over 800 ISIS fighters that we captured in Syria and put them on trial". His comments came with diehard Islamic State group fighters trapped in the last pocket of their crumbling "caliphate" in Syria. Prime Minister Theresa May's spokesman said the fighters should be put on trial in places where they committed their crimes. "Foreign fighters should be brought to justice in accordance with due legal process in the most appropriate jurisdiction," Downing Street said. "Where possible, this should be in the region where the crimes had been committed."

The spokesman added that London continued "to work closely with our international partners on this". US allies have been grappling for weeks with

what to do with foreign fighters detained in the war-ravaged country by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces. The issue's urgency was raised in Britain after a London school girl who joined the Islamic State in 2015 resurfaced in a Syrian refugee camp last week. Shamima Begum told British media she wanted to come back to London to raise a baby she gave birth to this weekend. UK security officials said they could not block Begum's return since she had never been convicted of any crimes. But they did not rule out prosecuting her upon her arrival.

Meanwhile, Germany vowed yesterday to prosecute German IS fighters but warned that it would be "extremely difficult" to organize the

repatriation of European nationals from Syria, after US President Donald Trump called on allies to take back alleged jihadists. Syria's US-backed Kurdish forces, which are battling Islamic State group jihadists in their last redoubt in eastern Syria, hold hundreds of suspected foreign IS fighters and the calls for their reluctant home countries to take them back have grown in urgency. "We must be able to ensure that prosecution is possible," Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen told Bild daily. Underlining the difficulties however of putting the ex-fighters on trial, the minister noted that there is "no government in Syria with which we have a sensible relationship". —Agencies



## International

# Death row 'spy' in Pakistan 'must be freed', India tells the UN court

## 'Farcical case based on malicious propaganda'

**THE HAGUE:** Islamabad should be ordered to free an Indian man sentenced to death for alleged spying in Pakistan, India's lawyers told the UN's top court yesterday, saying his military trial was a "farcical case" based on "malicious propaganda". The hearing concerning Kulbushan Sudhir Jadhav at the International Court of Justice comes amid a sharp spike in tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors, after a suicide attack on an Indian military convoy last week and renewed fighting in restive Kashmir.

Jadhav, a former Indian navy officer, was arrested in the restive southwestern Pakistani province of Baluchistan in March 2016 on charges of espionage and sentenced to death by a military court in 2017. India insists Jadhav, 48, was not a spy and that he was kidnapped in Pakistan. New Delhi is now asking the ICJ—which rules in disputes between countries—to nullify his sentence and to order Islamabad to set him free.

### 'Unlawful'

"Considering the trauma he (Jadhav) has been subjected to over the past three years, it would be in the interest of justice of making human rights a reality, to direct his release," India's lawyer Harish Salve told the judges. "India seeks relief in declaring that the trial by the military court in Pakistan... hopelessly fails to satisfy even minimum standards of due process... and should be declared unlawful," he said, speaking at the Peace Palace, the ICJ's headquarters in The Hague. India's joint secretary at its External Affairs Ministry, Deepak Mittal, told the court the proceedings against Jadhav in Pakistan were based on a "farcical case" and "malicious propaganda".

New Delhi's renewed bid in a controversial court case comes as fresh bloodshed in Kashmir sent tensions

between the neighbors soaring. The rare foray into the international courts by India and Pakistan could be another flashpoint after Thursday's suicide bombing in Indian-administered Kashmir that killed 41 troops. Indian troops suffered new losses yesterday in a fierce battle with Kashmir militants that left at least seven more dead. The latest confrontation piled more pressure on the Indian government, which has blamed Pakistan for the suicide attack that sparked widespread calls for action against its neighbor. Pakistan has rejected the allegations.

### 'Blurry on facts'

Jadhav was accused of working for the Indian intelligence services in the province bordering Afghanistan, where Islamabad has long accused India of backing separatist rebels. After a closed trial he was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on April 10, 2017, on charges of "espionage, sabotage and terrorism". India accused Islamabad of violating the Vienna Convention by failing to provide him with consular access, as well as breaking human rights law. Pakistan's "story has always been strong on rhetoric and blurry on facts," Salve said, adding that consular access should be granted immediately. Islamabad reacted coolly to the ICJ's urgent order at the time to stay Jadhav's execution, saying it "has not changed the status of commander Jadhav's case in any manner". Islamabad's lawyers are to state their case on Tuesday. The ICJ's decision will likely come months after this week's hearings.

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since independence from Britain in 1947 with both countries, which have fought three wars, claiming it as their own. India and Pakistan also routinely accuse each other of sending spies into their countries and it is not uncommon for either nation to expel diplomats accused of espionage, particularly at times of high tension. Death sentences however have been rarely issued in recent years. The last time India and Pakistan took a dispute to the ICJ



**THE HAGUE:** Secretary of Foreign Affairs of India Deepak Mittal (left) and Attorney General of Pakistan Anwar Mansoor Khan (right) greet each other at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, prior to the India-Pakistan case yesterday. — AFP

was in 1999 when Islamabad protested at the downing of a Pakistani navy plane that killed 16 people. The tribunal decided that it was not competent to rule in the dispute and closed the case. — AFP

## China province defends ban on Tibetan lessons

**BEIJING:** Chinese authorities yesterday defended a ban on schoolchildren attending informal Tibetan language classes taught by Buddhist monks in western China, as religious and cultural freedoms in the country come under increasing pressure. A county in western Qinghai—a province with a large Tibetan population that is mostly Buddhist—in December ordered an immediate halt to informal language classes taught by monks during the winter school holidays.

The lessons taught in monasteries in the province bordering Tibet have gained popularity among parents as a way for their children to learn a language that is being sidelined from the official curriculum. It follows a similar ban last summer barring Tibetan students from taking part in religious activities during their holidays. The provincial government said yesterday that the lessons were "illegal" and said the monasteries were "safety hazards" as well as being "ill-equipped" to teach students.

"According to Chinese law... education is conducted by the government. No organization or person can use religion as a means of obstructing the state education system," it said in a statement. It added that the classes pose a financial burden to students and their families, and contravene regulations to reduce the workload of students. Monasteries and monks who do not follow the new rules will be "dealt with in accordance with the law", the statement said. The regulations follow similar edicts by the ruling Communist Party in other regions with large ethnic minority populations, starting with a clampdown on Islam in Xinjiang, a Muslim-majority region in the far west. — AFP

## Thai junta shoots down proposal to slash defense spending

**BANGKOK:** Thailand's junta defended its \$7 billion defense budget and annual draft yesterday after political opponents proposed slashing military spending by 10 percent and ending conscription after elections. The country spends among the most on defense in Southeast Asia and recent big purchases—including submarines and tanks from China—have drawn criticism in a state riddled with inequality and corruption.

Its generals have grabbed power a dozen times since 1932 with defense spending spiking in lockstep with each coup. Last year the junta-picked National Legislative Assembly proposed a defense budget for 2019 of \$7 billion, a \$1 billion increase since the latest 2014 coup. But Pheu Thai, linked to ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra and the country's most popular political party, has vowed to end conscription and cut spending by 10 percent if it beats the odds and returns to power after the March 24 poll.

Junta chief Prayut Chan-O-Cha—who hopes to become civilian premier under an army-aligned party after the elec-

tions—on Monday justified the increase as necessary to upgrade obsolete gear. "If we do not have it, our military quality cannot be compared with other countries," he told reporters. Chan-O-Cha said the breakout of war was impossible to predict and in peacetime the army "fights against drugs and illegal entry" into the country.

Military conscription, he added, is "a duty of all Thai men". The army runs an annual draft for 100,000 men each year—all male citizens must participate at least once after they turn 21, but are exempted if they are students. Thailand has not fought a full blown war in living memory, although border disputes have previously turned into bloody conflicts with Laos and more recently Cambodia. The military has used its might more frequently inside the country, quelling street protests, staging coups or fighting insurgents in the Muslim-majority "Deep South", bordering Malaysia.

Army chief Apirart Kongsompong gave a coded slapdown to Pheu Thai's leadership over the proposal to cut military spending, insisting they should listen to a nationalist Cold War-era propaganda song, *Nhak Paen Din*. Roughly translating as "Scum of the Earth", it was the anthem of paramilitary units who led a massacre of at least 41 students protesting the return of a military dictator in October 1976. The #NhakPaenDin was top trending on Thai Twitter on Monday, a sign of the bitter memories it evokes, particularly among Thailand's pro-democracy movement. — AFP

## India pulls down Imran Khan portraits over Kashmir killings

**NEW DELHI:** Cricket stadiums around India have taken down portraits of Pakistan's former captain-turned-Prime Minister Imran Khan amid protests over the killing of 41 paramilitaries in Indian-administered Kashmir last week. India has blamed Pakistan for the suicide attack on a military convoy that sparked widespread calls for action against the country's neighbor. Khan, who led Pakistan to a World Cup victory in 1992, is considered one of the best players ever, and his portrait is found at many grounds around the world.

But the Cricket Club of India in Mumbai and the Test ground at Mohali have led the portrait protests by removing pictures of Khan

and other Pakistan stars. "We respect the sentiments of the people of India who are angry by what happened in Kashmir. In protest we took off the pictures of all Pakistani players," Punjab Cricket Association treasurer Ajay Tyagi told AFP. "We have kept them in safe custody and will see later what we are going to do about them," he added.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) slammed the removal of the portraits. "We have always believed and emphasized that sports and politics should be kept separate. History tells us that sports, particularly cricket, have always played a key role in building bridges between people and countries," PCB managing director Wasim Khan said in a statement. He called the protests "highly regrettable." Indian production company IMG Reliance has pulled out of producing the Pakistan Super League Twenty20 matches for broadcasters because of the Pulwama attack. India froze bilateral cricketing ties with Pakistan after deadly attacks on Mumbai in 2008 blamed on militants based across the border. The arch rivals only play each other abroad, and are next scheduled to meet in the World Cup in England starting June 15.— AFP



**ISLAMABAD:** Billboards showing portraits of Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (2nd right) and Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad. — AFP

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## Analysis

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## Europe food makers find green palm oil hard to stomach

Europe, the world's second-biggest buyer of palm oil, is set to miss a 2020 target backed by about 10 countries, as well as big companies, to use 100-percent sustainable supplies of the edible oil in food ingredients, environmental experts warn. A lack of public awareness and debate around the palm oil industry has left nations like Italy, Spain and Poland lagging behind their neighbors in green palm oil purchases, a January report by The Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH) said. "Countries in northwestern Europe are leading the pack," said Daan Wensing, a director at IDH, a Netherlands-based nonprofit. "Other major destinations are just getting started."

In addition to a lack of government action to force buyers to purchase sustainable palm oil, Wensing said European catering firms and animal feed companies are not coming under consumer pressure to source greener supplies. "The industries that are consumer-facing have stepped up, but sectors like canteen catering services are not really playing ball yet," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

As the world's most widely used edible oil, palm oil is found in everything from margarine to biscuits and soap to soups, as well as in biofuel. But in recent years, the industry has come under close scrutiny from green activists and consumers, who have blamed it for clearing forests for plantations and causing fires, along with the exploitation of workers.

In response, about 10 European governments - including France, the Netherlands and Britain - and major corporate buyers of palm oil like Nestle, Mondelez, PepsiCo and Unilever pledged to purchase only sustainable palm oil by 2020. The European Union has also approved a law to phase out palm oil-based biofuels by 2030, causing outrage in top producer nations Indonesia and Malaysia.

But with less than two years to go until the end of 2020, only 74 percent of palm oil bought by Europe's food industry was certified as sustainable, the IDH report said. "To meet the 100-percent target by 2020 is going to be very difficult because now we move into these markets where there is no consumer pressure or awareness," said Wensing.

### Cart before horse

Palm oil certified as sustainable by the global industry watchdog, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO), accounts for about a fifth of global output, at an estimated 12.3 million tons per year. It sells at a premium but demand covers just half of supply. Europe imported an estimated 7 million tons of palm oil in 2017, according to consultancy LMC International, with about 2.6 million tons of that used for food production.

Anne Rosenbarger, Southeast Asia commodities manager at the World Resources Institute Indonesia, said the debate around palm oil had often been politicized, further confusing consumers. British supermarket chain Iceland, for example, said last year it would remove palm oil from its own-brand food by the end of 2018 as part of efforts to stem deforestation. The retailer was then banned from showing a palm oil-themed Christmas advert on television because it was deemed to breach political advertising rules.

Such controversies around palm-oil boycotts are making major brands wary of using the RSPO logo on their products and drawing attention to their use of palm oil, said Rosenbarger. Building greater awareness of sustainable palm oil and the RSPO among consumers would encourage more food makers to use the trademark on their products, she added. Improving transparency around the way the RSPO applies its standards and handles complaints would also help convince more brands to use the logo, researchers said.

The RSPO is backed by major European buyers and has more than 4,000 members, including producers, traders, consumer goods firms and green groups. Even if the "extremely ambitious" 2020 targets set by European buyers fall short, they were required to drive the transformation seen in companies over the last few years, said Rosenbarger, who is also co-chair of the RSPO. "There was a little bit of cart before the horse, but that's part of the growing pains of what needed to happen," she said.

### No deforestation

While many companies have put in place sustainable palm oil policies, action and implementation have often been lacking throughout supply chains, said Grant Rosoman, Asia-Pacific campaign advisor at Greenpeace International. He said it was unlikely the 2020 goals would be met because "no deforestation" commitments take years to implement. "A lot of the big traders and buyers just don't want to pay enough for what it takes to do proper, responsibly produced palm oil," he said.

European countries that have pledged to buy only sustainable palm oil should enforce those commitments even if they are just refining or taking port deliveries of palm oil to be delivered across Europe, said IDH's Wensing. He called on more European governments to make the 2020 pledge on sustainable palm oil, and for more awareness campaigns to change consumer attitudes and demand. "Governments need to step up their game to make sure it (sustainable palm oil) is the norm in Europe," he said. — Reuters



Syrians queue for gas canisters in the Salah al-Din district of the northern city of Aleppo on Feb 11, 2019. — AFP

## In Aleppo, gas shortages add to daily woes

As soon as they spotted a truck distributing gas canisters, residents in the Syrian city of Aleppo formed a long queue stretching down the street - a now-familiar sight due to crippling shortages. Security forces and members of a municipal committee shuffled people around into an organized line, as men climbed into the back of the muddy lorry to hand out the cylinders. The mayor of the Salah al-Din district wrote down the personal details of each person who received a gas canister that day.

Umm Bader was one of them. A smile beamed across her face as she struggled to drag the heavy cylinder back home. "I've been standing here every morning for the past three days," said the women in her 50s, wearing a long robe and a black veil. "Today I was lucky," she said. Since December, queuing for hours to buy gas has become part of everyday life in the Salah al-Din district.

The crisis has also hit other government-held cities in Syria, including the capital Damascus, sparking a wave of discontent. Persistent power cuts and a spike in the price of fuel oil has forced residents to increasingly rely on gas to cook and heat their homes. Swelling consumption and increased demand during winter has led to one of the most serious gas shortages in recent years.

The scale of the crisis prompted Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to acknowledge the problem during a televised speech Sunday. "There has been real suffering, which most of the Syrian people have felt," he said. "There needs to be a change in the distribution system to take into account consumption and population density" in each province, he said.

### 'Punitive' sanctions

In Aleppo, the mayor of Salah al-Din said just 200 gas canisters a day were reaching a district of 25,000 families.

"Salah al-Din is considered to be the most populated neighborhood in Aleppo," 44-year-old Hassan Al-Jok said. Electricity cuts and high fuel oil prices mean residents are relying mainly on gas for heating, causing "excess in consumption", he said. "I expect the gas supply will improve as spring approaches," he said.

The mayor pointed to sanctions imposed on Syria as a reason behind the crisis, but said they only served to "pun-



### Sanctions are disrupting gas shipments

ish" the population. Since 2011, the United States and Europe have both slapped sanctions on imports including fuels, as well as Syrian individuals accused of financially backing Assad's regime. In November, the US Treasury issued a new advisory threatening penalties against "insurers, shipping companies, financial institutions, and others involved in petroleum-related shipping transactions with the Government of Syria".

That same month, the treasury moved to disrupt an international network "through which the Iranian regime, working with Russian companies, provides millions of barrels of oil to the Syrian government". The General Competition and Anti-Monopoly Commission, a state

body, said last month the gas crisis was linked to sanctions. In a report published by the pro-government Al-Watan daily, it said economic sanctions were disrupting gas shipments to Syria, which imports up to 80 percent of its fossil fuels from allied countries.

### Bad for business

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Ghanem told parliament last month work was being done to boost local gas production and to identify alternative sources to satisfy growing demand. On average, Syria requires 130,000 gas canisters a day, according to official figures. The government sells each cylinder at a subsidized price of 2,700 Syrian pounds (\$5) but limited supply has forced residents to purchase gas from private vendors at more than double that rate, according to residents.

Local businesses and restaurants that rely heavily on gas are struggling to stay open. In Aleppo's Al-Hamidiyah neighborhood, the owner of a rotisserie chicken shop said he now closes his restaurant early. "Ever since the gas crisis started, we have decreased the amount of food we sell and shortened working hours to avoid closing down completely," said 50-year-old Mohammad Fattouh. "We can't wait in line for hours every day to buy (state-subsidized) gas, so we are forced to pay more to get gas" from private sellers, he said.

Gas shortages are also a problem for Fattouh at home. His wife, Umm Abdu, says she is cooking less and preparing salads instead to limit gas consumption. "We're used to electricity cuts and fuel oil shortages but we're not used to not enough gas, which is a basic necessity," she said. "Finding a gas canister has become yet another dream to add to all the other dreams of a simple Aleppo resident," she said. — AFP

## Coffee farmers bet on blockchain to boost business

On a bustling street near the shiny new international airport in Ethiopia's capital is a small coffee roastery with big dreams. Nearly 40 Ethiopians - a third of them women - sift, roast and package prized Arabica beans for export to Europe under the Moyee brand, founded by a Dutch social entrepreneur. The roastery, together with the innovative use of blockchain technology to ensure the supply chain is transparent, represents an attempt to keep as much of the profits as possible in Ethiopia, one of the world's poorest countries.

"It's the world's favorite drink. We drink over 2 billion cups a day," said Kilian Stokes, who set up the Irish branch of Moyee. "The industry's worth \$100 billion and yet 90 percent of coffee farmers in Ethiopia live on less than \$2 a day." That is partly because most exporters process the beans elsewhere, but also down to price fluctuations and other factors that make coffee growing a precarious business.

To make things fairer, Moyee has created unique digital identities for the 350 farmers it currently works with - meaning buyers can see exactly how much each individual grower is paid, with prices set at 20 percent above the market rate. Now the brand, whose slogan is "radically good coffee", wants to use blockchain to take that to the next level - allowing buyers to tip farmers, or fund projects such as a new planting program, through a mobile app.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said in a recent report that blockchain had huge potential to address challenges smallholder farmers faced by "reducing uncertainty and enabling trust among market players". The technology, used to underpin cyber-currencies like Bitcoin, allows shared access to data that is

maintained by a network of computers and can quickly trace the hundreds of parties involved in the production and distribution of food. Once entered, any information cannot be altered or tampered with.

### 'Bigger than the Internet'

Siobhan Kelly, an advisor to the Food Systems Program at the FAO, said blockchain would ultimately be "much bigger than the internet". "Within 10 years - it'll take probably 10 years - it's going to be a major revolution, for everything," said Kelly. Fruit farmers in Caribbean nations are also looking at using blockchain to attract better-paying customers, bring traceability and build a credit trail.

"It's an innovation that is poised to empower local farmers in the Caribbean region," said Pamela Thomas, executive director of the Agriculture Alliance of the Caribbean (AACARI), a regional network of nearly 100,000 farmers. AACARI's project has two components: auditing by accredited professionals to ensure farmers adhere to the Global GAP (good agricultural practices) standards, and a digital marketplace where buyers can find detailed information about the produce. Global GAP is a voluntary standard required by many European and US super-market chains.

Vijay Kandy, whose company is building the blockchain platform, said the auditing process would allow farmers to deal directly with buyers - bypassing the middlemen that many currently rely on - and make access to credit easier. "One reason why buyers from faraway places or different countries go through middlemen is because they rely on them to make sure farmers are following these good practices," he said.

One such buyer is London-based Union Hand-Roasted Coffee. The company sources its coffee directly from growers' cooperatives to ensure higher quality, pays farmers more than minimum price set by the global Fairtrade organization, and works with more than 40 producer groups in 14 countries. — Reuters

## Hit by weather, Botswana farmers seek welfare

Maipato Kesebang normally grows maize, juko beans and sweet reed on her 20-hectare plot of land northwest of Gaborone, Botswana's capital. But last year, worsening drought and heat-waves destroyed much of her harvest. "The little that grew feebly we just ate. Nothing was left for storage or to sell," she said. Usually when her crops fail she turns to collecting wild spinach to sell, to support her two sons. But even that is now disappearing as climate change brings harsher weather and more people turn to harvesting the vegetable to survive, she said.

So last year, for the first time, she signed up to Ipelegeng, a long-standing government safety net program that provides temporary jobs for those struggling to make ends meet. Now she works one month out of four cutting back overgrown grass and trees, desilting dams and drains, collecting litter or cleaning streets. She'd prefer to work every month - but demand is so high for the jobs that there aren't enough slots, she said. "We only work for a month, then we go home and wait for three months before we apply again. That's because there are too many people now needing the relief," said Kesebang, as she pulled weeds on her parched plot of land. As harsher droughts and hotter weather linked to climate change ruin crops more frequently in Botswana, the country is facing a new challenge: growing demand for social assistance programmes.

### Swelling ranks

About 68,000 people worked for Ipelegeng as of March 2018, according to figures from Statistics Botswana, up from about 64,000 in March 2016. Of those on the rolls, about 47,000 were women, according to the agency. To accommodate

rising demand, Botswana's government last August increased the number of Ipelegeng slots by 5,000, after declaring 2018-2019 an expected drought year.

That will cost the country an extra \$2.7 million - money that it does not readily have as its national budget does not specifically set money aside for drought relief, said Billyboy Siabatho, deputy director of the rural development council at the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. "Often, when drought comes, we end up borrowing from funds that would have been set aside for infrastructure development projects," he said.

Ipelegeng's main objective is to provide short term employment and relief, while helping carry out development efforts the country sees as important, he said. "During drought periods, there are fewer farming activities. Therefore most people relocate from farms to villages, looking for alternative sources of income," Siabatho said. "Due to limited job opportunities in rural areas, most people rely on Ipelegeng as an alternative source of employment," he noted.

But as droughts continue to worsen in southern Africa, Siabatho wonders whether the government will be able to keep pace with growing demand. He also worries whether people will begin to see dependence on safety nets as an easier route than farming, as crop failures worsen. Botswana's government, aware of the risks from worsening drought, began in December working on a new drought management strategy that aims to improve planning and budgeting for threats and not focus simply on responding to them, Siabatho said.

For Kesebang, such help can't come soon enough. Her farm, a few kilometres out of the town of Molepolole, sits in Kweneng District, which has the highest poverty levels in the country, of over 50 percent, according to 2018 report by Statistics Botswana. Most of the 567 pula (\$55) she earns each month she works for Ipelegeng goes to keep her youngest son in primary school. "I buy books and uniform. Often nothing is really left. Life has become difficult," she said. — Reuters



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KUWAIT: The Capital Markets Authority officials address a press conference yesterday at Boursa Kuwait

# CMA project to set capital adequacy standards

## Authority eyes effective monitoring system in accordance with global standards

KUWAIT: The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) has launched a project to prepare regulations of capital adequacy standard for licensed persons with a view to establishing an effective monitoring system in accordance with international standards.

This is in tune with the CMA's comprehensive vision to enhance its legislative infrastructure and within its role as a monitoring auditor of the Kuwait capital market.

A capital requirement, also known as regulatory capital or capital adequacy, is the amount of capital a bank or other financial institution has to hold as required by its financial regulator. This is usually expressed as a capital adequacy ratio of equity that must be held as a percentage of risk-weighted assets.

The CMA's move is as per law no 7 of 2010 regarding the establishment of the Capital Markets Authority and regulating securities activities and its amendments, namely clause number 2 of article 66 of the law, which states "A person licensed to engage in the management of securities activities shall comply with the regulations specified in the bylaws and in particular maintaining adequate capital", as well as article 64 which states "The authority may request from persons licensed to engage in securities activities to submit periodic reports on all their activities to make sure they are capable of carrying on with their business and particularly have adequate capital that suits the volume and type of their securities activities".

These regulations are a major step in this regard as

they are part of the effective auditing tools that would enhance the efficiency of companies licensed to deal in securities and ensure safety of their financial statuses in a way that matches the nature of the risks they undergo. The regulations will also protect investors' rights and create a safe investment environment.

Notably, in collaboration with international consultants Ernst & Young, CMA prepared a draft on licensed persons' capital adequacy, in addition to all the forms needed in both English and Arabic to assess their suitability for the business environment through conducting a study on different quantitative impacts, which involved applying the draft regulations on a selected specimen of licensed persons.

The results showed that these regulations fit the business environment, namely in terms of covering all the risks accompanying securities activities. The results also showed that most licensed persons have high capital adequacies.

The basis of the draft regulations can be summed up in the following:

- Capital was calculated according to a risk-based approach.
- Four licensed activities will be initially exempted from the regulations and will be allowed to maintain minimum limits of their capitals, including: Asset assessors, investment consultants, credit rating agencies and investment auditors.

successfully complete the tender process of this landmark transaction. Given the various issues that needed to be attended to during the development of the tender process, we are also particularly proud of the manner in which various Kuwaiti laws (including the Kuwait Capital Markets Law) and regulations accommodated the tender process as they were being stress tested under the weight of this transaction. This privatization transaction is an example of our consistent diligence and commitment in providing quality legal services of the highest caliber. Our clients always come first, their success is our success, and we intend to keep it that way."

Hossam Abdullah, Legal Counsel & Managing Partner at Al-Hossam Legal, said that: "The privatization process required strenuous efforts by various specialized teams, including the legal team which worked for almost one year on the transaction and spent in excess of than 1000 hours on the same. The culmination of which resulted in a legally sound, transparent and successful competitive bidding process. All assumptions and scenarios were dealt with leaving no stone unturned. We are proud to have been part of this national endeavor and to have contributed to Kuwait's vision 2035 and beyond."

Ibrahim Sattout, Partner at ASAR noted that: "We are very proud to have worked with the CMA on this high profile and complex transaction. We believe that transactions of this nature are fundamental to growing Kuwait's economy particularly given the involve-



- Extra requirements have been set for financial market infrastructure (FMI).

The above regulations are expected to lower the minimum capital requirements in general, which will

enhance higher efficiency of utilizing capitals for both companies and CMA and balance the risks these companies may undergo as well as the auditory capital they should maintain.

## ASAR and Al-Hossam & Partners act as legal counsel for Boursa Kuwait privatization

KUWAIT: Al-Ruwayeh & Partners (ASAR), and Al-Hossam Legal Al-Turqi & Partners have acted as legal counsel as part of the advisory team to the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) in relation to the landmark privatization of Boursa Kuwait which culminated with the sale by the CMA of 44 percent of its shares held in the capital of Boursa Kuwait through a developed bidding process. This resulted in the winning bid being placed by the international consortium comprised of the Athens Stock Exchange, National Investments Company, Al-Oula Investment and Arzan Financial Group.

This historic privatization transaction is a landmark and precedent setting transaction in Kuwait given the nature and consequence of the deal and involvement of major international operators including some of the world's leading stock market operators and local financial institutions.

On this occasion, Robert Little, Counsel at ASAR noted that: "We are delighted to have been able to



KUWAIT: Officials of Al-Ruwayeh & Partners (ASAR) and Al-Hossam Legal Al-Turqi & Partners

ment of local financial institutions. We appreciate the confidence and trust that the CMA has put in our firm and we look forward to continuing to assist our clients in reaching their business and strategic objec-

tives. At ASAR, we have extensive experience with regard to similar transactions and the privatization of Boursa Kuwait further bolsters our market leading position in this context."



Business

# KDIPA signs MOU with Oxford Business Group for 2019 report

## Forthcoming report on Kuwait to highlight economic sector’s spearheading growth

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Oxford Business Group (OBG) for the research and publishing firm's 2019 report on the country's economic development and investment opportunities.

Under the MoU, the investment promotion authority will collaborate with OBG to facilitate interviews and access research material for the compilation of The Report: Kuwait 2019.

Kuwait's economic performance, which is forecast to gain further momentum throughout 2019, will be explored in OBG's forthcoming report.

The Report: Kuwait 2019 will shine a spotlight on the key sectors of the country's economy that have spearheaded growth, which include financial services, transport, oil and gas, petrochemicals, manufacturing, construction and ICT. Due to its sizeable foreign assets and extensive oil reserves, which continue to provide a buffer against external shocks, Kuwait's growth outlook remains stable, allowing the country to make increasing non-oil revenues its primary focus.

These efforts are aligned with the New Kuwait 2035 Vision, a wide-ranging initiative aimed at catalyzing the country's transformation through a number of initiatives, which include: encouraging the private sector to take on a bigger role; incentivizing more public-private-partnership schemes; upgrading existing infrastructure; generating a support mechanism for small and medium-sized enterprises, stimulating a knowledge-based economy as part of the diversification process; and creating employment opportunities for the local population.

The publication will provide comprehensive coverage of the New Kuwait 2035 Vision, including its scope and significance across the productive sectors of the Kuwaiti economy at the implementation phase.

KDIPA's Director General, Sheikh Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, highlighted the important role that OBG's publication will play in relaying Kuwait's commitment to economic diversification and encouraging the private sector to play a larger part, while also documenting the progress already made in these areas.

"Kuwait is witnessing concerted efforts to improve its business climate and facilitate procedures on the ground for investors," he said. "The country offers many lucrative investment opportunities in mega-projects across key sectors of the economy, including energy, ICT, infrastructure, transport, housing, petrochemicals, health and education, which makes it an attractive investment destination and a unique value proposition."

OBG's Country Director in Kuwait, Yeliz Tugce, said that the Kuwaiti government had taken steps to adapt to the latest global economic trends, while its efforts to promote the non-oil sector were helping to create a diversified and attractive business environment.

"These measures are expected to support the national drive to boost investment in the years ahead," she noted. Tugce added that OBG's report would highlight emerging opportunities within sectors of Kuwait's economy, while also identifying examples of cases where investors had successfully pursued growth opportunities.

"Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority's in-depth knowledge and under-



**KUWAIT: (L-R) Yeliz Tugce, Country Director for Kuwait, Oxford Business Group; and Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director General, KDIPA sign the MoU.**

standing of the country's investment landscape has undoubtedly provided our coverage with an edge over the years," she said. "I'm confident that the authority's support and input will once again give our report an added dimension."

The Report: Kuwait 2019 will be a vital guide to the many facets of the country, including its macroeconomics, infrastructure, banking and other sectoral developments. It will be available online and in print.

## EU vows ‘swift’ riposte to threatened US auto tariffs

**BRUSSELS:** The EU promised a quick and effective response if the United States imposes import duties on European autos, a spokesman for the European Commission said yesterday.

Brussels issued the threat after the US Commerce Department filed a report yesterday that empowered President Donald Trump to apply car duties within the next 90 days.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has labelled as "frightening" the prospect that this report could label European car imports as a national security threat to the United States, enabling the tariffs. The White House has already used the national security argument-saying that undermining the American manufacturing base impairs military readiness, among other claims-to impose steep tariffs on steel and aluminum imports.

"Were this report translated into action detrimental to European exports, the European Commission would react in a swift and adequate manner," EU spokesman Margaritis Schinas told a news briefing in Brussels. The protectionist Trump has threatened 25 percent duties on European autos, especially targeting Germany, which he says has harmed the American car industry. In 2017 just under half of the 17 million cars sold in the US were imported, most of them produced in Canada and Mexico which are expected to be exempt from any new automobile duties.

German automobile groups last year exported 470,000 cars from Germany to the United States, according to the VDA manufacturers' federation.

The transatlantic flare-up followed a truce established in July, in which Trump and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker pledged no new tariffs while both sides pursued a limited trade deal.

Juncker "trusts President Trump's word. The European Union will stick to its word as long as the US does the same," Schinas said. Aside from economic matters, US-European ties have already been upended over Trump's approach towards Iran and Syria, as well as other issues. —AFP

## Italy leads peripheral rally on expectation of ECB stimulus

**LONDON:** Short-dated Italian government bonds outperformed yesterday, their yields falling the most among euro-zone bonds to lead a rally in the periphery, on expectations of further monetary easing from the European Central Bank.

Italian two- and five-year government bond yields fell as much as eight basis points after comments by ECB policymakers Francois Villeroy de Galhau, Olli Rehn and Benoit Coeure raised expectations of new stimulus from the central bank.

Coeure's comments on Friday saw eurozone banking shares jump over 3 percent, the euro fall and Italy's bond yields tumble. Italian short-dated bonds outperformed because analysts expect the ECB's next round of cheap loans to banks to have a maturity of two to four years, according to Daniel Lenz, rates strategist at DZ Bank. "We expect banks to invest in the same maturities as this tender," he said.

Rehn told a German newspaper that recent data suggested a weakening eurozone economy, adding that interest rates would remain where they were until monetary policy goals were met.

Analysts took Villeroy de Galhau's comments to indicate that if Europe's economic slowdown looks permanent, the ECB might delay its forward guidance on interest rates.

Expectations of a fresh round of cheap funding for banks helped peripheral bonds yesterday, when Italy's government bond yields extended declines late last week by around two basis points across the curve. Italy's 10-year bond yield fell to a two-week low of 2.76 percent. Spain's 10-year government bond yield was also down one basis point to 1.234 percent.

The market was pinning hopes on a single-party government in Italy, Lenz said, after the country's 5-



**VANCE:** In this file photo, Employees inspect Mercedes-Benz C-Class cars at the Mercedes-Benz US International factory in Vance, Alabama. —AFP

Star Movement called an online vote to decide whether to block a possible kidnapping trial of Matteo Salvini, the leader of 5-Star's coalition ally, the League party.

"In case there is a majority, this could trigger new speculation about the end of the ruling coalition in Rome and increases the chance of snap elections," he said.

The ECB chatter also helped Portuguese bonds, with its 10-year government bond yield hitting its lowest since March 2015, down two basis points on the day to 1.54 percent.

Elsewhere, Germany's 10-year government bond, the benchmark for the region, held near 0.10 percent after falling as low as 0.07 percent on Feb 8. Some 20 billion

to 23.5 billion euros of new supply is due this week, analysts at UniCredit predicted. New issuance from France, Spain, Germany, Italy and Slovakia will be supported by 16 billion euros of redemptions from Germany and 0.5 billion euros of coupons from Ireland, Austria and Germany.

France has mandated banks for the issue of a new 30-year bond to be sold soon, the Agence France Tresor public debt management agency said yesterday. In addition, Cyprus picked Citi, Goldman Sachs and HSBC to arrange fixed-income investor meetings for a new euro-denominated deal that may come this week. —Reuters

## China unveils guidelines for developing Greater Bay Area

**BEIJING:** China's cabinet yesterday issued guidelines for developing a "Greater Bay Area" around the Pearl

River Delta, in a bid to spur growth and transformation in Guangdong province and the cities of Hong Kong and Macau. The area is home to some 68 million people with a combined GDP of \$1.5 trillion, roughly that of Australia or South Korea.

The development plans will "further enhance and support and leading role of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area in national economic development and opening up", the

Xinhua news agency said, citing the cabinet's guidelines.

The aim is to turn the Greater Bay Area into a global technology innovation center and build advanced manufacturing and modern services industries, it said.

The area will also promote "coordinated development and create a model for high quality development", it said. Authorities will expand and upgrade airports in Hong Kong, Macau,

Guangzhou and Shenzhen, and accelerate construction of large-scale oil reserve bases in the Pearl River Delta area, Xinhua said. Financial institutions in the Greater Bay Area will be allowed to conduct spot and forward yuan trading and yuan derivatives and conduct cross-border yuan lending, Xinhua said. Companies in the Greater Bay Area would be allowed to issue yuan-denominated bonds within the area, it said. —Reuters

### EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.650
Euro	347.220
Sterling Pound	394.780
Canadian dollar	231.120
Turkish lira	58.900
Swiss Franc	304.960
US Dollar Buying	297.350
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.754
Indian Rupees	4.267
Pakistani Rupees	2.222
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.701
Nepali Rupees	2.661
Singapore Dollar	225.720
Hongkong Dollar	38.800
Bangladesh Taka	3.573
Philippine Peso	5.810
Thai Baht	9.770
Malaysian ringgit	77.877
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.254
Qatari Riyal	83.688
Omani Riyal	791.423
Bahraini Dinar	809.090
UAE Dirham	82.959
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.700
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.323

Yemen Rival/for 1000	1.223
Tunisian Dinar	103.570
Jordanian Dinar	429.780
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.463

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd	
Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.140
Canadian Dollar	230.545
Sterling Pound	395.275
Euro	346.650
Swiss Frank	307.870
Bahrain Dinar	808.820
UAE Dirhams	83.210
Qatari Riyals	84.445
Saudi Riyals	82.000
Jordanian Dinar	430.255
Egyptian Pound	17.298
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.701
Indian Rupees	4.273
Pakistani Rupees	2.193
Bangladesh Taka	3.625
Philippines Peso	5.815
Cyprus pound	18.095
Japanese Yen	3.750
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.675
Malaysian Ringgit	75.450
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.370
Thai Bhat	10.720

Turkish Lira	58.140
Singapore dollars	223.338

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		
CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.385675	0.399575
Czech Korune	0.005379	0.014679
Danish Krone	0.042051	0.047051
Euro	0.336628	0.350328
Georgian Lari	0.132087	0.132087
Hungarian 0.000990	0.001180	
Norwegian Krone	0.031222	0.036422
Romanian Leu	0.055654	0.072504
Russian ruble	0.004586	0.004586
Slovakia	0.009104	0.019104
Swedish Kroma	0.028824	0.033824
Swiss Franc	0.296665	0.0307665
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.209247	0.221247
New Zealand Dollar	0.203045	0.212545
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.224560	0.233560
US Dollars	0.300400	0.305700
US Dollars Mint	0.300900	0.305700
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003054	0.003855

Chinese Yuan	0.043507	0.047007
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036710	0.039460
Indian Rupee	0.003722	0.004494
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002669	0.002675
Korean Won	0.000260	0.002849
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070828	0.076828
Nepalese Rupee	0.002611	0.002961
Pakistan Rupee	0.001569	0.002339
Philippine Peso	0.005808	0.006108
Singapore Dollar	0.219107	0.229107
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001341	0.001921
Taiwan	0.009759	0.009939
Thai Baht	0.009398	0.009948
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.793122	0.809622
Egyptian Pound	0.017124	0.019724
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000088
Iraqi Dinar	0.000211	0.000271
Jordanian Dinar	0.425181	0.434181
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022135	0.046135
Omani Riyal	0.784591	0.790271
Qatar Riyal	0.079349	0.084289
audi Riyal	0.080113	0.081413
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.095016	0.103016
Turkish Lira	0.050977	0.062477
UAE Dirhams	0.081479	0.083178
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070



## Business

# Infiniti Al-Babtain impresses crowds with Infiniti QX50 at Al-Kout Mall

The world's first variable compression ratio engine in a production vehicle



**KUWAIT:** Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the authorized dealer for Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait recently demonstrated the unique features that accompany its premium vehicle, INFINITI QX50. Visitors engaged and experienced the vehicle's high-quality performance blended with aesthetic world class interiors at Al-Kout Mall.

The new INFINITI QX50 is the world's first variable compression ratio engine in a production vehicle which was created to fully meet the needs of today's premium car buyers and to deliver on their desire to own the latest masterpiece of technology. The VC-Turbo engine delivers the strong and convincing performance of a V6 and the fuel economy of a 4-cylinder engine - transforming on demand and based on the input of the drivers. Instantly adapting to their needs, the VC-Turbo lets them harness the exhilarating performance of 268 hp and 380 nm at 4,400 rpm of torque.

The QX50 appeals to buyers who require the unique combination of interior space, power, efficiency, hand-crafted quality, and modern design, along with effortless on-road performance.

Driver-centric, yet passenger-minded, the QX50 offers a package of technologies to enhance the driving experience, while a calm, connected, and relaxing cabin features an asymmetric layout - designed to meet different needs

of the driver and the passengers. Infiniti Al-Babtain encourages its customers to continue exploring the advantages of its best in class models in Kuwait by visiting the designated showroom located in Al-Rai.

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.



## Swiss bank UBS faces French court ruling on fraud charges

**PARIS:** A Paris court will rule tomorrow on whether Swiss banking giant UBS illegally tried to convince French clients to hide billions of euros in Switzerland, charges which prompted prosecutors to seek a record 3.7 billion-euro fine. The trial opened last autumn after seven years of investigations, launched when several former employees came forward with claims of unlawful conduct.

The move came as authorities across Europe cracked down on tax evasion and dubious banking practices in the wake of the global financial crisis which erupted in 2007.

The pressure eventually forced Switzerland to effectively end its tradition of ironclad bank secrecy, by joining more than 90 countries which agreed to automatically share more client account information among each other. In the UBS case, French authorities determined that more than 10 billion euros had been kept from the eyes of tax officials between 2004 and 2012.

The National Financial Prosecutor's office urged a 3.7 billion euro (\$4.2 billion) fine, the largest ever sought in France, saying the bank and its directors "were perfectly aware that they were breaking French law" by unlawfully soliciting clients and helping them evade French taxes.

They also sought a 15 million-euro fine for UBS's French subsidiary, and fines of up to 500,000 euros for six top executives, including Raoul Weil, the former third-in-command at UBS, and Patrick de Fayet, formerly the second-ranking executive for its French operations.

In addition, lawyers for the French state, which is a plaintiff in the case, asked for 1.6 billion euros in damages. UBS, which was ordered to post 1.1 billion euros in bail, has denied the charges and said its operations complied with Swiss law.

It also says that it was "unaware" that some French clients had failed to declare assets in Switzerland, and that prosecutors have not produced any proof, such as client names or account numbers, to back up their fraud claims. The case is being closely watched by industry executives at a time when Paris and other European capitals are hoping to lure multinational banks from London as Brexit looms.

### 'Milk tickets'

UBS is accused of organizing or inviting prospective clients to prestigious outings such as the French Open or luxury hunt-



In the UBS case French authorities determined that more than 10 billion euros had been kept from the eyes of tax officials between 2004 and 2012. — AFP

ing retreats, where UBS's Swiss bankers would meet their "prospects"-something they were not allowed to do under French law. UBS France directors then used notes called "milk tickets" to keep track of how many "milk cans"-amounts of money-were transferred to Swiss accounts. They say the system was merely a way to balance out bonuses due to French bankers who were effectively losing a client to their Swiss peers, and the notes were later destroyed.

But investigators claim the "milk tickets" were proof that UBS had a parallel accounting system for keeping the transfers off its official books.

Only one "milk ticket" was found during the inquiry, prompting defense lawyers to argue there was no proof to justify claims of a massive fraud. Yet prosecutors pointed to the roughly 3,700 French UBS clients who later took advantage of an amnesty offer to regularize their tax declarations with the French authorities. UBS has been embroiled in a series of similar cases, most notably in the United States, where the authorities said the bank used Switzerland's banking secrecy laws to help rich clients avoid taxes. In 2009 it paid \$780 million to settle charges it helped thousands of American citizens hide money from the Internal Revenue Service, and agreed to turn over information on hundreds of clients, severely denting Switzerland's long tradition of shielding banking clients and their operations from prying eyes.

That case was also prompted by a former American UBS employee turned whistleblower, Bradley Birkenfeld, whose book "Lucifer's Banker: The Untold Story of How I Destroyed Swiss Bank Secrecy" was published in 2016.

Last November UBS was again sued by US authorities, who accuse the bank of misleading investors over the sale of mortgage-backed securities in 2006 and 2007, just before the financial crisis struck. UBS has denied the charges and said it will defend itself "vigorously". — AFP

## Norwegian Air sets big discount for share sale

**OSLO:** Norwegian Air will sell new shares at just a third of the current market price when the loss-making airline seeks to raise money from its owners in the next few weeks, it said yesterday.

Norwegian Air said on Jan. 29 it planned to raise 3 billion Norwegian crowns (\$348 million) in a share sale to bolster its finances, just days after British

Airways owner IAG ruled out a bid for the budget airline.

Norwegian is trying to replicate on transatlantic flights the low-cost model that dominates the short-haul market via companies such as Ryanair and easyJet, but is struggling to make the business profitable. The European airline sector is struggling with over-capacity and high fuel costs, with several companies going out of business, the latest being British budget airline Flybmi, which filed for bankruptcy on Sunday.

In the rights issue, Norwegian's shareholders will get two subscription rights to buy shares for every share they currently own, and new shares will be sold at 33 crowns each, compared with

Friday's closing price of 97.34 crowns. By selling new shares far below the current market price, Norwegian will boost the value of each of the purchasing rights, which can in turn be bought and sold.

The company's shares fell as much as 15 percent to a six-and-a-half year low of 83 crowns on Monday, before paring losses to trade down 8.8 percent at 88.8 crowns by 1300 GMT, valuing the business at about 4 billion crowns.

"Based on the (Friday) closing price, the theoretical value of each subscription right is NOK 21.45 and the theoretical value of the two subscription rights received per existing share is NOK 42.90," Norwegian said in a statement. — Reuters

## How South African mines cope with power cuts

**JOHANNESBURG/LONDON:** South African utility Eskom imposed the worst power cuts in several years on homes and businesses last week, conjuring up memories of the 2008 crisis when the grid nearly collapsed and cost the mining industry billions in lost output.

Although Eskom - which supplies around 90 percent of power in Africa's most industrialized economy - paused the blackouts on Friday for the first time in five days, it warned that its creaking infrastructure could buckle at any time. A decade ago, the state utility ordered mining houses to evacuate all underground staff and cease mining operations for five days as it cut electricity supply to minimum levels.

It is not clear how much the industry, which consumes about 15 percent of Eskom's annual output, lost in production but the crisis sent prices of both gold and platinum to record levels and pummeled the rand. But mining companies now appear to be better prepared to cope with the scheduled blackouts thanks largely to an agreement struck in 2010 between Eskom and the industry that allows it to continue operating on reduced power.

"The South African mines are probably a little bit better prepared for electricity cuts than they were 10 years ago," said Peter Major, an analyst and director of mining at Mergence Corporate Solutions.

Anglo American Platinum Ltd (Amplats), the world's top producer of the metal, said it lost 14,000 ounces or less than 1 percent of annual output - based on 2018 production - last week.

Diversified miners Exxaro and Anglo American said their operations were affected to varying degrees while AngloGold Ashanti said safety and production were untouched. An industry group, the Mineral Council, did not give specific details about the impact of last week's power cuts on production but said the effect on output for the sector had been minimal. Miners including Impala Platinum, Harmony and Sibanye-Stillwater have also been working on reducing their reliance on Eskom by setting up their own power generators. However, it has been difficult to get that off the ground because of red tape and prohibitive costs, they say.

### What is at stake?

South Africa is home to the world's biggest platinum group metals deposits, accounting for just over 90 percent of global production. Any disruption in output could directly affect prices of the white metal. The mining industry directly contributes more than 7 percent to the economy which has been struggling with anaemic growth over the last 10 years.

Miners, among the biggest consumers of electricity in the country, are already grappling with weak profits that could be exacerbated by the potential loss of output if Eskom imposes deeper power cuts.

The potential impact on jobs is also a concern in a country with a jobless rate of more than 27 percent and has prompted fierce opposition from the coun-

try's powerful trade unions to President Cyril Ramaphosa's plan to split the utility. "With all these power cuts through Eskom there will be consequences ... People will lose their work for less time put in for work and we are very, very concerned about this," said Stanford Mazhindu, spokesperson of trade union UASA.

### What are miners doing to cope?

The 2010 agreement between Eskom and the mining industry has partly shielded miners from the massive disruption caused by the 2008 power cuts, when the sector was forced to shut for five days to allow the grid to recover. Under the scheme, Eskom gives the industry notice to reduce their power consumption by between 15 and 20 percent when the national grid is at its tightest and unable to meet demand.

"If it's a 15 or 20 percent reduction in demand and it goes on for an extended period, it can have quite a big impact," said Sibanye spokesman James Wellsted.

For instance, concentrators are switched off and water pumps that would prevent underground dams from flooding are only turned on during low usage hours at night, he said. Impala Platinum reduces its usage of power-intensive equipment, including furnaces, during national peak usage times when residential consumers are just waking up or have just returned from work, spokesman Johan Theron said.

### Are these measures enough?

Despite these measures, business leaders and the Mineral Council are still concerned about the risks Eskom poses to the industry. Impala's Theron said shifting energy-intensive work to an off-peak demand period in the middle of the night to catch up on lost production "is not ideal or sustainable, as it will impact the business over time in that wear on furnaces are accelerated under these operating conditions".

While the industry was coping, extended rolling blackouts would have affected the commercial viability of mines, particularly deep-level mining and platinum mines, Mineral Council spokeswoman Charmaine Russell said.

Attempts by miners to produce their own power are expensive, as Eskom requires them to connect to the grid for a fee. The variety of legal codes found at the energy regulator and energy ministry are additional hurdles to independent power generation, they say. The volume of electricity consumed by the industry is also too much to rely solely on self-generation.

"We need to fix Eskom, to think that underground gold mining can survive without Eskom is going to be difficult," said Peter Steenkamp, the chief executive of gold miner Harmony.

However, a few companies have succeeded in cutting dependency on the grid. Petrochemicals firm Sasol produces 70 percent of its electricity needs to power its sprawling plants. Power generation, from steam turbines commissioned in 2010 and contracted with Eskom via a medium-term power purchase program, helped to alleviate Eskom's shortages at the time, Sasol said. But companies such as Sibanye are struggling to do the same. The precious metals producer has pushed back plans, unveiled in 2014, to build a solar plant because of difficulty in getting finance for the project and bureaucracy related to connecting to the national power grid. Harmony Gold has also been trying to build a 30 megawatt solar plant. Amplats said it was also considering building a 100 megawatt solar power plant at the group's Mogalakwena mine. — Reuters



## Business

# KFH sponsors, participates in advanced Blockchain technology training program

## Bank pioneer in leveraging Blockchain in cross-border remittance using Ripple



KUWAIT: Mazin Al-Nahedh and Patrick Schwerdtfeger with KFH executive management

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in an advanced training program on Blockchain technology as part of its ongoing efforts to develop talent in the Bank, while coping with the latest digitization development in the banking industry.

This also contributes in maintaining the leadership position of the Bank in keeping abreast of the latest Fintech services, while applying Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the Bank's operations in accordance with the highest standards of quality and professionalism.

The 2-day training program held at J W Marriot

Hotel was organized by United Arab Training Center amidst huge participation from KFH employees, in addition to several trainees from different financial institutions. The Blockchain training program included many topics: distinctions between Blockchain and traditional ledgers, centralized versus decentralized database structures, fundamentals of how Blockchain is constructed, early use cases (supply chain, digital identity, digital payment, etc.), data onboarding challenges and opportunities, models to anticipate where technology deployment is likely to happen, strategies to leverage



Blockchain from a marketing perspective and the Blockchain protocol.

The agenda of the training program encompassed presentations and discussions. Trainees were split into groups to brainstorm local applications where each group presented their best ideas and discussed how these ideas can be implemented, not to mention some topics like the data on-boarding challenges.

The training was led by Patrick Schwerdtfeger who is a leading authority on technology trends including Blockchain, distributed public ledger technology, and

cryptocurrencies, as well as big data, artificial intelligence, and disruptive innovation.

It is worth noting that KFH has been a pioneer in leveraging Blockchain, and it applied this technology in instant cross-border remittance service using Ripple's Blockchain technology. This emphasizes KFH flagship position in adopting innovative financial solutions, while offering the most advanced services as per highest standards of efficiency. Blockchain technology gives KFH the opportunity to apply novel approaches to achieve the Bank's objectives and improve customer service.

## Burgan Bank launches first-of-its-kind interactive bank statement in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank, one of the most innovative banks in Kuwait, recently launched the first-of-its-kind interactive statement as part of its ongoing digital evolution. Keeping in line with the latest technological applications in banking, the eco-friendly interactive e-statements will enable Burgan Bank's customers to view their account details in an interactive manner, instead of the traditional static version.



Nasser Al-Qaisi

Expanding on the eco-friendly email statements platform, the new interactive offering delivers optimal convenience through a dynamic search and sort feature, personalized infographics and a single point view of the entire relationship with the Bank, ensuring a differentiated experience. While the traditional statement that comes in a PDF format only holds personal account details, the new consolidated interactive statement provides customers a complete record of their transactions with Burgan Bank such as the liability account, fixed deposits, loans, and credit cards. The consolidated interactive statement is dispatched to the customers every month at their registered email address.

Speaking about the launch, Nasser Al-Qaisi, Chief Retail Banking Officer said, "Introducing the latest digital offerings is key to elevating our customers banking experience."

Keeping in line with their expectations of innovation and high quality service from Burgan Bank, we have now advanced our offering to a state-of-the-art bank statement. The new product is a unique value-added offering for our Bank's customers that guarantees enhanced convenience, simplicity and engagement."

Burgan Bank has been at the forefront of innovation through products and services that offer convenient banking solutions, whereby elevating all touch points to provide excellent customer experience to all customers.

## Turkish Airlines announces its first traffic results for 2019

**KUWAIT:** Turkish Airlines, who has recently announced the passenger and cargo traffic results for January 2019, recorded 79.5 percent Load Factor in this month. On top of the strong base effect of the last year' same period, growth in revenue per kilometer has come into prominence as an important indicator of the positive demand environment for Turkish Airlines in 2019.

### According to the January 2019 Traffic Results;

- Total number of passengers carried in January 2019 was 5.7 million.
- Load factor in January was 79.5 percent, while domestic load factor was

87.1 percent, and international load factor was 78.3 percent.

- International-to-international transfer passengers (transit passengers) went up by 5.2 percent compared to the same period of last year.

- In January, cargo/mail volume continued the double digit growth trend, and increased by 14.9 percent compared to the same period of 2018. Main contributors to this growth in cargo/mail volume were Europe with 21 percent, Far East with 13.7 percent and N. America with 11 percent increase.

- In January, Far East showed load factor growth of 1.4 points, while N. America increased by almost 1 percent compared to the same period of last year.

Commenting on the results, Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee, M. Ilker Ayci said: "In 2018, we have achieved record traffic results for almost the whole year. Now, when we look at the first monthly results of 2019, which we announced today, seeing the continuity of this momentum is an important sign of our stable performance



that we'll display in the coming months of the year. As we always say, 2019 will be a tremendous year both for our national aviation and our flag carrier. Having been successfully started to this

significant year, which we attributed great importance in our aviation history, with such a substantial Load Factor performance, is highly pleased us, as Turkish Airlines."

## Renault Al-Babtain drives to please its customers with Hala February leasing offer

**KUWAIT:** Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait invites customers to lease and enjoy models of the Renault Koleos, Renault Megane and Renault Megane GT. The offer comes as part of the company's efforts to offer its valued customers the best deals during the most celebrated month of the year.

The Renault Megane is equipped with generous space for its occupants i.e. dimensions of 4.63m long and 1.81m wide, and a record wheelbase in its class of 2.71m. Owing to its dynamic styling and advanced features, the new Megane represents the next level 10 yw in the compact saloon category. It comes with a 1.6-litre engine, 115hp designed to enhance driving enjoyment and reduce fuel consumption.

The Renault Koleos exterior holds a

taste for adventure all that is expected of a D-segment SUV. It's robust and muscular features amplifies the athletic exterior design with door protective moldings, large diameter two-tone alloy wheels, alloy roof rails, shark antenna, fender chrome lines and silver front skid. The four wheel drive technology, all-terrain ability, engine and transmission line-up has been tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the Kuwaiti market. The 2.5-litre petrol engine is also an atmospheric, four-cylinder, power is 170hp (126kW) at 6,000rpm, with peak torque of 233Nm at 4,000rpm.

The Megane GT is tuned by Renault Sport and boasts a 1.6L and TCE 205 HP engine mated to 7 speed dual clutch automatic gearbox, achieving a swift 0-100km/h in just 7.1 seconds. Combining dynamic style and ride comfort, the model offers first-class road handling thanks to 4CONTROL. The model delivers a connected driving experience thanks to R-LINK 2, which serves as the car's control center. Showcased via a modern 8.7" touchscreen, R-LINK 2 ensures an 'Easy Life' by offering a range of in-car features including easy park assist, rearview



camera, Renault Smart Card with walk-away closing, as well as an active emergency braking system, 6 airbags or even the Renault Sport mode switch button: RS Drive.

Renault Al-Babtain encourages its customers to discover the 'best in class' models by visiting the showroom located in Al-Rai and take advantage of the attractive offer.

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 17th February 2019 announcing the names of its winners for the week from the 10th February till the 14th February 2019, in which five winners will receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

### The winners this week are:

- Tareq Abdulla Soud Aleryan
- Yaser Naser Taan
- Somayah Ahmad Ashour Almusaleekh
- Soghra Yaqoub Rustm
- Meteib Mohsen Mansour Alhajri

The first Gulf Bank Al-Danah's quarterly draw 2019 for the prize of KD150,000 will be held on 27 March 2019, the second quarterly draw 2019 will be held on 26

June 2019, for the prize of KD 250,000, and the third quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 on 25 September 2019. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1,000,000, will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced at a live event.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any

given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2019 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

The Al-Danah draws are all approved by and held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce. Furthermore, Gulf Bank have partnered with Ernst and Young Kuwait (EY) with reference to "Al-Danah Prize Draw" system in order to assist in assessing processes, technical controls considering relevant parameters and provide recommendations in-line with industry leading practices. The study was conducted in line with industry standards and control requirements relevant to similar prize draw schemes wherein, a detailed review of prize draw management system along with draw scheme parameters, data extraction for draw, filtration of customers as per defined business criteria and necessary system interactions was conducted to advise on any potential areas of improvements.

## VIVA shares new digital experience with customers

**KUWAIT:** VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launched a new digital experience for its customers which includes the revamped VIVA website, VIVA App and Selfcare, to serve them faster, smarter and better. The all-new redesigned VIVA website allows the visitors to access VIVA services through an enhanced, engaging interface that is packed with user friendly features and mobile responsive so they can access with ease from any device. Users will be able to browse, manage their accounts, pay their bills, recharge their lines, and access promotions, news and latest announcements in an all new interface.

On this occasion, Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "This cutting-edge digital experience grants the users comfort and ease while surfing through all VIVA's urban digital touch points in a smarter way. We reiterate our promises to focus in our strategic expansion to meet our customers' aspirations and needs."





## Symphony Style Kuwait celebrates Kuwait's National & Liberation days

February is Kuwait's special festive month, so make sure you don't miss out on the National and Liberation Day celebrations at Symphony Style Kuwait, A Radisson Collection Hotel. A gala amount of celebrations are carried out throughout the hotel outlets, that is sure to enhance the guests' sense of patriotic pride.

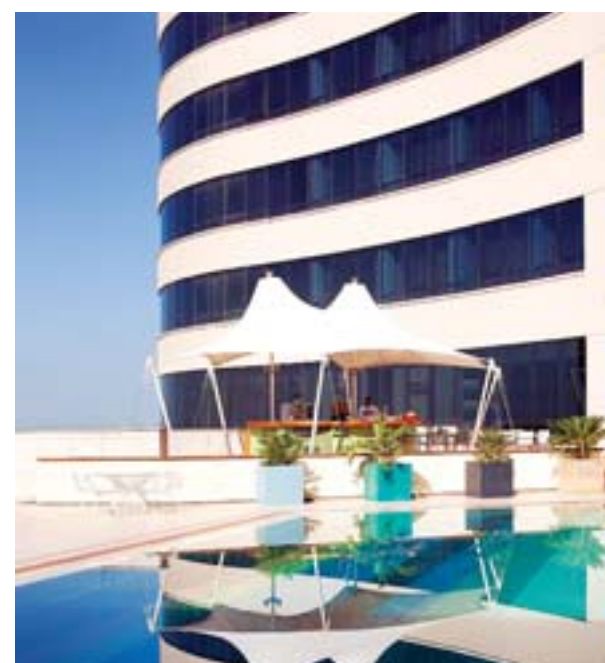
Each year, people rejoice the core of patriotism, where they celebrate these days with pride and wonderful festivities. The Exceptional welcomes you to enjoy an outstanding stay during these days. All the hotel's rooms and suites are overlooking the Arabian Gulf, which allows all guests to spot and enjoy the celebratory atmosphere specially on the 25th and 26th February.

Elevate your experience with the contemporary dining in any of the refurbished restaurants. You can choose to dine at Cucina, where the remarkable chefs deliver elegant breakfast, lunch and dinner buffets. In the case you favor a la carte menus, Luna Tuscany restaurant on the hotel's 18th floor is an effortless choice. Furthermore, you can enjoy an exciting shopping experience at Symphony Mall, connected to the hotel.

Energizing relaxation awaits at the hotel's 2nd floor in the Six Senses Spa. The renowned spa provides alluring locally inspired body treatments, signature facials and the authentically traditional Hammam, allowing a journey of absolute rejuvenation. Children

are also provided a vibrant and exclusive space in the distinctive Symphony Kids Club, which offers an immersive 500 sqm multipurpose activity room, a dedicated cinema, library, dining and sleeping areas, all under the supervision of trained staff.

Symphony Style Kuwait, a Radisson Collection Hotel, commits to ensuring an exciting experience for all of its guests, catering to older children as well with its Teens Hub. The buzzing entertainment is exclusive for teenage boys and girls between the ages of 10 to 14. Guests of the Teens Hub can also enjoy the most recent video games for Wii, PlayStation, and the Interactive Magic Motion Virtual Reality Experience.



### The responsibilities of the Diplomatic Women's Committee

Voluntary work is considered as the foundation of building and developing communities and it represents social and humanitarian civilized behaviors by which the communities become more advanced. The state of Kuwait is one of the pioneer countries in the field of voluntary work with a diverse group of voluntary community institutions and this concept is replicated in the sentiment of its people.

At this juncture, the state of Kuwait seeks to enlighten the diplomatic Corps within the country with the pioneering institutions in the fields of social life, cultural diversity and heritage, hence the idea of the necessity to establish committee for the Diplomatic women concerned with all of the activities of the residing female Diplomats in Kuwait and with the blessing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kuwait was crystallized.



### Kuwait Oil Company organizes 2-day festival

The Public Relations and Media Group and Ahmadi Services Group organized a two-day festival from 14-16 Feb for employees and friends of the Kuwait Oil Company. Several activities were showcased in the festival including kite flying, singing, dancing and a magic show.





## Health

# Japan trial to treat spinal cord injuries with stem cells

**TOKYO:** A team of Japanese researchers will carry out an unprecedented trial using a kind of stem cell to try to treat debilitating spinal cord injuries, the specialists said yesterday. The team at Tokyo's Keio University has received government approval for a trial using so-called induced Pluripotent Stem (iPS) cells — which have the potential to develop into any cell in the body — to treat patients with serious spinal cord injuries.

The trial, expected to begin later this year, will initially focus on four patients who suffered their injuries just 14 to 28 days beforehand, the university said. The team will transplant two million iPS cells into the spines of the patients, who will then go through rehabilitation and be monitored for a year. The strict limitations on the number of participants is necessary because the process is an "unprecedented, world first clinical trial", the uni-

versity added. "It's been 20 years since I started researching cell treatment."

Finally we can start a clinical trial," Hideyuki Okano, a professor of physiology, said at a press conference. "We want to do our best to establish safety and provide the treatment to patients," he added. The study will be carried out on patients aged 18 or older who have completely lost their motor and sensory functions. There are more than 100,000 patients in Japan who are paralyzed due to spinal cord injuries but there is no effective treatment.

The primary purpose of the trial is to confirm the safety of the transplanted cells and the method of the transplant, the researchers said. The research team hopes to test the efficacy and safety of the treatment for chronic injuries as well in the future if they can confirm the safety of the

technique through the clinical trial. The announcement comes after researchers in Kyoto said in November they had transplanted iPS cells into the brain of a patient in a bid to cure Parkinson's disease. The man was stable after the operation and he will be monitored for two years. The researchers injected 2.4 million iPS cells into the left side of the patient's brain in an operation that took about three hours.

Parkinson's disease is a chronic, degenerative neurological disorder that affects the body's motor system, often causing shaking and other difficulties in movement. iPS cells are created by stimulating mature, already specialized, cells back into a juvenile state — basically cloning without the need for an embryo. The cells can be transformed into a range of different types of cells, and their use is a key sector of medical research. — AFP

## China food producer says swine fever found in dumplings

**SHANGHAI:** A major Chinese food producer said yesterday that traces of the African swine fever virus had been found in its frozen dumplings. China, the world's biggest consumer and producer of pork, has struggled to contain an outbreak of the virus

since the first cases were detected last August. Officials have said hundreds of thousands of pigs were culled in a bid to stop its spread — an effort that has also seen restrictions placed on moving pigs from affected areas.

Sanquan Food, based in central Henan province, issued a public statement confirming media reports published in recent days that contaminated pork dumplings were detected in two provinces that do not share a border. The company said suspect batches of dumplings had reached grocery stores, but that it was sealing affected products and cooperating with authorities. The statement did not

mention a broader recall. Unconfirmed Chinese media reports have said that products manufactured by several other companies also contained traces of the virus.

African swine fever is not harmful to humans but can be fatal to pigs, raising fears for the country's giant pork industry. But the media reports prompted anger online from Chinese consumers who vented over the latest in a recurring series of product scandals, despite repeated government promises to ensure safety. Sanquan Food's share price dropped as much as 2.25 percent in yesterday morning trading on the Shenzhen Stock Exchange. — AFP

## Surgical workshop at Jaber Armed Forces Hospital

**KUWAIT:** Head of the urology department at Jaber Armed Forces Hospital Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanim said the hospital organized a surgical workshop for compensatory systems that deals with erectile dysfunction. It was done alongside a visiting doctor from France, who is a urology surgery consultant. This was his visit to the hospital and third to Kuwait. Al-Ghanim said, we carried out several operations using new state of the art techniques in the field of compensatory equipment, and they were all successful, and we fortunately did not face any complications.

He said the medical team at Jaber Armed Forces Hospital always carry out such operations, but we use some visiting doctors, especially those who we worked with before in order to exchange expertise in this field. There is also the fact that these operations are done more frequently in Europe due to the larger population. He said compensatory systems are the last resort in treating erectile dysfunction, as we try several normal means as well as stop smoking, exercise, eating habits, then treatment with pills, then local injections and then finally compensatory systems as a last resort and they have proved highly effective.



Dr Mohammad Al-Ghanim

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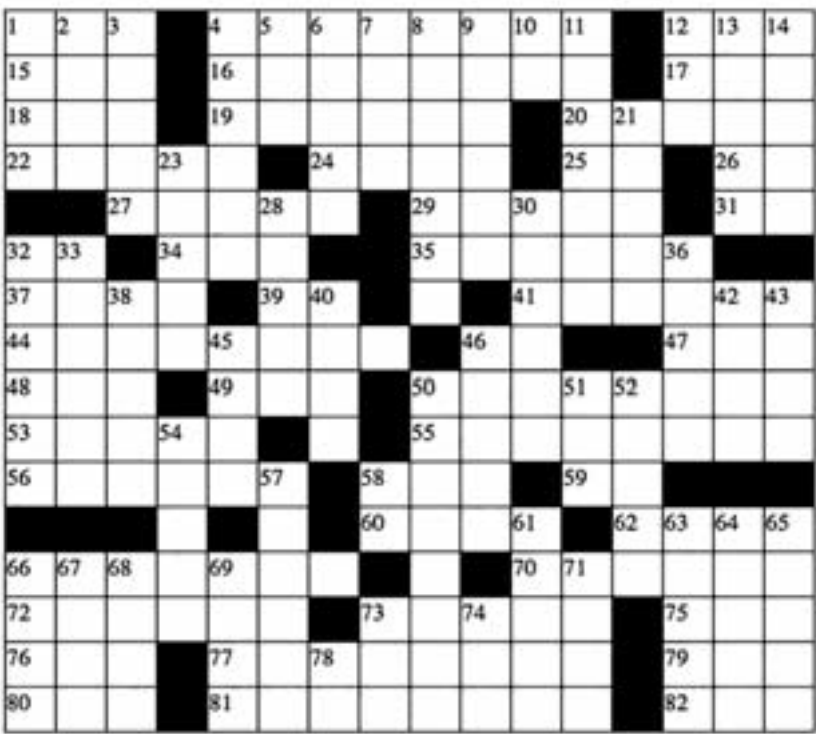
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CROSSWORD 2140



ACROSS

- 1. Alternative names for the body of a human being.
- 4. Elder brother of Krishna.
- 12. Kidney disease characterized by enlarged kidneys containing many cysts.
- 15. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
- 16. An intense and irresistible love for yourself and concern for your own needs.
- 17. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
- 18. (informal) 'johnny' was applied as a nickname for Confederate soldiers by the Federal soldiers in the American Civil War.
- 19. Characterized by violent and forceful activity or movement.
- 20. The sacred city of Lamaism.
- 22. Erect leafless flower stalk growing directly from the ground as in a tulip.
- 24. Using speech rather than writing.
- 25. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
- 26. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- 27. A large number or amount.
- 29. Yellow oval fruit with juicy acidic flesh.
- 31. A state in midwestern United States.
- 32. A white trivalent metallic element.
- 34. (Sumerian) Sun god.
- 35. A city in northwestern Turkey.
- 37. A unit of weight used in east Asia approximately equal to 1.3 ounces.
- 39. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- 41. (of reproduction) Not involving the fusion of male and female gametes reproduction".
- 44. A mountain climber who specializes in difficult climbs.
- 47. The cry made by sheep.
- 48. Last or greatest in an indefinitely large series.
- 49. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
- 53. An Indian tree of the family Combretaceae that is a source of timber and gum.
- 55. An Old World reptile family of Sauria.
- 56. The world's largest desert (3,500,000 square miles) in North Africa.
- 59. A heavy ductile magnetic metallic element.
- 60. United States physiologist (born in Germany) who did research on parthenogenesis (1859-1924).
- 62. A South American shrub whose leaves are chewed by natives of the Andes.
- 66. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- 70. Used of mouth or eyes.
- 72. A port city in southwestern Iran.
- 75. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
- 76. A former monetary unit in Great Britain.
- 77. A worker whose job is to repair things.
- 79. Long and light rowing boat.
- 80. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- 81. The capital and largest city of Nepal.
- 82. (informal) Of the highest quality.
- 2. Unhappy in love.
- 5. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- 6. The divine word of God.
- 7. An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
- 8. Herbs, shrubs and trees.
- 9. Forming or set at an angle.
- 10. Destruction of heart tissue resulting from obstruction of the blood supply to the heart muscle.
- 11. A city and port in northern Jutland.
- 12. Seed of a pea plant.
- 13. A river of southwestern Africa that rises in central Angola and flows east and then north (forming part of the border between Angola and Congo) and continuing northwest through Congo to empty into the Congo River on the border between Congo and Republic of the Congo.
- 14. Any of numerous low-growing cushion-forming plants of the genus Draba having rosette-forming leaves and terminal racemes of small flowers with scapose or leafy stems.
- 21. A reddish brown dye used especially on hair.
- 23. United States physicist (born in Austria) who proposed the exclusion principle (thus providing a theoretical basis for the periodic table) (1900-1958).
- 28. Any of numerous perennial bulbous herbs having linear or broadly lanceolate leaves and usually a single showy flower.
- 30. An unwholesome atmosphere.
- 33. A genus of Caltha.
- 36. To fix or set securely or deeply.
- 38. An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
- 40. (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
- 42. The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
- 43. The work of caring for or attending to someone or something.
- 45. Not far distant in time or space or degree or circumstances.
- 46. An evil spirit.
- 50. A dicotyledonous genus of the family Ericaceae.
- 51. A United Nations agency to promote trade by increasing the exchange stability of the major currencies.
- 52. A daughter of your brother or sister.
- 54. Well grounded in logic or truth or having legal force.
- 57. A genus of orb-weaving spiders including common garden spiders and barn spiders.
- 58. A state in southeastern United States between the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico.
- 61. Having had the bones removed.
- 63. Lake in northwestern Russia near the border with Finland.
- 64. Of or relating to or containing cerium especially with valence 4.
- 65. A condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people.
- 67. Very dark black.
- 68. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- 69. Disturb in mind or make uneasy or cause to be worried or alarmed.
- 71. A republic in western South America.
- 73. A guided missile fired from shipboard against an airborne target.
- 74. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
- 78. A heavy precious metallic element.

DOWN

- 1. Gymnastic apparatus consisting of two parallel wooden bars supported on uprights.
- 2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- 3. Bar temporarily.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Making the best of your situation for the future is at the uppermost part of your mental capacity today. It's not just work but about all aspects of life. You have a need to excel in every mode of your life and that means religion and spirituality too. You're asking the big questions and getting the big answers. Aries, you may be looking at land for building or a new home. Ownership is a thirst you can only quench by having roots to the earth. Go house hunting and take that special someone.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

The material world and all that entails means a lot to you today. You'll receive good news as to something you've gotten to establish the fact that you're reaping what you've sown. And it's all good. Speaking of reaping what you've sown, you're in a place where the mysteries of life are very important. You seek guidance from someone who may or may not know all there is to know about universal truths. Remember you know as much as others about what lies beyond life, Taurus. After all, has the person who's telling you they know it all had any experience with life after death? Think for yourself and study.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You need a change but be careful of change for change sake. You have a yearning for more, for different. Perhaps a new job or something new in the job. You're looking towards items you think you would've never chosen. Spirituality takes up time in your mind. You might even decide to study differing religions or spirituality. Be sure not to jump too quickly into whatever others believe. Gemini, you might find yourself hating that same idea tomorrow. Friends and family mean more right now in the scheme of things. Do something tonight that includes dinner with trusted friends.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You're taking the initiative in all you touch today both at work and at home but it's with an intuitive edge. Though you may not believe that your intuition works for you, you'll see evidence of it today when answers come readily. Pushing yourself further in life is your intentions though you may feel a little less than energetic. The clock is ticking and this day is one you'll wade through but will become one of your better days. Take time to be with friends later tonight, Cancer. If an acquaintance or stranger needs your help, give it. You'll be glad you did.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is going to be a day that you need to watch your words. It's not easy because you're in the mood to work quickly and efficiently. People at work don't have to love you. They may get their feelings hurt when you say something that was meant to be nicer sounding. It was more direct in intention but not hurtful you thought before it left your mouth. Be thoughtful, Leo. Please remember that others have their opinions too. It doesn't mean that theirs are wrong. Spirituality is on you mind strongly now.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Keep from arguing with your boss even if you know you're right. It won't end well for you. Take a breath, step back and think. Your work higher up might be having a hard day, let it go. Later you can bring the conversation up again and discuss it in a better manner. Do something for yourself now like a class on religion or higher thinking. Anything having to do with philosophy, Virgo, will assist you in understanding others. Call your lover and take them to dinner. Watch a movie you've wanted to see and forget everything but the movie.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Try not to push yourself or others to hard today. You won't like the results. Analyze your job and your life so that you can get the answers you desire. Listen to others at work today and study their answers. You'll find something that was overlooked which can help you at your job and even in your private life too, Libra. You need the help right now because you're not sure whether you're coming or going. It'll get better but right now you can't see the forest for the trees. Stick to your closest friend tonight. Do something that requires no thought.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Suddenly you have more brilliant thoughts about your life, you and your career. It's like an epiphany is taking place. Transformation of spirit in your workplace, at home and around family have you examining what you truly desire in your life though you thought you already knew. Sensitivity towards others is a strong suit you wear today, Scorpio. You're able to communicate more capably anywhere you are and you'll find people want to listen. You're fascinating in every manner. Love finds your attraction as well. You consider being wrapped in love as more than sexual gratification with your significant other. Enjoy the comradery.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your rapport at work takes on new meaning. With simple words you can cut down those who oppose you and can make others feel as if they're on top of the world. This is your specialty now and will help you increase production or whatever you need in your career. You're thinking about the manner in which you get your information because it comes so easily to you now, Sagittarius. You know you've got superior intuition and you need to listen. You have a very sharp mind which others gravitate towards opening the opportunities you've requested.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

At work and for your life's relationship issues you'll find information is the style of currency you need for helping yourself now and later. It's all about associations. Neighbors bring you news you need and may even keep a disaster from occurring. You seek the calming of family you've grown up with. This may be on a sibling side because they're closer to your age and can relate to your issues. One of your siblings might not be someone you listen to though, Capricorn. There just might be a little sibling jealousy on his or her part. Try to rest your mind tonight.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Go to work and enhance your chances for making money even though job isn't where you want to be this Monday. Shopping isn't for you today at all. Making any sort of change isn't your best source of engagement. Getting through the day and having a nice time at home or out tonight is, Aquarius. You want to socialize with friends and your love but you don't have to have both. Being able to talk on a myriad of subjects is what you crave now. You want to hit topics such as politics and religion without fear of being ostracized.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are a practical person with an abundance of common sense. You are able to use both of these qualities as assets to make your way to the top in the career world. You may be feeling a need to change your focus and tighten your circle a bit. You feel as if you need to spend more of your time and attention on you and yours. At this point you may have accomplished your goal in the workplace but feel you need to continue to work on your goal at home. This will be a balancing act to continue to make sure you thrive in every area of your life.

Wordsearch Puzzle

USA States

Find and circle all of the USA States that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - an Adlai Stevenson quotation. Note: VIRGINIA and WEST VIRGINIA do not overlap. The same goes for KANSAS and ARKANSAS

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

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The hidden sentence is: THIS COUNTRY WILL NOT BE A GOOD PLACE FOR ANY OF US TO LIVE UNLESS WE MAKE IT A GOOD PLACE FOR ALL OF US TO LIVE IN

Daily SuDoku

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Yesterday's Solution

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# Lifestyle

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2019



Performers take part in the Nice Carnival parade in Nice, southeastern France. The 135th carnival runs from February 16 to March 2, 2019, and celebrates this year the “King of Cinema”. — AFP



A participant poses for photographs with a young white lion during a family carnival and pet show in Karachi.



A participant holds a cat during a family carnival and pet show in Karachi. — AFP photos



A participant carries a cockatoo on her arm during a family carnival and pet show.



Participants hold their cats during a family carnival and pet show.

## MAKING ‘CAPERNAUM’ WAS A DUTY: OSCAR CONTENDER LABAKI

For Lebanon’s Nadine Labaki, whose social-realist epic “Capernaum” is an Oscar contender for best foreign film, the toughest battle is only just beginning. Her heart-wrenching story of poverty and survival in Beirut’s wretched underclass won a 15-minute standing ovation and the Jury Prize in Cannes last year. A former election candidate in Beirut, Labaki now hopes an Academy Award will not only complete the film’s impressive harvest of distinctions but also boost its impact at home. “So the conversation is starting now and that was my aim, to create this shock, and to create this debate,” Labaki told AFP in her Beirut office.

The 45-year-old has arguably become Lebanese culture’s most prominent export and she is bent on making good use of her growing celebrity. “I feel it like a duty, it’s not a choice even, and this is what we’re going to start doing, very, very soon: show the film to the government and organize these round tables with judges and lawyers,” she said. “Maybe it’s going to have a big influence and maybe it won’t, but we have to try,” Labaki said.

The film has already changed the lives of its cast members, many of whom were experiencing the same struggles as their characters during the grueling six-month shoot. “Capernaum” follows the travails of Zain, a malnourished boy who runs away from his family when his 11-year-old sister Sahar is sold into marriage. He is sheltered by an undocumented African worker named Rahil and ends up looking after her baby boy Yonas when she is arrested and jailed. The parallels between the film’s script and what happened to the actors in real life are uncanny.

### ‘No make believe’

Baby Yonas’s on-screen and real-life mothers were arrested together during filming and both were in jail when the scenes of the two children being left to their own devices in the streets of Beirut were being shot. In the film, Zain keeps dreaming that he will one day escape his misery and move to Sweden. The Syrian refugee child who plays Zain’s character was recently resettled by the United Nations in Norway, where he now lives with family in a house overlooking the sea.

“I don’t know why those things kept happening, maybe because the script was inspired by so much reality that it was actually bound to happen,” Labaki said. Zain is now going to school as are his parents as well as several other of the film’s children. Capernaum has already achieved new milestones for Lebanese cinema and received glowing endorsements from media mogul Oprah Winfrey and others. Some critics however argued the film was unsubtle in rubbing the viewer’s

nose in social squalor, telling the audience when to smile and when to cry. But restraint, Labaki retorts, is just not in her culture. “It’s as if people, especially critics, want all cinemas coming from all parts of the world to look the same way,” she said. “Let each country bring its own identity.”



Lebanese director Nadine Labaki gives an interview to AFP at her office in the capital Beirut. — AFP photos

“It’s really very hurtful to hear words like ‘poverty porn’ or ‘emotional manipulation’,” Labaki said. “Especially when there’s no big make believe in the film, everything that is in the film is a reality.” The activist in her wanted to jolt her audience into action and mobilize decision-makers in Lebanon, a country where Syrian refugees account for a quarter of the population but where faith in the government is rock-bottom.

“People come to me in tears, people say ‘You changed me forever’, ‘I’m not looking at the child I see under the bridge every day in the same way’, ‘I want to do something about it’, ‘How can we help?’,” Labaki said. She said an Oscar on February 24 would further increase her chances of making a difference. “Why do we use the word influencers? A celebrity is an influencer whether they like it or not, so they need to use this influence in the best way possible.” — AFP





# TOM JONES SET FOR LIVE AT CHELSEA GIG

**S**ir Tom Jones will play a special show at the home of the Chelsea Pensioners in West London this summer. As part of the 'Live At Chelsea Concert Series 2019', the 'It's Not Unusual' hitmaker - who can currently be seen as mentor on 'The Voice UK' - will perform at the outdoor event held at the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea on June 15. Tweeting about the forthcoming gig, Tom said: "London ... It's give me great pleasure to announce a show for you this June!" Other confirmed acts include 'Africa' hitmakers Toto on June 13 and Gipsy Kings featuring Nicolas Reyes and Tonino Ballardo on June 14. The 'Live At Chelsea Concert Series' returns for its

fifth year, and has previously seen the likes of James Blunt, Kaiser Chiefs, Rufus Wainwright, Ludovico Einaudi, Simply Red and Belle & Sebastian perform for the pensioners and audience members. A portion of the ticket sales from the event is donated towards the care of the Chelsea Pensioners, as well as, the maintenance of the Grade I listed site, which has provided care and comradeship to ex-military personnel since 1682 when it was founded by King Charles II. Tickets for the 78-year-old Welsh music legend's show go on sale on Friday from 10am.

## Richard E. Grant was told he looked 'too weird' to be an actor



**R**ichard E. Grant was told he "looked too weird" to make it as an actor when he was studying drama at university. The 61-year-old actor has revealed that when he was studying drama at the University of Cape Town his adviser predicted that he wasn't "cut out" for Hollywood because of his looks. Speaking on The Hollywood Reporter's 'Awards Chatter' podcast, he recalled: "He said, 'I don't think that you really are cut out - or are going to make it as an actor - because you look too weird.'" Grant admits he didn't think it would be possible for him to break into the film business, and he suspected he would spend his entire career as a stage actor "doing Chekhov in the theatre". He said: "I thought I was going to spend my whole life doing Chekhov in the theatre, It didn't really cross my

mind that it would be possible to ever be in a movie - that's what happened overseas or in America or in Hollywood, which was this fabled land on the other side of the planet." This year, Grant received his first ever Oscar nomination for the Best Supporting Actor prize for his performance as Jack in 'Can You Ever Forgive Me?' in which he stars alongside Melissa McCarthy as Lee Israel, who attempts to revitalize her failing writing career by forging letters from deceased authors and playwrights. The 'Withnail and I' star went on to explain that filming the drama was made easier by the fact that he and Melissa became friends, and they have remained close pals ever since. He said: "It was helped by the fact that we got on so well, and have stayed friends ever since."



## Chaplin to cover Queen songs on UK tour

**T**om Chaplin is set to tour the UK covering Queen's songs. The Keane frontman - who performed 'It's a Hard Life' with the surviving members of the band, Brian May and Roger Taylor, at The Prince's Trust Rock Gala concert in 2010 - is set to perform at theatres across the country playing the iconic band's hits backed once again by the 24-piece Leo Green Orchestra. The tour announcement follows the success of the 39-year-old singer's BBC Radio 2 'Friday Night Is Music Night' show last week, which was recorded live from The London Palladium, and saw him sing songs by the late Freddie Mercury's band backed by the same orchestra. The run of dates, which will see him take on their mega-hits 'Somebody To Love', 'Don't Stop Me Now', 'Killer Queen' and 'Bohemian Rhapsody', kick off in Bournemouth on April 18, and conclude at Manchester's Palace Theatre on April 28. The solo shows follow the news that Keane are working on their first album in six years. The 'Everybody's Changing' hitmakers went on an indefinite hiatus in 2013, a year after releasing their last record 'Strangeland', and after Tom admitted he would need to repair his "complicated" relationship with bandmate Tim Rice Oxley, they have reportedly put their differences aside to hit the studio to make new music. An insider said: "The boys have had a good few years to do their own thing but now they're back and raring to go once more. "It's been a long time coming and they've put all their differences to one side and are really loving working together again. "They've been in the studio recording since the end of last year and have been offered songs by some amazing names. It's all very exciting." Tom has had a successful solo career since the band went on a break, his 2016 solo LP 'The Wave' reached number three in the Official UK Chart. Life in Keane didn't come easy for 39-year-old singer, who saw his life spiral out of control in the mid-2000s due to his addictions to drink and drugs, and after picking himself back up again, he suffered a relapse in 2015. Tom admitted in 2017 that reuniting with his bandmates would only be possible if he and Tim mended their relationship to make the group a "happy" place again. Opening up about his difficult friendship with the 42-year-old keyboardist - who completes the rock band with guitarist Jesse Quinn - he said: "Me and Tim have a really complicated relationship. We have great love and respect, but there are other elements in that relationship. I think in order to do something with Keane we would have to explore ways to make it a happy and positive experience again. And at the moment it doesn't feel for me it's the right thing to be doing." Tickets for the 'Friday Night Is Music Night - The Songs Of Queen Starring Tom Chaplin' shows go on sale via Live Nation on Friday from 9am.

## Close doesn't want to win a 'pity Oscar'

**G**lenn Close doesn't want to win a "pity Oscar" at this year's Academy Awards. The 71-year-old actress is up for Best Actress for her role in 'The Wife' at the upcoming ceremony, and throughout her four decade spanning career she has been nominated seven times without winning one. Although she would love to take home one of the golden statuettes, Close doesn't want to be given one for time served in Hollywood but wants to earn one on merit. In an interview with The I Paper, she said: "It would mean a lot but I wouldn't want it to be a pity Oscar after 45 years." The 'Fatal Attraction' star does accept that everyone is



rooting for her to be recognized for her performance in 'The Wife' because she is yet to win an Oscar and she is grateful for people's support. She explained: "People have been going back and looking at my basic body of work and the six times I lost and what those roles were so I can't pretend it's just for 'The Wife' but I feel like everyone's rooting for me." In 'The Wife', Close plays Joan Castleman, a spouse who questions her life choices as she travels to Stockholm with her husband where he is going to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. And she admits it was a cathartic experience for her as it's reflective of the control she now feels she has in her own life now she's not attached to anyone but her daughter, Annie Starke, 30, who co-stars alongside her in the movie. She said: "It's taken a long time to gain control of my own life. When I made 'The Wife' I was in control of my life for probably the first time. I'm at a time in my life where I'm not beholden to anyone. I mean I'm always attached with every molecule in my body to my daughter; whether she likes it or not. Bu I'm not attached to any partner."

## Connelly very 'excited' to star opposite Cruise in Top Gun sequel

**J**ennifer Connelly is so "excited" to star opposite Tom Cruise in the 'Top Gun' sequel because of his "extraordinary" career. The 48-year-old actress will appear alongside Cruise in the much-anticipated 'Top Gun: Maverick' and while she's keen to remain tight-lipped about the movie's plot, Connelly has revealed that she has had an "amazing" time on set, and is going back to shoot more scenes for the upcoming blockbuster. Speaking to Collider, Connelly said: "It's amazing, it's so fun to be part with and how extraordinary what he's [Cruise] done in his career and the work he's done and I'm really excited to be a part of it. We're still working on it so I'll be going back and shooting some more, we'll still be shooting through April." The brunette beauty also stars in the new Robert Rodriguez directed sci-fi flick 'Alita: Battle Angel', which has been produced by James Cameron, and the star



admitted she saw it with her husband and their jaws were left "hanging open" in astonishment. She added: "I liked the world, I liked the design, I thought there's nobody else better to bring it to life than James Cameron and his team, and Robert Rodriguez I was really excited to see what they were going to do with it. "My husband and I saw it together and we kept looking at it and tapping each other on the shoulder and literally my jaw was hanging open. The first time we see Alita, I mean I couldn't believe it, it's so sophisticated now and advanced and so beautifully done. You believe it and it works because there was a time where there were earlier experiments with that in other films that I've seen that weren't successful but its clicked here." The 'Labyrinth' star also confessed that she has never "borrowed" anything from a film set because she is a "compulsive confessor" and would always be honest is she liked something. She admitted: "I'm a compulsive confessor, I'll say 'Oh I really like this, can I keep it?' But I wouldn't just thief something and put it in my bag and pretend I didn't have it - it's not in me."

## Reeves shocked by success of Bill + Ted's Excellent Adventure

**K**eanu Reeves can't believe how well 'Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure' has stood the test of time. The 54-year-old actor starred as Ted in the 1989 fantasy comedy, and has said he loves getting the chance to "connect" with people who are fans of the movie, even three decades after it was released. He said: "Time goes by quickly. Over the years it's been really nice to connect with people who love those characters and those films, and it's been fun to hear from fans who have become parents who have shown it to their kids. The ebullient spirit of [Bill and Ted], and the humor of the characters in the film, and the adventure they go on - I think it's still funny." Keanu says he and Alex Winter - who played Bill - hit it off as friends on the day of their audition. He



added: "Everyone was auditioning for both roles. When I arrived at the location for the rehearsal I just met Alex - there was no one else there yet. We had some stuff in common - we both played bass - and just starting to talk. We hit it off. We have kind of similar humor and interests, and then when we were working together there was something else there that was cool." Whilst Alex said: "We realized we saw the characters the same way, and we could kind of riff as a symbiotic unit. Keanu and I [agreed], 'They have to be human beings that we can play. It can't just be caricatures and they can't have a kind of a comedic aloofness to them. They have to genuinely care about the things that are happening to them. The way that Keanu and I played the characters was sort of a mix of hyper-real and totally sincere.'" And despite the movie being a cult classic, director Stephen Herek says it very nearly never made it to the big screen after suffering setbacks including the bankruptcy of its production company and a lengthy reshoot to completely change the ending. Speaking in a group interview with The Hollywood Reporter, Stephen said: "We went through a very tumultuous time actually even getting it on the screen. There was a period of time where it wasn't even going to be released. And then it's even more gratifying that when it got released, it actually did well. And then the cherry on top is having a conversation with you 30 years later about it."

## Johnson wraps filming on Hobbs and Shaw

**D**wayne Johnson has wrapped filming on the "challenging" 'Hobbs & Shaw'. The 46-year-old actor - who plays Luke Hobbs in the 'Fast & Furious' franchise admits it was tough working on the action movie but he was grateful to have Jason Statham, who plays Deckard Shaw, by his side. He wrote: "Last men standing. HOBBS & SHAW is officially wrapped. Easily the most challenging film I've ever produced and starred in, however based on the fans' insanely hyped "break the internet" reactions to our first trailer - this film is also shaping up to be my most rewarding. A HUGE bald and brotherly MAHALO to the man who trusted me and our chemistry and "pushed all his chips in" to make something bad ass and fun for the fans. My uso @jasonstatham. He's one legit talented and tough b\*\*\*\*\*d and the pure joy I got from making him laugh so hard during the our takes he couldn't even talk. I will always remember with evil glee. Finally, one of the best heli pilots in the world @fred\_north demonstrating

here our extreme commitment we all had to deliver the goods to our worldwide audience. #ThatsAWrap #LastMenStanding #AllChipsIn #HOBBSANDSHAW AUGUST 2nd @sevenbucksprod (sic)" And Dwayne admits the film franchise is more than a set of movies to him and instead "represents a soul, a DNA, a toughness". He added in a second post: "HOBBS & SHAW - peace out. My gratitude runs deep in sayin' this goodbye. To EVERYONE who committed their talents and time to making our movie as great as it can be and for putting their trust in me to help drive this passion project forward - THANK YOU. This production will always be more than a movie to me. It's represents a soul, a DNA, a toughness, a perseverance and a CULTURE. I love you all and a big fa'afetai tele lava again for trusting me on this one. Audience always comes first... and they're gonna have a blast! #ThatsAWrap #HobbsAndShaw #Culture AUGUST 2ND WORLDWIDE @sevenbucksprod (sic)"— Bang showbiz







# Burberry catwalk showcases streetwear, elegant classics



Burberry earned its place - again - as one of the top shows in London Fashion Week on Sunday with a widely ranging catwalk show that honored the British brand's long tradition but showed it is still ready to mix it up and set trends. Chief Creative Officer Riccardo Tisci showed in his second collection that he is perfectly comfortable stretching the Burberry look to keep its younger fans happy while easily switching gears to create classic, severely tailored ensembles that ooze chic.

The two sides of the Burberry coin were reflected in the two adjacent rooms where the collection was shown: one a sedate auditorium with comfortable, padded seats; the other a raucous wide-open space ringed by a climbing gym of the type young kids would use. "I have been thinking a lot about England as a country of contrasts, from the structured to the rebellious and free, and I wanted to celebrate how these elements coexist," Tisci said.

He said he had four characters in mind when putting the collection together: a girl and a boy, and a lady and a gentleman. The transition was obvious as models went from street-style clothes - oversize puffer jackets, metallic ornamentation, revealing slip dresses, silver boots, faux fur, big red plastic sneakers - to subtle, timeless outfits in muted fall colors.

There were occasional references to the brand's earlier incarnation as a purveyor of fine, traditional menswear as a few models were dressed in classic suits and ties, including one double-breasted throwback. Tisci made ample and imaginative use of the traditional Burberry trench and check, and paired a number of sexy evening dresses with full-length coats for a look at once provocative and classy.

There were a few eccentric touches, including an outfit set off by a giant scarf that paid homage to "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" by English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Tisci seems to be enjoying his time at Burberry, treasuring tradition but refusing to be overwhelmed by it. — AP



## Future styles: Could virtual clothes reduce the damage of fast fashion?

Striking a pose in the mirror, Swedish model and stylist Lisa Ankarman shows off a new jacket with a difference on Instagram - though it fits her perfectly in the photo, it's a virtual design that does not exist in real life. She is among a number of trendsetters embracing cutting-edge technology that offers the opportunity to sate appetites for fast fashion while dramatically slashing the emissions, pollution and labor abuses linked to the garment industry. "I really liked the idea and the aspect that it's good for the environment," Ankarman told the Thomson Reuters Foundation as she discussed her virtual styling.

"Actually I think it maybe looked too good because people didn't really get that it was digital. 'People were asking me 'Where did you buy this?' and I was saying, 'It's digital', and they were like, 'No, at what shop did you buy it?'" Fashion is one of the world's most damaging industries - it is responsible for about 10 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions, sucks up scarce water and creates vast amounts of pollution and waste. But the desire for the latest look is only increasing. Global fashion sales grew by about 4.5 percent to \$1.7 trillion in 2018, found analysts at McKinsey and Company, who said social media is bringing trends to consumers at an ever swifter pace.

Some businesses are now looking to meet the demand for new styles through digital designs, with Scandinavian fashion firm Carlings convincing its customers to pay real cash for virtual clothes that are digitally "fitted" onto users' photographs. "It was kind of scary (launching it) but the response was so overwhelming that we were convinced we were on to something," said Ronny Mikalsen, the firm's brand director. The first Carlings designs, costing between 10 euros (\$11) and 30 euros, sold out and a second digital collection is due to be released in spring 2019.

### High fashion, low emissions

Digital clothes create far lower emissions than physical clothes as they cut out the long, labor-intensive process of sourcing materials, producing fabrics, making garments and shipping them worldwide. While virtual styles may still be niche, experts say they are set to grow as technology seeps into more aspects of human lives. Younger generations in particular are keen to curate their online personas as much as their real-life image, said Matthew Drinkwater, the head of the Fashion Innovation Agency based at the London College of Fashion.

On Instagram you have to ask "how much of that is a real person and how much is an enhanced version or a way they wish to portray themselves?" he said. The increasing use of filters on social media that can add cute dog ears or a flower crown on top of a photo or edit video in real time to make people vomit rainbows shows how people are already using digital effects to play with their image, he said.

"In a very simple sense people are beginning to enhance or alter the way that they look," he said. "You can begin to see a drift towards this merging of physical and digital." Shopping habits are already changing to meet the demands of online images: nearly one in 10 people have bought clothes to wear once, with the aim of sharing their outfit on social media, according to a survey of 2,000 Britons by finance firm Barclaycard last summer.

"If you get caught wearing the same clothes too many times it's seen as a bad thing," said Morten Grubak from the Virtue creative agency, who came up with the Carlings campaign. "One of the worst things you can write under images is 'Not again,' making the hint they have posted that outfit before."

### 'Physics-defying' outfits

Some involved in virtual fashion said they had set out to offer a new solution to the industry's climate damage and waste rather than trying to persuade consumers to buy less. Right now (environmental campaigns) are always about, like, how much water did we save producing these jeans and people don't care about that," said Grubak. "Instead of getting angry with people doing fashion on Instagram, how can we innovatively solve that problem by adding a new platform?" Other companies said they had taken a deliberate decision to avoid the traditional fashion market entirely. "We've made a very clear point of never wanting to be a physical fashion brand," said Kerry Murphy of Dutch digital fashion house The Fabricant, which creates only virtual designs.

"We believe the world does not need more clothing. It's an incredibly wasteful and polluting industry. That's why we very consciously said we want to re-imagine fashion." Digital design also opens up new possibilities to play with fashion, from using fabrics like rubber which would be relatively uncomfortable in real life through to dabbling in exotic skins or even physics-defying fantasies. "Clothing will definitely have a different meaning because it does not have the same functionality as physical clothing," Murphy said.

"People can wear fire or they wear rain or they can be a dinosaur, so the possibilities are limitless." Those involved in the digital design industry said it will not offer a complete solution to fashion's emissions and waste problems, but it can help by encouraging people to update their existing wardrobes with virtual flourishes. And as technology advances, virtual fashion could sashay into the mainstream, said Drinkwater.

Within a decade, people could regularly wear high-tech glasses that can apply digital effects over what the wearer sees in real life, he predicted, meaning virtual clothes will no longer be restricted to a computer or phone screen. —Reuters

Models present creations during the British fashion house Burberry 2019 Autumn / Winter collection catwalk show at London Fashion Week in London. — AFP photos



'No love scenes' for Hagler as boxing legend eyes more silver screen action

American boxing legend Marvelous Marvin Hagler may be 64 but he told AFP that age won't stop him hunting down more roles in action adventure movies. However, there is one condition-he will not do love scenes. The undisputed middleweight world champion from 1980-87 has made four films in Italy where he lives with his second wife Kay. His most recent silver screen appearances were in 1997 in movies Notti di Paura and Virtual Weapon. However, Hagler says while he enjoys commentating and carrying out charity work, the chance to lose himself playing someone else in movies has its attractions.

"Hopefully for me to land another film," he told AFP of his future plans. "I love to do that, that is what I have been doing, action and adventure." However, light-heartedly suggesting that his wife may not be happy, he added: "You always get the girl in adventure films, but I cannot do any love scenes." Hagler, who retired from the ring after a controversial loss to bitter rival Sugar Ray Leonard in 1987, says he found himself as immersed in films as he had once been in boxing. "It is not real; it is all

fake, a fantasy," said Hagler, who is in Monaco for the annual Laureus Awards. "You can die and come back the next day, you know what that stuff cracks me up."

"Its another game in the sense you can get lost and become another character. "I got to live it same as I did it in boxing-walk it, talk it, live it, sleep it just try not to look like it afterwards!"

**'Brings back respect'**

Hagler, who retired with a record of 62 wins, including 52 inside the distance, two draws and three defeats, shakes his head at the amount of titles that are on offer in his former sport today compared to his heyday. "Now they have so much they throw them (titles) away like candy," he said. "It was a long hard road in my day, I said you have to kill me to take it (the title)." Hagler says there is one boxer who he believes represents the good old days and that is Kazakhstan's former unified middleweight champion Gennady Golovkin. "I saw 'Triple G' (Golovkin's nickname) and I told him I am glad that you became

champion because it brings back respect into my division, you look like a champion who will be there for a while. "Most champions these days, they come and they go, they confuse the public, who do not know who the real champion is. "Right now they think Mike Tyson is the champion," he adds, chuckling.

Hagler, though, derives great pleasure in his work with disadvantaged youngsters in his role as an academy member of Laureus, a global movement that aims to use the power of sport to tackle social challenges in the world. "I like to give them hope and direction and put a smile on their faces," he said. "I went to Brazil before the Olympics to see some of these kids who had bad habits. "I had to step in there but my wife says 'Marvin, what are you doing?'. However it gets into your blood and you get carried away. "The coach (at the gym) says I am not going to stop you going in there. "It is important to catch them when they are young. It was exciting and they responded." — AFP



Marvin Hagler



French music composer Camille Pepin poses in her studio in Paris. — AFP

Rarer than a Sumatran rhino: A woman composer

Camille Pepin is part of a very rare breed. She is a female composer. Women have conquered space, risen in the military ranks, but some professions remain resolutely and bewilderingly masculine. When Pepin turned up for her first day at the Paris Conservatoire-as usual the only woman in a class of men-an official told her that her name wasn't on the list. But when she insisted that she was and that he look again, he cried, "Ah, you're a woman!" Camille is also a man's name in France.

"I would never have thought," he apologized. "There are so many men..." With so few female composers in the classical music repertoire, it was an easy mistake to make. Pepin has never let everyday sexism get her down though, laughing it off like water off a duck's back. "One male composer told me I was getting commissions because I was a woman and not too bad looking," said the 28-year-old, whose first album, "Chamber Music", is released later this month. After a concert of one of her more combative pieces, "a man came to tell me my music was 'very fresh, flowery and sweet,'" she told AFP.

"I am a woman so clearly those three words" apply, she said wryly. Pepin, whose music recalls both Claude Debussy and American minimalist composers like John Adams, said sometimes the sexist stereotypes which persist in the classical music world are hard to take.

Only woman

One "old school" music professor insisted she sit on his right at lunch "because that was a woman's place" and sent her off to make the coffee. "I was the only woman in all my classes in the Conservatoire, and it was fine," said Pepin, who is now working on her first ballet score in her Paris apartment which doubles as a studio. Mostly the young composer, who made her breakthrough with the orchestral piece "Vajrayana" in 2015, said she was treated exactly the same as her male colleagues in classes with French contemporary composers like Guillaume Connesson, Thierry Escaich and Marc-Andre Dalbavie.

Beyond the classroom, however, progress is slow in the conservative world of classical music. Pepin believes it will take generations for the forgotten work of female composers to get just recognition. Beyond the casual unthinking sexism, she said the biggest problem for young female composers was "a lack of role models". A few woman such as the American composer Meredith Monk, Kaija Saariaho of Finland and Tansy Davies from Britain have managed to break the glass ceiling.

Written out of history

But even Pepin admitted that when she was younger she didn't know of a single female composer. "We never studied them," she said. Who has ever heard of Helene de Montgeroult (1764-1836), Louise Farrenc (1804-1875) or Fanny Mendelssohn (1805-1847)? Fanny was the older sister of the more famous Felix Mendelssohn, with many at the time saying her work was more expressive. But after she married she was limited to domestic duties and had to content herself with being her brother's chief editor and muse, which led him to call her his "Minerva" of wisdom.

"Lots of female composers were crushed like Clara Schumann (the wife of Robert Schumann)," despite being one of the most distinguished composers and musicians of the Romantic era, said the pianist Celia Oneto Bensaid, who often performs Pepin's work. "You play my music." Schumann once bluntly told his wife, a star of concert halls across Europe.

**Began at age 13**

Born into a family in the northern French city of Amiens that wasn't particularly musical, Pepin began to write her own melodies at 13. But even at the age of five in her ballet class, her eyes were more drawn to the piano. "I was so fascinated that I would forget to do my exercises," she said. Before settling on composing, Pepin thought about being a dancer. "I need to feel the notes physically," she said.

Her first ballet will be choreographed next year by Sylvain pad for France's Ballet du Nord. Finally, she feels she is getting beyond the dreaded question-"But what do you do for a living?"-when she tells people she's a composer. "They thought it was just something I did to chill on Sundays," she laughed. —AFP

Investigation into alleged attack on US actor has 'shifted'

An investigation into an alleged attack on an openly gay black actor has "shifted" and police are now seeking a follow-up interview with the "Empire" cast member, a spokesman said Sunday. Jussie Smollett, 36, reported to police on January 29 that two men beat him, yelled racial and homophobic slurs, poured bleach on him and tied a rope around his neck while he walked downtown in the third-largest American city. The announced change in direction came two days after police said that the two "potential suspects" in the attack had been released without charge and as US media outlets reported that the attack may have been staged.

"The information received from the individuals questioned by police earlier in the Empire case has in fact shifted the trajectory of the investigation," Chicago police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi said in a statement. "We've reached out to the Empire cast member's attorney to request a follow-up interview," he added. Multiple US media outlets reported the two men are brothers who were arrested at Chicago's O'Hare airport upon their return from a trip to Nigeria.

At least one of the men reportedly worked on "Empire," a TV series about the fortunes of a hip-hop mogul and his family battling over control of a multi-million-dollar music company. In an emotional interview with ABC's "Good Morning America" broadcast Thursday, Smollett gave details of the purported attack and said he was angry at doubts about its veracity. Smollett said a masked man



Najee Ali of Project Islamic Hope holds a press conference to call for the arrest and prosecution of 'Empire' television series star Jussie Smollett. — AFP photos

yelled "Empire" as the actor was walking through an intersection after a late-night stop at a sandwich shop.

After he ignored the man, Smollett said the attacker yelled out a racial slur and used President Donald Trump's campaign slogan acronym "MAGA," which stands for "Make America Great Again." Smollett said the man called Chicago "MAGA country" and then punched him in



This photo shows US actor Jussie Smollett arriving at the Trevor Live Los Angeles Gala 2018, in Beverly Hills, California.

the face, at which point the actor fought with the attacker, and was kicked by a second man he had not noticed earlier. "It felt like minutes, but it was probably like 30 seconds, honestly," Smollett said. Initial reports of the attack shocked the entertainment industry and brought waves of support from advocacy groups and senior politicians, including Democratic presidential hopefuls Kamala Harris, Cory Booker and Kirsten Gillibrand. — AFP



A veterinarian checks a puppy at Sultangazi Health Center at Sultangazi, western Istanbul.

Istanbul vets make city's stray animals feel at home

Concerned for the health of a black cat roaming around the university campus where she works, Mevlude dropped off the feline at the veterinary clinic for street animals run by the Istanbul municipality. Visitors to the Turkish city, who admire its centuries-old mosques and Ottoman palaces, are often surprised to see cats and dogs making themselves at home on the streets, and watch them taking the best seats in cafes and restaurants without a care for the world. Like Mevlude, many Istanbul residents try to help these four-legged friends in their neighborhood, putting out bowls of food and offering shelter by their doors or windows.

Now Istanbul officials are increasing efforts to ensure the good health of the street animals, and thereby of the residents who come into contact with them. That care can be seen at the "Vetbus", where Mevlude brought the black cat because one of its eyes had been closed for several days. The bus is a mobile clinic stationed for several days in different neighborhoods around the Turkish metropolis. "We often get in touch with the municipality when we see animals who are in need of care," Mevlude said, once reassured over the cat's health whose eyes were now wide open. "People generally bring the animals that they take care of... so that they are given anti-parasite" treatment, said Nihan Dincer, a veterinarian working for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (IBB). And "because people are in constant contact with them, they are also protected", she added.

**Islamic tradition**

The attention given by Istanbul residents to caring for street animals partly "comes from the Islamic tradition, and part of it... comes from the structuring of the public space in the Ottoman Empire," Mine Yildirim, a doctoral candidate at the New School for Social Research in New York, said. In Ottoman times, people moved between home, the mosque and the market. The streets were the space for the dogs, the researcher said. Then in the early 20th century there were extermination policies like in the West, and



The Vetbus is pictured at Rumelihisari district in northern Istanbul. — AFP photos

even in the 1990s city officials would put poison on the streets to kill animals, said Yildirim, coordinator of the collective "Dort Ayakli Sehir" (Four-legged City).

But an animal protection law passed in 2004 forced municipalities to take care of street animals. In Istanbul, as well as the mobile clinic, IBB maintains six health centers. The aim is to vaccinate, sterilize and take care of around 130,000 dogs and 165,000 cats who live on the streets, according to the municipality. The animals, fitted with a microchip, are then taken back to where they were found, except those which are adopted by individuals during their stay at the health centers.

Due to the development of these services, the municipality has cared for 73,608 animals in 2018 — that compares with only 2,470 back in 2004. There hasn't been a single case of rabies in Istanbul since 2016, according to the municipality which employs 100 veterinarians and veterinary technicians.

While the municipality refused to say how much the services cost, Agriculture and Forests Minister Bekir Pakdemirli said last month that his ministry has provided 31 million Turkish lira (around \$6 million) of support to local authorities across Turkey for the care of street animals between 2009 and 2018. "If people knew how much money was spent on these services, maybe people would be more upset, but these figures are not disclosed," Yildirim commented.

Puppies

While animals living on Istanbul's streets are often well fed, in the forests surrounding the city, "animals don't have a place to feed themselves," Umut Demir, also a veterinarian at IBB, said during a patrol in Belgrade Forest on Istanbul's European side. So around a ton of food is distributed each day by vans dispatched full of dry food, towards which dogs come running after hearing the horn. According to Tugce Demirelek, chief veterinarian at Sultangazi district health center, the fact that the animals are well fed and cared for ensures that they are calm and limits any aggressive behavior.

But the number of dogs has remained fairly stable in the past few years despite sterilization efforts. "We sterilize them systematically, but the animals that we do not catch continue to reproduce," she explained. Puppies continue to be born every year in Istanbul, like a small golden puppy only 40 days old, that was found alone, whimpering, on the side of a road. Once examined and chipped, the dog is put up for adoption, its picture displayed in the Vetbus. One recent afternoon, the puppy attracted a lot of attention, but it still has not found a home. "We will try our luck again tomorrow," Dincer said. — AFP

A worker of Istanbul metropolitan municipality feeds stray dogs.



A stray dog is pictured at Sultangazi Health Center.



Nihan Dincer, veterinarian of the Vetbus, checks a stray cat.



People look at a puppy presented in a showcase on a Vetbus for adaption.





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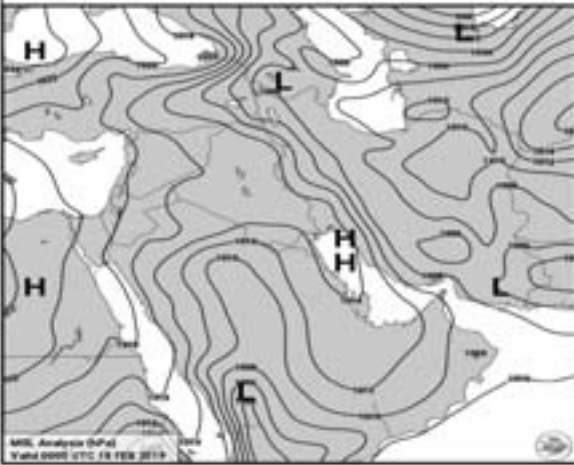
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## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Fair and with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Cold and Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	<div>SFC. CHART18/02/2019 0000 UTC</div>	
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	14 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	07 °C		
ABDALY	22 °C	08 °C		
BUBYAN	00 °C	00 °C		
JAHRA	23 °C	11 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	20 °C	10 °C		
SALMIYAH	20 °C	14 °C		
AHMADI	18 °C	14 °C		
NUWAISIB	21 °C	10 °C		
WAFRA	21 °C	07 °C		
SALMY	20 °C	06 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Tuesday	02/19	Cool and with a chance for scattered rain	18 °C	10 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	02/20	Fair	21 °C	07 °C	NW	08 - 30 km/h
Thursday	02/21	Fair	22 °C	08 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 28 km/h
Friday	02/22	Fair with a chance for light fog forming at night	23 °C	08 °C	VRB-NW	10 - 32 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:05
Sunrise	06:25
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:14
Sunset	17:39
Isha	18:57

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	08 °C
MAX. RH	89 %
MIN. RH	25 %
MAX. Wind	N 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, Jackson Krishnankutty Raju holding Indian Passport No: R5455973 issued at Kuwait on 20/04/2017, residing at Ashok Nivas, Thottappally P.O, Alappuzha, Kerala - 688563, hereby changed my name as Jackson Krishnankunju Raju. (C 5445) 19-2-2019

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is

1889988

EMERGENCY

112

## 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
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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)

## DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 19/2/2019					Departure Flights on Tuesday 19/2/2019				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	QTR 8511	KAC	774	Riyadh	13:55	
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	KAC	FDB	059	Dubai	14:00	
THY	766	ISL	00:30	KAC	672	Dubai	14:20		
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	GFA	221	Dhaka	14:25		
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC	618	Bahrain	14:30		
JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:40		
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	KAC	692	Muscat	14:40		
KAC	102	London	01:20	KNE	529	Jeddah	14:45		
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	KAC	788	Jeddah	14:55		
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:05		
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	FEQ	441	Asyut	15:10		
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	JZR	222	Riyadh	15:15		
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	OMA	645	Muscat	15:30		
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	562	Amman	15:35		
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45		
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50		
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	SYR	341	Damascus	16:00		
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	JZR	152	Mashhad	16:00		
MSR	612	Cairo	03:05	KAC	118	New York	16:05		
RBG	211	Luxor	03:05	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:05		
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	516	Tehran	16:20		
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25		
LMU	5510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	542	Cairo	16:30		
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	502	Beirut	16:30		
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35		
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	FDB	051	Dubai	16:40		
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	612	Tbilisi	17:10		
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	JZR	114	Doha	17:10		
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15		
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30		
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45		
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00		
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15		
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	JZR	124	Dubai	18:20		
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30		
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	MSR	2620	Cairo	18:30		
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:10	RJA	640	Amman	19:00		
KAC	362	Colombo	06:10	KAC	744	Dammam	19:00		
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:00		
THY	6376	Istanbul	06:30	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:25		
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	NIA	0161	Cairo	19:30		
BAW	157	London	07:05	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30		
KAC	204	Lahore	07:10	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:30		
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30		
KAC	358	Kochi	07:35	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50		
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:50		
FEG	241	Alexandria	07:40	JZR	106	Bahrain	20:00		
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	620	Doha	20:15		
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20		
KAC	304	Mumbai	08:20	KAC	546	Cairo	20:30		
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:25	QTR	1088	Doha	20:35		
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	674	Dubai	20:35		
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	166	Rome	20:35		
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:45		
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	ICV	675	Luxembourg	21:15		
IRA	675	Lar	09:40	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:15		
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20		
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20		
JZR	142	Al Najaf	09:50	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20		
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	KAC	168	Paris	21:30		
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	UAE	859	Dubai	21:35		
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45		
KAC	624	Doha	10:40	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50		
JZR	122	Dubai	11:10	KAC	564	Amman	21:55		
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	JAI	574	Mumbai	22:00		
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05		
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15		
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25		
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	RBG	213	Sohag	22:30		
MSC	411	Asyut	12:30	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:45		
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00		
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	MSC	501	Alexandria	23:05		
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	JZR	128	Dubai	23:15		
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	MSC	405	Sohag	23:30		
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	JZR	254	Amman	23:40		
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	FDB	071	Dubai	23:45		



# US pressing Gulf states to keep Syria isolated

## Kuwait reiterates any return of relations only through Arab League

**DUBAI:** The United States is lobbying Gulf states to hold off restoring ties with Syria, including the UAE which has moved closer to Damascus to counter the influence of its rival Iran, five sources told Reuters. The opposing approaches are an early test of whether Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad can gain political and diplomatic credibility after a nearly eight-year civil war turned him into an international pariah. Many countries cut links with Syria at the start of the war.

Several Gulf states shut or downgraded their embassies, Syria was suspended from the Arab League, flights stopped and border crossings were closed. The United States and other countries imposed economic sanctions. Washington, backed by Gulf countries Saudi Arabia and Qatar, does not want Syria welcomed back into the international community until a political process to end the war is agreed.

“The Saudis are quite helpful in pressing the others. Qatar also is doing the right thing,” said a US official, when asked about the diplomatic pressure. The official said that the United States was pleased that “some Gulf states are putting the brakes on”. The US position suggests that Assad is still a long way from being accepted, even after his forces reclaimed most of Syria through victories over Sunni rebels, thanks largely to help from Iran and Russia.

The lack of support from Washington and regional heavyweight Riyadh to end Syria's isolation will make it

harder for the devastated country to attract investment needed to rebuild it. While the UAE believes Sunni Muslim states must embrace Syria swiftly in order to move Assad out of Shiite Iran's orbit, Saudi Arabia and Qatar back the US approach.

The UAE sees Assad as the “only option”, according to one Gulf source, and believes that stemming Iranian influence in Syria could help prevent the kind of hold it now has in Iraq. During the war, the UAE did support armed groups opposed to Assad. But its role was less prominent than that of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and its support was mostly to do with ensuring that Islamist forces did not dominate the uprising.

US and Saudi officials have spoken to representatives of other Gulf countries, urging them not to restore ties with Syria, three Gulf political sources, a US official and a senior Western diplomat said. They particularly want to ensure that those countries do not back Syria's return to regional organization the Arab League, and that embassies are kept closed or operating with only junior staffing.

With Assad strengthening his position militarily, relations with some countries have started to thaw. The UAE reopened its Damascus embassy in December. This was a major boost for Assad, and the United States “gave the Emiratis flak”, said the US official. A UAE official did not respond to a request for comment.

“In the last seven years there has been absolutely zero

Arab influence in Syria. Zero Arab influence has been a disaster,” UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash told reporters in a recent briefing in Washington. He said Abu Dhabi re-established diplomatic ties with Damascus to “be closer to the reality on the ground”. Gargash said more Arab states need to engage “to crowd the space” taken by Russia and Iran, who support Assad, and Turkey, which backs the rebels.

The next step for Syria's international rehabilitation could be reinstatement to the Arab League, which would be largely symbolic but something Assad's government would likely use to show its return from the diplomatic wilderness. The League said last Monday that there was not yet the necessary consensus for this to happen, and the United States is pushing hard to ensure it does not, according to the sources.

“Washington is lobbying against it and Saudi Arabia and Egypt are working to slow down the readmittance of Syria in the Arab League,” said the senior Western diplomat. Government media offices in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Oman's foreign ministry did not respond to a Reuters' request for comment. A Kuwaiti foreign ministry official declined to comment on whether Kuwait had been asked by Washington or Riyadh to hold off on normalizing ties and reiterated the country's stance that “any possible return of relations with it can only be through the Arab League”.

Not all Arab League nations severed ties with Syria

after the outbreak of the war in 2011. Oman maintained diplomatic ties with Damascus. A day after the UAE reopened its embassy, Bahrain said its embassy in Damascus and the Syrian diplomatic mission in Manama had been operating “without interruption”. Kuwait's deputy foreign minister said in December it would reopen its embassy in Damascus once the Arab League allowed it.

Saudi Arabia has no plans now to normalize ties, said one Gulf official, adding “everything is suspended” until Syrians agree a transition from Assad's rule. Rival Qatar has said it sees no “encouraging” signs for restoring normal relations, its foreign minister said in January. But Abu Dhabi hopes it can eventually sway Syria towards the business-friendly UAE model, and Dubai can play a role as a hub for trade with Syria.

Abu Dhabi last month hosted a Syrian delegation led by prominent businessman Mohammad Hamsho to discuss potential cooperation in trade, infrastructure, agriculture, tourism, logistics and renewable energy, state media reported. Gargash acknowledged, however, that real investment would not happen without a political process. A second senior Western diplomat said that without a UN-led political process it would be difficult for sanctions to be removed which would clear the way for investment. “I don't think this is the end of the war and time for reconstruction,” that diplomat said. — Reuters

## Pakistani women seeking abortions as birth control

**PESHAWAR:** Pregnant, desperate, and poor, Pakistani mother Zameena faced a stark choice: Risk her life by having a secret abortion, or risk her life bearing her husband a sixth child. In the end, she opted for the former, one of more than two million women a year to do so in a country where religious leaders are critical of family planning measures and there is a lack of sex education and access to contraception.

Almost half of all pregnancies in Pakistan - around 4.2 million each year - are unplanned and around 54 percent of those end in termination, according to a report by US research firm Guttmacher Institute. “Three years ago, when my daughter was born, the doctor told me that I should stop having babies because it would be bad for my health,” said Zameena, using an assumed name, from her home in the north-west city of Peshawar. “But whenever I say that to my husband, he tells me to trust God,” the 35-year-old added. “My husband is a religious man... he wants to have a line of sons.”

Decades ago, a family planning campaign with the slogan “do bache hi ache” or “two children is good” was rejected by religious leaders as well as nationalists who wanted a bigger population to rival the 1.2 billion people in neighboring India. Today with a population of around 207 million, Pakistan's baby boom is stretching resources beyond capacity and experts warn of trouble ahead.

Zameena said she frequently suggested to her husband that they practice family planning, but he refused. “My mother-in-law had nine kids,” said Zameena. “When I complain to my husband that I can't have more babies, he answers: ‘If my mother didn't die, you should also stay alive.’” Abortion is allowed in Pakistan if the health of the mother is in danger. But many doctors invoke their Muslim faith and refuse to carry them out. As a result, some women abort illegally and authorities largely turn a blind eye to the situation.

The preferred method is by ingesting Misoprostol,

an over-the-counter drug used to treat ulcers, which causes the expulsion of the embryo. It can also cause serious complications for the mother. NGO Aware Girls counsels those who call its hotline on how such drugs should be used safely and when to seek emergency or professional treatment at a clinic. “Most of us know women who have died of an abortion,” said Aware Girls co-founder Gulalai Ismail.

Zameena was one of the lucky ones - she knew where to go for help once she decided to terminate her latest pregnancy. At the other end of the Aware Girls hotline, counselor Ayesha reassured and advised her on what medicines to take and in which dosage. They insist that women must never be alone when they attempt such procedures. “My work saves women's lives. When they call, they are willing to do anything to have an abortion,” explained the 26-year-old.

Ayesha estimated that she fields around 350 calls a month. Most women who contact the NGO know very little about contraception. Access to condoms, the most well-known option, is limited and even when they can be bought, it requires the man to agree. According to official statistics, only around 35 percent of Pakistani women use any form of non-abortive birth control despite them being inexpensive. Birth control pills cost just 20 rupees (0.12 euro), for example, while an IUD is available for 400 rupees (2.5 euros).

But population control is a controversial issue in Pakistan, where large families are prized. “Authorities have not been able to make this issue an emergency for Pakistan. It is all rhetoric and political gibberish,” says Dr Haroon Ibrahim of the family planning NGO Greenstar. Zeba Sathar, a demographer in charge of another NGO, the Population Council, branded the nation's negative attitude to contraception a “systemic failure”.

Prime Minister Imran Khan in December acknowledged the lack of political will on the issue and promised pro-contraception campaigns using the media, cell phones, schools and mosques. “The mullahs have a key role to play,” he insisted. But the Council of Pakistani Islamic Ideology, a religious body which advises the government, says otherwise, insisting that family planning is against Islam. “The birth control campaign at the government level should be immediately stopped and the birth control program should be removed from the economic planning,” the council told AFP.

two days in China on Thursday and Friday. Analysts have said the tour is part of a Gulf pivot to rising Asia as a growing oil market, but also a timely demonstration to the West that MBS is not an international pariah. Pakistan has also been accused by its western neighbor Iran of harboring militants who carried out an attack that killed 27 Revolutionary Guards last week. The Guards' commander has also vowed to make Pakistan pay. But Islamabad received a boost from Jubeir, who called Tehran a “chief sponsor of terrorism” during yesterday's live press conference.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have enjoyed a long alliance dating back to the founding of the Islamic republic. However, Islamabad has also tried to walk a fine line by maintaining warm relations with its neighbor - and Saudi Arabia's regional foe - Iran. Jubeir also noted that Riyadh continues to participate in a months-long push by Washington for peace talks in Afghanistan, saying that if the war-torn country can be stabilized, “it will be to benefit... the region as a whole”. — Agencies

take them back or grant them any sort of identification after their true nationalities were discovered.

Meanwhile, chairman of the central agency for illegal residents' affairs Saleh Al-Fadhlah said the total number of bedoons dropped from 220,000 before Aug 2, 1990 to only 117,000 in 1992, noting that the agency tracked the relationship between those deported and their relatives who still live in Kuwait, and that this helped discover the original citizenships of many people pretending to be bedoons.

Fadhlah added that the legal statuses of 90 percent of the 88,000 bedoons registered with the agency have been determined. He also noted that the agency exerts endless efforts to provide bedoons with decent services. Fadhlah said a special committee had been formed with elements from various state bodies to study the dossiers of bedoons included in the 1965 census pending granting them citizenship. — Al-Qabas



**PESHAWAR:** In this picture taken on Dec 17, 2018, Ayesha, an employee of the Pakistani NGO Aware Girls, answers a call on the hotline “Sahaalee” (“friend” in Urdu), dedicated to abortion. — AFP

The charity Marie Stopes, whose clinics provide post-abortion care, has profiled a typical client in Pakistan: Aged in her thirties, married at 18, she is poor, uneducated and already has three children. Such women approach the agency when backstreet abortions go wrong. “Women are just dying... for the lack of knowledge,” said Xaher Gul, an executive at Marie Stopes.

In 2012, the year of their last study, the Guttmacher Institute estimated there were 2.25 million abortions in Pakistan with 623,000 women treated for post-abortion complications. “We have failed women in this country,” warned Hassan Mohtashami, former head of the United Nations Development Programme in Pakistan. He added: “Abortion is not a family planning method.” — AFP

## Saudi crown prince orders 2,100 Pak...

Continued from Page 1

Islamabad is also facing a serious balance of payments crisis and hopes the huge deals signed over the two-day visit - seven separate agreements and memorandums of understanding - will boost its struggling economy. Pakistan laid on a lavish welcome for the crown prince, including a 21-gun salute, fighter jet escort and honor guard. He also received the country's highest civilian award yesterday, the Nishan-e-Pakistan (Order of Pakistan), before heading to India to meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

After India, MBS expected to finish the Asian tour with

## Issue of bedoons nears resolution...

Continued from Page 1

injustice they have suffered because of pretenders and fake bedoons.

The sources added that those who do not deserve Kuwaiti citizenship will be offered a reasonable settlement by granting them permanent residency and decent lives in Kuwait. However, the sources warned against taking the issue lightly, because of security threats that entail the government's swift action to resolve the problem, especially since certain countries have ‘implanted’ their nationals in Kuwait and are refusing to

## 9 dead as Kashmir battle heightens...

Continued from Page 1

injured in the hours-long gun battle, a police official told AFP. “A police deputy inspector general has also suffered injuries,” the official said.

The identity of the militants was not revealed but local media reports said one of those killed was Abdul Rashid Gazi, a Pakistani national whose role in Thursday's attack was being probed by investigators. Hundreds of soldiers raided villages and fired warning shots at a suspected militant hideout, unleashing the firefight in the village of Pinglan late Sunday. Images showed flames and smoke billowing out of one of the residential houses in the area.

Government forces have launched a massive hunt since an explosives-packed van struck the convoy transporting 2,500 security men close to Pinglan on Thursday. A video on social media purportedly shows a pre-recorded message by the 20-year-old Kashmiri suicide bomber warning of more attacks. India accuses Pakistan of harboring the JeM group, a charge Islamabad denies.

With tensions mounting, Islamabad recalled its envoy to New Delhi for “consultations” while Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called for greater international action against “terrorism”. “The cruel terrorist attack in Pulwana shows that time for talks is over,” Modi said after a meeting with Argentina's President Mauricio Macri in New Delhi.

Thursday's attack sparked anger and outrage across India. Thousands of demonstrators staged angry rallies in several Indian cities over the weekend, with attacks on Kashmiris reported in several towns. Protesters in New Delhi on Sunday burned effigies of Pakistani and

JeM leaders. Many small businesses closed yesterday following a call for a nationwide shutdown. In the capital, a Kashmiri man was beaten by a mob that accused him of chanting anti-India slogans. He was later detained by police.

A curfew remained in force for a fourth day in Jammu city, in the Hindu-majority part of Kashmir, where mobs attacked and set fire to properties belonging to Kashmiri Muslims. Thousands of residents in the city have fled to Muslim-majority areas. The government faces increased pressure because of an upcoming national election. New Delhi has withdrawn trade privileges for Pakistan and ended police protection for four Kashmiri separatist leaders.

Some commentators have called for military action against Pakistan. India launched what it called ‘surgical strikes’ on targets in Pakistani Kashmir in Sept 2016, 11 days after a militant attack on an Indian army base in Kashmir which left 19 soldiers dead. Pakistan denies the strikes took place. But experts say India has limited options for action now. “Whatever retaliation India takes will be symbolic. It won't have any real impact,” Ajay Sahni, executive director of the New Delhi based Institute for Conflict Management, told AFP.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir said during a visit to Islamabad that his country “will try to de-escalate tensions” between India and Pakistan. He is due to visit New Delhi with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman today. JeM is one of several militant groups fighting Indian troops in Kashmir, which has been split between India and Pakistan since independence from Britain in 1947. Both claim the Himalayan region and have fought two wars over the territory.

Kashmir is the world's most militarized zone with some 500,000 Indian troops deployed to fight a rebellion that broke out in 1989. Tens of thousands of people, mainly civilians, have died in the conflict. Violence has spiked since 2016 with almost 600 killed last year, the highest toll in a decade. — AFP



Sports

# Friendly fire as Monfils beats Wawrinka to win Rotterdam Open

## Wawrinka returns to top 50 after Rotterdam final run

**ROTTERDAM:** Gael Monfils defeated good friend Stan Wawrinka 6-3, 1-6, 6-2 on Sunday to win his eighth career title at the Rotterdam Open. Monfils, the runner-up three years ago, held off Wawrinka's second-set surge to ease through the decider.

"It was an unbelievable week, a pleasure," said Monfils. "Stan is a part of this win. We've been talking a lot and practising a lot. You're my brother," he told his Swiss opponent. "This has been a good week for Stan and a good week for me. I hope we can have many more battles."

<b>ATP top 20</b>	
1. Novak Djokovic (SRB)	10,955 pts
2. Rafael Nadal (ESP)	8,320
3. Alexander Zverev (GER)	6,475
4. Juan Martin del Potro (ARG)	5,060
5. Kevin Anderson (RSA)	4,595
6. Kei Nishikori (JPN)	4,190 (+1)
7. Roger Federer (SUI)	4,100 (-1)
8. Dominic Thiem (AUT)	3,800
9. John Isner (USA)	3,225
10. Marin Cilic (CRO)	3,140
11. Karen Khachanov (RUS)	2,880
12. Stefanos Tsitsipas (GRE)	2,805
13. Borna Coric (CRO)	2,605
14. Milos Raonic (CAN)	2,275
15. Daniil Medvedev (RUS)	2,230 (+1)
16. Fabio Fognini (ITA)	2,225 (-1)
17. Marco Cecchinato (ITA)	2,091 (+1)
18. Roberto Bautista Agut (ESP)	1,955 (-1)
19. Diego Schwartzman (ARG)	1,940
20. Nikoloz Basilashvili (GEO)	1,820
<b>Selected:</b> 41. Stan Wawrinka (SUI)	1, 0 4 0 (+27).

Wawrinka, the 2015 champion in the Dutch port city who is continuing an 18-month comeback from double knee surgery, was playing in his first final since Roland Garros in June 2017. "It was great for sure to be in the final," Wawrinka said. "I'm pleased with the way I played in it and the way I arrived to the final. "I played four good matches here, I kept my level up all week." Three-time major winner Wawrinka said he hopes to build on his run this week. "I need to keep doing what I've been doing the last few months. I need to play events to gain confidence. Keeping going is the only way to get back my ranking," said the world number 68.

It was the first championship match in 11 years at Rotterdam to feature two unseeded players. Monfils, 32, showed no hard evidence of the left wrist injury which has bothered him all week and forced him onto a regime of pain-killers.

"I struggled with the wrist all week," he said. "I came out running hard in the first game to make him feel I was there. "But when I hit as hard as I could with the backhand-'ohhh'," he said in reference to the wrist pain he was feeling.

"I've been in worse shape, but I'm really exhausted after this week." The world number 33 triumphed in one and three-quarter hours with four service breaks against three-time major winner Wawrinka as he claimed his first title since Doha last year.

The Frenchman took the opening set with two breaks of Wawrinka, but the 33-year-old Swiss immediately returned the favour with a 6-1 second set. In the third, Monfils broke for 2-1, taking control of his opponent's mighty backhand.

The Frenchman moved to 5-2 and saved a break point a game later as he closed out victory.

Meanwhile, Stan Wawrinka returned to the world's top 50 on Monday for the first time since



last year's French Open after his run to the final in Rotterdam.

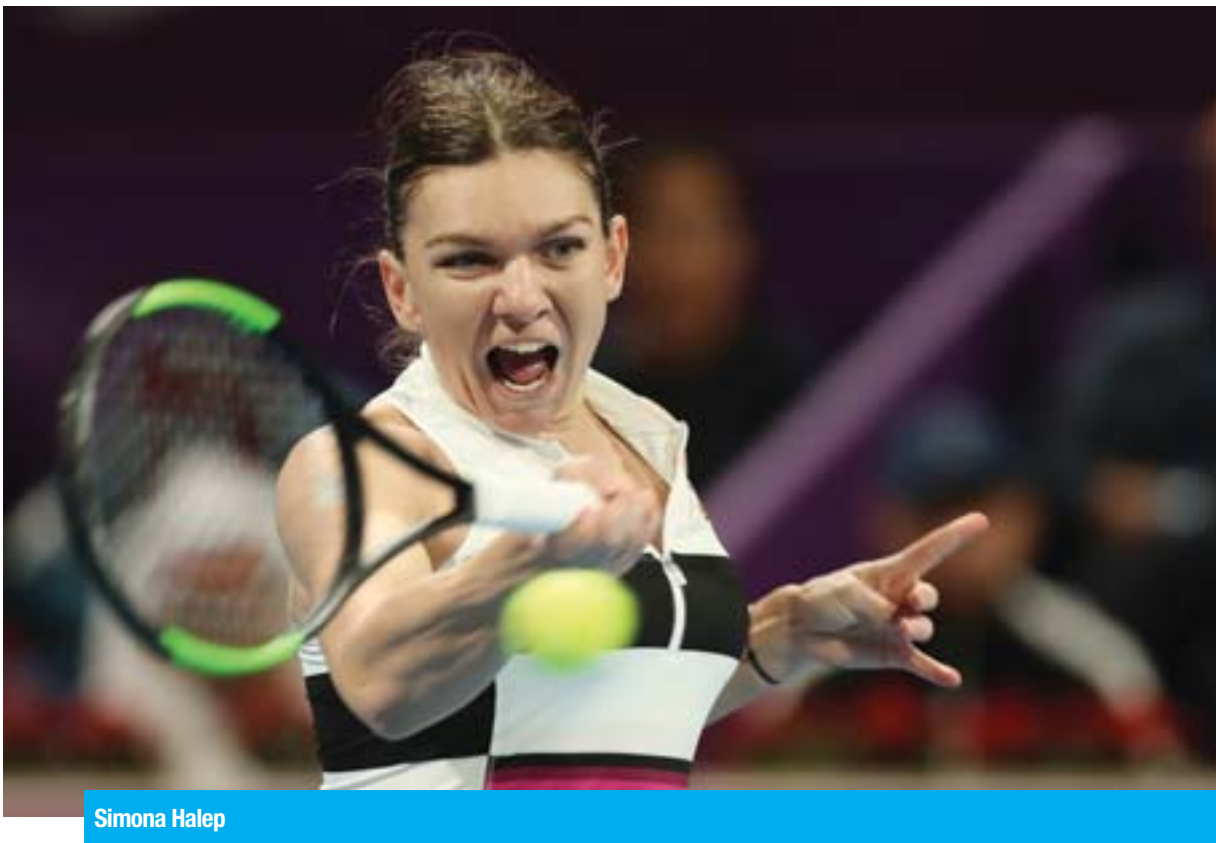
The three-time Grand Slam champion is on the road back to his best after serious knee injuries and reached his first final last week since losing to

Rafael Nadal at Roland Garros in 2017. The 33-year-old Swiss was beaten in three sets by Gael Monfils, though, with the Frenchman climbing 10 spots to 23rd. Wawrinka sits 41st in the rankings after a rise of 27 places.— AFP

## Halep returns to second despite Doha final defeat

**PARIS:** Simona Halep reclaimed second place in the WTA rankings yesterday after her run to the Qatar Open final, while Doha champion Elise Mertens

<b>WTA top 20:</b>	
1. Naomi Osaka (JPN)	6,970 pts
2. Simona Halep (ROU)	5,537 (+1)
3. Sloane Stephens (USA)	5,307 (+1)
4. Petra Kvitova (CZE)	5,120 (-2)
5. Karolina Pliskova (CZE)	5,055
6. Elina Svitolina (UKR)	5,020 (+1)
7. Angelique Kerber (GER)	4,960 (-1)
8. Kiki Bertens (NED)	4,885
9. Aryna Sabalenka (BLR)	3,565
10. Serena Williams (USA)	3,406 (+1)
11. Anastasija Sevastova (LAT)	3,325 (+1)
12. Ashleigh Barty (AUS)	3,285 (+1)
13. Daria Kasatkina (RUS)	3,230 (+1)
14. Caroline Wozniacki (DEN)	3,118 (-4)
15. Julia Goerges (GER)	2,820 (+1)
16. Elise Mertens (BEL)	2,745 (+5)
17. Madison Keys (USA)	2,726
18. Wang Qiang (CHN)	2,605
19. Garbine Muguruza (ESP)	2,510 (-4)
20. Caroline Garcia (FRA)	2,460 (-1).



climbed back into the top 20. Halep moved up a spot as Australian Open runner-up Petra Kvitova dropped two places to fourth, with Sloane Stephens matching her career-best of third despite not playing since losing in the last 16 in Melbourne.

Naomi Osaka remains top of the standings, while Serena Williams returned to the top 10 for the first time since July 2017. Mertens rose to 16th after the Belgian rallied from a set down to beat Halep 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 on Sunday to claim the biggest title of her career.

## Split with Bajin not over money: Naomi Osaka

**TOKYO:** World number one Naomi Osaka was adamant that her shock split with coach Sascha Bajin had nothing to do with money but it was because she was determined that her career would not be about putting "success over happiness".

The German had guided the Japanese player to back-to-back Grand Slam titles as well as to the summit of the WTA rankings. But just two weeks after her triumph at Melbourne Park, Osaka abruptly severed ties with Bajin. That led to suggestions the two had fallen out over money.

"Everyone thinks it was a money-related issue, but it wasn't," the U.S. and Australian Open champion told the WTA in Dubai. "That's one of the most hurtful things I've ever heard.

"I travel with everyone on my team, I see them more than my family. I would never do that to them.

"My reason is I wouldn't put success over my happiness - that's my main thing. I'm not going to sacrifice that just to keep a person around."

Bajin, a former hitting partner of Serena Williams, Victoria Azarenka and Caroline Wozniacki, was named as the WTA's coach of the year in 2018 after his success with Osaka.

During their time together, Osaka rocketed from 72 in the world at the start of 2018 to number one last month. Osaka said it was clear things were not right between them during the season's opening major. "It was kind of breving in Australia. I think some people could see that if they saw how we interacted," the 21-year-old added.

"I would not want to split on really bad terms. I'm not going to say anything bad about him because, of course, I'm really grateful for all the things he's done. "During the Australian Open, I was just trying to tell myself to get through it. I'm not sure, but I think you guys noticed."

Osaka said she hopes to have a new coach in place by March at Indian Wells.

"It's not really ideal to go to Indian Wells without a coach. I don't want someone that's in the box saying negative stuff. That would be the worst," she said. "(I want) someone that's kind of direct, not afraid to say things to my face. I'd rather someone say it directly to me than go around my back. That's one of the biggest things." — Reuters



## Prince Phillips to attend opening ceremony of Int'l Tennis Complex

**KUWAIT:** Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait and Arab Tennis Federations, met the elder grandson of Queen Elizabeth II, Prince Peter Phillips on his private visit to Kuwait. During the visit he has been to some of important sports facilities of Kuwait. Prince Peter Phillips is the elder grandson of the Queen and the only son of Princess Ann, Queen's daughter. He is interested in the game of tennis.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber briefed Prince Phillips on the latest developments of Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah International Tennis Complex and invited him to attend its opening ceremony late this year.

## Vettel gets Ferrari off to strong start in F1 testing

**BARCELONA:** Ferrari made a strong start to the first day of Formula One testing yesterday with four-times world champion Sebastian Vettel top of the timesheets at lunchtime with 72 laps completed.

The Italian team won six of the 21 races last year, finishing overall runners-up, and are hoping the new SF90 car can end Mercedes's five-year stranglehold on both championships. Vettel's fastest lap of one minute 18.161 seconds, on a sunny morning at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya, was already quicker than anything set during the weather-hit first four-day test of 2018.

The German was also nearly two seconds faster than

the best of the rest. Racing Point's Mexican Sergio Perez was next on the timesheets, with a 1.19.944, on a day when mileage mattered more than outright speed as teams get to grips with their new cars for the first time and focus on getting in plenty of laps.

Reigning champions Mercedes, with Valtteri Bottas first behind the wheel of the silver W10, completed the second most laps—three fewer than Ferrari—with Renault's Nico Hulkenberg doing 65.

Five-times world champion Lewis Hamilton will take over from Bottas, who was third fastest, in the afternoon. Former champions McLaren also made a solid start with Spaniard Carlos Sainz, stepping into the shoes of departed compatriot Fernando Alonso, completing 56 laps with the sixth fastest time.

Red Bull, now powered by Honda after their split from Renault, managed 52 laps with Dutch driver Max Verstappen in action. Alfa Romeo, the renamed former Sauber team, had 2007 champion Kimi Raikkonen in new overalls after leaving Ferrari and completing 46 laps after an early trip into the gravel that brought out the first red flag of 2019.—Reuters

## Denny Hamlin wins Daytona 500 after late-race wrecks

**MIAMI:** Denny Hamlin withstood three major late-race wrecks Sunday to win the 61st Daytona 500, an emotional triumph the American dedicated to former team co-owner J.D. Gibbs, who died last month.

Hamlin, who didn't win a race last season, captured his 33rd career top-level U.S. stock car series victory and his second at Daytona after 2016.

"We just weren't going to be denied," Hamlin said. "I'm going to have a terrible hangover tomorrow but I'm going to remember it for the rest of my life."

Joe Gibbs, who coached the NFL Washington

Redskins to three Super Bowl titles, guided Hamlin's racing team with J.D. until his son's death last month at age 49 over issues related to brain function.

The Gibbs team swept the podium in Toyotas, the first time since 1993 a single team owned the top three spots in a Daytona 500.

"What happened here is emotional for all of us," Joe Gibbs said. "Denny racing like he did right there is just unbelievable.

"Emotionally I'm just shot. What happened here is really unreal." It was J.D. Gibbs who brought Hamlin into the team.

"The whole family, they have done so much for me," Hamlin said. "This one is for J.D.-his legacy lives on."

The biggest race of the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) season produced a dramatic and emotional start to the American stock car campaign for 2019 on the 2.5-mile (4km) Daytona International Speedway oval.

Carnage struck on a restart attempt with 10 laps

remaining on a crash near the front that saw 18 cars damaged but no drivers suffering major injuries as the event was red-flagged.

Racing resumed with seven laps to go and Toyota drivers Kyle Busch and Hamlin trying to hold off five Ford racers. Another wreck followed with seven cars collected behind the field's top five as the tension built.

Busch and Hamlin took the green flag side-by-side with two laps remaining with cars lined up behind them. They made 3/4 of a lap before fourth-place Clint Bowyer's car veered into that of William Byron and half a dozen more cars were collected in the mayhem, requiring another long clean-up delay.

Hamlin and Busch led again as another two-lap restart followed under NASCAR rules with Joey Logano and Michael McDowell in Fords just behind.

Hamlin surged ahead at the final restart and kept the lead to the checkered flag with teammate Busch second and Erik Jones third. — AFP



## Sports

# India urged to boycott Pakistan in World Cup after Kashmir attack

## Indian channel stops showing matches in Pakistan

**NEW DELHI:** Indian cricket fans, angered by an attack claimed by Pakistan-based militants on Indian forces in disputed Kashmir, have urged India to boycott a World Cup match against Pakistan this summer.

The Cricket Club of India, among the country's oldest clubs, also joined calls for the national team to stay away from the June 16 match in Britain, as Indians accused Pakistan of not doing enough to stop militants from operating on its soil.

Pakistan has denied any involvement in the suicide attack on a military convoy that killed 40 paramilitary police last week, the bloodiest loss by Indian security forces in decades.

"Let's boycott Pakistan in @ICC Cricket World Cup! Let's stand together against the terrorism they are sponsoring," cricket fan Ishan Datta said in a tweet.

The International Cricket Council (ICC) governs world cricket. Another Indian cricket supporter said India's cricket body, one of the world's richest, should use its influence to force Pakistan out of the ICC. "Either India will be part of World Cup 2019 or Pakistan. You have enough funds to pull this off," the supporter tweeted.

India and Pakistan have not hosted a cricket series between their countries since 2013 due to political tensions. However, the national teams have faced each other in tournaments such as the 2017 Champions

Trophy and 2018 Asia Cup held in neutral venues.

Reuters could not immediately reach Amitabh Choudhary, the acting secretary of the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), which manages Indian cricket, for a comment on the calls for a boycott.

### PICTURES REMOVED

The Cricket Club of India (CCI) said it supported a boycott of Pakistan at the World Cup in June.

"Though CCI is a sporting association, nation comes first, even before sports," Suresh Bafna, its secretary, told Reuters partner ANI. In CCI's Mumbai office, a cloth had been placed over a portrait of former Pakistan captain and current Prime Minister Imran Khan, ANI and other media reported. Photographs of Pakistani cricketers were removed from inside a cricket stadium in the northern Indian state of Punjab, which borders Pakistan, Indian media reported.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who faces an election that must be held by May, has promised a strong response. Pakistan has recalled its ambassador to India for consultations amid escalating tensions.

Coverage of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) Twenty20 competition has been blacked out in India.

Event management company IMG Reliance decid-



Photographs of Pakistani cricketers removed from inside a cricket stadium in the northern Indian state of Punjab.

ed against showing the matches live, and Indian television channel D-Sport suspended coverage of the Twenty20 league. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) expressed "extreme disappointment" on its website <https://www.pcb.com.pk/press-release-detail/pcb-statement-on-production-of-hbl-psl.html>. "Denying India cricket fans the right to follow PSL ... as well as

covering or removing portrait of former Pakistan cricket captain and Prime Minister Imran Khan and other legendary cricketers from one of the most historic cricket clubs and venues are highly regrettable actions," PCB Managing Director Wasim Khan said. The PCB said it would take up the incidents at the ICC committee meeting in Dubai later this month. — Reuters

## India on Finch's mind after Big Bash League win

**MELBOURNE:** Australian limited overs skipper Aaron Finch heads to India with a skip in his step after leading the Melbourne Renegades to the Big Bash League title, in contrast to a despondent Glenn Maxwell.

Finch's Renegades clinched their first domestic Twenty20 crown in dramatic fashion on Sunday after city rivals the Stars, led by Maxwell, imploded during a tense run chase. They lost seven wickets for 19 runs in one of the biggest capitulations in Australian cricket history, and Maxwell admitted it left him "pretty shattered".

Both men were due to fly out Monday to play two T20s and five one-day internationals against Virat

Kohli's team, leaving them little time to reflect on their incredible change in fortunes on Sunday.

Chasing 146 to win at Docklands Stadium, Maxwell's men were cruising at 93 without loss before dramatically collapsing to throw away the game. Finch said he was thrilled by the 13-run win, which was just the tonic for a man who has gone through an eventful summer.

He was appointed Australia's one-day captain in a World Cup year, before making his long-awaited Test debut. But he has since been dropped from the Test squad after failing to fire, and has not been as destructive as usual in the shorter form of the game.

His season seemed to be summed up on Sunday with a bizarre dismissal when Cameron White's straight drive deflected off bowler Jackson Bird's boot to hit the stumps, with Finch stranded outside his crease.

He stormed off and smashed a plastic chair with his bat in the tunnel, then gave it another whack for good measure. "It just about sums up my summer," a smiling Finch said of the unlucky dismissal.

But the drama is all behind him now, with India his

focus. "I don't think you need anything to put a pep in your step when you're going on an Aussie tour, particularly to India," he told reporters. "If you're slightly off the mark you're going to get hurt."

"They're the best side in one-day cricket in their own conditions, I think. So you've got to go there full of confidence and have a real clear game plan." Maxwell, a good friend who used to share a room with Finch, admitted he was devastated by the BBL loss, and said his opening batsmen Ben Dunk and Marcus Stoinis—who is also in the squad to play India—ideally would have killed off the game earlier.

"I thought we did well with the ball, executed well, did everything right," he said. "And up until the 12th over (with the bat) I thought we were fine. I'm pretty shattered to be honest." This season's BBL was the biggest yet with the eight franchises playing each other twice over a total of 56 round-robin matches in a season spanning nearly two months.

The expansion reflected enthusiasm for the tournament from sponsors and broadcasters, although crowd and TV viewing figures were down. — AFP

## CBK sponsors Kuwait Riders Carnival

**KUWAIT:** Within its social responsibilities to sponsor youth and sport activities, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently sponsored the Kuwait Riders Carnival organized by Kuwait Riders Dragon for bikes.

In this regard, CBK's deputy director for corporate communication, Amani Al-Wer'a said that the this sponsorship came as part of the bank's keenness on communicating with all age categories, namely the youth taking part in various sports activities.



six at the same ground.

England, captained in 50-over cricket by former Ireland batsman Eoin Morgan, with the side featuring Test skipper Joe Root and the hard-hitting talents of Jason Roy, Alex Hales and Jos Buttler, now sit atop the ODI world rankings heading into their upcoming five-match series away to the West Indies.

### 'NOW IS THE TIME'

"We can say we were the best ODI side to play for England... but without a trophy, it will be difficult to say that," said all-rounder Moeen Ali, looking to help England's men win just their second major global event following the 2010 World Twenty20 in the Caribbean.

"We have come close and we feel now is the time." "We don't feel we have to win it, it's more 'this is the time to win it'. We are an amazing side but we know this year is massive for us," added Moeen, with England, as was the case in 1975, playing host to a World Cup and an Ashes series in the same season.

But unlike that first eight-team edition 43 years ago, which featured two then non-Test sides in East Africa and the long since elevated Sri Lanka, this year's event will be a 10-team affair contested solely by Test nations.

Ever since India and Pakistan were both knocked out in the group stage of the 2007 World Cup in the West Indies, thereby putting a huge dent in broadcast audiences, attendance figures and commercial revenues for the rest of the tournament, International Cricket Council chiefs have been determined no such 'nightmare scenario' will ever befall both Asian giants again.

The result has been a decrease in the number of non-Test nations involved to the point none will take part this year. That has seen the ICC criticised for making the World Cup too narrow at a time when other sports are expanding rather than cutting the number of teams involve in their global showpiece events.

But ICC officials point to the creation of a qualifying tournament from which two-time champions West Indies only narrowly emerged-as proof the non-Test world still has a shot at the World Cup.

Rather than have pool stages this year, the ICC have opted for an all-play-all group format-a move that many believe has more to do with ensuring India, cricket's financial powerhouse, are guaranteed a minimum of nine matches than sporting fairness for all the teams taking part.

Such a lengthy group phase ahead of the semi-finals does reduce the chances of any team going through to the July 14 final at Lord's unbeaten.

Reigning champions Australia, set to be boosted by the return of star batsmen Steve Smith and David Warner following their lengthy ball-tampering bans, will be bidding for a sixth title.

India, with Virat Kohli at the helm, are a major force in all formats while Pakistan defied expectations to win the 2017 Champions Trophy in England.

New Zealand will be keen to go one better after losing in the 2015 final, while South Africa will arrive hoping to end years of World Cup heartbreak.

West Indies, the 1975 and 1979 champions, will have an extra incentive this year after Sunday's announcement that star batsman Chris Gayle will retire from ODIs following this year's World Cup.— AFP

## West Indies need better batting: Bishop

**LONDON:** Former West Indies bowler Ian Bishop took pride in his former team's recent test series win over England, and thinks the current crop is "filled with possibilities" enough to climb up the rankings and put a smile back on the face of Caribbean fans.

Despite the unexpected 2-1 win in the three-test series, West Indies remain eighth in the International Cricket Council (ICC) rankings, bottom of the sport's traditional powers.

The series against England showed that West Indies has depth in fast bowling, but Bishop identified two glaring deficiencies that need to be rectified for the team to have further success.

"They are looking for a spinner to be developed and want more consistency for the top-order batting," the Trinidadian said in a telephone interview with Reuters ahead of the five-game one-day international series that starts on Wednesday.

"From speaking with one or two of the people involved with the team, they are very aware of certain areas of the game that need to be rectified." West Indies played the tests against England without a specialist spinner, though allrounder Roston Chase took eight wickets in the first test, which West Indies won by 381 runs.

They followed up with a 10-wicket win in the second test, though it could have been a far different story had Jason Holder not won the toss and sent England in on a green wicket. West Indies openers John Campbell and Kraigg Brathwaite got the team off to decent starts with partnerships in excess of 50 in all but one innings, but the rest of the top order proved brittle and inconsistent.

Shai Hope was out cheaply three times in five innings and his back-to-back centuries at Leeds in 2017 are a distant memory, although Bishop said he was a "phenomenal talent".

"During the (recent) series, and even last year, batting on seamer-friendly pitches, he is getting beaten on the outside of the bat and inside of the bat," said Bishop, now a respected television commentator in the Caribbean.

"He has to decide how best he can position himself at the crease and allow the ball to come to him, because he is reaching for the ball. He will overcome it. He just needs reps. I think he's an investment."

Stylish left-hander Darren Bravo, back in the team after a two-year absence following a dispute with administrators, also failed in four of his five innings but with a batting average of more than 38, Bishop said he only needs time to "integrate himself" back into test cricket.

Chase also had three failures, balanced by an unbeaten century in the final test, while Shimron Hetmyer made 81 in the first test but then fell away.

### WORKLOAD MANAGED

Hetmyer's problems may stem from a heavy schedule, with the 22-year-old still due to play in the IPL and Bishop said his workload needed to be managed over the next year. "Particularly for next six to eight months, his cricket must be managed," Bishop said. "He's an integral part of the test match team, growing quickly as a batsman."

"Problem is that for such a young kid he is good in all formats of the game. In order to keep fresh, he has to be managed. It could mean time off. If he were to play every game, that's a lot of cricket." — AFP

## England expects as World Cup looms into view

**LONDON:** With 100 days until the 2019 World Cup gets underway, might it be the year that England lift the global game's premier limited-overs trophy at long last?

England-the pioneers of one-day cricket as a professional sport-have taken part in every World Cup since staging the inaugural men's event in 1975. But all they have to show for their efforts are runners-up medals from the 1979, 1987 and 1992 finals. Test cricket has long been the priority for everyone in English cricket, be they players, fans or administrators. That changed, however, after another World Cup group-stage exit at the 2015 edition in Australia and New Zealand was sealed with a woeful loss to Bangladesh.

Then England and Wales Cricket Board supremo Andrew Strauss decreed that white-ball cricket would no longer be the "poor relation", with the former England captain sacking head coach Peter Moores and bringing in Australian Trevor Bayliss specifically to turn round the team's limited-overs form. The transformation has been remarkable with a newly-liberated England twice setting new records for the highest ODI totals-their 444 for three against Pakistan at Trent Bridge in 2016 a prelude to last year's colossal 481 for



Sports

# Torino frustrate Napoli as Nainggolan seals Inter win

## Juventus firmly on track for an eighth consecutive title

**MILAN:** Napoli's title hopes took a further blow on Sunday as Carlo Ancelotti's side were held to a goalless draw for the third time in four league matches to drop further points against Torino and trail champions Juventus by 13 points.

Napoli had drawn at home against AC Milan two weeks ago and at Fiorentina last time out and will face a top-of-the-table clash against Juventus on March 3 with their Serie A bid already all but over.

Champions Juventus are firmly on track for an eighth consecutive title after Cristiano Ronaldo scored in a 3-0 win over lowly Frosinone on Friday. "We played with focus, motivation, determination, but it's unacceptable to have 18 scoring opportunities over two games and not score any of them," Ancelotti told Sky Sport Italia.

Napoli proved wasteful at the San Paolo Stadium with Arkadiusz Milik missing a string of chances to break the deadlock as Lorenzo Insigne hit the post in the 74th minute. On-loan Chelsea defender Ola Aina threatened for Torino in the dying minutes but was chased down by Brazilian Allan as Walter Mazzarri's side stayed ninth - three points off the Europa League places.

Earlier Sunday, Radja Nainggolan scored the winner for Inter Milan to consolidate third position with a 2-1 win over Sampdoria at the San Siro, while Lazio's Champions League hopes took a knock with defeat by Genoa.

Nainggolan rifled in low on 78 minutes after Danilo D'Ambrosio had opened the scoring five minutes earlier,

with Manolo Gabbiadini equalising for Sampdoria in between. It was the Belgian's third goal this season and gave Inter a third straight win after a recent slump as Luciano Spalletti's side sit seven points adrift of Napoli in third.

Argentine forward Mauro Icardi watched from the stands, along with his wife Wanda Nara, who is also his agent, after being stripped of the captaincy amid protracted contract negotiations. "I very much appreciated that he was in the stadium," said Spalletti of Icardi who missed the last two games with a reported knee injury.

"I would have liked even more if he had come into the dressing room afterwards to celebrate with us, as it was a very important victory."

### LAZIO SINK IN GENOA

Earlier, Genoa captain Domenico Criscito scored deep into injury time to grab a 2-1 win over Lazio which left the capital club in seventh, four points adrift of fourth-placed AC Milan in the race for Champions League qualification. Milan Badelj had given injury-depleted Lazio a lift before the break after their Europa League defeat by Sevilla in midweek. But Genoa punished the Romans late in the second half with Antonio Sanabria scoring on 75 minutes and Criscito sealing victory with a stunning half-volley from distance three minutes into additional time. Europa League hopefuls Fiorentina were saved by VAR amid controversy after the referee disallowed rivals SPAL a goal and instead awarded a penalty which the Tuscans converted before winning 4-1.

Mattia Valoti's deflected 75th-minute strike had

one assist to lead host Florida over Montreal. It was Barkov's second career hat trick and his third four-point game. His second goal, which came on a break-away with 2:11 left in the second period, was sensational, and it gave Florida a 4-3 lead. Montreal defenseman Victor Mete tried to catch up, but Barkov was too fast and skilled, moving the puck forward and then back between his legs before flipping it over goaltender Carey Price's stick. Max Domi scored twice for Montreal, giving him 19 this season, and the Canadiens also got a goal from Brendan Gallagher (his 23rd). Tomas Tatar added two assists.

### PENGUINS 6, RANGERS 5

Kris Letang and Evgeni Malkin each scored twice as Pittsburgh held on to beat visiting New York. Marcus Pettersson had a goal and an assist, Brian Dumoulin scored, Sidney Crosby had three assists, and Phil Kessel and Zach Aston-Reese each had two assists for the Penguins. Goaltender Casey DeSmith made 39 saves for Pittsburgh, which has won three of its last four games. Mats Zuccarello scored two goals, and Ryan Strome, Kevin Hayes and Mika Zibanejad also scored for the Rangers, who have lost three of five. Alexandar Georgiev stopped 35 of 41 shots.

### FLYERS 3, RED WINGS 1

Oskar Lindblom scored two goals, and Ivan Provorov scored the game winner early in the third period to lead Philadelphia to a win in Detroit, completing a weekend sweep. On their home ice on



**MILAN:** Torino's defender from Camerun Nicolas Nkoulou (L) fights for the ball with Napoli's Polish midfielder Piotr Zielinski during the Italian Serie A football match SSC Napoli vs Torino FC on Sunday at the San Paolo Stadium. — AFP

been greeted with delight by the home crowd as it appeared to have given relegation-threatened SPAL a 2-1 advantage. But the referee immediately ordered a video review which confirmed Felipe had fouled Federico Chiesa in the build-up to the goal which he disallowed and instead awarded Fiorentina a penalty at the other end of the field.

Jordan Veretout stepped up and converted from the

Saturday, the Flyers beat the Red Wings 6-5 in overtime after blowing a 5-1 lead in the third period. But they were up to the task of protecting a one-goal lead this time in the third period. Philadelphia goalie Carter Hart made 37 saves in net for the Flyers, who have won three games in a row and four out of their last five. Detroit outshot Philadelphia, 38-23.

### DUCKS 5, CAPITALS 2

Adam Henrique and Jakob Silfverberg each scored two goals, and Ryan Miller had 23 saves to become the all-time winningest US-born goalie, as Anaheim dominated play to earn a victory over visiting Washington. Corey Perry added his first goal of the season as the Ducks won for the second time in three games since Bob Murray took over as interim head coach for Randy Carlyle, who was fired. Alex Ovechkin scored a goal for the Capitals, giving him his 10th 40-goal season.

### DEVILS 4, SABRES 1

Miles Wood's second-period goal gave New Jersey a lead it would never relinquish in a win over Buffalo in Newark, NJ. Jesper Bratt, Kyle Palmieri and Joey Anderson also scored for the Devils, who won back-to-back games for the first time since Jan. 12-14. New Jersey came back from a 4-1 deficit to beat the Minnesota Wild, 5-4, in overtime on Friday. Goalie Cory Schneider, who snapped a nearly 14-month, regular-season losing streak by earning the victory in relief Friday, recorded the win Sunday by making 34 saves. —Reuters



**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah attends a team training session at Melwood in Liverpool, north west England yesterday, on the eve of their Champions League round of 16, first leg football match against Bayern Munich. — AFP

another former pupil of Klopp's-Robert Lewandowski. The prolific Pole won two Bundesliga titles under Klopp when the pair were together at Borussia Dortmund and also lost the Champions League final against Bayern in 2013 before Lewandowski was lured to Bavaria a year later.

Bayern have been dominant in the Bundesliga since Klopp's Dortmund won back-to-back titles in 2011 and 2012, but are playing catch up in the title race to Lucien Favre's outfit this season. "Of course over the years I have watched a lot of Bayern games and this season as well," said Klopp.

"They were six times in a row champions of Germany, which is not easy, and they were one of the teams in the last 10 years who were pretty much all the time in the quarter-finals, semi-finals, final of the Champions League."

## Blues shut out Wild, win 10th straight

**MINNESOTA:** Rookie Jordan Binnington recorded his second straight shutout and the third consecutive for the St. Louis Blues, who breezed to a franchise-high-tying 10th straight win with Sunday's 4-0 victory over the Minnesota Wild in Saint Paul, Minn. Vladimir Tarasenko extended his point streak to a career-best 12 games with a goal and two assists to stake Binnington, who made 31 saves to win his franchise-rookie-record eighth straight start. Binnington highlighted the performance by denying Wild defenseman Ryan Suter from point-blank range late in the second period, and notched his fourth shutout and improve to 12-1-1 on the season. Ryan O'Reilly and Brayden Schenn each scored and set up a goal, and defenseman Vince Dunn also tallied for the Blues, who defeated Minnesota for the first time in three tries this season. Alex Stalock turned aside 26 shots for the Wild, who have dropped five in a row at home (0-3-2) and eight of nine overall (1-5-3).

### PANTHERS 6, CANADIENS 3

Aleksander Barkov scored three goals and added

## Suspended Van Dijk leaves gaping hole in Liverpool defence

**LIVERPOOL:** Fortress Anfield has become even more impenetrable for visiting sides in the 13 months since Liverpool made Virgil van Dijk the world's most expensive defender, but the commanding Dutchman's absence for Bayern Munich's visit in the Champions League leaves Jurgen Klopp with a selection headache.

Van Dijk is banned for the last 16, first leg today after being booked three times as last season's finalists squeezed through the group stages by the narrowest of margins thanks to more goals scored than Napoli.

In stark contrast to their Premier League form, where Liverpool have been beaten just once all season, Klopp's men lost all three of their group games on the road against Napoli, Paris Saint-Germain and Red Star Belgrade to underline the importance of taking a lead to Germany for the second leg.

Three wins at Anfield pulled them through to the last 16 and Van Dijk has yet to taste defeat in 25 Premier and Champions League games on home soil as a Liverpool player, keeping 16 clean sheets in the process to tighten up a leaky defence that undermined Klopp's first two years in charge.

"Straightaway he was organising the defence, he was the leader at the back, and as time has gone on he is even more important," said former Liverpool captain Sami Hyypia.

"He gives confidence to the players and makes many other players play better. "It is very difficult to find a weakness. He is an ultimate centre-back." Missing the £75 million man is a big enough blow, but Liverpool will also be without Joe Gomez and most likely Dejan Lovren through injury.

Gomez underwent surgery on a lower leg fracture earlier this month, while Lovren has not featured since suffering a hamstring injury on January 7 and did not travel with the rest of the squad for a warm weather training camp in Marbella this week.

A makeshift centre-back pairing of Joel Matip and Fabinho are therefore likely to be tasked with stopping

spot with the decision proving to be a killer blow for SPAL, who sit just three points above the relegation zone. Giovanni Simeone added a third goal minutes later, and Brazilian Gerson a fourth as Fiorentina moved up to eighth, three points off the European places.

"They robbed us," complained SPAL president Walter Mattioli. "If you have to cancel a goal for a foul like that, it makes me laugh." — AFP

Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE	
Liverpool v Bayern Munich	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
Olympique Lyonnais v FC Barcelona	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1	

## Mbappe fires PSG 12 points clear in France

**PARIS:** Kylian Mbappe's excellent volley secured Paris Saint-Germain a hardfought 1-0 win at Saint-Etienne on Sunday as the runaway Ligue 1 leaders moved 12 points clear at the summit.

The 20-year-old Mbappe fired home his league-leading 19th goal of the campaign with 17 minutes remaining.

"He (Mbappe) shows his quality every day in training, he has this hunger to score, score, score," said PSG coach Tuchel. "It's his quality. He is a special player." Mbappe has now scored 45 goals for PSG since signing from Monaco at the start of last season.

"We lost to a goal from nowhere... A 20-year-old who will soon be the best player in the world," said Saint-Etienne coach Jean-Louis Gasset.

With a second straight French title all but secured, Tuchel's men, who also have two games in hand on second-placed Lille, now have their eyes on breaking their own record tally of 96 points set in 2015-16.

Tuchel rested midfielder Marco Verratti after his excursions in the midweek Champions League victory at Manchester United, with Leandro Paredes handed his first league start for the club.

"Everyone was tired after Manchester United-physically, but also mentally," added Tuchel. "It was necessary to control the game, to play focused."

PSG fashioned their first clear-cut chance in the 18th minute, as Julian Draxler turned and fired over the crossbar after a fine exchange of passes with Dani Alves.

Mbappe saw a shot well saved by home goalkeeper Stephane Ruffier in an underwhelming first half.

The visitors always appeared in control of the game, but Draxler wasted another golden chance to put them ahead shortly after the restart when he was denied by a sprawling Ruffier stop.

Angel Di Maria, who starred with two assists on his return to Old Trafford in midweek, dragged an effort wide as PSG continued to plug away in search of an opening goal.

It arrived in the 73rd minute, as Alves picked out the run of Mbappe, and the Frenchman caught out Ruffier with a fine first-time volley on the turn.

Saint-Etienne started to show more ambition with time running out, but the best they could muster was Kevin Monnet-Paquet's long-range strike which flew harmlessly over, with the winger injuring himself in the process.

A late set-piece came to nothing for Les Verts, as PSG sealed a 20th win from only 23 Ligue 1 games this term. Earlier on Sunday, Lille were held to a goal-less draw by Montpellier, while Reims boosted their hopes of European qualification with a 2-0 victory over Rennes. — AFP



**25** Friendly fire as Monfils beats Wawrinka to win Rotterdam Open



**26** India urged to boycott Pakistan in World Cup after Kashmir attack



**27** Torino frustrate Napoli as Nainggolan seals Inter win



## Team LeBron tops Giannis in All-Star Game

Kevin Durant scores 31 points and claims MVP honors



CHARLOTTE: Kevin Durant #35 of Team LeBron holds up the MVP trophy after the 2019 NBA All-Star Game on Sunday at the Spectrum Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. — AFP

CHARLOTTE: Kevin Durant scored 31 points and won MVP honors after outdueling Giannis Antetokounmpo to lift Team LeBron to a 178-164 win Sunday night in the 2019 NBA All-Star Game.

In the “First in Flight” city, players showed up Sunday ready to launch. Team LeBron attempted 90 3-pointers (hitting 35), and the teams combined for 167 tries from deep. Durant helped put the game away for Team LeBron with a 3-pointer with two minutes left for a 171-160 lead. Kyrie Irving made a leaning floater and Durant hit a 15-footer from the wing to seal it.

“It’s cool to be out there with some of the best players to ever play the game, and to win an MVP here in front of my family and friends is pretty sweet,” said Durant, who also took home All-Star Game MVP honors in 2012.

Antetokounmpo scored a game-high 38 points on 17-of-23 shooting and drew raves from his peers, Durant included. “He’s got potential through the roof. He’s still producing at an elite level, and it’s scary to see how far he can keep going,” Durant said. “His game is rounding into shape. He’s still getting better, but he’s leading top five, top

three MVP candidates right now at 20. How old is he, 23? To be that young and already at the top of the class as one of the elites in the game, it’s a joy to watch his progression.” Just before Durant’s closing stretch, James shook off 76ers forward Joel Embiid for a corner 3, and on the next trip, pounded home a one-handed slam on a lob from Irving that extended Team LeBron’s lead to 168-158. As the teams traded long-distance daggers and mixed in the occasional lob off the glass, Durant connected on a pair of 3-pointers from the right side to give Team LeBron a 161-153 lead at the five-minute mark in the fourth as shots started to fall short and handles were less certain.

Stephen Curry brought the Spectrum Center to its feet at the final buzzer, catching the ball off a hard bounce from himself and throwing in a reverse jam. He did the same with a four-point play early in the fourth-knocking down a 3 from the right wing as Warriors teammate Klay Thompson of Team LeBron pushed him to the floor.

“Any possession I was going to touch the ball with him guarding me, I was going to shoot,” Curry said of facing Thompson. “I definitely sold the call. If I was going to hit

any of the 23 shots I took, that was going to be it.”

All-Star teammate DeAngelo Russell added a 3 of his own, staking Team Giannis to a 148-142 lead with 8:54 left in the game. 76ers guard Ben Simmons gave Team LeBron the lead 132-131 with 36 seconds left in the third quarter, closing what had been a 95-82 deficit at halftime. Team Giannis led by 20 in the third.

Damian Lillard’s 25-footers on consecutive possessions pulled Team LeBron even at 127-all, but Russell Westbrook put Bradley Beal on skates on two straight trips for easy layups at the rim.

Thompson drained a 3 from the corner in front of the Team Giannis bench to pull Team LeBron to within 120-115 with 4:30 left in the third quarter, and Beal followed with a 3-pointer of his own off a turnover to cut the advantage to 120-118.

Played above the rim in spurts, the game threatened to become a full-fledged 3-point contest. The first half consisted of 81 3-point attempts — 29 successful-between the teams.

Antetokounmpo led all scorers with 20 in the first

half. He was on a dunk-a-minute pace to start the game. In the opening seven minutes, he had 16 points to fuel Team Giannis to a 36-22 edge, while assisting on 3-pointers by Bucks teammate Khris Middleton on three of four possessions.

“Previously, my first and second All-Star, I think I was kind of nervous,” Antetokounmpo said. “This one I was a little bit more relaxed. I had my name on that MVP until the third quarter, and they got hot and took it away from me.” Curry, the de facto player host because of his local roots, got on the board with 5:32 left in the first half and was 2 of 7 at halftime. He finished 6 of 23 from the field.

Honorary All-Stars Dirk Nowitzki and Dwyane Wade checked into the game with 58 seconds left in the first quarter. Nowitzki splashed a 3-pointer from the right wing on his first offensive possession, and drained another from the left wing on the subsequent possession, giving Team Giannis a 53-37 advantage entering the second quarter. He added a third at the 9-minute mark in the second quarter and scored nine points on 3-of-3 shooting in 3:58 in the opening half.—Reuters

## Semenya fights gender rule at top sports court

LAUSANNE: Olympic 800 metres champion Caster Semenya of South Africa went to the Court of Arbitration for Sport yesterday to challenge proposed rules that could force her to lower her testosterone levels. Semenya made no comment as she arrived at the court in Lausanne for the start of a week-long hearing that is likely to define the rest of the 28-year-old’s career. The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) says it is introducing the rules to create a “level playing field” for other female athletes.

The South African government says the rules specifically target Semenya and has called them a “gross violation” of her human rights. The controversial measures would force so-called “hyperandrogenic” athletes or those with

“differences of sexual development” (DSD) to take drugs to lower their testosterone levels below a prescribed amount if they wish to continue competing.

The rules were to have been introduced last November but have been put on hold pending this week’s hearings. A judgement is expected by the end of March. As he arrived at the court, IAAF President Sebastian Coe said: “Today is a very, very important day. “The regulations that we are introducing are there to protect the sanctity of fair and open competition.” Athletics South Africa has strongly backed Semenya. Its chief advocate Norman Arendse said she would give evidence.

“The whole week is going to be important. Obviously the evidence will be evaluated and assessed at the end of the process this week, so today this is the start,” Arendse told reporters. The issue is highly emotive. When British newspaper The Times reported last week that the IAAF would argue that Semenya should be classified as a biological male—a claim later denied by the IAAF—she hit back, saying she was “unquestionably a woman”.

In response to the report, the IAAF—stressing it was referring in general terms, not to Semenya in particular—denied it intended to classify any DSD athlete as male. But in a statement, it added: “If a DSD athlete has testes and

male levels of testosterone, they get the same increases in bone and muscle size and strength and increases in haemoglobin that a male gets when they go through puberty, which is what gives men such a performance advantage over women.

“Therefore, to preserve fair competition in the female category, it is necessary to require DSD athletes to reduce their testosterone down to female levels before they compete at international level.” Semenya is not the only athlete potentially affected—the silver and bronze medallists in the Rio Olympics 800m, Francine Niyonsaba of Burundi and Kenya’s Margaret Wambui, have also faced questions about their testosterone levels. But it is Semenya, who also won Olympic gold in 2012 and has three world titles to her name, who has brought the court challenge. Matthieu Reeb, the secretary general of the court, said: “It is unusual and unprecedented because we never had a such a case at CAS.” South Africa’s Sports Minister Tokozile Xasa argues that the IAAF’s rules are “discriminatory”. “What’s at stake here is far more than the right to participate in a sport. Women’s bodies, their wellbeing, their ability to earn a livelihood, their very identity, their privacy and sense of safety and belonging in the world, are being questioned,” Xasa said on Friday.—AFP



LAUSANNE: South African 800 meters Olympic champion Caster Semenya arrives for a landmark hearing at the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne yesterday. — AFP