

CELEBRATING NATIONAL & LIBERATION DAY
A proud and patriotic moment deserves a special celebration, a gift that's beautiful and memorable.

FREE GIFT ON EVERY PURCHASE

OFFER VALID TILL 2ND MARCH 2019

Joyalukkas
World's favourite jeweller

Parasonic Tower, Kuwait City - Tel: 2227 9460 • Fahaheel, Makkah Street - Tel: 2392 2148
Al Rai Branch 2, Near Lulu Hypermarket & Friday Market - Tel: 2220 2466 • Al Salam Mall, Salmiya - Tel: 2206 0062
Lulu Hypermarket, Dajeej - Tel: 2202 1378 • Near Police Station Roundabout, Farwaniya - Tel: 2227 1340

Government totally rejects normalizing ties with Israel

FM reiterates stance a major pillar of Kuwait's foreign policy

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah told the National Assembly's foreign relations committee that Kuwait totally rejects any normalization of relations with Israel, the head of the panel said. MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said after an expanded meeting of the committee that the foreign minister also reiterated that rejecting normalization is one of the major pillars of Kuwait's foreign policy.

The meeting was held following parliamentary and popular criticism of Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah for taking part in a group picture at a Warsaw conference in which the Israeli prime minister was also present. Kuwait has repeatedly said it will not normalize relations with Israel and that it will do so only if all Arab countries normalize ties with Israel. Jarallah represented Kuwait at the Warsaw conference held a couple of weeks ago, which was attended by sever-

al Arab foreign ministers who reportedly met the Israeli premier.

Following his return, several MPs and activists strongly lashed out at Jarallah and the government, accusing it of violating its longstanding pledge not to have any contacts with Israel. Jarallah immediately issued a statement in which he clarified that there was no change in Kuwait's well-established policy towards the Palestinian cause.

Besides Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and Jarallah, the meeting was attended by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and several lawmakers. Kandari said besides discussing the Warsaw conference, the meeting also debated regional developments, and the discussions were very open and transparent. The lawmaker said the information and commerce ministries will be summoned later for meetings to reiterate their total rejection of normalization with Israel.

Continued on Page 24



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, head of the Assembly's foreign relations committee MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari and other lawmakers and officials attend the panel's meeting yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

29 hurt in Mahboula blaze



KUWAIT: The charred remains of a room ravaged by fire are seen in Mahboula yesterday.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: At least 29 people were hurt in a fire in a Mahboula building yesterday, including 21 who were hospitalized with burns. The fire reportedly started in a laundry before the flames spread to an adjacent residential building, trapping 100 occupants inside. Firefighters rushed to the scene and evacuated the building before

extinguishing the blaze. The victims, who are of Indian and Filipino nationalities, were taken to Adan, Mubarak and Farwaniya hospitals with injuries varying between burns and smoke inhalation. A firefighter also suffered from smoke inhalation and was hospitalized. An investigation was opened to determine the cause of the fire. Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said in a statement.

Saudis, India to step up 'pressure' against terrorism

NEW DELHI: Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Indian leader Narendra Modi vowed yesterday to increase pressure on countries that fuel terrorism. The promise came as fallout from a suicide bomb attack that India has blamed on Pakistan overshadowed the latest leg of the crown prince's tour aiming to boost his country's image. Modi did not mention Pakistan - a key Saudi ally - as he again blasted the "barbaric attack" in Kashmir last week that left at least 40 paramilitaries dead.

"To tackle this menace effectively, we agreed that there is a need to increase all possible pressure on countries supporting terrorism in any way," Modi said after talks with the crown prince.

Continued on Page 24



NEW DELHI: Indian President Ram Nath Kovind (center) looks on as Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi shake hands during a ceremonial reception at the presidential palace yesterday. — AFP

IS teen 'shocked' after UK revokes her citizenship

LONDRES, United Kingdom: A British teenager who joined the Islamic State group in Syria said yesterday she was shocked by a government decision to revoke her citizenship and was considering applying to settle in The Netherlands, the homeland of her husband. Shamima Begum, who travelled to Syria in 2015 and now wants to return to Britain after giving birth in a refugee camp in Syria last week, said the order was "unjust".

"I am a bit shocked," she told ITV News after learning of the move, which was announced in a letter Tuesday from the British government to her mother in London. "It's a bit upsetting and frustrating. I feel like it's a bit unjust on me and my son." She said an "option" could be to apply for citizenship in The Netherlands, where her husband and the father of her newborn child - an IS fighter believed to be held by Kurdish forces in Syria - is from and has relatives. "Maybe I can ask for citizenship in Holland," Begum added. "If

he gets sent back to prison in Holland I can just wait for him while he is in prison."

Begum's fate has stirred controversy since she and two friends fled her east London home to join the terror network four years ago when she was aged 15. The case highlights a dilemma facing many European countries, divided over whether to allow militants and IS sympathizers home to face prosecution or bar them over security concerns as the so-called "caliphate" crumbles.

Britain's Home Office said it did not discuss individual cases when asked about Begum. Interior minister Sajid Javid told lawmakers yesterday that revoking citizenship was "a powerful tool" not used lightly. "But when someone turns their back on (our) fundamental values and supports terror they don't have an automatic right to return to the UK," he said. However Javid hinted that Begum's newborn son could be treated differently. "Children should not suffer, so if a parent does lose their British citizenship it does not affect the rights of their child," the minister said.

Begum gave birth to her third child at the weekend, and appealed to British authorities to show "compassion" by allowing her to raise the baby in Britain - while expressing no regret over having joined IS. In the ministry's letter sent to Begum's mother, it said the teen

UAE eases Qatar shipping ban amid continuing dispute

DUBAI/DOHA: The United Arab Emirates has eased a ban on the shipping of goods between it and Qatar enforced under a political and economic boycott of Doha, according to port circulars and an industry source. The UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain severed diplomatic, trade and transport ties with Qatar in June 2017 over allegations it supports terrorism, a charge Doha denies. An Abu Dhabi Ports circular dated Feb 12 cancelled previous directives that banned cargoes of Qatar origin from UAE waters and ports and those of UAE origin from Qatar.

It maintained a ban on vessels flying the

Qatar flag, owned by Qatari shipping firms or nationals. UAE-flagged vessels still cannot call at Qatar ports. An industry source told Reuters the circular applied to all UAE ports. Government authorities in both Gulf Arab states did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment. Liberian flagged container ship MSC ELSA 3 arrived at Dubai's Jebel Ali Port on Feb 20 from Qatar's Umm Said, according to Refinitiv data.

It was not clear if the move was linked to complaints filed to the World Trade Organization related to the Gulf dispute. Qatar filed in July 2017 a wide-ranging legal complaint at the WTO to challenge the trade boycott. Last month, the UAE filed a complaint against Qatar at the WTO saying Doha has imposed a ban on Emirati products.

Continued on Page 24



Shamima Begum

had the right to appeal the order. Tasnime Akunjee, a lawyer for her family, said it was disappointed with the move and "considering all legal avenues to challenge this decision". Begum, who is of Bangladeshi

Continued on Page 24

Local

Amir meets children from Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Charitable Village in Indonesia

Defense minister congratulates Crown Prince on anniversary



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Hawally Governor Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of the Indonesian-Kuwaiti Charity Ahmad Mohammad Al-Houli, the organization's officials and orphans of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Charitable Village in Indonesia. — Amiri Dwan photos



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Hawally Governor Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Chairman of the Indonesian-Kuwaiti Charity Ahmad Mohammad Al-Houli, the organization's officials and orphans of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Charitable Village in Indonesia. During the encounter, Sheikh Sabah spoke highly of the charity's benevolent and humanitarian efforts, boasting that interest in charitable activities across the world has been deep-rooted in the Kuwaiti society.

A number of children from His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Charitable Village in Indonesia have come to Kuwait, partaking in the national days' celebrations. Some of those

children, after meeting His Highness, expressed deep pleasure for having the chance to see him. Nawfal Ramadhan recited a poem, praising His Highness, wishing him long life and expressing congratulations on the happy occasions. Two girls, named Zuhaira and Mutiaa, recited a poem in tribute to Kuwait hoping the country may witness further progress and elevation.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir's audiences also included Hawally Governor Sheikh

Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who presented him with memorial gifts on the occasion of the country's national festivals.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also met Hawally Governor Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who presented him with a memorial shield and portray of Sheikh Nawaf on the occasion of the 58th anniversary of the Independence Day and 28th anniversary of the Liberation Day as well as the 13th anniversary of assumption of his

post. Sheikh Nawaf then received Al-Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who handed him a memorial souvenir on the occasion of the country's national festivals. His Highness the Prime Minister also received Hawally Governor Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. Separately, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah has congratulated His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on 13th anniversary of assuming the post. Minister Sheikh Nasser, in a cable to His Highness, expressed sincere blessing on this occasion, praying to give His Highness the Crown Prince a healthy life to continue serving the homeland. — KUNA

Zain's National Day TVC reaches one million views

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced that its latest National Day televised commercial, 'Al-Zain Yihlak Helo', reached over one million views on its official YouTube channel during the first few days of its launch on February 16, 2019.

Zain's National production for the year 2019 was launched to mark the company's celebration of Kuwait's National and Liberation days. The production's lyrics, which reflected values of national pride, were written by the great Kuwaiti poet Bader Bourisli. The TVC received overwhelming feedback from across the Kuwaiti community, and featured three different eras starting from Kuwait's rich history to its bright future.

The production's idea centered around the importance of the human element in the progress of countries in light of the huge technological advancements witnessed by the world at the present time. Zain's TVC highlighted the significant role played by Kuwait's national talents, especially that this concept coincides with the goals of the Kuwait National Development Plan (New Kuwait 2035) that stems from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's conceptualized vision of a new Kuwait by 2035, which will contribute to the further progress of the nation.

Zain's message this year is a message of hope and trust in the creativeness of the people of Kuwait across history and despite of all challenges. With the emergence of many advanced innovations, such as artificial intelligence (AI),



From Zain's National Production 2019.

digital transformation, and other technologies that proved to be capable in enhancing life's various aspects, some might see that such technologies would replace the human element in many fields. Zain's TVC's idea came to remind everyone that no matter how advanced technology gets, human beings will always be the ones that inspire and innovate, and that the human touch is what gives life meaning. These concepts were brought to life by the production's lyrics, which were beautifully written by the great Kuwaiti poet Bader Bourisli.

Zain's national production 2019 is the first of its kind in Kuwait to use the advanced 3D Mapping technology, resulting in the wonderful outcome the production achieved with the use of the world's top technology innovations. Zain offers the production to all customers as a free ringback tone (RBT) by simply sending 2020162 to 99000.

Zain takes this opportunity to express its gratitude to everyone who contributed in making this national production a success, especially the great Kuwaiti poet Bader Bourisli who beautifully wrote the production's lyrics. Zain

also thanks the entire team of young Kuwaiti talents who worked behind the scenes, including Director Khalid Al-Refai, Composer Bashar Al-Shatti, Music Distributor Rabie Al-Saidawi, talented performers Haneen Hamed and Rana Al-Tannak, as well as Joy Production's team headed by Mai Al-Saleh.

Zain recently changed the name of its network in Kuwait to 'SABAH ALKUWAIT' for the period of celebrations marking the 13th anniversary of the ascendency of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as the ruler of Kuwait. The move reflected Zain's enthusiasm in sharing the joys of this occasion with the people of Kuwait. Zain customers found the network name updated to 'SABAH ALKUWAIT' on their devices during the celebratory period, as the company commemorates the anniversary of a journey full of giving and benevolence. His Highness the Amir has often called for Kuwait's progress, and the adoption of a kind, loving, and the nurturing of a brotherly spirit based on equal rights for all. To watch Zain's new TVC, please visit <https://youtu.be/H70CWw8Jgx4>.

Al-Shaheed Park witnesses festival marking National days

KUWAIT: Al-Shaheed Park, one of Kuwait's main tourist attractions, has witnessed inauguration of the Amir-patronized festival, dubbed 'Thank you 3.' Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs and Chair of the Board of Trustees at the Martyr's Bureau, Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, attended the ceremony on behalf of His Highness the Amir. Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah

was welcomed upon arrival by Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs and Deputy Chairman of the Board of Trustees at the Martyr's Bureau, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as well as Director General at the bureau, Fatma Ahmad Al-Amir.

The audience was entertained with a series of activities that kicked off by playing the National Anthem, screening a documentary about Kuwait, then Representative of His Highness the Amir toured the festival exhibition pavilions. A troupe of young orphans from His Highness the Amir Village in Indonesia performed on stage, marking Kuwait's national days. Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah, who was presented with a memorial gift, lauded the communications and interaction with Indonesia and other nations of the globe. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs and Chair of the Board of Trustees at the Martyr's Bureau Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah is seen as part of the ceremony. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shalkh



Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah takes a selfie with a child.



Local



KUWAIT: A picture taken from Al-Hamra Tower in Kuwait City yesterday shows part of the Sheikh Jaber Causeway, one of the world's longest causeways that will link the Kuwaiti capital to the north of the country. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Sheikh Jaber Causeway: A bridge towards Kuwait's bright future

Project to link Kuwait City with the future Silk City

KUWAIT: The Sheikh Jaber Causeway is one of the major infrastructural projects aimed at creating a bridge leading Kuwaitis toward a bridge future. The Sheikh Jaber Causeway, which is currently in its final stages, will link Kuwait City with Al-Subiya area and the future Madinat Al-Harir (Silk City) project over Kuwait Bay as part of the development plans kicked started some nine years ago. Through the 'New Kuwait' or Kuwait Vision 2035, a national initiative development aimed at transforming the country to a regional and international hub for business and commerce. The plan also focuses on diversifying the country's resources to a non-oil based economy.

The Jaber Causeway - which stretches around 37.5 kilometers - will shorten the commuting time between Kuwait City and Subiya area to under 30 minutes, from around 90 minutes which is the time that it currently takes through the usual 104 kilometers of highways and roads. Work on Sheikh Jaber Causeway began on November 3, 2013. The bridge is divided into the 27-kilometers main-link at cost of around KD 738 million (around \$2.3 billion). The main-link will connect between Kuwait City and Al-Subiya



Shortens commuting time to 30 minutes

area, while the Doha link, a four-lane bridge road, will stretch at 4.7 kilometers towards Doha area, costing around KD 165.7 million (\$545 million).

The development of the causeway coincided with establishment of an entity tasked with the development of Al-Hariri City in Subiya and Boubiyan Island as part of strategy linking Shuwaikh Port in Kuwait City with the northeastern region of the country. Recently, a high-level 35-member Chinese delegation - headed by Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission of the People's Republic of China Ning Jizhe - visited the country and held discussions focusing on Kuwait's development vision.

The visiting Chinese delegation expressed great desire to partake in the development of the Silk City project, indicating that China was working on its own Belt and Road development initiative. In regards to the Silk City project, the first phase will focus on establishing a commercial region in Mubarak seaport, a logistic zone, an international airport, a railway network carrying cargo and individuals, and city dedicated to small to medium enterprises. — KUNA



The 'Doha Link' at the Sheikh Jaber Causeway. — KUNA photos



An aerial view of the Sheikh Jaber Causeway's intersections.



A night view of the Sheikh Jaber Causeway.

Shagaya solar power project's 1st phase launched

KUWAIT: Under the aegis of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the first phase of Al-Shagaya renewable energy park project was launched by Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel yesterday. The launching coincides with Kuwait's ongoing celebrations marking National Day and Independence Day as well as the 13th anniversary of His Highness the Amir's assumption of power. Al-Shagaya solar energy plant is a joint project developed by Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and the Ministry of Electricity and Water. It is a major development project purposed to fulfill His Highness the Amir's vision aiming at securing 15 percent of local power needs out of renewable energy sources in Kuwait by 2030, thus saving \$2.5 billion annually on a USD-45-per-barrel basis.

The project was initiated in 2011 and then put up for execution in 2013 for generating renewable energy based on solar and wind energy. Kuwait began to be interested

in renewable energy in the eighties before it was included as a project in the country's development drive in 2010 at the behest of His Highness the Amir. Al-Shagaya Park is designed into four phases, and Phase One includes a solar energy plant. Once complete, it would provide 150,000 houses with power all over the year, save 12 million barrels of oil per annum and create 10,000 jobs during execution as well as 1,200 during operation and maintenance.

The project would also slim carbon dioxide emissions involving 196,000 tons annually in the first phase and five million tons once the final phase is over. The phase one of Al-Shagaya Park includes the generation of 70MW, involving 50MW solar energy, 10MW Solar PV and 10 MW wind. The second phase is meant to produce 1,500MW Solar PV, while the third phase aims at generating 1,500MW of mixed technology energy. The fourth one is intended to generate 1,000MW.

Harnessing renewable energy

Minister Fadhel has affirmed that Kuwait is relentlessly taking strides for harnessing renewable energy. Kuwait is seeking to ensure that renewable energy covers 15 percent of the used energy by 2030, the minister said, singling out Al-Shagaya Renewable Energy Project. The minister was speaking during a ceremony, organized by Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), inaugurating the first phase of Al-Shagaya project, under patronization of His

Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Amir, at the 2012 United Nations Climate Change Conference, hosted by Doha, Qatar, affirmed Kuwait's interest in the renewable energy. His statement constituted guidelines for all state sectors to move forward in harnessing this emerging energy. In line with His Highness the Amir vision at this level, the Cabinet had formed a higher commission, headed by the Minister of Electricity and Water, with membership of Kuwait University, KISR, Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), Ministry of Public Works, along with other departments, to compel contractors, in future ventures, to equip installations for securing at least 10 percent of needed energy from renewable resources.

There are other projects for securing renewable energy; namely Al-Dabdaba solar energy venture. Moreover, the state, he continued, specialized 630,000 square meters of land for establishing solar energy facilities. These ventures are also in harmony with Kuwait's adherence to the UN policy of tackling climatic change according to the UN Convention on Climatic Change and the Kyoto protocol, said Minister Fadhel.

KD 1 million

Samira Al-Sayed Omar, KISR's Director General, said His Highness the Amir, in 2010, instructed KFAS to grant KISR KD 1 million (\$3.3 million) to cover costs of feasibility



KUWAIT: Minister of Oil, Electricity and Water Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel (right) participates in a ceremony held to inaugurate the first phase of Al-Shagaya solar power project. — KUNA

studies to generate energy from renewable sources - thus these studies constituted the basis of this complex. KISR has based its projects in this sector on His Highness the Amir instructions that the renewable energy should cover 15 percent of the country's needs for power by 2035.

Omar announced that the complex would be operated, today, at a capacity of 70 megawatts-linked up with the conventional power network. The generated power comes from solar, wind, thermal and electro optic resources. This complex is capable of securing power for 1,000 residential units throughout the year. It is highly feasible for it

enables Kuwait to save more than 285,000 barrels of oil per year. Moreover, Omar continues, it provides work opportunities, minimizes emissions of carbon dioxide at a proportion of five million tons per year.

Meanwhile, Badr Al-Rifae, the assistant general secretary at the higher planning council, affirmed that the key project contributed to the strategic approach of minimizing dependence on oil for state income. Mohammad Boushehri, the electricity undersecretary, said the project is the largest at the Gulf level, indicating a plan to establish a station of a 1,500-Mega solar energy. — KUNA

Local

Iraqi president calls for boosting trade with Kuwait

Kuwaiti minister in Iraq to discuss creation of free trade zone

BAGHDAD: Iraqi President Barham Salih called for bolstering trade ties between his country and Kuwait, and that during a meeting with the visiting Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan yesterday. The president noted necessity of broadening the cooperation at this level for serving the two brotherly peoples' interests. Moreover, President Salih called for following up on resolutions of the Kuwait-hosted international conference on rebuilding Iraq, praising Kuwait's aid for the relocated Iraqis and rebuilding war-damaged regions in the country. Iraq seeks openness with Arab, regional and foreign countries in the economic and industrial fields, he added. Meanwhile, Minister Roudhan affirmed Kuwait's determination to promote ties with Iraq and Kuwaiti companies' readiness to invest in the country and contribute to overhauling the infrastructure.

Furthermore, the two sides affirmed the common approach for swapping expertise

and coordination on various arenas. Earlier yesterday, Roudhan said that his current visit to Iraq aims to eliminate any hurdles that could encumber the progress of bilateral trade ties. The Kuwaiti minister's remarks came amid talks with his Iraqi counterpart Mohammed Al-Ani, where he pointed out that Baghdad now seeks economic prosperity after ridding its soil of terrorism.

He said bilateral trade remains unsatisfactory, citing a genuine Kuwaiti desire to improve relations in that field, while time is now ripe to accomplish that goal. The Iraqi minister welcomed the prospect of establishing a joint free trade zone with Kuwait, describing it as a measure that would rejuvenate bilateral trade. He said the Kuwaiti minister's visit will prove instrumental in propelling ties to new heights. Kuwait's commerce minister arrived in Baghdad earlier yesterday to kick off a two-day visit, in which he is expected to hold talks with senior Iraqi officials. — KUNA



BAGHDAD: Iraqi President Barham Salih meets with Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan. — KUNA

Kuwait inks deal with German company to overhaul airport

KUWAIT: Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) inked yesterday a contract with the Germany Obermeyer for offering consultancy on managing projects of the '2012 structural scheme,' which constitutes execution of development plan for Kuwait International Airport. The deal was co-signed by Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, the DGCA Chairman, and his counterpart from the German company, during a session attended by the German ambassador to Kuwait.

Meanwhile, DGCA Director-General Yousef Al-Fozan said that the contract, valid for five years, envisages management of current and planned ventures, such as building the third runway and a new observation post. Moreover, it envisages plans for executing future projects for the airport, such as overhauling the western runway, building three others in the future, two observation towers, five passenger terminals after finishing the T-2 terminal. Furthermore, it is designed to update work procedures at the airport management as well as technical guidelines. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Directorate General for Civil Aviation and Germany Obermeyer officials sign the deal yesterday. — KUNA

NBK implements collective executive development program with INSEAD

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) partnered with one of the leading international business schools, INSEAD, in an intensive training program specifically designed for the bank's executive management team.

Since the banking industry worldwide is facing significant challenges. Digital disruption and FinTechs challenge existing banking models. Digital has fundamentally changed our lives. Adapting to the ongoing digitization of the economy, and of society in general, is arguably the most challenging transformation every business is currently facing. Due to competition from local and regional play-

ers, strategies are reassessed in various parts of the world (GCC, ASEAN, LATAM, EU).

In this turbulent world, there is an imperative need to assess the situation, to identify key-strategic actions, and to further develop senior banking executives in terms of organizational and personal skills related to digital strategy, customer-centric strategies, leadership, strategy execution and management of change.

National Bank of Kuwait - INSEAD program - Creating Value in a Fast Changing Banking World has two main objectives. First, a discussion of the fast changing banking world, including digital disruption with identification by NBK senior executives of key-strategic actions to undertake. Second, the further development of senior NBK executives to lead the strategy execution and changes, both in terms of personal and organizational skills.

During the program, Isam J Al-Sager, Group Chief Executive Officer, Shaikha K Al-Bahar, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer and Salah Y Al-Fulaij, Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait visited the participants. Emad Al-Ablani, said, "This program adds new value in the

changing banking industry as it provides essential training led by a prestigious educational institution, INSEAD. The program aims to highlight the challenges facing our industry in a digital transformation era and comes in line with our strategy at NBK to ensure our human capital is well equipped to deliver efficient solutions in our digital transformation journey."

Ablani added that NBK is proud to provide the best training opportunities for the employees and the executive managers in cooperation with the world's leading institutions and universities, enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge at par with their global peers. Ablani also mentioned: "NBK provides a unique environment for training and developing employees to enhance their skills, foster a culture of self-development and recognize their career growth in the long term."

INSEAD is one of the world's leading and largest graduate business schools. It offers participants a truly global educational experience with campuses in Europe (France), Asia (Singapore) and Middle East (Abu Dhabi), in addition, more than 11,000 executives participate in INSEAD's executive education programs each year.



KIB participates in MGRP career fair

KUWAIT: As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting local talent, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently participated in and sponsored a career fair entitled 'Because You Deserve,' which was organized by the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP). Taking place at the MGRP main office building, the career fair aimed at introducing young Kuwaiti talents to the various career opportunities on offer within the private sector.

'Because You Deserve' featured a large number of companies and institutions from across Kuwait, including some of the biggest names from the banking sector. KIB was represented by a team from its Human Resources Department (HRD) at the bank's dedicated booth. The team introduced visitors to the nature of

working at a bank and advised them on how they can start their professional career at KIB. Additionally, the bank provided visitors with a broad range of career advice to help guide them through the complicated process of choosing suitable future careers.

On this occasion, Feras Al-Darmi, Assistant General Manager of the Human Resources Department at KIB, said: "Our participation in this event came as part of our dedication to supporting and encouraging young, local talent. We believe that it is our responsibility to help guide enthusiastic youth by providing them with employment opportunities that match their career goals. For this reason, we continue to support various career fairs, which we believe serve as excellent opportunities to introduce students to KIB - thereby attracting the right caliber of candidates."

KIB remains committed to playing an active role in nurturing and investing in local talent. The bank always strives to provide young, aspiring local talent with opportunities that allow them to apply their professional and technical skills, realize their potential, and fully develop



their capabilities. It is worth noting that KIB participates in career fairs all year around, as part of its leading social responsibility program's youth empowerment pillar. The bank continues to open its doors and focus on attracting young, local

talents by providing them with employment opportunities that nurture their skills and capabilities. KIB has always believed that youth are the foundation on which a brighter, more successful future for the nation can be built.

Social security amendments to encourage SME investments

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) held a press conference yesterday to announce new social security amendments. Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf said the amendments to the fifth chapter and supplementary insurance by PIFSS aim to encourage citizens to invest in medium and small enterprises (SMEs).

"The amendment of the fifth chapter, which will start early next month, will positively affect the economic and social fields of the country and is in line with its development plans," Hajraf said. He pointed out that these changes are the first since 1981, indicating that the amendments are mainly related to linking academic qualification with financial segments through which insured people participate.

Director-General of the General Organization for Social Insurance and Labor Meshal Al-Othman said the amendments were based on studies conducted by PIFSS. "The study showed that 49 percent of insured people are enrolled in the lowest subscription rate starting at KD 200, resulting in a very low pension for fifth-chapter subscribers," he said.

He added that the total number of participants in the KD 550 or below bracket is 84 percent as a result of not updating their contributions during their career for many reasons, such as preoccupation with their work and the delay in development between the segments to raise the pension. Deputy Director-General for Insurance Affairs Khalid Al-Fadala said the amendments will achieve goals in the interest of the insured and benefit the economy by making the fifth chapter more attractive, adding that the average pension of basic insurance in the fifth section before the amendment amounts to KD 652, compared to KD 1,100 for employees in the government sector and KD 1,400 for workers in the private sector.



KUWAIT: Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf speaks during a press conference at the Public Institution for Social Security yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait praises UNSC statement on missing citizens

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday welcomed the Presidential Statement issued by the United Nations Security Council regarding developments related to the search for the missing Kuwaitis and properties including the national archive. The search is carried out by UNAMI, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, in implementation of the UNSC Resolution 2107 of the year 2013. The statement was adopted by unanimity at the UNSC, in affirmation of the council keenness on undertaking its responsibility as to following up on this file to make tangible progress.

The ministry, in a statement yesterday, expressed appreciation for the efforts that had been exerted by all stakeholders, affirming it would follow up on this sensitive file, continue to shed further light on this humanitarian cause and devote the necessary concern for it for it is among the national priorities of the State of Kuwait. It affirmed determination to urge the UN and the international community to pursue the efforts and follow up on the remaining humanitarian issues for the State of Kuwait, also lauding the constructive cooperation on part of the Iraqi side in this regard. Moreover, the ministry expressed aspiration for more constructive cooperation, on basis of the brotherly relations between the two countries. — KUNA

Interior prepares for celebrations

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah yesterday presided a security meeting attended by Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Nahham, his assistants, governorate security directors and top security officers to discuss preparations for the upcoming national celebrations. Sheikh Khaled stressed that all capabilities have been dedicated to provide top security during the festivities.

Sheikh Khaled was also briefed about security plans set for each of the concerned security sectors, their readiness, means of coordinating their work, immediate response to various reports, traffic plans and readiness to provide humanitarian services when needed. The meeting also discussed a media plan designed to boost public awareness about the festivities, cover the events day by day and cooperate with various departments.

British minister stresses joint security amid Kuwait visit

First Deputy Prime Minister meets British Minister of Defense Procurement

KUWAIT: Security in Kuwait and the entire Arabian Gulf region is inextricably linked to the safety of Britain, a British minister said yesterday, reminiscing about how Britain stood 'shoulder to shoulder' with Kuwait during the 1990 Iraqi invasion. British Minister for Defense Procurement Stuart Andrew's visit to the Gulf state comes in the midst of the country's national celebrations, he said in an interview. Kuwait and Britain celebrate this year 120 years since the Anglo-Kuwaiti agreement sparked a robust partnership that stands to this day, the minister pointed out.

On Britain's role towards preserving security and peace in the Middle East, he said the country is eager to impart some of its military knowledge on its allies in the region. The British government is a proponent of Kuwait's 2035 development plan, he added, saying high-level bilateral talks over matters such as security and defense are held on a regular basis. In response to a question over whether Britain perceives the Middle East region as a platform to flex its military muscle, the British minister said the Middle East is an important ally with whom Britain shares an interdependent relationship. On a related note, he allayed

concerns over a diminished British presence in the region as a result of its withdrawal from the European Union, saying the country will continue to reach out to its allies in the Middle East.

Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and British Minister Andrew had discussed issues of common interests during a meeting held at Bayan Palace on Tuesday. Both sides discussed military cooperation during the meeting, the Ministry of Defense said in a press statement. Sheikh Nasser underlined the depth of the bilateral relations between the two countries and the keenness of both sides to strengthen and develop them, it added. Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khedhr, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and UK Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport, attended the meeting. The First Deputy, meanwhile, also received at Bayan Palace the President of the Municipal Council Osama Al-Otaibi, where they exchanged views over several topics, said the ministry. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with British Minister for Defense Procurement Stuart Andrew. — KUNA

University professor assaulted by student

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man yesterday reported that his wife, a professor at Kuwait University's College of Education in Kaifan, was assaulted by one of her female students. On rushing his wife to hospital, initial medical reports suspected that her nose was broken. A case was filed and the assailant was referred to relevant security authorities.

Fatal accident

An elderly man was killed and his driver injured in an accident on Abdaly road, Al-Rai reported yesterday. They were on their way to help a woman whose car had run out of petrol, but the driver lost control and the vehicle flipped over. Meanwhile, a citizen was killed after his motorcycle collided with a vehicle in Daiya.

Officers penalized

The Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Public Security Affairs Maj Gen Sheikh Faisal Al-Nawaf referred more than 30 uniformed officers and profession-

als to military courts after finding they were registered with the public security department at the undersecretary's office, but not complying with official working hours, Al-Rai reported yesterday.

Man assaults wife

An Egyptian man saw his wife in a cafe with her sister, and they were laughing loudly, so he got angry because she did not tell him she was going out, reported Al-Rai. He left the cafe and called her and asked where she was. She told him she was at home, so he became more enraged and returned to the cafe and started beating her in front of everyone. He also broke a chair while beating her. The woman went to the police station and lodged a complaint. The man confessed to the beating, and investigations are ongoing.

Diesel theft

Jahra police arrested a Syrian man for stealing diesel from Um Naqa and selling it to an Egyptian man cheaply. Police said a call came from a Kuwaiti, who said he suspected two persons were stealing diesel from the Um Naqa oil facility, reported Al-Rai. Jahra police found the two inside with a pickup truck with diesel drums, and both were sent for questioning. In other news, Abdaly customs officers found one kilogram of shabu in the inspection yard, and it is likely a smuggler got rid of it there. The drugs were sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

No bird flu cases detected

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Commenting on fears concerning rumors about people infected with bird flu, Ministry of Health (MoH) Undersecretary Dr Majeda Al-Qattan denied any such cases and stressed that all poultry products and birds in the local market had been examined and that none of them pose any threat. Qattan also explained that eight cases had been thoroughly examined over suspicions of being infected with bird flu but all diagnosis results came negative.

General assembly meeting

Kuwait Teachers Society (KTS) Chairman Mutee Al-Ajmi announced that the administrative court issued an expedited ruling on the validity and legality of the measures followed by KTS to call for a general assembly meeting, according to correspondence with the Ministry of Social Affairs. Speaking at a press conference held yesterday, Ajmi said the ruling emphasizes the legality of the measures KTS followed to hold a general assembly meeting on February 19. "However, the ministry's representatives acted strangely and left the meeting for no reason,"

he remarked, explaining that due to a lack of quorum at the time set to start the meeting (4 pm), a legal measure was taken to postpone the meeting for half an hour and then hold it with whoever was present, which had been used for years. "This raises a huge exclamation about such an unjustified action by the ministry", he said.

Meanwhile, Ministry of Social Affairs' acting undersecretary Hana Al-Hajeri said the ministry requested postponing the KTS general assembly meeting to finalize the measures stipulated in article 25 of its law and to protect members' rights. Hajeri added that the ministry's representatives were present, but found only a few of KTS' 10,578 members had shown up to attend the meeting, and thus the meeting was postponed for two weeks in accordance to the law for lack of quorum.

Outstanding women

A total of 112 women from 20 countries are nominated to take part in the Kuwait International Award for Outstanding Women, including 70 Kuwaitis and 42 others from the US, Europe, Asia and Africa, Security General of the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Khaled Mahdi announced yesterday. Mahdi explained that Kuwaiti nominees include 41 working in the government sector, 28 working in the private sector and 43 from various NGOs, noting that the nominees will be interviewed and the winners will be honored in a special ceremony on March 6, 2019.

Kuwait & Gulf Link Transport Company
congratulates

His Highness the Amir
Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
and His Highness the Crown Prince
Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah
and all the Kuwaiti nationals
on the occasion of the National and Liberation Days
asking the Almighty to protect Kuwait and its people

KGL 1888700
kgl.com



India prisoners stone a Pakistani inmate to death amid tensions

Alabama editor under fire after calling for KKK revival



JIMETA, Nigeria: Camp dwellers pump water from a well in the early morning at Malkohi refugee camp in Jimeta, Adamawa State. Malkohi is a camp for internal displaced who fled their homes as Boko Haram insurgents advanced across north-eastern Nigeria. —AFP

'Over 130' killed in northwest Nigeria

Governor rejects claims that 'attack was fabricated'

ABUJA: An attack by gunmen on villages in northwest Nigeria last week claimed "over 130" lives, more than double the toll initially reported, the governor of Kaduna state said yesterday. "The last report we got is that over 130 people were killed, not even 66," governor Nasir El-Rufai said after a meeting of military and security chiefs in Abuja.

El-Rufai, who was invited to speak at the briefing with President Muhammadu Buhari, was criticized for announcing the deaths last Friday, on the eve of elections which were subsequently delayed. The bodies were found in eight villages in the Kajuru area of the state, which has long been a centre of deadly unrest, fuelled by ethnic and religious tensions. A representative of the ethnic Christian Adara community, which is dominant in the area, told AFP there had been recurring attacks by Fulani Muslims in the last three years.

At the weekend, the governor said the victims were Fulanis. But a prominent Christian body has said the attack did not happen. It is unusual for state governors to make such announcements in Nigeria and El-Rufai hit out at claims that the attack was fabricated as "irre-

sponsible". "I know there is a prevailing narrative in the Nigerian media that only certain lives are more important than others," he told reporters. "We see that clearly in the slant of reporting and the denial," he said. "Fulani leaders are providing the names of all these people, we have the list and we will release it to the press."

Nigerian media reported that Kaduna state police chief, Ahmad Abdulrahman, also attended the meeting and said 11 people had been arrested. El-Rufai, from the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC), is known as a close ally of Buhari. He is seeking re-election as governor in upcoming polls on March 9. Buhari, who also wants a second term of office in presidential polls postponed to this Saturday, is facing a number of security challenges across the country. They include Boko Haram's Islamist insurgency in the northeast and

an upsurge in violence between farmers and herders in central states. Kaduna is one of several northwest states to have been hit by kidnappings for ransom and cattle rustling by criminal gangs.



Boko Haram kills fourteen

Babakura Kolo said. The assailants were supporters of a long-time factional leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, he said.

"We have recovered a total of 14 bodies from the scene of the attack and we are still looking for four

Boko Haram kills 14

In another development, at least 14 people were killed when Boko Haram jihadists attacked loggers in northeastern Nigeria, members of a militia force said yesterday. The group came under attack on Monday in Koshebe forest, 10 kilometers (six miles) from Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, militia leader

more," Kolo said. "We recovered nine bodies yesterday (Tuesday) and five more this morning," said militiaman Mohammed Asheik, who was among the search team combing the bush for bodies. Four other wood-cutters are missing and presumed killed, he said. The loggers, who were in the forest to cut firewood, came from Lawanti village in Jere area, which the jihadists have previously targeted.

The bodies were scattered over a large area because the jihadists pursued the loggers and gunned them down as they fled, said Kolo. Boko Haram has repeatedly targeted farmers, loggers and herders, accusing them of passing information on the group to soldiers and the pro-government militia fighting them. Last month, four farmers were killed as they worked near Molai village, five kms outside Maiduguri. Boko Haram's decade-long uprising to establish a hardline Islamic state in remote northeastern Nigeria has killed more than 27,000 people and displaced 1.8 million from their homes. The conflict has spilled into neighboring Niger, Chad and Cameroon, sparking a humanitarian crisis in the region. —Agencies

US sanctions a 'terrorist act': Iran's leader

LONDON: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday relations with the United States had rarely been so bad and that sanctions imposed by the Trump administration targeting Tehran's oil and banking sectors amounted to "a terrorist act". Animosity between Washington and Tehran - bitter foes since Iran's 1979 revolution - has intensified since US President Donald Trump withdrew from an international nuclear deal with Tehran last May and reimposed sanctions lifted under the accord.

"The struggle between Iran and America is currently at a maximum. America has employed all its power against us," Rouhani was quoted as saying in a cabinet meeting by the state broadcaster IRIB. "The US pressures on firms and banks to halt business with Iran is one hundred percent a terrorist act," he said. "Trump has reimposed the sanctions with the aim of slashing Iranian oil sales and choking its economy in order to curb its ballistic missile program and its activities in the Middle East, especially in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen."

Hypocrisy

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif accused the United States of hypocrisy for trying to wreck Iran's nuclear program while seeking to sell nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia, Tehran's regional rival. "Neither human rights nor the nuclear program are the real concern of the US. First a dismembered journalist; now illicit sale of nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia fully expose #USHypocrisy," Zarif said in a tweet. He was referring to the killing of Saudi jour-



Iranian President Hassan Rouhani

nalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, which triggered international revulsion. His body has not been found. The CIA has said Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman likely ordered the killing, which Riyadh denies. Trump has stood by the prince, saying weapons sales to Saudi Arabia are an important source of US jobs.

US Democratic lawmakers alleged in a report released Tuesday that a proposed transfer of US nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia was being fast-tracked around a mandatory approval process. Unlike the United States, European powers are working to preserve the 2015 international nuclear deal with Iran. But France has said it is ready to reimpose sanctions on Iran if no progress is made in talks over its ballistic missile program. In a clear reaction to French pressure, Rouhani said: "We want a constructive interaction with the world, but the countries that work with us should not have excessive demands. Iran is firm in its stance and will act based on its national interests." Iran has said its missile program is purely defensive. —Reuters

App-based delivery men highlight India's growing gig economy

MUMBAI: Suraj Nachre works long hours and regularly misses meals but he treasures his job as a driver for a food delivery startup-working in a booming industry that highlights India's expanding apps-based gig-economy. The 26-year-old is one of hundreds of thousands of young Indians who, armed with their smartphones and motorcycles, courier dinners to offices and homes ordered at the swipe of a finger.

A surge in the popularity of food-ordering apps like Uber Eats and Swiggy provides a welcome source of income for many as India's unemployment rate sits at a reported 45-year high. But they also shine a spotlight on the prevalence of short-term contracts in the economy, raising questions about workers' rights and conditions and the long-term viability of the jobs. "These delivery workers are treated as independent contractors so labor laws governing employees are not applicable and they lack job security," Gautam Ghosh, a human resources consultant, told AFP.

"While jobs created by food delivery apps are crucial, they may not exist in 10 years so for the majority of youngsters they are a stopgap arrangement," he added. India's army of food delivery drivers, mostly men but some women too, became a talking point on social media late last year when a rider for the Zomato platform was filmed sampling a customer's order. The video, apparently shot on a mobile phone, showed the man taking bites from several food parcels before wrapping them again. It sparked anger online and he was promptly sacked.

Rushing around

Many internet users rallied to his defense, however. They insisted that the two-minute clip showed he was hungry and desperate, and said Zomato had acted harshly in

dismissing him. "It is a challenging job," said Nachre, expressing sympathy for the unnamed delivery man who was working in the southern city of Madurai before being fired. "We work 12 hours straight in soaring heat and heavy rains. Sometimes I don't even have time to eat," he added.

Nachre drives for the Scootsy platform. He leaves home at 9:00 am and does not return until after 1:00 am. Navigating Mumbai's abysmal traffic makes work stressful, he says. "We're always in a rush to deliver and customers keep calling us. We know we have to be on our toes all the time or customers might complain and we may lose our jobs," Nachre told AFP. India's food delivery apps, backed by major international investment, are offering new avenues of employment for Indian youngsters who lack higher education but possess a driving license.

Their importance to the likes of Nachre was highlighted recently when a leaked government report said India's unemployment rate was 6.1 percent in 2017-18, the highest since the 1970s. "This job is lucrative," said Nachre, who has no post-school qualifications and earns a minimum of 18,000 rupees (\$253) a month. In his previous job running errands at an office he made only 8,000 rupees. The app-based food delivery industry is worth an estimated \$7 billion to Asia's third-largest economy, according to market research firm Statista, and is expanding rapidly. Swiggy announced at the end of last year that it had received \$1 billion in funding from foreign backers including South Africa's Naspers and China's Tencent.

Foreign investment

That put the valuation of the five-year-old company, headquartered in Bangalore, at more than \$3 billion. Zomato, Swiggy's nearest challenger for market dominance, is being aggressively backed by Alibaba's Ant Financial. The Chinese giant recently pumped in \$210 million, valuing the Delhi-based startup at \$2 billion. The food delivery platforms are soaring as India's growing middle classes take advantage of better smartphone connectivity and cheap data plans that are fuelling a gig economy centered on technology. —AFP

International

We will target US, Europe host if Washington deploys missiles

The response will be 'asymmetric,' Russian leader says

MOSCOW: Russia will respond to any US deployment of short or intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe by targeting not only the countries where they are stationed, but the United States itself, President Vladimir Putin said yesterday. In his toughest remarks yet on a potential new arms race, Putin said Russia was not seeking confrontation and would not take the first step to deploy missiles in response to Washington's decision this month to quit a landmark Cold War-era arms control treaty.

But he said that Russia's reaction to any deployment would be resolute and that US policy-makers, some of whom he said were obsessed with US exceptionalism, should calculate the risks before taking any steps. "It's their right to think how they want. But can they count? I'm sure they can. Let them count the speed and the range of the weapons systems we are developing," Putin told Russia's political elite to strong applause. "Russia will be forced to create and deploy types of weapons which can be used not only in respect of those territories from which the direct threat to us originates, but also in respect of those territories where the centers of decision-making are located," he said.

Missiles in Europe

Alleging Russian violations, Washington said this

month it was suspending its obligations under the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and starting the process of quitting it, untying its hands to develop new missiles. The pact banned either side from stationing short and intermediate-range, land-based missiles in Europe and its demise raises the prospect of a new arms race between Washington and Moscow, which denies flouting the treaty.

Russia denies violating the treaty. Putin responded to the US move by saying Russia would mirror the US moves by suspending its own obligations and quitting the pact. But Putin, who has sometimes used bellicose rhetoric to talk up Russia's standoff with the West and to rally Russians round the flag, did not up the ante. He did not announce new missile deployments, said money for new systems must come from existing budget funds and declared that Moscow would not deploy new land-based missiles in Europe or elsewhere unless Washington did so first.

Yesterday, he made clear however that he was ready, reluctantly, to escalate if the United States escalated and that Russia was continuing to actively develop weapons and missile systems to ensure it was well prepared for such an eventuality. He said any US move to place new missiles in Europe would leave Moscow with no choice but to respond because it would drastically cut the time it took US missiles to reach Russia, some-



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers his annual state of the nation address in Moscow yesterday. —AFP

thing that would pose a direct threat. He said Russia wanted good ties with the United States, but was ready with its defensive response if necessary. "We know how

to do this and we will implement these plans immediately, as soon as the corresponding threats to us become a reality." —Reuters



Putin addresses the political elite

Gay church prays for historic Kenya ruling

NAIROBI: A lesbian church leader lights pink, yellow, and purple candles and passes them around to worshippers as they pray for a court decision that will mean they no longer have to live a lie. "The Lord is in control," she says, as swaying congregants yell out "Victory!" and a musician shuts his eyes in prayer, his fingers dancing across a keyboard laid on a table covered with a rainbow flag. The Cosmopolitan Affirming Church (CAC) is a rare space where Kenya's LGBT community can escape hostility from society, which is often reflected in hatred and vitriol from religious pulpits.

Dozens of LGBT churchgoers and their allies crammed into a tiny room Sunday to worship ahead of Friday's potentially historic decision by Kenya's High Court on whether laws that criminalize homosexuality are unconstitutional. "When this law is struck down it is going to be a huge kind of liberation for us, like a burden has been taken off our shoulders," said David Ochara, who helped found the church in 2013.

'Police in our bedrooms'

Kenya's colonial-era laws echo those in more than half of Africa's countries, where homosexuality is illegal. Being gay can even

lead to the death penalty in Mauritania, Sudan, northern Nigeria and parts of Somalia. One section of the penal code says that anyone who has "carnal knowledge ... against the order of nature" can be imprisoned for 14 years, while another could see one land in jail for five years for "indecent practices between males". "The law specifies 'in public or private' which essentially allows police to enter our bedrooms to investigate these crimes," said Eric Gitari, the co-founder of the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Council (NGLHRC), one of the petitioners.

Imani Kimiri of the NGLHRC's legal team said her office dealt with 15 prosecutions under the laws in 2018, but cannot recall the last conviction - slamming the process as "just a frustrating endeavor". In 2014, a government report to appease parliament's anti-gay caucus reported some 600 prosecutions over three years. However, Gitari said 70 percent of these were "conflated" and some turned out to be cases of child rape, bestiality or even traffic offences. The biggest fear is the persecution that the laws allow. "Because of the law you fear blackmail, you fear extortion, you fear violence ... because there is no law protecting you, and the law is against you," said Arthur Owiti, who plays the keyboard in church.

Blackmailed by online dates

The NGLHRC in 2017 recorded an increase in cases where people using online dating applications such as Grindr end up being blackmailed or extorted, often by organized gangs who work with the police. "When you get a date online you have to ask them security questions so you don't fall into



NAIROBI: LGBT members attend an inter-faith service in Nairobi, Kenya. Kenya's High Court will on February 22, 2019 rule on a petition from gay rights groups to declare two laws that effectively criminalize homosexuality, unconstitutional. —AFP

a trap," said Owiti. And those who are blackmailed, evicted, fired, expelled from school, or assaulted over their sexual orientation, are unable to access justice because it means "confessing to a crime," said Gitari. While Gitari points to recent court decisions as cause for optimism, most activists agree that even if the court rules in their favor it will be tied up in appeals for the foreseeable future. In March last year the High Court banned forced anal testing of men suspected of being gay. And in September a court ruled that "Rafiki" (friend), a film about a lesbian love affair, could be screened for seven days after its initial banning.

African precedent

Kenya's decision could reverberate across the continent, where several countries are facing challenges to similar legislation. Mozambique struck down anti-gay laws in 2015, and Angola decriminalized homosexuality in January. Botswana is expected to hear a case against its laws in March. "The law is one of the means of changing society," said Gitari. "Politically there is a chance for African states to assert themselves in their grounding of justice which is inclusive of LGBT persons without necessarily having to give in to political pressure, which is external." —AFP

Convoy plucks women, children from IS holdout

BAGHOUZ: A convoy of trucks evacuated dozens of people including women and children from the Islamic State group's last Syria redoubt yesterday, bringing US-backed forces closer to retaking the last sliver of the "caliphate". The implosion of the jihadist proto-state which once spanned swathes of Syria and neighboring Iraq has left Western nations grappling with how to handle citizens who left to join IS.

Around 15 trucks carrying men, women and children exited the last patch of IS territory in eastern Syria, according to AFP correspondents. Women wearing face veils, several children-including young veiled girls-as well as men were seen inside the vehicles. Their exact number and nationalities were not immediately clear. The convoy passed a position of the Kurdish-led SDF, which are spearheading the battle against the jihadists, after leaving the last IS holdout in the village of Baghouz, near the Iraqi border.

SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali said the trucks were evacuating a first batch of civilians, but some remained inside. "After many days of trying, we were able to evacuate the first batch today," Bali said. The number of people who quit the holdout would become clear once the convoy arrived at a nearby SDF screening point, he said. "We don't know if IS fighters are among them, we will know at the screening point," Bali said. Backed by air strikes by a US-led coalition, the SDF have trapped IS fighters in less than half a square kilometer (0.2 square miles) in Baghouz. The SDF have slowed their advance in recent days to protect civilians ahead of a final push to defeat the jihadists.

Deal?

Thousands of people-mostly women and children related to IS members-have streamed out of Baghouz in the past weeks, but the flow had largely stopped in recent days. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, said a deal appeared to have been reached with the jihadists. "There have been negotiations for the surrender of the last IS fighters," Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said. "There are reports of a deal, but we don't know the details yet," he said. On



BAGHOUZ: Islamic State group's fighters and their families sit in the back of a truck as they leave IS's last holdout of Baghouz in Syria's northern Deir Ezzor province yesterday. —AFP

Tuesday, the SDF said several IS fighters and dozens of civilians handed themselves over to the Kurdish-led force. Spokesman Adnan Afrin said a convoy of trucks had entered Baghouz to transfer jihadists and

their relatives out to SDF-held territory. The spokesman said foreigners were among those who left the pocket, but did not say where they were from, or if they were civilians. —AFP

Enough! Thousands decry anti-Semitism after spike in attacks

STRASBOURG: Thousands of people rallied across France after a surge of anti-Semitic attacks in recent weeks that culminated on Tuesday with vandals daubing swastikas and anti-

Jewish slogans on dozens of graves in a Jewish cemetery. Political leaders from all parties, including former Presidents Francois Hollande and Nicolas Sarkozy, gathered in Paris filling the Place de la Republique, a symbol of the nation, to decry anti-Semitic acts with one common slogan: "Enough!"

People also lined the streets of cities from Lille in the north to Toulouse and Marseille in the south. President Emmanuel Macron paid respects at one of the 96 desecrated graves in the village of Quatzenheim, near the eastern city of Strasbourg. "Whoever did this is not worthy of the French republic and will be punished... We'll take action, we'll apply the law and we'll punish them," he said, walking through a gate scarred with a

swastika as he entered the graveyard. Macron later visited the national Holocaust memorial in Paris with the heads of the Senate and National Assembly. France is home to the biggest Jewish community in Europe-around 550,000 — a population that has grown by about half since World War Two, but anti-Semitic attacks remain common. Government statistics released last week showed there were more than 500 anti-Semitic attacks in the country last year, a 74 percent increase from 2017. "Some people are provoking the authority of the state. It needs to be dealt with now and extremely firmly," Sarkozy told reporters. "It's a real question of authority. Violence is spreading and it needs to stop now." —Reuters

Anti-gay laws widespread in Africa despite gains

PARIS: More than half of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have anti-homosexuality laws, although others have moved towards legal tolerance, watchdogs say. Twenty-eight out of 49 countries have laws penalizing same-sex relationships, according to Neela Ghoshal, a Human Rights Watch (HRW) specialist in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights. The death penalty is on the books under sharia, in Mauritania, Sudan and northern Nigeria, although there have been no known executions in recent times. In southern Somalia, gay men are believed to have been put to death in territory ruled by the Al Shabaab jihadist group.

However, Angola, Mozambique and Seychelles have scrapped anti-gay laws in recent years, and on Friday a High Court ruling in Nairobi will determine whether Kenya follows suit. On the other hand, Chad and Uganda have introduced or toughened legislation. Rights groups say many anti-gay laws date from the colonial era. They represent a peril even in countries where they are not implemented, according to campaigners, as their existence on the statute books entrenches stigma and encourages harassment, they say. Following is a snapshot of the legal situation in Africa, provided by AFP bureaus:

Angola

Last month scrapped a notorious "vices against nature" provision in its penal code, and made the refusal to employ or provide services to someone on the grounds of their sexual orientation liable to a jail term of up to two years.

Botswana

On March 15, the High Court will hear a case brought by campaign group Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana challenging the constitutionality of a law punishing same-sex conduct.

Chad

Approved a law in May 2017 to punish "same-sex sexual relations" with between three months' and two years' jail and a fine ranging from 50,000 to 500,000 CFA franc (76 to 760 euros, \$85 to \$850).

Gabon

The first gay traditional wedding was conducted in 2013 but the couple was immediately arrested following an outcry. The pair was released and the marriage overturned on technical grounds.

Lesotho

In 2012, approved a penal code which scrapped a common-law regime under which sodomy had been criminalized. Initiated a process in 2016 to decriminalize same-sex marriage, although the law is making little headway in parliament.

Malawi

Debating the legal status of homosexuality. In 2012, the government ordered a moratorium on arrests and prosecutions of consensual homosexual adults. In 2016, the High Court suspended the moratorium pending a judicial review by the Constitutional Court.

Mozambique

In 2015, swept away Portuguese colonial laws dating back to 1886 that punished anyone "who habitually engages in vices against nature." No known prosecutions under those laws occurred after Mozambique gained independence in 1975.

Mali

No anti-homosexuality law, but conservative Islamic groups last December successfully campaigned against a Dutch-funded schoolbook on sexual education, maintaining it promoted homosexuality.

Nigeria

Law introduced in 2014 provides for up to 14 years' jail for same-sex cohabitation and any "public show of same-sex amorous relationship". In the north, sharia makes homosexuality punishable by death in theory.

South Africa

In 2006, South Africa became the sole African nation to allow gay marriage. The country has become a haven for African homosexuals who flee persecution at home or travel to the country to get married before returning home.

Tanzania

A conviction for having "carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature" can lead to 30 years' jail or more. Political rhetoric against homosexuality has increased since President John Magufuli was elected in 2015. Foreign gay rights activists have been expelled and last October, the governor of Dar es Salaam, the country's economic capital, threatened to arrest homosexuals. —AFP

International

3 MPs abandon PM over Brexit as Britain political sands shift

Eighth MP jumps ship in crisis for UK Labor

LONDON: Three MPs quit the governing Conservative Party over Brexit yesterday, joining a mounting rebellion in parliament this week against the two major parties that is shaking the system in British politics. Anna Soubry, Heidi Allen and Sarah Wollaston said they planned to sit in parliament alongside eight former Labor MPs who, also citing their opposition to Brexit, have resigned from the main opposition party since Monday to form the new Independent Group.

The trio of Conservatives, who support Britain remaining in the European Union, said in a joint resignation letter to Prime Minister Theresa May that Brexit had "re-defined" their party and was "undoing all the efforts to modernize it". "The final straw for us has been this government's disastrous handling of Brexit," they added, in stinging criticism of May's leadership, noting they could "no longer act as bystanders" to her EU exit strategy. "Following the EU referendum of 2016, no genuine effort was made to build a cross-party, let alone a national consensus to deliver Brexit."

The resignations posed a fresh and embarrassing headache for the prime minister as she prepared to travel to Brussels for crucial talks with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. It also reinforced the view that Britain was plunging further into political turmoil as its MPs struggle to agree a divorce deal just five weeks before it is due to leave the bloc on March 29. The political impasse risks the country crashing out without an agreement, with the rising uncertainty blamed for a string of car-makers and other businesses recently announcing job cuts and reduced investment in Britain.

May said she was "saddened" by the resignations and thanked the MPs for their "dedicated service to our

party over many years". She noted Britain's membership of the EU has been "a source of disagreement both in our party and our country for a long time" but the MPs' move would not stop her delivering on the referendum result. "Under my leadership, the Conservative Party will always offer the decent, moderate and patriotic politics that the people of this country deserve," she added.

'Radical changes now afoot'

Earlier yesterday, an eighth MP quit the Labor Party in protest against its veteran socialist leader Jeremy Corbyn, joining its own growing internal rebellion sparked by rows over Brexit and anti-Semitism. Joan Ryan told BBC radio that Corbyn had "introduced or allowed to happen in our party this scourge of anti-Semitism. It has completely infected the party".

The shake-up of seats mean May's centre-right Conservatives alone are now six votes short of a majority in parliament's lower House of Commons. They can command a working majority of eight thanks to their confidence and supply arrangement for support from Northern Ireland's 10 Democratic Unionist (DUP) lawmakers.

Meanwhile The Independent Group now form the joint fourth-biggest bloc in the Commons with 11 MPs—the same as the centrist Liberal Democrats, with predictions of further defections to come. The new group sat squashed together on the opposition backbenches in the Commons during the prime minister's weekly grilling, but did not ask May a question. Liberal Democrat leader Vince Cable said: "There is clearly some very radical changes now afoot as both the Conservatives and Labor have been taken over by mili-



LONDON: Former Conservative Party and now Independent MPs (left to right) Heidi Allen, Sarah Wollaston and Anna Soubry pose for a picture after a press conference in central London yesterday following their resignation from the Conservative Party in a joint letter. —AFP

Mounting rebellion in British parliament



tant groups, driving out more moderate MPs."

'Country's interests first'

In their resignation statement, the three former Conservative MPs, who have voted against multiple elements of the government's Brexit legislation, blamed their decision on May's "dismal failure" to stand up to the "hard line" European Research Group (ERG) of Brexiteers in her own party. The group "operates openly as a party within a party, with its

own leader, whip and policy" they said. "We no longer feel we can remain in the party of a government whose policies and priorities are so firmly in the grip of the ERG and DUP," the lawmakers added. They noted that there was a wider dissatisfaction with the state of British politics, with both the Conservatives and Labor moving "to the fringes, leaving millions of people with no representation". "We now feel honor bound to put our constituents' and country's interests first," they added. —AFP

News in brief

Judges, lawyers detained

VILNIUS: Lithuanian prosecutors yesterday detained several veteran judges and lawyers suspected of receiving bribes, as more than a hundred police investigators conducted raids at dozens of addresses. "Today 26 individuals were detained, including eight judges and five well-known lawyers," prosecutor general Evaldas Pasiulis told reporters. He gave no details on the other 13 people held. Prosecutors suspect the individuals—who include one Supreme Court justice—received bribes ranging from 1,000 euros (\$1,130) to 100,000 euros in various criminal, civil and administrative cases. "Huge harm was done to the state," said Pasiulis, the most senior prosecutor in this Baltic EU state. "It wasn't just the sum of the alleged bribes but also that trust in the justice system was undermined," he added. Zydunas Bartkus, head of the anti-corruption agency STT, said that from the early morning its agents and police officers had carried out searches at more than 100 addresses. —AFP

Egypt denies NYT journo entry

CAIRO: Egyptian authorities have denied entry to a veteran New York Times journalist, the US-based newspaper reported on Tuesday. David Kirkpatrick arrived at Cairo airport on Monday but was barred from entering the country, the newspaper said. Security officials held him "incommunicado for hours before forcing him onto a flight back to London without explanation," the New York Times reported. Kirkpatrick was the newspaper's Cairo bureau chief from 2011 to 2015 and last year authored a book on the Arab Spring uprisings. His writings have long stirred controversy and pro-government media in Egypt have previously criticized his reporting. In 2018, pro-government newspaper "Youm7" accused Kirkpatrick of "deliberately distorting Egypt's (image)" after he reported on Egyptian officials' "tacit acceptance" of the United States' recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. —AFP

6 dead in karaoke fire

KUALA LUMPUR: Six people, including three foreigners, were killed when a fire broke out yesterday in a Malaysian karaoke centre, with rescuers describing scenes of chaos as the blaze engulfed the building. The fire erupted before dawn on the fourth floor of an eight-storey building in the city of Ipoh, northern Perak state. Firefighters rushed to the scene and found the bodies of six people who had died of smoke inhalation. Perak fire department acting director Sayani Saidon said. "We came across two locals, two Vietnamese women and a Bangladeshi man. We are still determining the identity of the sixth person," she said. Firefighters rescued eight people alive, including two in critical condition, she added. People inside were unable to find the way out after the fire erupted as exit lights did not come on, she said. Those that survived had run to an upper level to escape the flames. —AFP

Ex-military chief jailed

BEIJING: A former chief of staff of China's military was sentenced to life in prison, state media said yesterday, after he was swept up in President Xi Jinping's ongoing anti-graft crackdown. Appointed to the People's Liberation Army's top post in 2012, Fang Fenghui was convicted of accepting and offering bribes, and having an unclear source of a huge amount of assets, official news agency Xinhua reported. A military court sentenced Fang to life in prison, stripped him of political rights for life, and ordered the confiscation of all his personal assets. Xinhua said. Fang was abruptly replaced in August 2017 amid a stand-off with India over a territorial dispute, and just days after he had met the US top brass to discuss North Korea. The general was transferred to the military prosecution authority on suspicion of bribery in January of last year, state media reported at the time. —AFP

Solving backstop issue 'only way to avoid hard Brexit'

BERLIN: Britain can only avoid a hard Brexit on March 29 if it reaches a deal with the EU to resolve the tricky Irish backstop issue, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said yesterday. "This is really the only way through the current situation," he said in a speech in Berlin, adding that pushing back the Brexit deadline would leave both the UK and EU in "paralysis". The infamous "Irish backstop" clause provides for Britain to remain in the EU customs union until a way is found—such as a future free trade deal—to ensure that Ireland's border with Northern Ireland remains open.

Resolving the issue would allow the government to gain parliamentary support for the EU divorce deal and also guarantee the 1998 Belfast peace agreement, he predicted. "If we can make that change, we are confident we can get the

'No place to sell'; Zimbabwe targets street vendors

CHITUNGWIZA: When police backed by armed soldiers arrived at the market in Chitungwiza in early February, Lilian Kashamba was reminded of her childhood during Zimbabwe's war for independence. The 48-year-old widow, who had sold vegetables, maize and chickens from the council-owned venue for 15 years, pointed to a heap of rubble where her stall once stood, and told how vendors were given 30 minutes to pack up and leave. After that, the market was demolished by officials from the council, which has not yet said what it will do with the space.

"From my sales here I raised three children. With no place to sell, I don't know how else to care for my one last child in primary school," she said. The demolition of the Zengeza 4 market was one of a number of actions by local authorities - backed by security forces - against thousands of vendors and informal traders in the capital Harare as well as in other cities and towns this month. Lovemore Meya, a spokesman for Chitungwiza council, said the clampdown in the town about 30 km south of Harare was a joint effort by local authorities, the police and the army to remove illegal structures and businesses.

But Kashamba and other vendors said they had paid weekly rentals for their stalls and shops to an intermediary, who had not given it to the council. The market's destruction followed a spate of violence that rocked the southern African nation in January when a three-day stay-at-home strike was called after President Emmerson Mnangagwa raised fuel

deal through" parliament, he said on the day Prime Minister Theresa May was headed back to Brussels to renew her quest to reopen the terms of the Brexit divorce.

Brexiteers in May's own Conservative party see the backstop as a "trap" to keep Britain in a form of union indefinitely, and have demanded a time limit or a unilateral exit clause. This would be seen in Brussels as a betrayal of EU member Ireland, and it has consistently got short shrift from EU officials. Hunt, speaking on the question of a possible extension on Britain leaving the bloc, questioned whether that "really solves anything". "I think the last thing that people in the UK and indeed the rest of the EU want is Brexit paralysis with this issue hanging over Europe like a shadow," he said.

"I think people want to move on and they want to demonstrate that we can have a Brexit that respects the referendum result but also that we remain best of friends with our neighbors in Europe." May and the other 27 EU leaders approved a Brexit withdrawal agreement

prices. The protests led to mass arrests and a security crackdown. Zimbabwe has been on edge ever since, with residents and other witnesses saying police and soldiers conducted night-time raids on many homes and removed and beat alleged protesters. Meya denied the exercise was politically motivated, saying it affected all vendors and did not discriminate on party lines.

'Urban renewal'

Some traders likened the destruction of stalls to the government's 2005 slum-clearance operation called Operation Murambatsvina, which meant 'Drive out the filth'. Joshua Mukungati, 25, who sold furniture out of Zengeza 4, said he had been paying \$10 a week to the council and did not understand why he had been evicted and his shop razed. "It was brutal. We were given only given 30 minutes to remove our wares ... we lost valuable property," he said.

"I don't have anywhere to sell, and have to keep some of the sofas at my lodgings. The sad part is the authorities have not given us an alternative place to work from." Meya, from Chitungwiza council, said some people had sublet market space and were collecting rent without giving it to the council but added the exercise was also about urban renewal. "People were just erecting structures everywhere and conducting their business anywhere, including along roads, and council was not getting revenue due," he said. "Harare is doing the same. They started their operation in October following communication from the ministry of local government to spruce (up) our image to attract investment."

He said the council had started to register some vendors and informal traders who wanted to operate legally, and would designate trading places for them at an unspecified future date. Harare mayor Herbert Gomba told the



LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May leaves 10 Downing Street in central London yesterday ahead of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs). —AFP

at a summit on November 25 last year, but the British leader's own parliament rejected it on January 15. Since then, May and her ministers have repeatedly

met EU leaders and their negotiator Michel Barnier to urge them to reopen the text to find a way to appease eurosceptic MPs. —AFP

Thomson Reuters Foundation that the law clearly stated where people could trade, and citizens should comply in order to protect public health. He added that notice of the evictions in Harare was given ahead of time and traders had been offered new locations. However, traders said that was not the case, according to Samuel Wadzai, the director of the Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET), a Harare-based group.

'Defenseless traders'

Demolishing vendors' stalls without notifying them or offering them a new place to do business was "barbaric and inhumane", the Chitungwiza Residents Trust (CHITREST) said. CHITREST director Alice Kuvheya said the group realized that local authorities were obliged to maintain cleanliness. "(But) we note with concern the use of the armed soldiers to deal with defenseless traders, who were making an honest living through vending and informal work in a very challenging economic environment," Kuvheya told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Meantime, Wadzai of VISET said more than 2,500 informal traders and vendors had been affected in the capital, and up to 800 more in Gweru, a city about 200 km southwest. He said the situation in Harare, Chitungwiza and elsewhere remained tense with many vendors traumatized and fearful of being confronted by soldiers if they returned to former sites. Instead of cracking down on innocent citizens, he added, the government should recognize the informal sector was key to Zimbabwe's economy and implement policies to reflect that. "Over 90 percent of the population is surviving through the informal sector, so there is need to review policies like the criminalization of street vending," he said. —Reuters

Alabama editor under fire over KKK editorial

WASHINGTON: The publisher of a small Alabama newspaper has come under fire after calling in an editorial for the return of the white supremacist Ku Klux Klan. Goodloe Sutton, publisher and editor of The Democrat-Reporter, wrote the editorial that appeared in last week's edition of the weekly newspaper in Linden, Alabama. "Time for the Ku Klux Klan to night ride again," the editorial said. "Democrats in the Republican Party and Democrats are plotting to raise taxes in Alabama. "Seems like the Klan would be welcome to raid the gated communities up there," it said. "Truly they are the ruling class."

Alabama Senator Doug Jones, a Democrat, called for Sutton's resignation. "OMG! What rock did this guy crawl out from under?" Jones tweeted. "This editorial is absolutely disgusting & he should resign-NOW!" "I have seen what happens when we stand by while people—especially those with influence—publish racist, hateful views," Jones said. Sutton, 79, defended his views in an interview with another newspaper, the Montgomery Advertiser.

"If we could get the Klan to go up there and clean out (Washington) DC, we'd all be better off," he told the Advertiser. Asked whether he considered the Klan a violent organization, Sutton said "well, they didn't kill but a few people. "The Klan wasn't violent until they needed to be." Linden is a town with a population of around 2,000. According to the Advertiser, The Democrat-Reporter had about 3,000 subscribers in 2015. —AFP

International

Indian prisoners stone Pakistani inmate to death amid tensions

US urges Pakistan to punish those behind Kashmir attack

JAIPUR: Indian prisoners stoned to death a Pakistani inmate in a jail yesterday amid mounting tensions over a suicide bombing that Delhi has blamed on its arch-rival neighbor, an official said. The Pakistani had been eight years into a life term at Jaipur Central Jail in the western state of Rajasthan when he was attacked. He was stoned to death after a quarrel, Rajasthan state director general of police Kapil Garg said.

The killing came amid calls for retribution across India over a car bombing in Kashmir last Thursday which killed at least 40 Indian paramilitaries. Pakistan-based Islamist group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) has claimed responsibility for the attack. India has accused Pakistan of backing the militants but Islamabad has denied any role. India and Pakistan, which each control sectors of Kashmir, have been bitter rivals since their independence from Britain in 1947. A Pakistani prisoner was killed by fellow inmates in a Kashmir jail in May 2013 in retaliation for a fatal attack on an Indian prisoner in a Pakistani jail.

Meanwhile, United States threw its support behind India on Tuesday and pressed Pakistan to punish those behind a suicide attack in Kashmir that killed 40 Indian

security personnel. "We have been in close communication with the government of India to express not only our condolences but our strong support for India as it confronts this terrorism," deputy State Department spokesman Robert Palladino told reporters. "We urge Pakistan to fully cooperate with the investigation into the attack and to punish anyone responsible."

India accuses Pakistan of backing militants

Palladino said that the United States has been in contact with both countries since the February 14 attack, which was claimed by the Pakistan-based Islamist group Jaish-e-Mohammed. "We call on all countries to uphold their responsibilities pursuant to the United Nations Security Council resolutions to deny safe haven and support for terrorists," Palladino said. India earlier called on Pakistan to take "credible and visible action" against the perpetrators of the attack, rejecting Prime Minister Imran Khan's offer to investigate any evidence offered by New Delhi.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has faced pressure from his Hindu nationalist base to respond forcefully to the attack, which comes weeks before he is expected to call general elections. The United States has a fast-growing relationship with India on



KASHMIR: A house in which militants are suspected to have sheltered is in flames after a gunfight happened between rebels and security forces in South Kashmir's Pulwama district. — AFP

areas from defense to trade. After years of seeking some balance in its ties between the nuclear-armed powers, the United States under President Donald

Trump has taken a hard line on Pakistan, cutting off aid over Islamabad's associations with extremists active in Afghanistan. — Agencies

India workers take to airwaves to demand better conditions

CHENNAI: The caller broke down in tears as she described how she queued three times to use one of only two toilets provided for 200 garment employees at the spinning mill where she works in India's southern state of Tamil Nadu. Her turn never came, forcing the factory worker to use a corner of the mill where waste cotton is discarded.

Humiliated and angry, the worker decided to share her daily ordeal at the mill with a local radio phone-in show. Listeners included labor unions and factory managers and work has now begun to add more toilets at the mill. Three radio stations, which are free and broadcast through mobile phones, have been set up across Tamil Nadu over the last year and now give a voice to the thousands of garment workers whose plight has long been ignored by manufacturers and brands.

Operating in the regions of Dindigul, Chennai and Tirupur, they attract more than 200 callers per day and have quickly become a huge hit among the state's garment workers. Callers into the shows discuss harassment, long working hours, poor wages and other working conditions. Many of the factories and mills in Tamil Nadu - the largest hub in India's \$40 billion-a-year textile and garment industry - operate informally, with poor regulation, and provide few formal grievance mechanisms for workers, union leaders say.

Existing grievance systems, like anonymous complaint boxes and internal committees to deal with

sexual harassment, are rarely used by workers who fear they will lose their jobs or distrust management, they add. "What they cannot openly say for fear of losing their jobs, they say here," said Thiviyarakhini Sesuraj, president of the all-women Tamilnadu Textile and Common Labour Union (TTCU), which runs the Voice of TTCU station in Dindigul. "These are first hand reports of what goes on inside the factories. And they reflect everyday abuse and hardship."

Tune in

Every day on her way to work, Chennai-based garment worker Padma listens to the Voice of Rights station on her mobile phone, pressing it against her ear and straining to hear the callers over the traffic sounds during her daily commute. Padma, who goes by one name, describes the show as an "addiction that empowers" her. Paul Kani, tunes in to the same station each morning, putting her phone on loudspeaker as she cooks for her family before heading to work at her garment factory in Ambattur, a suburb near Chennai. Kani says she can no longer cook unless she has the station playing in the background and likes to get involved.

"I love talking about various issues on the show," she said. "So many people can hear me and I don't feel alone in my struggles." Supported by technology company Gram Vaani, the Voice of Tirupur station hit the airwaves last week - making it the third interactive platform available to the more than one million workers employed in Tamil Nadu. Run in collaboration with garment workers' unions like TTCU, Garment and Fashion Workers Union, and Penn Thozhilalargal Sangam, these channels are helping to track and find solutions to grievances, labor rights campaigners say.

"We have had more than 80 cases where the problem has been resolved and impacted hundreds of workers in just one year," said Lamuel Enoch, program manager at Gram Vaani. As well as spoof shows

that give a light-hearted take on the lives of factory workers, Village Talk is a segment that invites listeners to share a short clip of them singing or talking on a work-related or everyday issue. "We use comedy, music and drama to talk about issues ... (and) broadcast updates on union activities, ongoing court cases and policy," Enoch said. "Our latest edition also includes multiple language options to cater to the migrant worker."

Call for help

Sesuraj at TTCU, who has campaigned for many years to improve the rights of mill workers, said she is often surprised by the nature of complaints and concerns raised by workers who call the radio shows. "A recent caller said that she was being ridiculed for not fitting into a uniform shirt provided by the management," Sesuraj said. "All the shirts were in medium size but she needed a large, which they refused to give her. She could not even negotiate for that. She wanted help." The silence around sexual harassment is also being broken by the three new radio networks. Despite nationwide awareness campaigns and the introduction of mandatory complaints committees in factories since 2013, no sexual harassment complaints have been made in the Tamil Nadu garment industry, according to a 2018 government report.

However, on air, garment workers have found their voice, often mentioning the abuse they are subjected to each day, Sesuraj said. Three cases of sexual harassment described by callers on Voice of TTCU shows are now being formally pursued by the union in Dindigul. "The users are growing, awareness is growing, and we have received complaints in large numbers," said Sujata Mody, president of Garment and Fashion Workers' Union that runs the Voice of Rights broadcast. "But are brands listening to voices of the women ... and is the industry willing to meet their basic needs? Everyone needs to tune in and listen carefully for change to come." — Reuters

European and Arab ministers hold talks on Mideast peace

DUBLIN: European and Arab ministers held closed-door talks in Ireland on Tuesday on "how best to move forward" in the Middle East peace process, the Irish foreign ministry said. Foreign Minister Simon Coveney headed the "retreat-style" meeting with his counterparts from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Egypt, France, Jordan, Spain, Sweden, as well as Palestinian foreign minister Riyad Al-Malki.

The ministers were joined by Arab League head Ahmed Aboul Gheit. "Ireland's experience in the past has been that confidentiality can allow for a better discussion between different participants", a foreign ministry spokesman said in a statement. "The intention was not to launch any new process but to consider ways to support and shape engagement on this issue in other fora." The "confidential discussion on the present state of the Middle East peace process and how best to move forward" was held at Farmleigh, a manor house in Dublin used for visiting dignitaries.

The Irish meeting comes just days after Jared Kushner, US President Donald Trump's son-in-law and adviser, outlined plans for a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians at the Munich Security Conference. The US plans are to be formally presented after Israel's April 9 elections. But the Palestinian Authority says it can no longer trust the United States as an honest broker after Trump in 2017 recognized Jerusalem-holy to the three major monotheistic religions-as Israel's capital. — AFP

Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call:
+965 248 35 616 / 617
E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
ads@kuwaittimes.net
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

best OFFERS 50%

SAMSUNG J2 Core SM-J260
8GB 5.6" LTE
23 ق.ب. / 28 ق.ب. / 5 ق.ب. SAVE

SAMSUNG J4+ SM-J415
32GB 6.0" LTE
39 ق.ب. / 49 ق.ب. / 10 ق.ب. SAVE

SAMSUNG Galaxy A7(2018) SM-A750-Blue
128GB 6.0" LTE
84 ق.ب. / 109 ق.ب. / 25 ق.ب. SAVE

SAMSUNG Galaxy Note8 SM-N950-Gold
64GB 6.3" LTE
144 ق.ب. / 179 ق.ب. / 35 ق.ب. SAVE

best ست
AL-YOUSIFI

1 809 809
www.best.com.kw

Kuwait City (New St.) | Kuwait City (Panasonic Tower) | Sharq (Souq Sharq)
Hawalli (Tunis St.) | Hawalli (Bin Khaldoon St.) | Al-Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak St.)
Al-Salmiya (Boulevard Mall) | Al-Farwaniya (Behind the Police Station)
Al-Shuwaikh (Al-Ghazali Bridge) | Al-Fahaheel (Opposite Public Parking)
Al-Rai (4th Ring Rd) | Al-Jahra (Opposite Main Co-op) | Airport (Departures)
Al-Eqaila (B9 Mall)

Best Alyousifi @BestAlyousifi BestAlyousifi alyousifiBEST

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
Email: info@kuwaittimes.com
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

As Maduro holds on, opposition eyes negotiated transition

Venezuela's opposition is trying to convince ruling Socialist Party officials to join a transition government, shifting focus as it seeks to unseat President Nicolas Maduro, who has clung to power in the face of growing international pressure and US sanctions. Last month, Venezuelan opposition leader and Congress chief Juan Guaido invoked the constitution to assume the interim presidency after declaring Maduro's reelection in May 2018 illegitimate. He swiftly received recognition from the United States and Latin American powers.

In an effort to secure the backing of Venezuela's military, Guaido proposed an amnesty for officers who turn on Maduro's government. But defections have been minimal and top brass has declared allegiance to Maduro, dimming hopes of a quick end to an economic disaster that has prompted millions of desperate Venezuelans to flee abroad, fueling a regional humanitarian crisis.

Amid fears the changes have stalled, opposition leaders have begun to talk in the past week about bringing ruling Socialist Party stalwarts into a potential transition government. "This transition requires a large national agreement between the country's political forces," Edgar Zambrano, vice president of the opposition-run National Assembly, said in an interview. Zambrano said any transition must include "Chavismo", the leftwing movement founded by Venezuela's late leader Hugo Chavez, who handpicked Maduro as his successor. "You cannot disappear Chavismo and you cannot go from persecuted to persecutor. This is not political revenge," he said.

It was not immediately clear how actively the opposition is building bridges. Opposition leaders say they maintain contact with government officials and military officers but keep such talks confidential to avoid affecting those involved. Maduro says he is the victim of a US-orchestrated coup attempt and has refused to resign. Many rank-and-file opposition supporters hope to see Maduro and his allies exiled or behind bars, and would be frustrated by attempts to bring them into the transition.

Guaido's decision to assume the interim presidency revitalized Venezuela's fragmented and disillusioned opposition and led to a flurry of street protests. Hopes of quick change were fueled by diplomatic support from numerous countries and tough US sanctions on Venezuela's vital oil industry, which has bankrolled Maduro's government.

Some in the opposition quietly predicted a military pronouncement in favor of Guaido as early as Jan 23, the day he proclaimed himself president at a rally in Caracas. Top military officials were silent for hours after Guaido's pronouncement, leading to speculation that Maduro was frantically negotiating with officers not to switch sides.

Yet only a handful of active officers backed Guaido. Expectations of a quick military proclamation have given way to concerns over a slow and complicated path forward, both in Caracas and Washington. "I don't think (Washington) understood the complexities of the target, of Venezuela: all the overlapping security that Maduro has available; the things at his disposal," said one former U.S. administration official in touch with current officials.

What about justice?

The idea of a unity in Venezuela was in fact included in a little-noticed provision of a Transition Law passed by the National Assembly last month. Venezuela's four main opposition parties all back the idea, but in the past week have increasingly discussed the issue. "People must understand that Chavismo is not just Maduro," legislator Stalin Gonzalez said in an interview with Reuters last week, in comments that sparked a backlash on social media.

Some opposition supporters say they would be open to middle-ranking or dissident socialists being included in an interim government, but not the top brass. "They must pay for what they have done," said Maria Elena Fonseca, who at age 78 struggles to make ends meet despite working as a psychologist. Like countless Venezuelans, Fonseca has seen her income eroded by hyperinflation that now tops 2 million percent annually. Fonseca receives remittance from her daughter abroad, who is among the estimated 3 million Venezuelans who have fled the once-prosperous nation since 2015. "It's not about revenge: it's about justice," she said.

Stalling momentum?

Back channels between the two sides are considerably better developed than might be expected from 20 years of acrimonious politics and the constant slew of vitriolic social media commentary. Gonzalez and other young legislators developed relationships with Socialist Party politicians in 2016. The two sides coexisted in the legislature until Maduro backed the creation in 2017 of an all-powerful, government-controlled Constitution Assembly with the aim of sidelining Congress. Guaido's team is wielding a stick as well as a carrot. It has held massive protests nationwide over the past month and will face off with authorities when it attempts to bring humanitarian aid into the country on Saturday. —Reuters



This photo taken on Feb 3, 2019 shows an illegal poppy field in Hopong, Shan State. — AFP

Ruthless meth networks get Myanmar hooked

Mobs of stick-wielding churchgoers in Myanmar's northeast used to descend on dealers and addicts in a desperate effort to save their communities from a meth-induced health crisis sweeping the country. But anonymous death threats brought the vigilante operations to a halt. "It simply became too dangerous for us," says Zau Man, leader of the local Baptist church in Kutkai, a town in Shan State scarred by addiction.

Myanmar is the second-biggest producer of opium in the world after Afghanistan and is now believed to be the largest source of methamphetamine. The multibillion-dollar industry outstrips rivals in Latin America to feed lucrative markets as far away as Sydney, Tokyo and Seoul. Shan is the epicenter of production in Myanmar, with a network of local armed groups linking up with transnational trafficking gangs.

Kutkai sits between Mandalay and the militia-riddled town of Muse on the China border, a key entry point for precursor chemicals heading to Myanmar's illegal meth labs. Trucks carrying illicit goods roar through the town in both directions, past a Chinese temple and street-side restaurants with signs in Mandarin. Heroin and meth use here are rampant. Zau Man says nearly every household has at least one drug user, dealers work out in the open and often violent meth addicts have turned parts of Kutkai into no-go zones. "In some areas, you can only get food until 10pm, but you can get drugs 24/7," he says.

'Smart and ruthless'

Myanmar is facing a "public health disaster" because of meth and few villages in the country are left unscathed,

Jeremy Douglas, regional representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, tells AFP. But the crisis is at its most acute in the poppy-covered hills of Shan State, where a landscape overrun with armed rebel groups, militias and security forces is an ideal breeding ground for meth labs. Accurate figures of production of high quality crystal meth, or "ice", and low-grade meth, known in Southeast Asia as "yaba", are unavailable.

In January 2018, Kutkai police seized 30 million yaba pills, 1,750kg of crystal meth and 500kg of heroin with a domestic value of some \$54 million in the country's largest-ever drug bust. But huge raids leave street prices unaltered, suggesting they are only a small slice of production, according to the International Crisis Group, which says the business now "dwarfs" Shan's formal economy.

Crystal meth is smuggled via sophisticated trafficking networks to more developed markets like Australia, where it can fetch a wholesale value of more than \$180 million per ton. Yaba is distributed to Myanmar's neighbours, particularly Thailand and Bangladesh. But the pink pills are increasingly being dumped at rock-bottom prices on a domestic market in what Douglas called a "smart and ruthless" strategy to build demand. "It's a nasty business and they're really pushing it out into the population," he says.

Users and health workers in three different towns in Shan state - Lashio, Kutkai and Muse - told AFP pills go for just 500 kyat for three, or around 10 cents each. As the price falls, so does the user age, with reports of children as young as nine taking yaba. Many miners, long-distance drivers and shift workers mix narcotics - smoking meth to keep them awake, and injecting heroin to bring them down.

Ashamed to go home

Arr San, a gaunt 27-year-old with matted hair, rummages round his roadside shack in Muse and pulls out a bong crafted from a plastic bottle he uses to smoke yaba. He has been hooked since he was 18 and now consumes around five pills a day. For Arr San, like many others in the region, there are few opportunities to avoid the cycle of poverty and violence - two years ago he fled his home in a nearby town for fear of being forced into an ethnic armed group.

Narcotics can provide an escape from the often grim reality of life in Shan. "I take drugs because I get depressed and they help stabilise my mind," he says. Arr San is one of 300 heading daily to the local hospital for methadone, a powerful opioid used to wean people off heroin. But the problem is not limited to the poor. Among Myanmar's urban elite, addiction to high grade crystal meth is already taking root. Usually in powder or crystal form, "ice" is commonly snorted or smoked. It can also be injected, which increases the threat of disease transmission through needle-sharing. A UNODC-backed policy launched in Feb 2018 champions penalizing users and treating drugs as a health issue while tackling the trade's kingpins. But the law has yet to catch up - anyone caught with even one yaba pill still faces a minimum of five years behind bars. It is estimated that around half of Myanmar's prison inmates are jailed for minor drug offences and arrests of drug users are rising. A lack of funding for prevention work and treatment means Myanmar's meth problem may only get worse. Arr says: "I want to go back home and see my mother's face, but I just can't." He added: "I don't want to trouble her as I'm so sick." — AFP

Sanders has pulled Dems leftward

Once declared too radical by Democratic leaders, the policies pushed by Bernie Sanders including universal health care have tilted toward mainstream party acceptance, themes he and several rival progressives will uphold on the US presidential campaign trail. Sanders on Tuesday became the latest figure to seek the Democratic nomination to challenge Donald Trump for the White House in 2020, squaring off against several other progressives who have embraced many of the issues he championed during his visionary first presidential bid.

Back in 2016, debate swirled about pushing for a substantial expansion of health coverage through "Medicare for All," raising the US minimum wage to \$15 per hour, free tuition at public colleges, and aggressively combatting climate change. "We were told that all of these concepts were ideas that the American people would never accept," Sanders said in a video launching his candidacy. "Well, three years have come and gone, and as a result of millions of Americans standing up and fighting back, all of these policies and more are now supported by a majority of Americans."

Of the major Democrats already in the race, several espouse progressive policies popularized by Sanders. Senators Kamala Harris, Cory Booker, Elizabeth Warren and Kirsten Gillibrand, all 2020 candidates, co-sponsored his Medicare for All legislation in 2017. Julian Castro, another Democratic hopeful, joins Gillibrand in supporting universal early childhood education. And Warren, Booker and Harris have all proclaimed support for the Green New Deal, an ultra-progressive platform to combat climate change that was unveiled this month by congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a rising liberal star. "I got laughed at three years ago when I said climate change is one of the great crises facing our planet," Sanders told Vermont Public Radio on Tuesday. "People are not laughing now."



Bernie Sanders

Embracing socialism?

Trump's re-election team seized on Sanders' announcement as an opportunity to blast his Democratic rivals for supporting an extremist agenda. "Every candidate is embracing his brand of socialism," the Trump 2020 campaign said in a statement. Sanders has nevertheless had tremendous influence on the party. "It's a sign of Sanders' success that he now has so many imitators," Dante Scala, a political science professor at the University of New Hampshire, told AFP.

Following November's midterm elections, the Congressional Progressive Caucus - co-founded by Sanders in 1991 - wields more power than at any time in its history. "We're seeing 2020 candidates adopting his ideas," Scala added. "And I think his ideas are becoming a marker, or a dividing line, among the primary contenders."

Some candidates have already sought to distance themselves from the 77-year-old liberal, as Harris did last weekend during her first-ever visit to New Hampshire, the state which votes second in the nominating process, after Iowa. "The people of New Hampshire will tell me what's required to compete in New Hampshire," she said at a campaign event in Concord. "But I will tell you I am not a democratic socialist."

Senator Amy Klobuchar, a Democrat known for forging consensus across party lines, said this week that the Green New Deal and positions like Medicare for All were currently more aspirational than realistic. As an example she rejected the prospect of tuition-free college. "If I was a magic genie and could give that to everyone and we could afford it, I would," she said at a town hall. But a leftward shift in Democratic politics is underway. — AFP

Is Zimbabwe nostalgic for Mugabe?

While it's unlikely that many Zimbabweans yearn for former ruler Robert Mugabe's return, the occasion of his 95th birthday on Thursday has led some to see him in a softer light. "Comrade Bob" was toppled from 37 years in power in November 2017 following a brief military takeover that saw him replaced by his one-time protégé, deputy and latterly, political rival President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Immediately after Mugabe's resignation, there was an outpouring of joy and many people took to the streets to celebrate. But Mnangagwa's gloss quickly faded and the economic catastrophe facing Zimbabwe began to crystallize as cash shortages worsened and fuel prices soared. "We miss Mugabe. If he didn't care, at least he pretended to," Harare resident Anita Mugombedzi told AFP. "If what we have seen so far is anything to judge by, Zimbabwe will be worse than it was under Mugabe at his worst."

In the months after Mnangagwa took power, it became clear the security services were prepared to use deadly force to put down dissent - just as they had done under Mugabe. Six people were killed after soldiers opened fire in downtown Harare following presidential elections in July, which Mnangagwa won despite rigging allegations and an appeal by the opposition.

In January, at least 17 civilians were killed according to community groups after a crackdown sparked by thousands of Zimbabweans taking to the streets to protest an overnight doubling of fuel prices. There were also harrowing accusations by civilians of

torture and sexual assault by the security services. "Mugabe made mistakes but he was not as ruthless as those who took over from him. We thought things would be better under Mnangagwa but now many people are saying Mugabe was better," said Edmond Jera, an unemployed accountant.

Mugabe's birthday will not be publicly celebrated this year, and it will simply be a national holiday like any other. Before his fall, his birthdays were week-long extravaganzas and he would receive cakes that weighed as many kilograms as his age along with lavish gifts including cattle and tributes from regime loyalists.

'Divided' nation

"The day is passing this year without the usual pomp and ceremony," said Rashweat Mukundu, a researcher at the Zimbabwe Democracy Institute think-tank. "Mugabe failed to leave a lasting legacy. He left a divided Zimbabwe. This should be a lesson to those in power today." Last year, Mugabe's family and friends marked his first birthday since his defection from a low-key private birthday party at his Harare home attended only by members of his inner circle. No senior government leaders were thought to have been present.

A pro-Mnangagwa march, originally planned for Thursday, will be held at the weekend, according to the ruling party's youth wing. "We are going to march in Harare to show support for our president," said ZANU-PF's youth leader Pupurai Togarepi. But Togarepi diplomatically insisted that "we will remember the revolutionary work done by the former president", calling him a "giant political icon".

Harare resident Wright Chirombe said Mugabe's allies had treated the ex-ruler unfairly. "They should have kept on honoring him rather than want him to appear like he did bad things throughout his rule," he said. "That's betrayal, and it's unfair. He made mistakes like all humans do, but there are many things he did which make him better than those who are now in power." — AFP



Business

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2019

12 GIG reports KD 11.9m in net profit for 2018 with 18.2% y-o-y growth**13** France fines Swiss bank UBS 3.7bn euros in tax fraud case**14** Gulf Bank participates in Harvard Business School's program

LE MANS, France: Protesters wear paper-made costumes as they take part in a demonstration in support of maintaining jobs at two Arjowiggins paper factories in receivership in the Sarthe department, yesterday in Le Mans, western France. Nine hundred jobs are threatened at the Besse-sur-Braye and Le Bourray Arjowiggins plants, which are looking for a buyer. — AFP

Indian tycoon ordered to pay or go to jail

Anil Ambani 'refused to pay telecom giant Ericsson \$77 million'

NEW DELHI: India's top court told billionaire tycoon Anil Ambani yesterday he must pay his debts to Sweden's Ericsson or go to jail, the latest twist in a saga that has brought his telecom company to its knees. Ambani's Reliance Communications is some \$4 billion in debt after a brutal telecom price war with his brother Mukesh-India's richest man. Judges found Anil Ambani, 59, had refused to pay telecom giant Ericsson 5.5 billion rupees (\$77 million) as previously ordered by the Supreme Court.

They ruled the billionaire will be jailed for three months if 4.5 billion rupees are not stumped up within four weeks.

Ambani's firm said it will comply with the ruling and pay the debt. Some 1.0 billion rupees have already been deposited with the court, which said the sum will be handed to Ericsson.

But the ruling dealt a new blow to Reliance Communications shares which lost

another 3.65 percent Wednesday on the Mumbai stock exchange. The shares have now fallen 86 percent in the past three years—including a drop by more than a third after it filed for insolvency.

That move was started after Reliance Communications failed to sell assets to pay back lenders.

The dispute started when Ericsson sought to recoup 16 billion rupees from Reliance Communications. They reached a settlement last May, but the Indian company failed to meet payment deadlines.

Ambani had hoped to avoid insolvency proceedings by offloading his company's telecom tower and spectrum business to his brother's Reliance Jio for \$2.4 billion. But the deal has hit regulatory hurdles and opposition from creditors. Reliance Communications faces liquidation if it is unable to pay back its debts by November.

The Ambani brothers engaged in a bitter

feud for control of Reliance Industries after their rags-to-riches father Dhirubhai Ambani died in 2002 without a will.

The pair ended up splitting the Reliance group, which was India's most valuable listed company. RCom shares plunge in latest twist between battling tycoon brothers.

The Anil Ambani-led mobile carrier is reeling under debts of around \$4 billion after a battle with Reliance Jio-led by Ambani's older brother and India's richest man Mukesh Ambani.

The fight for supremacy in India's hugely competitive telecoms market is the latest twist in a long-running saga between the tycoon brothers which has gripped India's business community.

Reliance Communications said in a statement last week that it had decided to start insolvency proceedings after failing to sell assets to pay back lenders. The company had hoped to offload its telecom tower and



spectrum business to Reliance Jio for \$2.4 billion but the deal has hit regulatory hurdles and opposition from creditors. It faces liquidation if it is unable to pay back its debts, with the help of the national bankruptcy court, in 270 days.

Reliance Communications was once India's second-biggest wireless carrier, but began a downward spiral when its rival

shook up the telecoms market in 2016 by offering free voice calls and vastly cheaper data plans.

The new 4G Jio network sent competitors scurrying to match the costly investment or deciding to get out of India altogether. The Ambani brothers engaged in a bitter feud for control of Reliance Industries after their rags-to-riches father Dhirubhai Ambani died in 2002 without a will. The pair ended up splitting the Reliance group that was India's most valuable listed company.

After a protracted court case that saw their mother, Kokilaben, act as peacemaker, the brothers agreed to bury the hatchet and tear up a non-competition agreement that prevented them from entering the same sectors. In 2011, Mukesh and Anil came together to dedicate a memorial to their father, and their mother declared the enmity over, telling reporters: "There is love between the brothers." — AFP

US debt hits record \$22tn under Trump

WASHINGTON, DC: More massive than the US economy, the national debt hit a new record of \$22 trillion under President Donald Trump but Republicans who traditionally rail against debt and deficits have remained mum.

The sum of borrowing to cover chronic deficits as well as growing interest payments, this mountain of debt already stood at \$19.95 trillion when Trump entered the White House, reaching the equivalent of US GDP for the first time since World War II. By comparison, France's debt, which also is about the same as its GDP, amounted to a little more than 2.3 trillion euros (about \$2.6 trillion) in late September.

The massive corporate tax cuts that Trump pushed for at the end of 2017, and

the surge in spending, especially in defense, have increased the fiscal deficit for the world's largest economy.

"If we don't have a strong military, you don't have to worry about debt, you have bigger problems," Trump told reporters last week. Administration officials continue to argue that the tax cuts, which are expected to widen the deficit by \$1.5 trillion over 10 years, will pay for themselves by boosting economic growth and thereby increasing tax revenues.

Republican deficit hawks quiet

But despite faster growth, the budget deficit climbed 17 percent to \$779 billion last year, the worst since 2012. And according to the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO), the deficit is expected to widen further this year to \$900 billion. The United States saw a budget surplus for four years under Democratic president Bill Clinton, amid a booming economy, but the war in Iraq under Republican George W. Bush once again plunged federal finances into the red.

Democratic president Barack Obama had to deal with the aftermath of the 2008 global financial crisis that required a ramp up in government spending, causing the federal books to deteriorate badly.

That helped fuel the birth of the Tea Party, a populist political movement that contributed to Trump's rise to power. With the economic recovery and the standoff in the Republican-controlled Congress forcing cuts in public spending, the last few years of the Obama administration saw a decline in the deficit.

But when it started to surge again under Trump, the Republican deficit-hawks were strangely silent.

'Unsustainable path'

Beyond the politics, however, the aging US population with the accompanying increase in health and pension expenditures is the structural issue that is the primary cause of chronic US deficit. Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell frequently points out that while it is not his role to set fiscal policy, "it's not a secret, it's a long-



A pedestrian passes the National Debt Clock on West 43rd Street in New York.

known fact that the US federal government budget is on an unsustainable path and that needs to be addressed."

Of course the Fed's interest rate increases—nine in the past four years—have caused an increase in the debt service costs, and

Trump has frequently lashed out at the central bank, calling it "crazy" and a greater economic threat than China. Interest on the public debt cost the US government \$13 billion more in December compared to a year earlier. — AFP

Business

France fines Swiss bank UBS 3.7bn euros in tax fraud case

Europe cracks down on tax evasion, dubious banking practices

PARIS: A Paris court yesterday fined Swiss banking giant UBS 3.7 billion euros (\$4.2 billion) for tax fraud, a record for such a case in France. Lawyers for the bank, which was convicted of illegally helping French clients to hide billions of euros from French tax authorities, said they would lodge an appeal. UBS had tried to negotiate a settlement to avoid the potentially embarrassing court showdown, before failing to agree on a fine with prosecutors. The trial opened last autumn after seven years of investigations, launched when former employees came forward with claims of unlawful conduct.

This came as authorities across Europe cracked down on tax evasion and dubious banking practices in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. 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 with each other. In the UBS case, French authorities determined that more than 10 billion euros had been kept from the eyes of their tax officials between 2004 and 2012.

The National Financial Prosecutor's office has said the bank and its directors "were perfectly aware that they were breaking French law" by unlawfully soliciting clients and helping them evade French taxes. UBS's French subsidiary was also fined 15 million euros for complicity.

The court also awarded the French state, itself a plaintiff, 800,000 euros in damages. But this fine was far below the 1.6 billion sought by prosecutors.

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 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 was 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 hunting retreats, where bankers would meet their "prospects"—something they were not allowed to do under French law. UBS France directors then used notes



PARIS: In this file photo, US former UBS Group AG banker Bradley Birkenfeld who as a whistleblower helped US authorities prosecute the Swiss bank for tax fraud is seen, at Paris' courthouse, prior to the trial of UBS as part of the French part of this case. — AFP

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 books. Only one "milk ticket" was found during the inquiry, prompting defense lawyers to argue there was no proof to justify claims of 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 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.

Prosecutors in this case were assisted 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. In 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

the central bank. The official added that the central bank will prevent risks from overly tight monetary conditions, as well as to promote reasonable growth in credit and social financing.

China, the world's second largest economy, has been trying to reduce risks of a slowdown, especially with its trade dispute with the United States. The government has been rolling out measures, such as cutting banks' reserve requirement ratio (RRR) to ensure that there is ample liquidity in the financial system.

China slashed RRR by 100 basis points in January - its fifth cut in the past year, with further reductions widely expected by the market. China's banks doled out a record 3.23 trillion yuan (\$480.43 billion) in new loans in January while several other key credit gauges also picked up modestly that month in response to recent policy easing steps.

Rising bill financing and short-term loans could lead to "arbitrage" activities and create potential risks, he added. Financial institutions should offer more credit, especially medium- and long-term loans to small firms, he said. Li also said the government needed to deepen reform to resolve long-term problems in the economy. — Reuters

paying off an associate in Saudi Arabia who helped him with collateral.

He has languished ever since in a detention center in northern Tokyo and has twice seen bail requests refused and multiple other attempts to contest his detention which has been extended several times.

Apparently frustrated by a lack of progress in his case, Ghosn shook up his legal team earlier this month, replacing a former top prosecutor with Hironaka, a hot-shot defense lawyer known for securing acquittals. This is no mean feat in a country where 99 percent of cases that go to trial end in conviction.

'Story of betrayal'

Ghosn's previous lawyer, Motonari Otsuru, surprised many during his one and only public appearance by seeming to side with his former colleagues in the prosecution over his client.

Otsuru declined to criticize Ghosn's detention conditions and suggested there was little chance in winning bail before a trial, which he said could take as much as six months to organize.

Ghosn previously led the three-way alliance of Renault, Nissan and Mitsubishi Motors that was the world's biggest selling car group. He has since been stripped of the leadership of the two Japanese firms and resigned from the chairmanship of Renault.

His downfall has exposed rifts in the awkward tie-up between Nissan and Renault, two firms with different corporate cultures and headquarters 10,000 kilometers (6,000 miles) apart.

Renault has a controlling 43 percent stake in Nissan, a fact that rankles with Nissan which now outsells its "senior" partner. In an interview with AFP last month, Ghosn said his arrest was a "story of betrayal" sparked by "opposition and anxiety" about bringing the companies closer together.

Speaking to reporters, Hironaka said: "I have the impression that it's an internal problem at Nissan."

"People at Nissan brought the case to prosecutors and they took up the case although they are supposed not to intervene in civil cases." —AFP

CBK promotion to celebrate national days

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced the launch of a promotional campaign to reward clients holding the bank's credit and prepaid cards on the occasion of the national day celebrations.



Hameed Ibrahim Salman

In this regard, CBK's individual banking services manager, Hameed Ibrahim Salman explained that the campaign would go on from February 20 till March 2, 2019 and that a raffle would be held to choose 28 winners to get valuable rewards and cash prizes.

Salman explained that each KD 10 spent locally using CBK credit or prepaid cards would give holders one entry in the raffle while each KD 10 spent abroad using these cards would give holders three entries in the raffle. He also noted that the result would be announced on March 10 and that the first winner would get KD 1000, the second KD 500, the third KD 250 and the remaining 25 winners would get KD 100 each.

China will not change prudent monetary policy: Li

BEIJING: China has not and will not change its prudent monetary policy and will not resort to "flood-like" stimulus, Premier Li Keqiang said yesterday. Market speculation is growing over whether authorities will take more aggressive policy steps after recent weak data. "I reiterate that the prudent monetary policy has not changed and will not change. We are determined not to engage in 'flood-like' stimulus," Li said at a cabinet meeting, according to a statement on the government's website.

Later yesterday, a central bank official reiterated Li's comments on prudent monetary policy when interviewed by the Financial News, which is run by

Carlos Ghosn case a chance to 'mend' Japan's system: Lawyer

TOKYO: Carlos Ghosn's lawyer said yesterday his client's high-profile and controversial detention was a chance to "mend" Japan's justice system, as he insisted the former Nissan boss was innocent of all charges. In his first media appearance since his surprise appointment earlier this month, Junichiro Hironaka estimated that a trial would likely come "after the summer" but declined to say whether Ghosn would again attempt to win bail.

"Prosecutors have detained him because he did not confess. I would like people to consider whether this is appropriate from the viewpoint of international standards," Hironaka told reporters.

"Since it's turning out to be an international issue, I think it's an opportunity to mend the system to global standards," added the lawyer.

Hironaka's comments chimed with an earlier statement by the International Federation for Human Rights and Japan's Center for Prisoners' Rights (CPR) which claimed Ghosn's case highlighted "serious failings" of Japan's legal system.

Ghosn, a 64-year-old Franco-Lebanese-Brazilian businessman and one of the world's best-known tycoons, saw his life turned upside down when prosecutors stormed his private jet on November 19 after it landed at a Tokyo airport. He faces three charges. Prosecutors believe he under-reported his salary to the tune of more than \$80 million over two periods of time.

They also accuse him of a complex scheme to defer personal investment losses to Nissan and of

CELEBRATING KUWAIT

ABK extends its congratulations to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to the Kuwaiti government and its people on the occasion of National and Liberation days.

ABK will be closed on Sunday 24th February 2019 as a day of rest and on Monday & Tuesday 25th - 26th February 2019 as a public holiday. Business will resume as usual on Wednesday 27th February 2019.

During this period, the Bank's online services and Call Center will be available.

Simpler Banking

eahli.com Ahlan Ahli 1 899 899

الأهلي ABK

Business

Gulf Bank attends Harvard School's program on strategic execution in financial services

Program held jointly by Kuwait IBS and Harvard Business School

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is proud to announce its participation in Harvard Business School's 'Leading Strategy Execution in Financial Services' program. Held at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel, from 26th to 31st January 2019, the residential program was attended by Gulf Bank managers, Tamer Al-Shawa and Mohammad Al-Beloushi.

The program falls under the partnership between Harvard Business School and Kuwait Institute of Banking Studies. Now in its tenth year, the partnership involves the presentation of an executive education program, designed to support the development of senior leaders in the GCC's banking and finance sector.

Leading Strategy Execution in Financial Services' introduced participants to the latest trends in the digital arena, senior leadership development, and progressive strategies including impactful business planning.

Commenting on Gulf Bank's participation, Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager of Human Resources, Gulf Bank said: "Enrolment into the program comes as part of the

bank's efforts in developing our executive leadership with the skills to make strategic decisions as part of our continued drive to build a high-performing innovative culture. Congratulations to Tamer Al-Shawa and Mohammad Al-Beloushi for the successful completion of the 'Leading Strategy Execution in Financial Services' Program."

In addition to participation in Executive Leadership Programs, Gulf Bank offers a wide array of learning and development programs across all levels of the organization.



Salma Hajjaj



Blow to US efforts to ban Chinese company from allies' telecoms networks

KUWAIT: The British government has concluded yesterday that it can mitigate the risk from using Huawei equipment in 5G networks, in a serious blow to US efforts to persuade allies to ban the Chinese supplier from high-speed telecommunications systems.

The UK National Cyber Security Centre has determined that there are ways to limit the risks from using Huawei in future 5G ultra-fast networks, two people familiar with the conclusion, which has not been made public, told the Financial Times.

The finding comes despite stepped-up US efforts to persuade countries to bar Huawei from their networks on the basis that it could help China conduct espionage or cyber sabotage. The US National Security Agency has been sharing more information with allies and partners to underscore the risks, but several European countries, including the UK and Germany, have not been convinced that a ban is warranted. One person familiar with the debate said the British conclusion would "carry great weight" with European leaders, since the UK has access to sensitive US intelligence via its membership of the Five Eyes intelligence sharing network.

"Other nations can make the argument that if the British are confident of mitigation against national security threats then they can also reassure their publics and the US administration that they are acting in a prudent manner in continuing to allow their telecommunications."

Robert Hannigan, former head of GCHQ, the UK signals intelligence agency, recently wrote in the FT that NCSC had "never found evidence of malicious Chinese state cyber activity through Huawei" and that any "assertions that any Chinese technology in any part of a 5G network represents an unacceptable risk are nonsense".

Burgan Bank announces Airport branch working hours



KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced that its airport branch will resume normal working hours during Kuwait's upcoming National and Liberation holidays, starting from Sunday 24th February till Tuesday 26th February 2019, in order to accommodate banking requirements for all the customers during the public holidays. The bank's branch will operate from 8:00 am to 10:30 pm.

For more information on any products or services, customers are required to contact Burgan Bank's call center 1804080 during the holiday. On this occasion, Burgan Bank extends its best wishes and greetings to the public on Kuwait's nationwide celebrations of both the 58th Independence Day and the 28th Liberation day.

flydubai to increase flights to Saudi Arabia

KUWAIT: Dubai-based airline flydubai has announced yesterday that it will boost its services to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with 12 new flights per week. An additional daily flight to Riyadh Airport (RUH) and five flights a week to Hofuf Airport (HOF) will start from 16 March 2019.

Commenting on the increase of flights to Saudi Arabia Hamad Obaidalla, Chief Commercial Officer at flydubai, said: "Saudi Arabia remains an important market for flydubai and we are delighted to be able to increase our services to the Kingdom as trade and tourism between the UAE and Saudi Arabia continues to grow."

Flydubai will now operate to 11 points

in Saudi Arabia from its hub in Dubai. In addition, flydubai operates to Abha, Dammam, Hail, Jeddah, Jizan, Medina, Qassim, Riyadh, Tabuk and Taif providing passengers with the opportunity to connect onwards to Asia, Europe, India and Russia. "We would like to thank the authorities in Saudi Arabia for their cooperation in supporting flydubai and providing the necessary facilities and services needed for the success of our flights. With these additional flights our commitment to serve our passengers in the Kingdom will enable passengers to travel to numerous destinations," added Hamad Obaidalla.

Flydubai has recently announced the launch of flights to Tashkent in Uzbekistan from March 2019 along with flights to Naples in Italy and Budapest, the Hungarian capital, from June 2019. It also recently launched flights to Kozhikode, India. The airline's network of destinations has now grown to more than 90 destinations in 47 countries around the world served by a fleet of modern Boeing 737 aircraft. As part of the partnership announced in 2017,



Emirates will codeshare on this route. For bookings under the codeshare, Emirates passengers will receive complimentary meals and the Emirates check baggage allowance on flights operated by flydubai in Economy Class. Benefiting from this codeshare partnership, travellers from Saudi Arabia will have access to travel to hundreds of des-

tinations all over the world via Dubai. Emirates Skywards members can earn Skywards miles and Skywards Tier Miles on codeshare flights as per the existing Skywards mileage programme. Skywards Silver, Gold and Platinum members travelling on codeshare flights can access flydubai's Business Check-in counters and receive priority tags.

Unlimited roaming Internet with Ooredoo passport during National Day holidays

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait announced the continuation of its latest promotional campaign on the occasion of Kuwait's national celebrations during the National Day holidays. Customers will be able to enjoy the Ooredoo Passport Unlimited Monthly Pack for KD 20 over a 30-day period when they subscribe during the month of February that can be used in over

60 countries. It is worth mentioning that the price of the Ooredoo Passport Unlimited Monthly Pack will go back to its original price of KD 39 per month after the offer ends at the end of the month.

The Ooredoo Passport Unlimited package gives customers exclusive unlimited roaming internet to keep up with the customers' mode of usage for mobile internet, as it is the main tool for sharing videos, pictures and audio clips with loved ones on various social media channels such as Instagram and Snapchat.

Commenting on this offer, Ooredoo Kuwait issued a statement saying that the service is aimed to enrich the experience of the telecom service provider's customers and meet their expectations, taking in mind the lifestyle of the company's global-oriented customer base. The offer also reiterates Ooredoo's commitment to helping customers enjoy the internet, especially since mobile internet is an essential part of everyday use to many customers.



Glencore vows to cap coal output as profits tumble

ZURICH: Mining giant Glencore pledged yesterday to limit its coal production and instead prioritise investment in other commodities needed as part of a transition towards cleaner energy and transportation. "To meet the growing needs of a lower carbon economy, Glencore aims to prioritize its capital investment to grow production of commodities essential to the energy and mobility transition and to limit its coal production capacity broadly to current levels," the firm said in a statement.

Switzerland-based Glencore, which also trades commodities, noted that it was well-positioned to support the transition to a lower-carbon economy with a portfolio that includes copper, cobalt, nickel, vanadium and zinc. The metals are important in the production of batteries, the cost and performance of which will likely be key in determining whether electric vehicles displace petrol- and diesel-fuelled vehicles.

Glencore said it believes that energy and mobility transformation "is a key part of the global response to the increasing risks posed by climate change". Coal, a key fuel for electricity production, is a major producer of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, a major driver of global warming. Globally, coal use accounts for 40 percent of CO2 emissions and is on the rise after declining slightly from 2014 to 2016.

Glencore said it agreed with international efforts to limit the rise in global temperatures while also ensuring universal access to affordable energy. The firm also said it "must invest in assets that will be resilient to regulatory, physical and operational risks related to climate change ... to deliver a strong investment case to our shareholders."

Trade ties review

The pledge to limit its coal output to current levels comes after Glencore recently increased its footprint in the sector, buying stakes in a couple of



The logo of mining giant Glencore at the Swiss commodity trading's headquarters in Baar, central Switzerland. —AFP

coal mines sold by Rio Tinto in Australia. The integration of the Hail Creek and Hunter Valley should take Glencore's coal production to 145 million tons in 2019 from 129.4 million last year.

Glencore said it would begin in 2020 to publish long-term projections about reducing the intensity of emissions and mitigation efforts. It added it was on track with its pledge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions intensity by 5 percent by 2020 compared to 2016 levels.

Glencore also said it would review its membership in trade associations in line with its climate change positions. The coal announcement came as Glencore announced its 2018 net profits tumbled 41 percent to \$3.4 billion (3 billion euros).

However, the firm said its measure of operating profit-adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation costs-rose by 8 percent to a record \$15.8 billion.

The firm's commodity trading business saw its operating earnings fall by 17 percent to \$2.4 billion, but mining rose 15 percent to \$13.3 billion. Glencore announced it would pay a dividend of 20 cents per share, the same as last year. In addition to the \$2.8 billion, it will return to shareholders through the dividend, Glencore also announced a new program to buy back at least \$2 billion in shares this year.

Shares in Glencore rose by 0.6 percent in morning trading in London, while the blue-chip FTSE 100 index was flat overall. —AFP

Warba Bank announces Al-Sunbula weekly draw

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, "the Best investment Bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait, will be organizing its weekly Sunbula draw number 8 on Thursday at 11 am in presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the bank officials.

Al-Sunbula both account and fixed deposits are the perfect choices for customers who wish to save money and achieve steady returns while at the same time have the opportunity to win cash prizes throughout the year. In line with the bank's mission to develop and differentiate its offerings, Warba Bank has enhanced its Sunbula campaign for 2019 with more cash and prizes reaching more than KD 1 million.

Warba Bank will continue its weekly draws for 5 winners of KD 1,000 each. What's new in 2019 are the "Mega Draws" which will be held every quarter to reveal five winners, the 1st winner will get KD 100,000! The four winners thereafter will each get the latest Land Cruiser VXR. Furthermore, the final Mega draw held in January 2020 will feature 2 more Land Cruiser VXRs!

As for the chances for winning, each customer is eligible to enter the draw against each KD 10 in the Sunbula Account. Nevertheless, Sunbula Fixed Deposit investors also get chances in the Sunbula draws along with high expected returns that reach up to 3.5% distributed either monthly or at maturity upon the customer's preference.

Furthermore, Warba Bank is leveraging on its Customer Onboarding solution, in line with its ambitious five-year strategy that enables non-Warba Bank customers to request the opening of Al-Sunbula account in a simple electronic manner without having to visit the branch, through 5 simple steps in 5 minutes. New customers will be able to request opening the account at anytime, anywhere, through the new and unique electronic system used to implement this service. Representatives will then contact the customer to determine the appropriate time to visit the branch to get required signatures, verify the customer's identity, deliver his/her debit card, and activate the account.

What's On



The Japanese Embassy in Kuwait organized an origami workshop for adults at Yarmouk Cultural Center as a part of the Japanese cultural week. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

Jumeirah Al Naseem's Rockfish brand new menu

Rockfish, the Mediterranean seafood restaurant in Jumeirah Al Naseem has revealed an entire new menu created by the hotel's new Executive chef, Chef Marco Garfagnini. Born in Carrara, on the foothills of the Apuan Alps in Tuscany, Chef Marco is an Italian who was destined to cook. With a passion for 'cooking from his heart' these new dishes at Rockfish have been artfully crafted to bring the comfort of traditional Italian cuisine to life through Crudo, Seafood and Grilled mains, to keep the most discerning diner satisfied.

Diners can now enjoy Roasted Langoustine with a lentil puree to start or Tuna Tartare with Crispy Saffron rice as part of the Crudo menu. For mains, there is a 36 hour Slow Cooked baby goat, served with fresh tomato Concasse and Pomme puree, or a delicious Lobster Risotto or a Line-caught Seabass with artichoke and lemon emulsion. As well as these new signature dishes, there is the ever-



classic but wellloved Veal Milanese served with Rocket, tomatoes and parmesan.

For dessert, Chef Marco has created a new classic: Fusing Burrata cheese into ice cream with citrus couli and candied orange, a hazelnut parfait served with caramelized hazelnut and gianduja ganache, and a classic meringue served with mixed berries, key lime and strawberry cream - all finished off with hazelnut crumble.

For those diners who want a classic Italian dish cooked well, Chef Marco's team are also able to create pastas and risottos inspired by Mediterranean flavors a la minute, showcasing their skill and passion for good food served simply and yet perfectly, very well. Not only known for its diverse menu, Rockfish is well

known for its eclectic interior design masterminded by famed designer Bill Bensely, its amazing beachfront location with balanced views of the lapping waves of the Arabian Gulf and Burj Al Arab and of course its specially gin trolley that serves 15+ varieties of signature and newly discovered gins from around the world. The new enhancements come as part of Chef Marco's role to enhance the F&B offering of hotels within Jumeirah Group hotels. In his current role at Jumeirah Al Naseem, he leads a team of 150+ chefs and stewards and oversees the hotel's seven owned restaurants. Chef Marco also plays a key role in executing the vision of CEO Jose Silva and Chief Culinary Officer Michael Ellis in growing the hotel group's F&B excellence.

Indonesian orphans visit White Palace

A delegation from Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah village orphans in Indonesia recently paid a visit to Sheikh Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah's family at the White Palace where they were received by Sheikh Mohammed Al-

Abdullah, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah and Sheikhah Shyma' Al-Abdullah. The orphans were also escorted by the village supervisor, Ahmed Mohammed Al-Houli and deputy chairman of the Kuwaiti-Indonesian Charitable Society, Khaled Al-Kandary. The delegation thanked Sheikh Abdullah Al-Mubarak charity for its support to various charitable activities at the village that houses over 450 students. Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Mohammed Al-Abdullah thanked Al-Houli and Al-Kandary for their efforts and promised to provide for the village's various needs.



Burgan Bank customers can enjoy discounts from Atyab Al Marshoud



Ensuring its valued customers receive the best deals on popular choices and trends, Burgan Bank announced its latest partnership with leading Perfumer and Fragrance House, Atyab Al Marshoud. The latest offer presents premium quality oil incenses and oudh carefully selected from the finest areas in Asia. Founded in 1925, the company was recently revolutionized with a dream of combining a touch of modernity to its authentic and oriental fragrances, while maintaining its luxuriance of tradition. Burgan Bank customers can avail the 10% discounted offer by using any of Burgan Bank cards. To find out more about Burgan Bank's latest promotions or any of its products and services, customers are urged to visit any of the bank's branches, or contact the call center. For more information, customers can also log onto the bank's website on www.burgan.com

Al-Fahad Exhibition highlights history of Kuwaiti-Saudi relations

The 'Al-Fahad ... Spirit of Leadership Exhibition' held a symposium on history of Kuwaiti-Saudi relations at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Culture Center on Sunday in Kuwait city. During the event, Secretary General of the King Abdulaziz Foundation for Research and Archives Dr Fahad Al-Samari spoke to the audience about the main aspects of the relations between the two Arabian Gulf countries as well as their shared geographic location, traditions and destiny.

He also shed light on the life of late King Fahad bin Abdulaziz and his role in strengthening the Kingdom's relations with Kuwait. For his part, Professor of History at the Kuwait University Dr Saud Al-Asfor reviewed



a number of the important historical manuscripts and leaders' statements which show the strong bonds between Kuwait and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The exhibition, patronized by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah, commenced February 11 and would last until February 23. It consists of 14 pavilions dedicated to the memory, life, and achievements of the late King of Saudi Arabia Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud as well as the Kuwaiti-Saudi relations. — KUNA

Health & Science

Fountain of youth? Study finds anti-ageing compound in plant

TOKYO: In Japan, the slightly bitter leaves of the Ashitaba plant have long been considered healthy, and a new study has found the traditional belief may have good scientific grounds. A natural substance in the plant appears to induce a key process that helps remove the "cellular garbage" that can build up as cells age and cause a range of diseases and disorders. "It is always nice to find a scientific rationale for traditional medical folk tales," said Frank Madeo, a professor at the University of Graz's Institute of Molecular Biosciences, in Austria.

Madeo, who helped lead the research, said the substance known as 4,4'-dimethoxychalcone or DMC, which occurs naturally in Ashitaba plants, induces a process called autophagy. "This is a cleansing and recycling process," he said. It removes "superfluous material, especially cellular garbage like aggregated proteins." That

"cleaning" process is key to sustained good health as the body ages. When cells fail to promptly and efficiently remove damaged parts, they can build up and that can lead to diseases including cancer.

There are already a handful of compounds known to scientists that work to stimulate the cleaning process. Fasting also appears to naturally encourage cells to undertake spring cleaning. But in a bid to expand the field of compounds able to protect cells and turn back the hands of time, the team of researchers turned to a class of substances called flavonoids. Many flavonoids have already been shown to have a range of beneficial effects, ranging from anti-inflammatory properties to protecting against brain degeneration and cancer. The team reasoned that they might find flavonoids that could also help prevent destructive ageing in cells. They screened 180 compounds

representing various subcategories of flavonoids, looking for candidates that might have the natural ability to "counteract age-related cell demise."

Cell-protective capacity

After initial screening, they settled on DMC and started by testing how the substance affected yeast cells. They discovered it was indeed helping to protect the yeast cells from the effects of ageing, and that the substance performed as well or even better than some existing compounds prized for their cell-protective capacity like resveratrol, which occurs in grape skin, among other places. The team then tested DMC's effect on cells in both worms and fruit flies — common test subjects in medical research.

"Remarkably, chronic DMC treatment... prolonged the median lifespan of both model organisms by

approximately 20 percent," the study published Wednesday in the Nature Communications journal says. Additional tests showed the compound helped protect cells in mice hearts through the autophagy process, and even protected against a kind of liver damage caused by ethanol intoxication.

The team also tested DMC's effect on several types of human cells and found that there too the substance worked to slow ageing. "The experiments indicate that the effects of DMC might be transferable to humans, although we have to be cautious and wait for real clinical trials," said Madeo. The research is still in the early stages and Madeo said next steps will include testing whether the positive effects of DMC in mice hearts extend more broadly to protect mice against ageing and age-related diseases. "Eventually, clinical trials on humans are needed," he added. — AFP

Climate change an 'imminent' security threat: Risk experts

THE HAGUE: Climate change threats - from worsening water shortages in Iraq and Pakistan to harsher hurricanes in the Caribbean - are a growing security risk and require concerted action to ensure they don't spark new violence, security experts warned Tuesday. "Climate change is not about something in the far and distant future. We are discussing imminent threats to national security," said Monika

Sie Dhan Ho, general director of the Clingendael Institute, a Dutch think tank.

The drying of Africa's Lake Chad basin, for instance, has helped drive recruitment for Islamist militant group Boko Haram among young people unable to farm or find other work, said Haruna Kuje Ayuba of Nigeria's Nasarawa State University. "People are already deprived of a basic livelihood," the geography professor said at a conference on climate and security at The Hague. "If you give them a little money and tell them to destroy this or kill that, they are ready to do it."

Iraq, meanwhile, has seen its water supplies plunge as its upstream neighbors build dams and climate change brings hotter and dryer conditions to Baghdad, said Hisham Al-Alawi, Iraq's ambassador to the Netherlands. "Overall we are getting less by nearly 40 percent of the waters we used to get," he told the conference. Shoring up

the country's water security, largely by building more storage and cutting water losses, will take nearly \$80 billion through 2035, he said. Faced with more heat and less rain, "we need to be wise and start planning for the future, as this trend is likely to continue," he said.

'Existential crisis'

The threat of worsening violence related to climate change also extends to countries and regions not currently thought of as insecurity hot spots, climate and security analysts at the conference warned. The Caribbean, for instance, faces more destructive hurricanes, coral bleaching, sea-level rise and looming water shortages that threaten its main economic pillars, particularly tourism. "We're facing an existential crisis in the Caribbean," said Selwin Hart, the Barbados-born executive director of the

Inter-American Development Bank. Ninety percent of the region's economic activity - particularly tourism, fishing and port operations - takes place on the threatened coastline, he said. Hurricanes, in recent years, have flattened the economies of some Caribbean nations, with Hurricane Maria in 2017 costing Dominica about 225 percent of its GDP, according to World Bank estimates. But as the global emissions that drive climate change continue to rise, "there's not a realistic chance of achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement", Hart suggested.

The agreement calls for a rapid shift away from fossil fuels to hold the global average temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius. The failure to cut emissions means the Caribbean, while doing what it can to become more resilient to the growing risks, also needs "to plan for the worst-case scenario", Hart said. — Reuters

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

Dr Sahar Ghannam

Dermatology consultant, skin treatment and laser



Timing: Saturdays and Wednesdays from 10 am to 5 pm
Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from 9:30 am until 5 pm
Thursday from 9:30 am until 1 pm.

Friday is a holiday.

Address: Fourth Ring Road - Abdallah Fadal Street, Meidan Hawally, opposite fire station - block 35, building 31.

Clinic Phones: 25610407/ 409/ 314 Fax: 25610465
Mobile: 90974754/ 99166746

saharpolyclinic Dr.saharghannamclinic Email: drsgderma@gmail.com

Dr. Ala' Groof

Consultant Surgeon
Canadian board certified.

General Surgery, Vascular Surgery, Endoscopic/laparoscopic Surgery, Obesity/Metabolic Surgery, Tumor Surgery



- Treat patients with problems in the arteries and veins- varicose veins, narrowing/occlusion or ballooning of vessels.
- Treat patients with diabetic foot wounds and leg swelling.
- Treat patients in need of hemodialysis access and associated problems.
- Treat patients with gall bladder stones, abdominal swellings/tumors/hernias.
- Treat patients with problems of overweight- Sleeve Gastrectomy and gastric bypass.

We cover GIG insured patients- KPC/AFYA

Meidan Hawally - End of Fourth Ring Road - behind the Gas Station - Sabaek building, seventh floor
Tel: 25626000 - 65966000

To advertise on this Page, Call: 24833199 ext:101,102

WELCOME

Dr Tammam Abou Ali
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon.

Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
Snoring and OSAP Surgery
Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
Salivary gland and parotid surgery
Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
Micro laryngeal surgery

1 888 883
www.qmc-kuwait.com

qmcKuwait

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or
Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

Dr. Husain Alenezi

-Board Certified Urologist.
-Endourology Society-Approved Fellowship in Endourology And Robotic Surgery At Western University, Ontario, Canada.

Expert in diagnosing and treating:

- 1- Urinary Stones (Kidney, Ureter & Bladder) By Endoscopy & Laser
- 2- Prostate Cancer And Benign Prostatic Hyperplasia
- 3- Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms In Males And Females
- 4- Tumors And Malignancies Of The Urinary Tract (Kidney, Adrenals, Ureter, Bladder And Testes)
- 5- Male Factor Infertility And Varicoceles (Microscopic Surgery)
- 6- Erectile Dysfunction

Contact Taiba Hospital: 1808088 94449452 Twitter: @DrHusain_UroI

Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family

Book your appointments today!

Dr. Kiran Turak
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Zareena Zahir
Ophthalmologist

Dr. Hassan Khan
Senior Cardiologist

Dr. P. Seshendra Nath
Orthopedic Consultant (AUSTRALIA)
Specialized in Neck, Shoulder, Hip and Knee

50721507
24551555

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

Tel : 24560057 / 24560059 info@exircenterku.com www.exircenterku.com

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- ◆ Diagnosis/ Treatment of General Ears, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- ◆ Minimally invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- ◆ Minimally invasive Microscopic & Endoscopic Ear surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of Otolology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- ◆ Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- ◆ Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders
- ◆ Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

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

SPECIALIZED IN:

- o Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- o Laser Treatments.
- o Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- o Body & Face Contouring.
- o Injectable Fillers & Botox.

SHARD, Ahmad Alsheer st., Building 14, Floor 13.
Tel: (+965) 22060777
@DrFahamed, @Fahmedb, @dardonabb
Email: drfahamed@beautybeyond.com.kw

To advertise on this Page

Call: 24833199 ext:101,102
or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617
or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com

Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine
Head of Cardiology departmenta at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- ◆ Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- ◆ Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

مستشفى دار الشفا
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

DR KHALED ALMERRI
Consultant Interventional Cardiology
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

Specialized in:

- 1-Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

Know your Doctor
Otorhinolaryngology (E.N.T)
Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj
ENT Specialist

- ◆ Laryngology Fellowship - Canada
- ◆ Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the British Laryngological Association
- ◆ Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- ◆ Member of the European Laryngological Society

Specialized in:

- ◆ Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- ◆ Vocal cord augmentation.
- ◆ Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- ◆ Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- ◆ Thyroid surgery.
- ◆ Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- ◆ Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- ◆ Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- ◆ Treatment of snoring.
- ◆ Treatment of vertigo.

IC INTERNATIONAL CLINIC
American Board Certified in General Surgery
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

- ◆ Day case surgeries
- ◆ Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- ◆ Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- ◆ Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- ◆ Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- ◆ Breast surgeries
- ◆ Hernia repair
- ◆ Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- ◆ Surgery for reflux disease
- ◆ Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- ◆ Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant
http://www.international-clinic.com **Tel: 1886677**

Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, Including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
- ◆ Transanal minimally Invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad
Surgery Department
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo - Rectal Surgeon

مستشفى دار الشفا
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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

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

Academic Certificates - Training

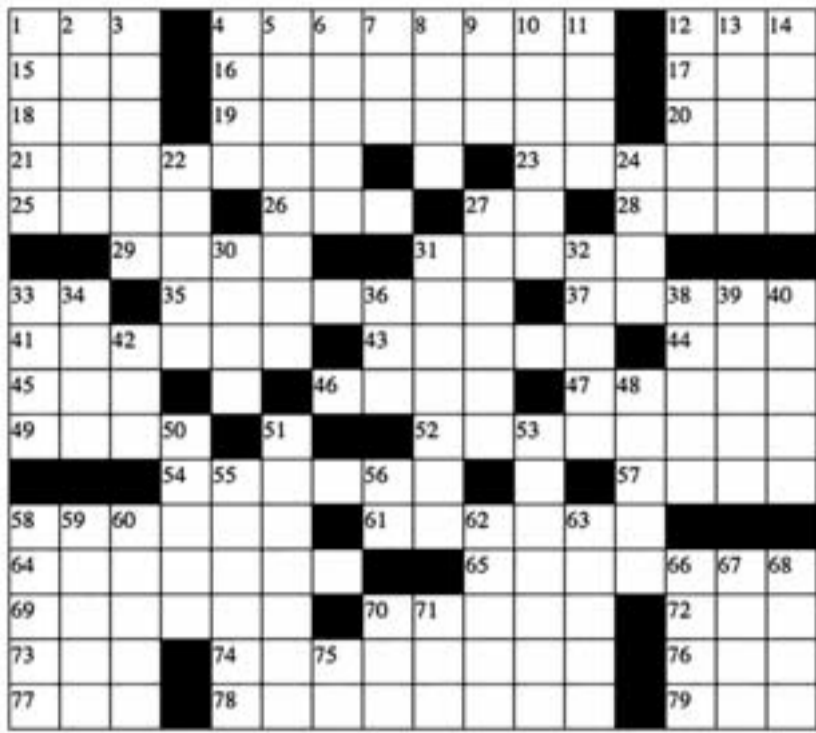
- ◆ Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- ◆ (IFSO) member .
- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

CROSSWORD 2142



ACROSS

1. An argument opposed to a proposal.
4. Elder brother of Krishna.
12. A member of the Siouan people living in the Yazoo river valley in Mississippi.
15. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
16. Narrow and long and pointed.
17. (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
18. A fractional monetary unit of Japan and Indonesia and Cambodia.
19. Turning about an axis.
20. Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
21. A member of a people native to the Philippines chiefly inhabiting central Luzon around and including Manila.
23. (Judaism) Conforming to dietary laws.
25. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
26. A master's degree in education.
28. (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
29. Capital and largest city and economic center of Peru.
33. A state in the Rocky Mountains.
35. A person who is deemed to be despicable or contemptible.
37. (prefix) Within.
41. A family of languages of the Fula people of west Africa in the sub-Saharan regions from Senegal to Chad.
43. Growing old.
44. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
45. A fixed charge for a privilege or for professional services.
46. King of Saudi Arabia since 1982 (born in 1922).
47. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
49. (cosmology) The original matter that (according to the big bang theory) existed before the formation of the chemical elements.
52. One who professes great sensitivity to the beauty of art and nature.
54. A resident of Utah.
57. A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
58. Of or relating to abasia (inability to walk).
61. United States feminist (1860-1935).
64. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
65. One who attacks the reputation of another by slander or libel.
69. Free from disturbance.
72. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
73. Belonging to or on behalf of a specified person (especially yourself).
74. Of or relating to or belonging to a nation or country.
76. Informal terms for a mother.
77. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
78. A person who eats all kinds of foods.
79. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.

DOWN

1. A riblike part of a plant or animal (such as a middle rib of a leaf or a thickened vein of an insect wing).
2. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
3. (Akkadian) A goddess.
4. Shout loudly and without restraint.
5. A member of the North American Indian people of the Pit river valley in northern California.
6. Owing or owed feudal allegiance and service.
7. (informal) Of the highest quality.
8. Neat and tidy.
9. American prizefighter who won the world heavy-weight championship three times (born in 1942).
10. A member of the Manchu speaking people of Mongolian race of Manchuria.
11. Formerly a large constellation in the southern hemisphere between Canis Major and the Southern Cross.
12. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
13. Having lost freshness or brilliance of color.
14. Of a moderate orange-yellow color.
22. A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
24. The act of scanning.
27. Alloy of copper and tin and zinc.
30. A male religious living in a cloister and devoting himself to contemplation and prayer and work.
31. Of or relating to or characteristic of Afghanistan or its people.
32. A prejudiced person who is intolerant of any opinions differing from his own.
34. A prearranged fight with deadly weapons by two people (accompanied by seconds) in order to settle a quarrel over a point of honor.
36. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
38. An edible tuber native to South America.
39. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
40. Extensive landed property (especially in the country) retained by the owner for his own use.
42. Towards the side away from the wind.
48. A feudal lord or baron in Scotland.
50. An artistic form of auditory communication incorporating instrumental or vocal tones in a structured and continuous manner.
51. Covered with paving material.
53. Any meeting for an exchange of ideas.
55. An Italian-speaking region of southern Switzerland.
56. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
59. Be in contradiction with.
60. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
62. An extensive grassy and nearly treeless plain (especially in Latin America).
63. A poplar that is widely cultivated in the United States.
66. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
67. Very dark black.
68. Avatar of Vishnu.
70. Being one more than two.
71. The month following October and preceding December.
75. A state in east central United States.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find yourself with an ear to a co-worker or family member's mouth for the best of gossip right now. Most often you don't have time for such things but this is too good to pass up. Your spouse or significant other is uppermost in your thoughts along with any children you may have. Family means more to you now than you usually take the time to acknowledge. Anything around house and home is your agenda for this very important day. Enjoy.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Talking with close friends, neighbors, work mates and family makes you feel all warm and cozy when you speak about your innermost feelings. Furthermore, there is no anxiety exposed while showing emotion today unless it's someone you really don't know or for which you don't care. Then the proverbial poo can hit the fan and cause a massive irritation. Try to stay closer to family and those you care for at work. Harmony is your word of the day even if you're not practicing it at the time. Stay cool.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You have a lot of nervous energy which affects your thinking. Thoughts seem contradictory and you can't seem to get your views aligned with what you have going on. You want to be treated the way you treat others and that is straight-forward and always above board but you may have an issue with someone older who is an authority figure. He or she may have their own irritations today and aren't in the mood to listen. Relax, the blockage you feel frustrated with now will end soon, Gemini. Find time to do something alone. Discuss your situation with someone you love.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your love and family take on more importance. It's imperative that you feel secure and needed. Thankfully, you get that now because you are needed and loved too by many. Work is a place that you need to just keep on keeping on. Perhaps work you've done in the past is all that's needed to allow you to skate today. Otherwise do the bare minimum to keep your job. It's because your mind isn't on work, Cancer. It's on those you love and you're needs. Do what you can to make it through your work day and get home quickly to those who make you feel wanted. Enjoy.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You're considering making changes in every aspect of your life. Be careful when making these changes to get all the facts first. You may not appreciate tomorrow the changes you made today if you don't. In other words, don't jump too quickly. You're at odds with even your own thoughts, Leo. The money you're making now may not add up to the same thing if you change today. Your home might have issues you'll find leaves you disheartened if you sell your house today and start to buy another. Your love life might be so much worse if you get rid of what you have now. Think and take your time.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Since you've been a little unsettled at work lately, today might be the very day to apply for a new job. You find yourself more polished and delightful than your usual temperament, or so your friends are saying. This could help you land the job you've been looking at for the last three months. Romance is a huge factor in your mind too. You're sure of yourself and exude all the confidence you need for both the job and love. Talk to your lover or a new date and perhaps plan for an indoor picnic. You might make it in a beautiful new hotel, just in case.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Good news. You're entering a cycle where all you touch can become gold to you. As long as you use your diplomatic resources but err on the optimistic side you can create exactly what you want. At work your superiors and your coworkers look to you for advice. You seem to make all the right decisions. It's the same with friends, family and your lover. The only problem with this good, fortunate aspect in your life is that you, Libra, are looking to your past and thinking about what you really want in the future. That could cause you to rid some items in your life. Know that it's good for you when it happens but you might get emotional because of it.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Family, your lover and children mean more to you at this time than at most other times. It's a need. You require the closeness and you want more togetherness with all of them. This includes close friends as well because friends like that can be family you've chosen. You need to be admired, Scorpio. So, you'll probably take chances that would normally be ignored today. Guess what? You'll be right in your decisions because you have the intuition you're sure of right now. You just know and it works for you.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You're fighting with yourself over your thinking processes today. Make up your mind and quit being noncommittal. It's like brushing your teeth, a decision needs to be made. You're able to help others make good, intelligent decisions and they tell you so meaning you can make the same at work and for yourself. Now, the problem may come with children or your lover, Sagittarius. They may not be so easily handled for you at this time. This too shall pass. Take a breath, think about the situation and pretend you're at work. You have to be nice to the people you work with and that goes for home tonight too.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You try to show more effectively your feelings for your lover or parents. You're proud that they're your part in the storm and you want them to know how much they're appreciated. You have a need for the close emotional support you get from those you love. Times haven't been the best lately and you're trying to make amends, Capricorn. Take heart though because you're able to see the problems that's been plaguing you. You can take the steps to amend some decisions that may have precipitated these issues. You're on the road to solving your life's mystery. Be thankful.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Coming to grips with your past is uppermost on your mind now. Somehow you feel that if you can resolve what may have happened before in your career, then you'll be able to do better at your current job. A little fear has crept into your thoughts on your occupation. Put your mind at ease. You're checking into a part of your life most wouldn't understand, you think. Others might have the same intuitive happenings going on in their life as well. Aquarius. Keep your concerns to yourself and study why you feel the way you do. Talking with friends and loved ones will help.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Ideas come through clearly now so that you can describe them in detail to your coworkers. You make part of a good team with you being concise and brilliant in your communication. Your efforts really pay off and run smoothly. You look good at work, Pisces. More than that you're looking good at home too. Work may have created a house move but you're able to make that house a home. Perhaps you're in the process of redecorating making your older home new now. Others gather around you for inclusion in your friend family. You're happy and at ease though you work harder now than you ever have. You like it. Enjoy your evening with friends.

Wordsearch Puzzle

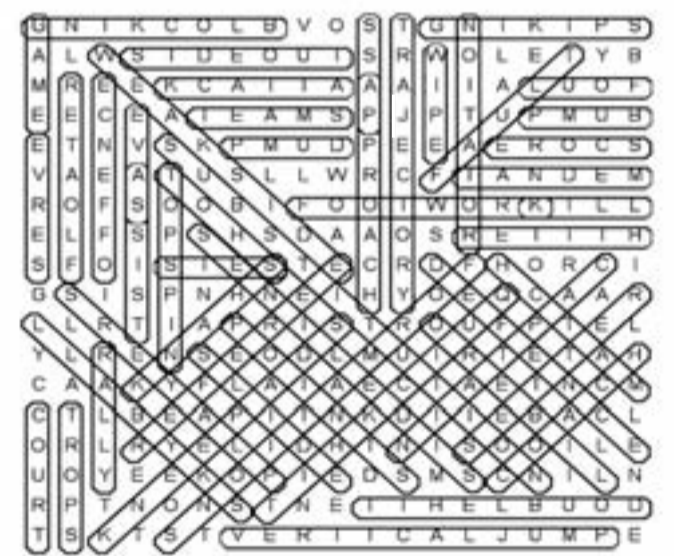
Washing a Car

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 13 letters spell something that you wash off of a car.



- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| BRUSH | FENDERS | PREPARATION | TIRES |
| BUCKETS | FRONT | REAR | TOP |
| CHAMOIS | GARDEN HOSE | RINSE | TOWELS |
| CHROME | GLASS | ROOF | VEHICLE |
| CLEAN | GRIME | SCRUB | WASH |
| DEAD BUGS | HEADLIGHTS | SIDES | WATER |
| DIRT | HOOD | SOAP | WAX |
| DOOR HANDLES | HUBCAPS | SPONGE | WHEELS |
| DOORS | LICENSE PLATE | SQUEEGEE | WINDOWS |
| DRIVEWAY | MIRRORS | SUDS | WINDSHIELD |
| DRY OFF | MUD | TAIL LIGHTS | |

Volleyball



- | | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| APPROACH | FOOTWORK | QUICK HIT | SKY BALL |
| ASSIST | FORMATIONS | RALLY | SLIDE |
| ATTACK | FOUL | REFEREE | SPIKING |
| BLOCKING | GAME | ROTATION | SPORT |
| BUMP | HITTER | SAVE | SUBSTITUTION |
| CAPTAIN | KILL | SCORE | TANDEM |
| COACH | KNEE PADS | SERVE | TEAMS |
| COURT | LINER | SETS | TOPSPIN |
| DEFENCE | MATCH | SETTER | TRAJECTORY |
| DOUBLE HIT | OFFENCE | SHANK | VERTICAL JUMP |
| DUMP | PASS | SHOT | WEAK SIDE |
| FALT | PLAYERS | SIDELINES | WIPE |
| FLOATER | POINTS | SIDE OUT | |

The hidden message is: VOLLEYBALL WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED MINTONETTE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2019



This photo shows people visiting a lantern show to celebrate the Lantern Festival, which marks the end of Lunar New Year celebrations, in Nanjing in China's eastern Jiangsu province. — AFP

INDONESIA CAPS LUNAR NEW YEAR WITH BLOODY TONGUES, LION DANCES



An Indonesian man believed to be in a trance cuts his own tongue with a dagger while his cheek is pierced with a needle, at a temple in Jakarta to mark the Cap Go Meh Festival.

Eyes rolled back in his head, a heavily tattooed Indonesian man sliced his tongue with a dagger in a bid to communicate with other-worldly spirits. The gory spectacle at a Jakarta temple marked the 15th and last day of Lunar New Year, known as Cap Go Meh in the Southeast Asian nation. With a significant ethnic Chinese minority, Muslim-majority Indonesia on Tuesday celebrated the end of two-week festivities welcoming the Year of the Pig with traditional lion dances, colorful parades and temples decked out in red lanterns.

In Indonesia's section of Borneo island, Chinese shamans shocked onlookers with chains and swords embedded in their faces. At the Jakarta temple, the man in a trance-like state wrote messages with the blood from his sliced tongue to the spirits in an effort to ward off evil. With a long needle still embedded in his cheeks, he finished off the ceremony with a chug of booze. Just outside the capital in Bogor city, residents dressed in white shirts and turbans sang Arabic songs accompanied by tambourine music.

The Muslim take on the Lunar New Year is a show of solidarity in a country where nearly 90 percent of its 260 million citizens follow Islam. "We're all different, but it's clear that our intention here is one: together, we want to defend the unity of our beloved Indonesia," Bogor's mayor Bima Arya Sugiarto said. — AFP



Chinese-Indonesians make offerings with incense at a temple in Jakarta.



A Chinese-Indonesian woman prays at a temple in Jakarta.— AFP photos



An Indonesian man holds burning incense at a temple in Jakarta.



An Indonesian man (front right) believed to be in a trance leads a prayer at a temple in Jakarta to mark the Cap Go Meh Festival.



Indonesians gather for prayer at a temple in Jakarta.

Lifestyle | Fashion

Designer **Karl Lagerfeld** to be cremated without ceremony

Karl Lagerfeld will be cremated without ceremony and his ashes are likely to be scattered with those of his mother and lover, his label said yesterday. "His wishes will be respected," a spokeswoman for his Karl Lagerfeld brand told AFP a day after the legendary designer died at the age of 85. The "Kaiser"-who was known for his rapier wit-had long insisted that he would "rather die" than be buried. "I've asked to be cremated and for my ashes to be dispersed with those of my mother... and those of Choupette (his cat), if she dies before me," he said in one of his last major interviews.

Lagerfeld had previously said that his ashes would be mixed with those of his longtime lover, the French dandy Jacques de Bascher, who died of AIDS in 1989. He told de Bascher's biographer Marie Ottavi that he had kept half of his ashes so they be together again at the end. The German-born creator had put them away "somewhere secret. One day they will be added to mine," he told Ottavi. Lagerfeld fell for the dashing de Bascher when he was 19 and looked after him until his death at 38. This was despite de Bascher, a notoriously philandering party animal, having an affair with Lagerfeld's great rival Yves Saint Laurent. The other half of de Bascher's ashes was given to his family, the French daily Le Monde reported yesterday.

Horror of burials

Lagerfeld believed that burial "was horrible. I just want to disappear like the animals in the virgin forest. It is awful to encumber people with your remains," he told a French television in 2015. Nor did he want to be mourned at a grandiose funeral like the one France granted its rock legend Johnny Hallyday in 2017.

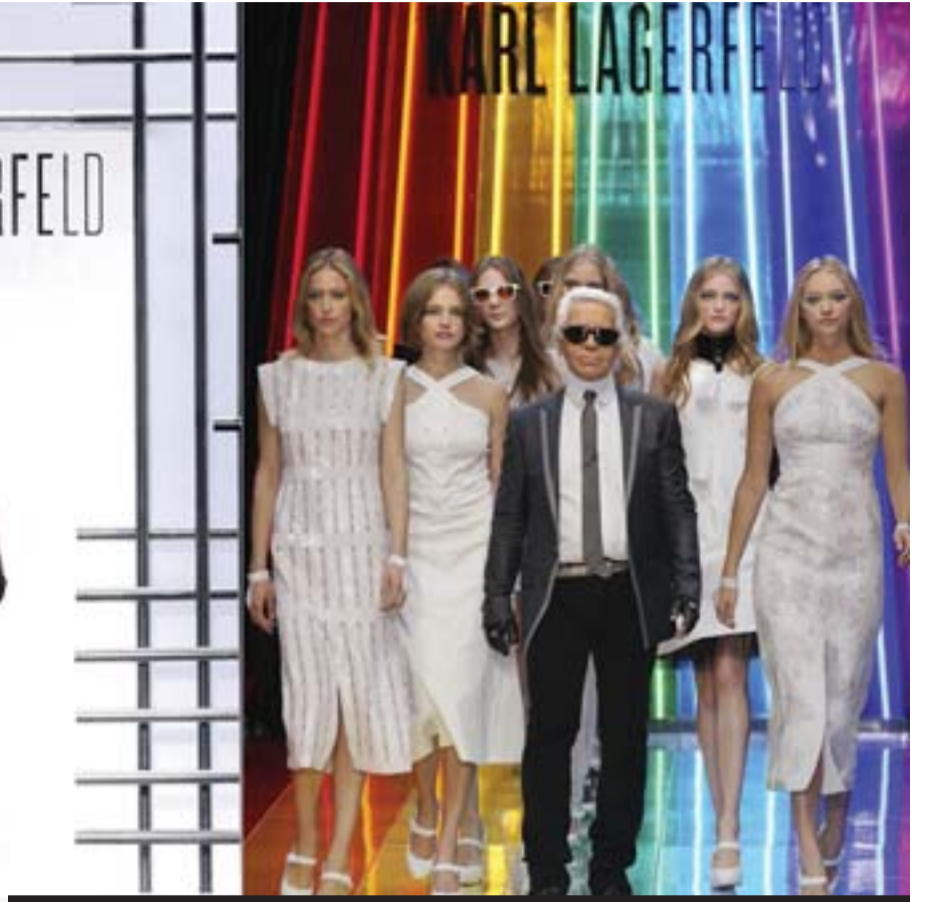
"What a horror!" Lagerfeld declared. "With all the in-fighting in the Hallyday family (over the singer's will), the funeral felt like a farce." The deluge of tributes to the workaholic designer-the most prolific of the last century-continued yesterday as fans left white roses outside Chanel's main



Paris boutique. US Vogue's editor-in-chief Anna Wintour called Lagerfeld "a giant among men".



chief Virginie Viard, who stepped into his shoes as creative director on Tuesday, will unveil its autumn winter ready-to-wear collection on March 5, the last day of the shows. — AFP



This combination of pictures created on February 19, 2019 shows (From left) German designer Karl Lagerfeld in Tokyo on 03 December 2004, Lagerfeld in Paris during autumn/winter 2009 ready-to-wear collection and Lagerfeld in Paris on 03 October 2007. — AFP photos

Chanel's style circus to roll on despite loss of Lagerfeld



Models present creations during the Benetton women's Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection fashion show, in Milan. — AFP



Benetton's new French flair colors debut in Milan

Benetton took to the catwalk in Milan for the first time Tuesday with its debut collection by French designer Jean-Charles de Castelbajac in a bid to revive the historic Italian brand. The show, which kicked off Milan fashion week, opened with a homage to Karl Lagerfeld, who died Tuesday aged 85. "Thank you, Karl," Castelbajac said. Then the models unveiled his "Rainbow Machine" collection, sashaying around a fictional workshop, where tailors wearing the Benetton logo could be seen cutting and stitching together new creations.

"Benetton had been a little sleepy for the past ten years, because it had started competing with 'fast fashion' houses and it was losing its DNA," Castelbajac said ahead of the show. "We went back to basics with this collection, prioritizing the Benetton look, colors and symbols, but with another generation in mind: millennials," he said. At 69 years old, the French stylist has a long career behind him, including in advertising, where he was known for his colorful, impudent style which mixed punk and pop.

"We share a common DNA with Benetton in terms of color, knitwear, sportswear and most importantly, irony," he said, stressing that he wanted to restore the brand to pride of place in wardrobes across the land. "Benetton was a haute couture house for everybody, everyone has a little Benetton 'Proust's Madeleine' at home," he added, referring to the trip down memory lane taken by author Marcel Proust's narrator when he tastes a madeleine dipped in tea.

'Archeological approach'

Castelbajac said he adopted an "almost archaeological" approach: "I searched for the roots of the Benetton story, which began in 1965 with a visionary man (Luciano Benetton) and a little girl who had a knitting machine". Being appointed the brand's artistic director in October was like "finding paradise". "I was like Charlie at the chocolate factory. I submitted a drawing in the morning and by the evening I could see the first prototype".

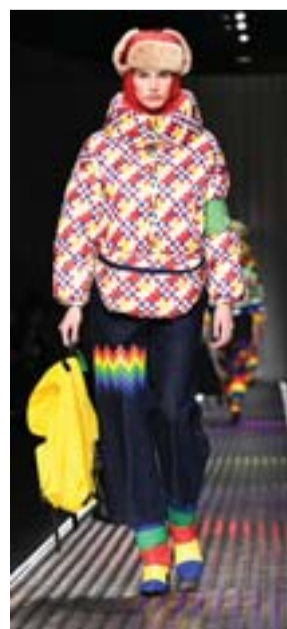
His collection featured colorful, eco-friendly creations that aim to be affordable without sacrificing quality. Women wore checkered tights or skyboots-heeled moonboots-in wide horizontal stripes in the colors of the rainbow. The Benetton logo was on prominent display, printed in colour on a white jacket or bordering a yellow tunic in green. Wool is reclaiming center stage thanks to a close collaboration with Giuliana Benetton. The 81-year-old came out of retirement when her brother Luciano-"angry" over the brand's decline-took back control in 2017. The family business had wilted first at the hands of Luciano's son Alessandro, then under the control of external managers.

'Only the start'

The brand, which suffered its biggest loss ever in 2017, has revived its collaboration with renowned photographer Oliviero Toscani, the man behind the shock advertising campaigns that contributed to its global success between 1982 and 2000. The catwalk in Milan-its first big show since a 40th birthday bonanza in Paris in 2006 — aimed to mark its rebirth.

"This show symbolically marks the family's desire to focus once more on the project launched more than 50 years ago," Giuliano Noci, professor of strategy at the Polytechnic Business School in Milan, told AFP. "It also shows their willingness to respond to the market's every demand," he said. However, he warned that it was "only a starting point, because the brand faces many other challenges".

"The key to the future will lie in its ability to reposition itself in the rather high-end segment of fast fashion, with innovation and a constant product renewal," he said. "Benetton will have to... have stores that offer a real, personalized experience, as well as online sales," Noci said, pointing out that "Zara, for example, is doing much better than H&M because it is stronger on the online business". — AFP



Flowers are laid in tribute to late German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld outside the French fashion house Chanel, in Paris, on February 19, 2019. — AFP

The death of legendary designer Karl Lagerfeld leaves a huge hole at the head of Chanel, but the fashion juggernaut is in such rude health it is likely to power on without him, analysts say. The workaholic German turned around the fading fortunes of Coco Chanel's iconic house in his 36 years in charge, setting the template for the modern luxury fashion industry. When the iconoclastic Lagerfeld took over in 1983, the brand was dowdy and somewhat doddery, but by hitching its rich heritage to the supermodel sass of Linda Evangelista and Claudia Schiffer he made its clothes the armor in which women began to break the glass ceiling.

He had previously performed a similar miracle for the Fendi sisters in Italy, turning what the New York Times called a "boring bourgeois (Roman) furrier into a hip fashion name". Such was their gratitude that the brand took out a full-page black-trimmed advert in the newspaper Wednesday to thank "Karl for the most beautiful journey. With all our love, your Fendi family." With the label now worth \$3.8 billion (3.3 billion euros), they had a lot to thank him for. At Chanel he did the same thing but on an even bigger scale, making it one of the three richest luxury houses in the world. Ever the showman, he packed Paris' enormous Grand Palais with celebrities for his spectacular shows.

Sales of \$9.6 billion

Until last year the real scale of his financial success at Chanel was kept secret. But in June the Wertheimer family who own the brand released figures for the first time showing sales of \$9.62 billion in 2017. That put them ahead of Gucci and just behind Louis Vuitton as the biggest luxury fashion label, although much of Vuitton's profits come from sales of bags and luggage.

Even without Lagerfeld, whose name became synonymous with the brand, Chanel is still "a Ferrari of the luxury world", analyst Luca Solca of Bernstein Consulting told AFP. "There is no doubt that the house is in a very strong position," he said. Solca said Chanel had the "ideal business model", with its handmade haute couture collections allowing it to "keep its prices high", while its perfumes and cosmetics "also appeal to the middle classes, who can get into the brand through its fragrances or lipstick". In fact, Lagerfeld's death could push up sales even further with "very strong interest in his final col-

lections which could almost become collectors' items," he added.

Within hours of the designer's death at the age of 85 on Tuesday, Chanel said Virginie Viard-who Lagerfeld has called his "right and left hand"-would be stepping into his shoes as creative director. Solca believes that "a few new ideas" would do Chanel no harm. "There is a big hunger for novelty right now with brands like Gucci and Balenciaga" breaking records with edgy and irreverent collections.

'Unsinkable' brand

"Chanel is a myth, the brand has such power that it is unsinkable," insisted Eric Briones, one of the founders of Paris School of Luxury. "In fact, following Karl should be fairly easy stylistically because he did not impose his own look but instead riffed on the base" of Coco Chanel's classic themes. "It's even a great chance to bring new life into Chanel," Briones added. More difficult will be finding someone with Lagerfeld's gift for making headlines.

"What will be tough is following Karl in terms of image, marketing and communication," Briones told AFP. Lagerfeld was also a phenomenal workhorse, putting out an average of 14 collections a year for Chanel and Fendi as well as overseeing his own label well into his eighties-a pace that would have burnt out many half his age. "He has become a model for so many other creators," Briones said. "He worked so hard, managed to please everyone, and was totally free in what he said-totally ignoring political correctness," he added.

Indeed he could often be "staggeringly straight-talking" without somehow ever damaging the brand, said Arnaud Cadart of Flornoy management consultants. Cadart sees few problems on the horizon, arguing that "other great houses have managed to survive the loss of great creators like Yves Saint Laurent or Christian Dior." "The brand is a more important than the designer, and Virginie Viard, who worked alongside Lagerfeld for 30 years, had quite a bit to do with that success," Cadart added. Fashion, however, is a notoriously fickle business. The British designer Phoebe Philo-formerly of Celine-who has a large feminist following, is often mooted as a possible longterm replacement for Lagerfeld. — AFP

Lifestyle | Music & Movies

South Korea retracts guidelines on look-alike K-pop stars

Government guidelines aimed at promoting more diversity in South Korea's K-pop world have been withdrawn after critics said they amounted to state censorship of a booming industry. The guidelines issued last week complained that K-pop stars looked too alike, saying "the problem of ... uniformity among singers is serious", and noting most idols were thin and wore identical make-up and skimpy outfits. South Korea's K-pop world is a multi-billion-dollar business, but so too is the plastic surgery industry in the image-obsessed country, and tens of thousands of people go under the knife every year in pursuit of the perfect look.

The guidelines from the ministry of gender equality drew criticism online—and also from a lawmaker who said it was reminiscent of censorship during the country's period of authoritarian government which ended in 1980s. Demanding the state apologize, lawmaker Ha Tae-keung said the guidelines were a "totalitarian and unconstitutional idea". Until the late 1980s, censorship permeated every part of South Korean society and the state controlled everything from what could be screened on TV to the length of a man's hair.

"It is truly surprising that South Korea is doing what communist dictatorships, like China and North Korea, would consider doing," one online critic said. In the wake

of criticism, the ministry said Tuesday it would withdraw the recommendation after it had "caused unnecessary confusion". But it added it had neither the intention nor authority to control TV production and it had simply tried to "prevent media, which has big influence on people's daily life, from undermining human rights or fostering discrimination unintentionally".

Critics say the narrow concept of beauty promoted by Korean celebrities was pushing many to go under the knife. In 2017 all four members of K-pop band SixBomb went through extensive plastic surgery, from nose jobs to breast implants, before releasing a single. A series of videos showed the four women visiting a clinic, strutting into an operating theatre and lying on the operating table.

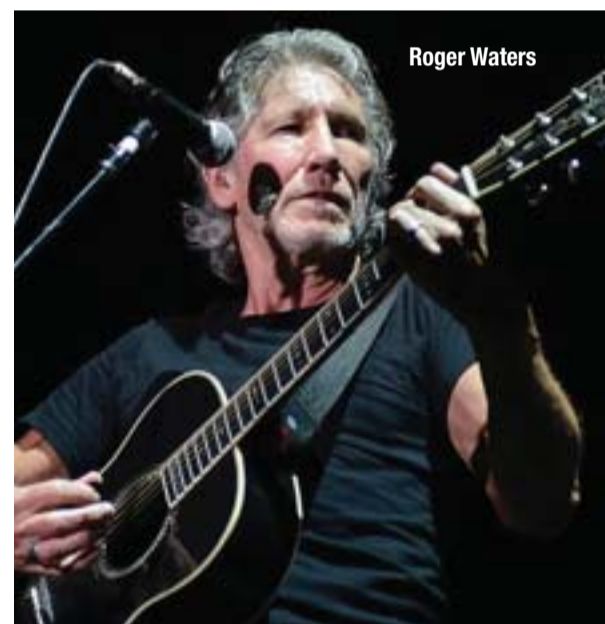
In a survey of teenagers last year, nearly 70 percent said the idea of trying to become a celebrity in the entertainment industry had crossed their mind. The ministry alluded to the impact TV celebrities have on young people in the guidelines. "Overt concerns for how one should look on TV has a negative impact not only on adults, but also on teenagers and children," it said. — AFP



K-pop band SixBomb

Pink Floyd singer hits out at Branson's Venezuela aid concert

Pink Floyd singer Roger Waters hit out at Richard Branson on Tuesday over plans to hold a humanitarian aid concert to benefit Venezuelans suffering from shortages of food and medicines. Branson announced last week he is organizing a fundraising concert in Colombia tomorrow featuring stars such as former Genesis singer Peter Gabriel to raise "\$100 million" for "those millions that need it the most." But Waters said Branson had been fooled by a US "shtick."



"It has nothing to do with the needs of the Venezuelan people, it has nothing to do with democracy, it has nothing to do with freedom, and it has nothing to do with aid," said the British singer-songwriter in a Twitter video that was shown on Venezuelan state television.

Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido says 300,000 Venezuelans could die without the desperately needed aid currently stockpiled in Colombia, close to the border with Venezuela where Branson plans to stage his concert. The military, under the orders of President Nicolas Maduro has barricaded the border to prevent the aid from entering. Maduro says its a "political show" and nothing but a pretext for a US invasion.

US President Donald Trump has refused to rule out a military intervention. "Do we really want Venezuela to be turned into another Iraq, Syria or Libya? I don't, and neither do the Venezuelan people," said Waters. The opposition considers Maduro's presidency illegitimate over his controversial reelection in May in polls boycotted by his opponents as many of their leaders were unable to stand having been exiled, jailed or barred.

Civil unrest between April and July 2017 left 125 people dead while another 40 were killed during a week of anti-government protests last month. "I have friends in Caracas right now, there is so far no civil war, no mayhem, no murder, no apparent dictatorship, no mass imprisonment of opposition, no suppression of the press," said Waters in a post liked 12,000 times. "None of that is going on even though that is the narrative that is being sold to the rest of us."

Guaido has branded Maduro a "dictator" and blames the socialist leader for Venezuela's humanitarian crisis. An estimated 2.3 million Venezuelans have left the country since 2015 as astronomical hyperinflation the International Monetary Fund says will reach 10 million percent this year has left salaries and savings virtually worthless. In response to Branson's Venezuela Live Aid concert, Maduro's government has announced its own two-day musical extravaganza starting on Friday on a border bridge between Colombia and Venezuela. — AFP



Pink

Pink to star at British pop music's big night

Dua Lipa, The 1975 and George Ezra are some of the big names vying for prizes at British pop music's annual celebration on Wednesday, with US singer Pink also set to be honored. The 39th annual Brit Awards at London's O2 Arena will recognize Britain's top talent of 2018, and also feature live performances from Hollywood A-lister Hugh Jackman and Pink. The coveted Best Album of the Year Award will be fought out between pop rockers The 1975, rising star Anne-Marie, Florence + The Machine, indie singer George Ezra and Grammy-nominated diva Jorja Smith.

Electro-stars Clean Bandit are up for two awards for their collaboration with US actress/singer Demi Lovato while Dua Lipa, the 23-year-old star of last year's show, is up for four prizes and will perform with hit producer Calvin Harris during the glitzy ceremony. Anne-Marie, who shot to fame as the vocalist on Clean Bandit's worldwide hit "Rockabye", is nominated for four awards, including for the Britney Spears inspired video to "2002", her fourth top 10 UK single.

Baritone singer George Ezra will also perform live, and could walk away with three awards, including Best British Male Solo Artist. He is up against garage pioneer Craig David, veteran avant-garde techno producer Aphex Twin and soul singer Sam Smith.

The British Group award pits indie heavyweights Gorillaz and Arctic Monkeys against each other, with the latter's May album "Tranquility Base Hotel & Casino" earning plaudits for its experimental direction. Three categories recognize foreign artists, with hip-hop giants Eminem, Drake and The Carters all up for awards, along with Ariana Grande and French star Christine and the Queens.

The Brit Awards have recognized the cream of British pop music since they were first held in 1977, and have often been peppered with scandal and farce.

The 1989 Brits are best remembered for the shambolic presenting skills of model Samantha Fox and Fleetwood Mac's Mick Fleetwood and a comical series of mishaps. Pulp frontman Jarvis Cocker stormed the stage in protest while Michael Jackson performed surrounded by children in 1996.

In 1998, Chumbawamba vocalist Danbert Nobacon dumped a bucket of iced water over then deputy minister John Prescott. And Madonna suffered whiplash injuries at the 2015 edition when she fell off the stage wearing a giant cape and surrounded by dancers wearing bondage-style costumes and horns on their heads.

The awards have also been criticized for failing to be bold in their choice of performers in recent years. The British music industry contributed £4.5 billion (\$5.8 billion, 5.1 billion euros) to the UK economy in 2015, and British artists accounted for one of every eight albums purchased worldwide. — AFP

Ariana Grande first act since Beatles to claim US top three

Pop princess Ariana Grande is the first act in more than 50 years to claim simultaneously the top three spots on the US singles chart, industry tracker Billboard said Monday. The 25-year-old star is the second act in the Billboard Hot 100 chart's six-decade history to accomplish the feat, after The Beatles in 1964. Grande's "7 Rings," "Break Up With Your Girlfriend, I'm Bored" and "Thank U, Next" monopolized the top hits chart following her fifth album's debut on Billboard's top albums tally.

The Beatles nabbed the same spots in April 1964, with "Can't Buy Me Love," "Twist and Shout" and "Do You Want to Know a Secret" reigning atop the chart. The all-genre Hot 100 blends US streaming, radio airplay and digital sales data to rank the top hits. Grande also broke the record for most simultaneous top 40 hits by a female artist with 11 tracks, beating rapper Cardi B's previous record of nine.

The pop star has seen runaway success over the past 12 months, with Billboard naming her its 2018 Woman of the Year. This month she scored her first Grammy for Best Pop Vocal Album for "Sweetener," beating out tough competition including perennial favorite Taylor Swift.

Grande was notably absent from the gala amid a spat with the show's producer—but the social media maven commanded attention throughout the evening anyway with relentless posts, including of a satin Zac Posen ball gown she had planned to wear to the show. The superstar's latest album—entitled "Thank U, Next," like its lead single—sees the star sharpen her brand of bubblegum pop with a biting personal edge. Several songs allude to a tumultuous past year that saw Grande break up with rapper Mac Miller—who died at age 26 in September—and end a brief but heavily publicized engagement with comedian Pete Davidson. — AFP



In this file photo US singer/songwriter Ariana Grande attends Billboard's 13th Annual Women In Music event at Pier 36 in New York City. — AFP

FROM STREET KIDS TO WAR ROMANCE, OSCAR FOREIGN-FILM SLATE KEEPS IT REAL

From Lebanese street children to love behind the Iron Curtain and the daily life of a Mexican housekeeper, this year's Oscar-nominated foreign language films draw from real life and, in some cases, deeply personal experiences. While Poland's "Cold War" and Germany's "Never Look Away" are set decades ago, Japan's "Shoplifters" and Lebanon's "Capernaum" take on contemporary themes, while "Roma" is the most personal film ever made by Alfonso Cuaron.

"Roma," inspired by Cuaron's 1970s childhood in Mexico City's Colonia Roma neighborhood, is seen as the favorite to take not only the foreign language Oscar on Sunday but could make history by also winning best picture. The film, shot entirely in black and white, is inspired by the two women who raised Cuaron: his mother and a

domestic worker. "The source material were my memories, but then the film took on its own life," Cuaron said. "Now my memories are tainted by the film."

Love and chaos

Polish director Pawel Pawlikowski was inspired by the love life of his parents for "Cold War," a dark romance between a pianist and a singer set in both Communist-led Poland and postwar France. The lead characters, Wiktor and Zula, are named after his parents. "It was very personal to start with because that's where the idea came from," Pawlikowski said. "It's inspired by the tempestuous and chaotic relationships which involved many divorces, separations, marrying other people, remarrying, moving countries and so on."

Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck also looked back to World War Two for "Never Look Away." The story about a struggling artist in Nazi-era Germany and then Communist-ruled East Germany spans four decades. Donnersmarck was born in West Germany in 1973 and partly grew up in the United States.

Donnersmarck said he wanted to "see how within one family drama you have the murderers and the victims and the Nazis and those whom they abused and killed and destroyed living under one roof." In Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda's drama "Shoplifters," an elderly widow, three adults, a boy and a girl create a family unit that is united by financial and emotional need. They steal to supplement their working-class wages, all while hiding from authorities after kidnapping the girl from her abusive parents.

The film employs a "ripped-from-the-headlines" approach based on news reports Kore-eda read about families who commit crimes. Lebanese director Nadine Labaki cast street children in "Capernaum" to tell the story of a 12-year-old boy in a Beirut slum who tries to stop his younger sister from being married off.

The plot was largely based on events Labaki witnessed or cast members experienced, and took more than four years to make. The film's young protagonist is played by a Syrian refugee. Another young cast member was jailed during the shoot, and a third was deported to Kenya. "None of it was make-believe," Labaki said. — Reuters



Sci-fi fantasy 'Alita' tops N American box office

Fox's new sci-fi fantasy "Alita: Battle Angel" dominated the North American box office charts over the four-day holiday weekend, earning \$33.5 million, industry tracker Exhibitor Relations said on Tuesday. The futuristic film, which stars Rosa Salazar voicing "Alita," a cyborg almost more human than machine, is a computer-animated adaptation of a Japanese cyberpunk manga story.

Directed by Robert Rodriguez and produced by James Cameron, the project for the \$170-million film was 20 years in the making. The Fox film beat out last weekend's leader, "The Lego Movie 2: The Second Part," which earned Warner Bros an estimated \$27.8 million over the Presidents Day weekend.

This fourth "Lego" movie again features the voices of Chris Pratt, Elizabeth Banks and Will Arnett-joined this time by Tiffany Haddish and Maya Rudolph-in a story of

love and chaos in a post-apocalyptic toyland. In third was another Warner Bros. film, "Isn't It Romantic?," at \$16.6 million. Rebel Wilson stars as a rom-com hating New Yorker who, after a blow to the head, finds herself in her own romantic comedy. Liam Hemsworth also stars.

Fourth place went to Paramount's "What Men Want." The gender-switching remake of 2000's "What Women Want" stars Taraji P. Henson. It had four-day ticket sales of \$12.2 million. And in fifth was "Happy Death Day 2U" from Universal, at \$11 million — already recouping the mere \$9 million it cost to make. Jessica Rothe again plays the role of a young woman living and reliving the day of her murder.

Rounding out the weekend's top 10 were: "Cold Pursuit" (\$6.9 million) "The Upside" (\$6.5 million) "Glass" (\$4.6 million) "The Prodigy" (\$3.7 million) "Green Book" (\$3.5 million)—AFP

Could Lagerfeld's cat Choupette inherit his millions?

Karl Lagerfeld's cat Choupette was already the most famous cat in fashion. Now the white fluffy Burmese cat that the late fashion designer doted on could be about to become the richest feline on the planet. The pampered eight-year-old puss has enjoyed a jetset lifestyle eating off silver platters since Lagerfeld "kidnapped" her in 2011 from his young friend, male model Baptiste Giabiconi. Now she could be about to inherit a slice of his estimated \$200-million (176-million-euro) fortune. Long before his death on Tuesday, Lagerfeld said he had made sure that Choupette would go on living in the style that she had become accustomed to, with her own personal bodyguard and two maids.



In this file photo German fashion designer, artist, and photographer Karl Lagerfeld poses next to a painting of his cat "Choupette" during the inauguration of the show "Corso Karl and Choupette" at the Palazzo Italia in Berlin. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on February 7, 2014 German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld poses next to a photo of himself and his cat Choupette during a visit to the workshops that work for Chanel in Pantin, outside of Paris.



In this file photo taken on May 3, 2017 German fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld acknowledges the audience with his grandson Hudson Kroenig at the end of his Chanel Croisiere (Cruise) fashion show at the Grand Palais in Paris.

"Choupette is a rich girl," he once told French television, hinting that had written her into his will. "She has her own fortune," he added, thought to be at least three million euros (\$3.4 million) which she earned with him doing adverts for a German car firm and a Japanese cosmetics brand. "If anything happens the person who looks after her will not go without," said Lagerfeld, who designed for Chanel, Fendi and his own brand right up to his death aged 85.

Choupette-who the designer they called the Kaiser compared to the enigmatic star Greta Garbo-is something of a cult figure in the fashion world, with more than 170,000 followers on social media. She is also the hero of a book, "Choupette: The Private Life of a High-Flying Fashion Cat", where she was photographed in arms of super-model Linda Evangelista and snuggling with model turned actress Laetitia Casta.

Caviar and king crab

Unlike them, the spoiled feline has never had to watch what she eats. The book includes recipes for her favorite meals prepared by some of the best restaurants in Paris. One typically lavish repast is a mix of king crab, smoked salmon and caviar. And unlike ordinary cats, Choupette eats at a table. "She is like a human being, only with an extra quality-silence," Lagerfeld quipped.

Despite her reputation as a gastronome, the designer forbade her from doing ads for cat food. "She is too sophisticated for that," said the legendary wit, who lived alone and admitted that "Choupette is the center of my world". "She has

Choupette is a rich girl, she has her own fortune

something unforgettable in the way she moves-I'm inspired by her elegance and her attitude," he said.

Adored godson

Lagerfeld-an incorrigible collector of art and fine furniture-also famously showered his friends with gifts and money. Choupette's big rival for the Lagerfeld millions is likely to be his godson Hudson Kroenig, who the designer utterly adored, seeing something of himself in the blond 10-year-old son of his muse, US model Brad Kroenig. "I

consider them like my family," Lagerfeld said of the Kroenigs, using Hudson and his brother Jameson in many of his spectacular Chanel shows at the Grand Palais in Paris.

He often appeared at the end to acknowledge the applause holding Hudson's hand. Yet Lagerfeld thought so highly of Choupette that if she had died before him, her wanted to have her ashes scattered with his own and his mother's. Under French law, Lagerfeld could not leave his millions to a cat. "That's OK," he told reporters who once questioned him on the subject, "because I am not French", hinting that the money could be left in trust. Even so, Choupette-who has not tweeted since Lagerfeld's death-was sometimes used to deliver stinging swipes at her master. French actress and animal rights activist Brigitte Bardot wrote her a letter in 2015 asking her to "purr in the ear" of her owner so he would "stop using fur in his collections". — AFP



Vietnamese artist Tran Lam Binh applies finishing touches to the portraits of US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at a cafe in Hanoi yesterday ahead of the second Trump and Kim summit. — AFP photos



Vietnamese artist Tran Lam Binh poses with the portraits of US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at a cafe in Hanoi.

HAIR APPARENT: HANOI BARBER OFFERS FREE TRUMP, KIM CUTS AHEAD OF SUMMIT



Vietnamese artist Tran Lam Binh applies finishing touches to the portraits of US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Shorn on the sides, thick on top for the Kim Jong Un look; bright and blonde for the Donald Trump-loving customers: a creative Hanoi barber is offering free cuts ahead of the leaders' meeting in the Vietnamese capital next week. Barber Le Tuan Duong has been overrun with customers since word got out about his free dos, a gesture he's offering out of sheer excitement for the February 27-28 meeting in Hanoi. But one style has come out on top. "Over the past three days, I have made 200 Kim style haircuts, but only five for Trump," he told AFP in his cramped Tuan Duong beauty academy in Hanoi.

He would normally charge a whopping \$43 for the Trump dye-job, a steep fee in a city where most haircuts

cost a few dollars. No matter that Trump's infamous coif has come under fire, some Hanoians are delighted with the do. "I want the Vietnamese to know more about Trump, through my hairstyle. For me, Trump is an excellent man and that's why I want this hairstyle," a freshly dyed Vuong Bao Nam said.

The barber is not the only artist in Hanoi paying tribute to the leaders. Painter Tran Lam Binh has been busy churning out Technicolor peace portraits of the men, including one emblazoned with red hearts and the word "L-O-V-E". His color palette may not be true to life, but Trump's blonde locks and Kim's full cheeks in the 10 or so paintings he has created so far are unmistakable. "I really want the two leaders, or just one of them, to come and see my works here... I dream of giving one of the portraits to them," Binh told AFP from a Hanoi cafe where he has been working on the series.

The self-proclaimed Trump obsessive started painting the American president after the election, and has about 50 portraits of him in his studio-some that he displayed in the US capital outside the White House in 2016. "When I paint him, I feel like I understand his inner feelings through his eyes, his face," the 36-year-old artist said, standing next to several easels displaying his technicolour works.

He has even sculpted a nearly two-meter (six-foot) statue of the brash US leader, and while Binh's admiration for the reclusive Kim who has overseen North Korea's nuclear ambitions has been slower to emerge, he has grown fond of him. "I like his humor and his exhibitionist nature," he said. The meeting between Trump and Kim is aimed at building on their summit in Singapore in June, the first ever face-to-face between sitting leaders from the US and North Korea, which have never formally ended the 1950-53 Korean War. — AFP



Vietnamese artist Tran Lam Binh carries the portraits of US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds launches special jewelry collection on the occasion of 58th Kuwait National Day

Malabar Gold & Diamonds extends best wishes to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the occasion of 58th Kuwait National Day for his personal health, happiness and well-being as well as continued peace and prosperity to the people. Special necklace and bracelet has been introduced by Malabar Gold & Diamonds on the occasion of 58th Kuwait National day.

The necklace and bracelet unveiled on the occasion of the Kuwait National day comes in unique and attractive designs. The jewelry is designed in 18k gold and is available in all Malabar Gold & Diamonds & MGD - Lifestyle Jewelry outlets across Kuwait. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also unveiled the latest collection of jewelry in gold, diamonds and precious gems to suit the tastes of their multicultural and multinational customers.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds has incorporated these designs as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine- Indian Heritage Jewelry, Precia - Gem Jewellery and Starlet - Kids jewelry. Malabar Gold & Diamonds is displaying an eye catchy collection of trendy designs in 18 & 22K gold, diamonds, platinum and precious gems from different parts of the world to flaunt at any occasion or event.



'Two is enough,' Egypt tells families as population booms

SOHAG, Egypt: Nesma Ghanem is hoping for a fourth child even though her doctor says her body can't handle a pregnancy at the moment. She has three daughters and would like them to have a brother. "In the future he could support his father and the girls," said Ghanem, 27, who lives in a village in Sohag, an area with one of Egypt's highest fertility rates. The family depends on her husband's income from a local cafe. "If I have a son people, here in the village can say that he will carry on his father's name," she said.

As Egypt's population heads towards 100 million, the government is trying to change the minds of people like Ghanem. "Two Is Enough" is the government's first family-planning campaign aiming to challenge traditions of large families in rural Egypt. But Ghanem's wish to have a son shows how hard that could be. "The main challenge is that we're trying to change a way of thinking," said Randa Fares, coordinator of the campaign at the Social Solidarity Ministry. "To change a way of thinking is difficult."

Egypt's population is growing by 2.6 million a year, a high rate for a country where water and jobs are scarce and schools and hospitals overcrowded. President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi says the two biggest threats to Egypt are terrorism and population growth. "We are faced with scarcity in water resources ... scarcity in jobs, job creation, and we need to really control this population growth so that people can feel the benefits of development," Minister of Social Solidarity Ghada Wali told Reuters.

Decades ago, Egypt had a family-planning program, supported by the United States. The fertility rate fell from 5.6 children per woman in 1976 to 3.0 in 2008 while the use of contraceptives went up from 18.8 percent to 60.3 percent. Large amounts of contraceptives were made available and advertisements increased demand for birth control. Support for family planning from the Egyptian government and large sums from donors helped make the program successful, said Duff Gillespie, who directed USAID's population office from 1986 to 1993.

Donor support

But Egypt was relying on donor support and when that assistance went away, family planning was neglected. By 2014 the fertility rate had gone up to 3.5. The United States is supporting family planning in Egypt again, providing more than \$19 million for a five-year project ending in 2022 and \$4 million for a smaller private sector project ending in 2020. Those amounts are significantly lower than the \$371 million the United States spent on family planning in Egypt between 1976 and 2008.

"Two Is Enough" is mainly financed by Egyptian money, with the Social Solidarity Ministry spending 75 million Egyptian pounds (\$4.27 million) and the UN providing 10 million pounds, according to the ministry. The two-year campaign targets more than 1.1 million poor families with up to three children. The Social Solidarity Ministry, with local NGOs, has trained volunteers to make home visits and encourage people to have fewer children.

Mothers are invited to seminars with preachers who say that Islam allows family planning, and doctors who answer questions. Billboards and TV ads promote smaller families. The government aims to reduce the current fertility rate of 3.5 to 2.4 by 2030. At a session teaching volunteers how to speak to mothers and fathers about family planning in a village in Giza, Asmaa Mohammad, a 25-year-old volunteer, told Reuters she would rather have three children than two. "Since I was a child I knew I wanted three children," said Mohammad who is unmarried and doesn't have children yet.

Deeply rooted traditions and lack of education explain why many Egyptians have big families. Al-Azhar, Egypt's top Sunni Muslim authority, endorses family planning, but not all Egyptians agree. Some view children as a future source of support. Others who only have girls keep having more until they get a boy who can carry on the family name. During a visit from a campaign volunteer, Ghanem said her wish to have a boy was not the main reason she wasn't using contraceptives. She stopped using an IUD



CAIRO: This picture taken yesterday shows a building reflecting the sunset on its windows in the Egyptian capital. — AFP

after suffering from bleeding.

Contraceptives

About one in three Egyptian women stop using contraceptives within a year, often due to misinformation about the side effects or lack of information about alternatives, according to the United Nations Population Fund. Nearly 13 percent of married women of reproductive age in Egypt want to use contraceptives but are unable to, according to official data from 2014. Now the government has renovated clinics, added staff and provided more free contraceptives. Under "Two Is Enough" the goal is to have 70 new clinics up and running in March.

But when Reuters visited a clinic in Sohag last month, there were no contraceptives left. Nema Mahmoud, who had travelled from her village, was told to come back the next day. Sohag, one of Egypt's poorest governorates, also has one of the highest fertility rates at 4.3. The National Population Council said contraceptive use in Sohag is the lowest among six governorates surveyed.

For years Mahmoud, 33, didn't use contraceptives consistently even though she wanted a small family. Her mother-in-law kept her from travelling to the city to get contraceptives when the local clinic was out, she said. It was only after her mother-in-law died that she started using contraceptives properly. By then Mahmoud had three children and three miscarriages.

Since January, the government has limited cash assistance to poor families to two children instead of three in an attempt to push them to have fewer kids. Mahmoud will receive less cash every month. Her husband works only a few days a month, making 45 Egyptian pounds (\$2.60) a day, she said. Mahmoud and her neighbor Sanaa Mohammad, a 38-year-old mother of three, said the change should apply to new families, not women like them who already benefit from the program and have more than two children. "It's not fair to give someone something and then take it away," said Mohammad.

Begum is currently in a refugee camp in northeast Syria where she fled to escape fighting in the east of the country along with hundreds of other people with links to IS. She said she had previously given birth to two other children after marrying in Syria. Both children are said to have died, apparently from illness and malnutrition. Begum fled Britain with Kadiza Sultana, who has since been reported killed, and Amira Abase. Begum said in recent media interviews that Abase had stayed in a village where IS fighters were making a final stand against US-backed forces.

European countries have been grappling with what to do with foreign fighters detained in Syria by the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, who have warned they may not be able to guard their jails once US troops leave. The British government on Monday rebuffed US President Donald Trump's call for European allies to take back hundreds of alleged jihadists captured in the war-ravaged country. Prime Minister Theresa May's spokesman said the fighters should instead face justice in places where they committed their crimes. — AFP

year quit oil producer group OPEC, of which Saudi Arabia is de facto leader. Diplomats in the Gulf say the boycott has raised costs for companies operating in the region, with vessels forced to call at ports in third countries when sailing between Qatar and UAE.

Qatar's economy has largely weathered the boycott thanks to the tiny country's vast wealth, which was swiftly deployed by the government to support the financial sector. The world's largest natural gas exporter also forged new trade links to meet domestic demand, including basic goods such as food, and construction material as it prepares to host the 2022 World Cup. — Reuters

legislation to ban any normalization because existing laws are sufficient. Kandari said the committee conveyed to the meeting the strong popular rejection of any normalization and warned against any moves that may lead to any form of relations with Israel.

Meanwhile, the constitutional court yesterday decided to delay until April 10 to issue its verdict regarding if the law on conflict of interests is in line with the constitution.

The government sees the population boom as a threat to its economic reform plans. Every year, 800,000 young Egyptians enter the labor market, where unemployment is officially 10 percent. In Egypt, population growth is around half the economic growth rate, but it should be no more than a third - otherwise it will be difficult to invest in social programmes and improve living standards, said Magued Osman, chief executive of Baseera, the Egyptian Center for Public Opinion Research.

Analysts say Egypt should target people before they have children and sex education should be available in schools. "Two Is Enough is good, but by itself it will not do the job," said Abla Abdel Latif, executive director of the Egyptian Center for Economic Studies. Wafaa Mohammad Amin, 36, a mother of four who works on "Two Is Enough", got married at 17 and had her first child a year later. Two of her children were malnourished because she didn't know how to breastfeed properly. — Reuters

Egypt hangs 9 for 2015 murder of prosecutor

CAIRO: Egyptian authorities executed nine men convicted over the 2015 killing of the country's chief prosecutor yesterday amid a surge in the number of death sentences carried out this month, lawyers, activists and officials said. The men were among a group of 28 who were sentenced to death in the case in 2017. Public prosecutor Hisham Barakat was killed in a car bomb attack on his convoy in the capital, Cairo. Egypt blamed the Muslim Brotherhood and Gaza-based Hamas militants for the operation. Both groups denied having a role.

Since 2013, the year that then-army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi military ousted President Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood, Egyptian criminal courts have issued hundreds of death sentences. Only a small proportion have been carried out, though the rate of executions has risen since 2015, rights activists say. The executed men were brought to a morgue where families - who said they had not been informed about the execution date in advance - waited anxiously for several hours yesterday afternoon to recover their bodies.

Ghada Mohamed El-Abassy, the mother of one of those executed, said she had learnt about the execution from a TV report. She said she hadn't seen her son in more than one year because she was not allowed to visit him in custody. "We are in a country where humans have no value. If we were of value to them they wouldn't have deprived us from visiting them for years,"

she said. A police official at the morgue said authorities don't inform relatives before executions "for security reasons". "We can't tell them of the date, no one knows, even the prisoners are not told, they can commit suicide if we tell them," he said.

Officials at the morgue confirmed the executions had been carried out yesterday morning. They followed six others carried out earlier this month, rights groups said. Three of those were convicted over the killing of a police officer in Sept 2013, and three over the killing of a judge's son the following year. In both cases the defendants or their lawyers had said torture was used to extract confessions, according to Amnesty International.

"These executions are a stark demonstration of the government's increasing use of the death penalty," said Amnesty International, which had appealed on Tuesday for authorities not to carry out the executions. "Egyptian authorities must urgently halt this bloody execution spree which has seen them repeatedly putting people to death after grossly unfair trials in recent weeks." The rights group cited testimony by the defendants that they had been secretly detained and tortured into confessing.

The latest executions took place two days after three policeman were killed in Cairo after cornering the alleged perpetrator of an attempted attack against a police patrol in the capital last Friday. The executions "suggest a troubling trend on the part of the government in which executions appear to be tools of revenge following terrorist attacks rather than a part of an orderly criminal justice system," said Timothy Kaldas, non-resident fellow at the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. Sisi, who was elected president in 2014 and re-elected last year, says he is working to bring stability and security to Egypt following the turmoil of the 2011 uprising. — Reuters

IS teen 'shocked' after UK revokes...

Continued from Page 1

heritage, was born in Britain, has never had a Bangladeshi passport and is not a dual citizen, according to Akunjee.

The Home Office reportedly believes that she is entitled to claim citizenship in the south Asian country. Chiranjiv Sarker, head of the consular wing and dual nationality issues at Bangladesh's foreign ministry, told AFP it was aware of the case but had not received any contact from the family. "So far none of her family members (has) approached us," he said. "What I learn from newspapers is that Shamima was trying to return to Britain." He added that, if approached, the ministry would need to try to verify Begum's Bangladeshi heritage to assess any possible eligibility for citizenship.

UAE eases Qatar shipping ban amid...

Continued from Page 1

On the political front, there has been no indication of a thaw. The UAE and Saudi Arabia have said the dispute is not a priority and that Qatar must accept a list of conditions before ties are restored. Qatar has said that although it would like the matter resolved it is moving on and last

Government totally rejects normalizing...

Continued from Page 1

He however said that Kuwait does not require new

Saudis, India to step up 'pressure'...

Continued from Page 1

"It is extremely important to eliminate the terror infrastructure and stop support to terrorists and their supporters."

Prince Mohammed, who arrived in Delhi from Pakistan where he had offered to help the neighbors ease tensions, responded that "terrorism and extremism is a common concern for India and Saudi Arabia". The prince, whose country accuses Iran of backing militant strikes, added: "I want to state that we are ready to cooperate with India in every way, including through intelligence sharing." He said India and all "neighboring countries must work together".

The crown prince also signed joint accords on industry and culture, but announced no major deals.

In Pakistan, the Saudi prince announced \$20 billion of investment for the Muslim country. Modi has faced increasing pressure to take action over the Kashmir attack claimed by Pakistan-based Islamist group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM). Islamabad, which banned JeM in 2002, has denied any role.

The Saudi delegation had wanted the Delhi leg of the crown prince tour to be devoted to bolstering its oil supplies to India. Saudi Arabia is one of India's key crude suppliers, along with Iran and Iraq. Since taking office in 2014, Modi has also sought to attract Saudi investment in trade, infrastructure and defense. Two-way trade was worth \$27.5 billion last year.

After his meeting with the Indian premier, Prince Mohammed said the kingdom saw investment opportu-

nities "in various fields (in India) to exceed \$100 billion". Prime Minister Modi "welcomed the announcement of (the) crown prince to invest \$100 billion in India in a range of areas like energy, refining, petrochemicals, infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, etc.," T S Thirumurthy, secretary for economic relations at the Indian foreign ministry, told journalists in New Delhi.

"This is a clear reflection of the confidence of Saudi Arabia in the vibrancy of the Indian economy and tremendous opportunities available in India for investment." Thirumurthy said no time frame had been identified for these investments. "Economic power is shifting from West to East and India will be (the) second-largest economy ahead of the United States, which is a big opportunity for us," Amin Nasser, chief executive of Saudi Aramco, the world's biggest oil company, told a Delhi investment conference yesterday.

Aramco signed an accord in April last year with Indian investors on a \$44-billion petrochemical project in western India. Nasser, a member of the crown prince's delegation, said his firm was in talks with other Indian firms as well. "We are not limited to that investment (refinery), which is the mega refinery... we are looking at other opportunities," Nasser added, according to the Press Trust of India.

The crown prince, who was greeted with a traditional Modi bear hug at the airport on Tuesday, said Saudi Arabia has invested nearly \$44 billion in India since the Indian leader's visit to the kingdom in 2016. Prince Mohammed was expected to go on to China later yesterday. India's opposition Congress party meanwhile criticized Modi for welcoming the crown prince "with such abundance - only hours after he promised billions to Pakistan" while Indians were in grief over the Kashmir attack. "PM Modi has shown the country, the martyrs and every soldier in India what he thinks of their service and sacrifice," the party said on Twitter. — AFP

Sports

Southee, Taylor inspire Black Caps whitewash of Bangladesh

Ross, New Zealand's highest-scoring one-day international batsman

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard in the third and final one-day international between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Dunedin's University Oval yesterday:

New Zealand	
M. Guptill c Iqbal b Saifuddin	29
C. Munro lbw Mortaza	8
H. Nicholls c Iqbal b Hasan	64
R. Taylor c Mahmudullah b Rubel	69
T. Latham c Sarkar b Rahman	59
J. Neesham b Rahman	37
C. de Grandhomme not out	37
M. Santner not out	16
Extras: (lb 3, nb 2, w 6)	11
Total: (for 6 wickets; 50 overs)	330
Fall of wickets: 1-21 (Munro), 2-59 (Guptill), 3-151 (Nicholls), 4-206 (Taylor), 5-271 (Neesham), 6-284 (Latham)	
Bowling: Mashrafe Mortaza 10-1-51-1, Mustafizur Rahman 10-0-93-2 (3w, Inb), Rubel Hossain 9-0-64-1 (Inb), Mohammad Saifuddin 10-0-48-1, Mehidy Hasan 9-0-43-1 (1w), Mahmudullah 2-0-28-0 (2w).	

Bangladesh	
T. Iqbal c Latham b Southee	0
L. Das lbw Southee	1
S. Sarkar b Southee	0
M. Rahim c Munro b Boult	17
Mahmudullah c Munro b de Grandhomme	16
S. Rahman c and b Southee	102
M. Saifuddin c Guptill b Boult	44
M. Mortaza c Boult b Southee	2
M. Hasan c Guptill b Southee	37
R. Hossain run out (Santner/Southee)	3
M. Rahman not out	0
Extras: (lb 2, w 18)	20
Total: (all out; 47.2 overs)	242
Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Iqbal), 2-1 (Sarkar), 3-2 (Das), 4-40 (Rahim), 5-61 (Mahmudullah), 6-162 (Saifuddin), 7-170 (Mortaza), 8-237 (Hasan), 9-242 (Hossain), 10-242 (S. Rahman)	
Bowling: Southee 9.2-1-65-6 (11w), Boult 9-1-37-1 (2w), de Grandhomme 5-0-18-1 (2w), Ferguson 10-0-50-0 (3w), Santner 10-2-46-0, Neesham 4-0-24-0.	
Result: New Zealand win by 88 runs	
Man of the match: Tim Southee	
Series: New Zealand win 3-0	

DUNEDIN: Tim Southee snared a six-wicket haul and Ross Taylor tore up the record books as New Zealand dominated Bangladesh to seal a 3-0 series whitewash with an 88-run victory in the final one-day international in Dunedin yesterday. Sabbir Rahman's gallant maiden ODI century saved Bangladesh from total humiliation after they lost three wickets with just two runs on the board chasing New Zealand's imposing target of 331.

The tourists were 242 all out in 47.2 overs after the Black Caps were sent into bat and made 330 for six at University Oval. It was final New Zealand outing before the Cricket World Cup and players were desperate to impress coach Gary Stead even though the fixture was a dead rubber.

Paceman Tim Southee, overlooked in New Zealand's past six ODIs, took six for 65 to guarantee himself almost certainly a berth at the tournament.

Henry Nicholls looks to have secured an opening batting slot with a sparkling 64, but out-of-form rival Colin Munro was dismissed for eight. "Henry's shown he's a versatile player for us... he's a key component of our batting line-up," Black Caps coach Gary Stead said, adding that Munro might make the trip as injury cover.

Ross Taylor became New Zealand's highest-scoring one-day international batsman as his 69 off 81 balls took him past 8,000 runs in the 50-over format. His 47th ODI half-century saw Taylor reach 8,026 runs, overtaking Stephen Fleming's previous record of 8,007.

The 34-year-old, who made his ODI debut in 2006, reached his milestone in 203 innings with a superb average of 48.34. "I definitely would have taken that when I played my first match donkey's years ago," he said. "If you play long enough I guess these records come along but it's nice to set the bar for the next guy. "I'm still enjoying myself and hopefully I've still got a few years in me." Tom Latham pressed his claim for a World Cup spot with a solid 59 while Colin de Grandhomme and Jimmy Neesham both scored 37 as they seek all-rounder berths.



DUNEDIN: New Zealand pose for a team photo as they celebrate their series win following the third one-day international cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at University Oval in Dunedin yesterday. — AFP

Bangladesh made a horror start to the run chase when Tim Southee claimed a trio of top-order wickets in his opening two overs to leave the visitors reeling on two for three. The run rate slowed to a crawl after Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad departed, each caught by Munro after offering rash shots in pursuit of quick runs.

Resistance finally came in the form of Rahman and Mohammad Saifuddin, who made 44 in a 101-run partnership that added respectability to the scoreboard. Captain Mashrafe Mortaza said Rahman's plucky 102 was one of the highlights of a tough series. "It's disappointing but we have to come back stronger," he said. — AFP

World Cup 'firsts' still vivid for West Indies hero Lloyd

LONDON: The children playing cricket in the unlikely setting of London's Trafalgar Square could have been forgiven for not knowing the identity of the grey-haired gentleman loping between the wickets.

Yet even wearing a heavy coat to guard against the chill of an English winter morning, the tall, bespectacled and slightly stooping figure of Clive Lloyd was still instantly recognisable to generations of cricket fans. Lloyd was in London on Tuesday at an event marking 100 days until the start of the 2019 World Cup in England and Wales.

But unlike all the England cricketers past and present also involved, including Nasser Hussain, Graeme Swann, Alastair Cook and James Anderson, Lloyd knows what it is to be a World Cup-winner, having led West Indies to victories in Lord's finals in 1975 and 1979. The 1975 edition, the inaugural men's World Cup, saw West Indies captain Lloyd make a superb century during a 17-run win in the final against Australia. "It was the first World Cup—they'll never be another first—and having won it in front of a large West Indian contingent, it was quite exciting," Lloyd told AFP.

'SPOT OF BOTHER'

Modern batsmen are often expected to score at better than a run-a-ball in a one-day game. That wasn't the case, however, in 1975 when field restrictions had yet to become part of limited-overs cricket.

Lloyd's innings of 102 off 85 balls, including 12 fours and two sixes, in the final would have been eye-catching enough in scoring-rate terms alone. But that he came in with West Indies having slumped to 50 for three after being sent into bat by Australia captain Ian Chappell and made a hundred against an attack featuring outstanding quicks Dennis Lillee and Jeff Thomson, as well as left-arm swing bowler Gary Gilmour, made it all the more impressive.

Lloyd-dropped early on-received excellent support



BRIDGETOWN: Ben Stokes (L) and Joe Root (R) of England take part in a training session one day ahead of the 1st ODI between West Indies and England at Kensington Oval, Bridgetown, Barbados, yesterday. — AFP

from veteran batsman Rohan Kanhai who, in his 40th year, got off the mark by driving the fearsomely fast Thomson off the back foot for four.

The pair shared a stand of 149 that helped West Indies to a total of 291 for eight in a then 60 overs, with Chappell later remarking that Lloyd "battered us from one side of Lord's to the other".

Lloyd's recollection was, typically, rather more understated. "I got a few runs—I think I got 102 - but the point is I got in there when we lost three quick wickets, so we were in a spot of bother.

"Rohan Kanhai and myself sort of rallied the situation and then we got to a pretty good score. We had a total that we can defend and we defended it quite well. Although it was close in the end, we were always in the

ascendancy."

West Indies had to come through a qualifying event to reach this year's World Cup. But they recently upset the odds to beat England 2-1 in a Test series and their 74-year-old former captain believes they could cause a few upsets at the World Cup as well, especially if self-styled "Universe Boss" Chris Gayle—a powerful left-handed batsman in the Lloyd mould—finds his form.

"I think they can be quite a formidable side if they choose the right team," said Lloyd ahead of the start of a five-match one-day series between the West Indies and World Cup favourites England in Barbados yesterday. "We have some good one-day players and let's hope Mr Gayle fires in more ways than one. I think they can do very well in this competition." — AFP

Butt says call to play PSL could be his shot at redemption

LAHORE: Former Pakistan captain Salman Butt hopes an unexpected call to play in the domestic Twenty20 league will help him regain his place on the national team, he said yesterday, years after he was banned for spot-fixing. The 34-year-old said he was delighted to join the Lahore Qalandars in the ongoing Pakistan Super League (PSL) as a replacement for Mohammad Hafeez, who was ruled out after fracturing his thumb.

"After a long time I received one of the best messages of my life when Lahore called me to play in the PSL, and I am very happy to get this opportunity," he told AFP. The PSL's popularity has surged since it was first held in 2016. The bulk of the tournament is played in the United Arab Emirates, but with security improving in Pakistan the final eight matches—including the March 17 final—will be held at home, in Karachi and Lahore. The league's growing profile means it is the first big chance

for the left-handed batsman to rehabilitate himself since his high-profile ban for a spot-fixing scandal which erupted on Pakistan's 2010 tour of England.

Butt, captain of Pakistan's Test team at the time, was charged for orchestrating deliberate no-balls from his pace bowlers Mohammad Amir and Mohammad Asif during the Lord's Test in return for money.

He was banned for five years in total, as were Asif and Amir. Though they completed their bans in September 2015, only Amir was able to regain his place in the Pakistan team. "It's been a long time and I have been doing all my training and playing domestic cricket and trying my best to play for Pakistan," said Butt.

Since his return to domestic cricket in Pakistan, he has been a prolific run scorer, finishing with 536 runs in the National One-Day Cup in early 2016 — his first tournament since being cleared to play.

He scored 741 runs in the premier first-class tournament—the Quaid-e-Azam trophy—with twin hundreds in the final to help his team to the title in December 2016, and continued his strong form in the same tournament last year. Butt said he hopes he has done his penance. "It's been a long and hard path, but thankfully this is the first step and if I can carry on doing well things will work out, Inshallah," he said.

Before his ban Butt had played 33 Tests, 78 one-day internationals and 24 Twenty20 matches for Pakistan. He led Pakistan to a rare series draw against Australia in 2010, over two Tests played in England. — AFP



Salman Butt

Smiling Sri Lankans seek series win

PORT ELIZABETH: Sri Lankan captain Dimuth Karunaratne said yesterday he wanted his players to continue playing with a smile on their faces as they seek to become the first Asian team to win a Test series in South Africa.

Sri Lanka go into the second Test at St George's Park today with an unbeatable 1-0 lead in the two-match series after their sensational, Kusal Perera-inspired one-wicket win in the first Test in Port Elizabeth.

"We came here to win matches," said Karunaratne, who was handed the captaincy after Dinesh Chandimal was axed after losing a series in Australia last month. "I just want to make sure the boys give their maximum each day."

Karunaratne said enjoyment was a key factor. "We have to keep our heads clear and play positively," he said. "We want to enjoy ourselves. You will see with our boys when they are playing they are smiling and cheering each other. If you are enjoying yourself you will play well."

The Sri Lankan captain said conditions in Durban and those expected in Port Elizabeth were "much easier" than those in Australia, where they played on fast, bouncy pitches. Although Sri Lanka were beaten by 206 runs on their previous appearance in Port Elizabeth two seasons ago, Karunaratne said they had played well enough to go into Thursday's match with confidence.

South African captain Faf du Plessis said his players were "highly motivated" to square the series. "We were in control for most of the (first) Test, then something brilliant took it away from us," he said of Perera's match-winning innings.

"The disappointing thing with a short series is that you only play two matches so for us it is making sure we square up the series." The pitch had a good covering of grass but Du Plessis said he expected a "normal" St George's Park pitch.

"It looks pretty similar to what we played on against Australia and Sri Lanka in our last two Test matches. Hopefully there will be some assistance for our seamers. We are not expecting a lot of pace and bounce so we're just hoping there will be decent carry."

Du Plessis admitted that Sri Lanka's inexperienced bowlers, notably Vishwa Fernando and Lasith Embuldeniya, had brought "an element of the unknown and a surprise factor" to the touring team's attack.

"There has already been a bit of chat to make sure we play the new guys better," he said. Du Plessis hinted that all-rounder Wiaan Mulder, who turned 21 on Tuesday, could make his Test debut in place of the injured Vernon Philander.

"I see a role for him for the Proteas moving forward as a batting all-rounder, batting at number six or seven and bowling those extra ten overs that you need." — AFP

Sports

Pittsburgh Steelers and Antonio Brown decide to part ways

Chiefs likely to apply franchise tag to linebacker Dee Ford

After meeting with team president Art Rooney II on Tuesday, Pittsburgh Steelers receiver Antonio Brown announced on Twitter that both sides have decided to part ways. "Had a great meeting with Mr. Rooney today we discussed a lot of things and we cleared the air on several issues! We both agreed that it is time to move on but I'll always have appreciation and gratitude towards the Rooney family and @steelers organization! #CallGod #Boomin," Brown tweeted.

ESPN's Adam Schefter reported that Brown's agent, Drew Rosenhaus, and Steelers general manager Kevin Colbert and vice president Omar Kahn joined the meeting. "Everyone agreed the trade will be for the best," a source told Schefter.

All-Pro tight end Rob Gronkowski is still mulling over whether to retire or return to the New England Patriots for a 10th NFL season, Rosenhaus said. "He's thinking it through, he's giving it a lot of thought," the agent said on ESPN's "NFL Live," adding, "I imagine a decision will happen in the next couple of weeks."

NFL Network's Mike Giardi tweeted Tuesday afternoon that "Gronkowski told multiple teammates/associates that he wanted to win another ring in the first few days following the Super Bowl."

The Kansas City Chiefs are likely to apply the franchise tag to linebacker Dee Ford, according to multiple reports. The franchise tag period opened and will run until March 5. The linebacker tag for 2019 is expected to be \$15.78 million, according to ProFootballTalk.

In the 2018 regular season, Ford played in 16 games and recorded career highs in sacks (13), tackles (55), tackles for loss (13) and QB hits (29). The 27-year-old told WFNZ in Charlotte on Monday that he wouldn't object to playing under the franchise tag while a longer

deal is worked out between the sides.

The New York Jets are not picking up the options on three defensive players, the team officially announced. Defensive tackle Mike Pennel, safety Terrence Brooks and linebacker Kevin Pierre-Louis will become free agents.

The Jets had a deadline of Tuesday to pay a \$1 million bonus to Pennel, 27, who signed a three-year contract last March. Had the team paid the bonus, the final two years of the contract would have been activated.

New York Giants defensive backs coach Lou Anarumo will interview Thursday for the Cincinnati Bengals' vacant defensive coordinator position, according to multiple reports.

New Bengals head coach Zac Taylor and Anarumo, 52, worked together on the Miami Dolphins' coaching staff from 2012-15. Anarumo was interim defensive coordinator with the Dolphins in 2015 but otherwise he only has coached defensive backs during his seven seasons in the NFL.

He spent more than 20 years in college coaching prior to moving to the NFL. Tight end Scott Simonson resigned with the Giants, the team announced. The 26-year-old played in 16 games (four starts) in 2018 and caught nine passes for 86 yards and one touchdown in his first season with the Giants.

Simonson, who attended Assumption College, signed with the Oakland Raiders as an undrafted free agent in 2014. He then spent two seasons with Carolina before spending the 2017 season on injured reserve with a back injury.

The Arizona Cardinals signed former Buffalo Bills tight end Charles Clay to a one-year contract. The Bills released Clay last week, with the eight-year veteran

said on Monday his Ferrari had been "close to perfection". Mercedes, winners of both titles for the past five years, have also been pounding out the mileage without setting any eye-catching times.

"They (Ferrari) have been looking great," Hamilton, who will be chasing his sixth title, told reporters. "For us it's been just digging deep, trying to understand the car. Pretty much the same as the beginning of every year. The Ferraris always look strong, particularly in the last few years they look very strong right at the beginning so it's to be expected." Ferrari won the first two races of last year with a car that seemed quicker than the Mercedes but the champions came back strongly and Hamilton ended the year with 11 wins to Vettel's tally of five.

NO WORRIES

Last year Ferrari—who won six successive constructors' titles between 1999 and 2004 — were fastest in testing but it was still Hamilton who put his Mercedes



CHARLOTTE: NFL player, Antonio Brown smiles and laughs during the 2019 NBA All-Star Game on February 17, 2019 at Spectrum Center in Charlotte, North Carolina. — AFP

heading into the final year of a five-year \$38 million contract. His deal with Arizona is worth up to \$3.25 million, including a \$350,000 signing bonus, according to ESPN's Adam Schefter.

The Atlanta Falcons agreed to a three-year extension with offensive lineman Ty Sambrailo, the team announced. Sambrailo, 26, started the last four games of the 2018 season for Atlanta, playing both left guard and right tackle. His contract was set to expire next month. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed.

The Jacksonville Jaguars hired 31-year NFL coaching veteran Dom Capers as a senior defensive assistant, the team announced. Capers, who was the Jaguars' defensive coordinator from 1999-2000, most recently served as the Green Bay Packers' defensive coordinator from 2009-17. Capers, 68, has been the head coach of two NFL expansion teams—the Carolina Panthers (1995-98) and Houston Texans (2002-05). He was named the Associated Press NFL Coach of the Year in 1996. — Reuters

Hamilton shrugs off Ferrari's early testing pace

BARCELONA: Lewis Hamilton shrugged off Ferrari's testing pace yesterday while recognising that he and Mercedes faced their toughest challenge yet as they seek to stretch their Formula One domination into a sixth successive season.

Ferrari, overall runners-up last year, have led the timesheets for the first two days of testing at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya and have also done plenty of laps with their new SF90 car.

Sebastian Vettel, the four times champion who is partnered by young Monegasque Charles Leclerc this

India faces sanctions after Pakistanis fail to get World Cup visas

NEW DELHI: India could face sanctions after two Pakistani shooters failed to get visas to attend a World Cup event in New Delhi, the sport's world body said yesterday, amid tensions over a deadly suicide bomb attack in Indian Kashmir.

New Delhi has accused Islamabad of supporting the perpetrators of last week's attack that left at least 40 paramilitaries dead. Pakistan has denied any involvement.

Two Pakistani shooters, G.M. Bashir and Khalil Ahmed, and their manager were to take part in the event but had not arrived for yesterday's eve-of-contest formalities. The International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) warned India of consequences.

"The ISSF World Cup in New Delhi faces an urgent situation as Pakistani athletes cannot get entry visas to participate in the competition," it said in a statement. The federation and the Indian organising committee are making "all efforts to solve the situation to avoid the discrimination of the Pakistani team".

"Besides that, the ISSF and the organizing committee are discussing the possible consequences for India as a host country for future international competitions, in all sports." India, which has expressed a strong interest in hosting the 2032 Olympics and 2030 Asian Games, could face International Olympic Committee (IOC) action if Pakistan is blocked from taking part.

The event, with 500 shooters from 58 nations, is a qualifier for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The Kashmir attack sparked anger and outrage across India, with thousands of protesters staging anti-Pakistan rallies in several Indian cities demanding action, and even war.

National Rifle Association of India general secretary D.V. Seetharama Rao said it was not certain the Pakistanis would cross the border even if they had visas. "They have to come and shoot and shooting is such a technical sport with so much mental strain that this might cause disturbance in their mind," Rao told reporters.

"Their families and coaches might not allow them to come." "Repercussions? We take it as it comes. I can't predict the future," the official added. Rao said the Pakistanis would be allowed to compete if they have visas and make the trip to India. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Shimaa Hashad of Egypt takes part in a practice session with an air rifle at the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup at Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

Kostner rules out worlds in Japan

MILAN: Former world champion Carolina Kostner has ruled out competing in the world figure skating championships in Japan next month, with a slim hope that she will return from injury for the World Team Trophy there in April. The 32-year-old Italian has not completed this season as she struggles with a left hip problem and a fractured foot she picked up in a domestic accident in December.

"I never thought this season would turn out like this and I have to say breaking my foot disheartened me at the beginning," said five-time European cham-

pion Kostner, whose career has spanned 17 years.

"But then I transformed the time into something useful by dedicating myself, apart from the initial rest, to activities off the ice. Now I have also taken up dance and I am happy to be able to resume my work on the ice."

Kostner said she was resuming training gradually and hopes to participate in some Galas and a tour of Japan at the end May. The only remaining hope of seeing her in competition would be at The World Team Trophy in Fukuoka, Japan from April 11-14.

The world championships are also in Japan, in Saitama, from March 18-24. In addition to her gold in 2012, Kostner has won two silver and three bronze at worlds. She also won bronze at the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, but finished fifth in Pyeongchang 2018 and slumped to fourth in worlds at home in Milan. — AFP

ITF's new pathway to help dreamers reach the top

LONDON: Armed with his talent and a racket bag full of hope, Frenchman Evan Furness is one of the dreamers to climb from tennis's lowest rungs up to the biggest stages of all.

The trouble is the vast majority of the thousands of players who venture, like 20-year-old Furness, into the jungle of world tennis find the path leads not to fame and fortune, but to a dead end and debt.

Far from emulating the likes of Roger Federer or Serena Williams, most never even reach the lucrative ATP or WTA Tours, and hundreds never earn a bean for all their hard graft.

In 2017, there were 14,000 so-called tennis professionals, but fewer than 600 broke even before coaching costs.

While the likes of Novak Djokovic and Serena earn fortunes from the sport and even men's 100th-ranked Vasek Pospisil has banked \$5.2 million in a decade on Tour, around 80 percent of professionals quit having earned next to nothing.

In truth, for the majority, a career as a tennis pro has been more fantasy than reality.

Which is why the International Tennis Federation (ITF) has acted on its three-year Player Pathway review, a comprehensive study into the professional game published in 2017, and why players like Furness now see light at the end of the tunnel.

The new ITF World Tennis Tour, a transition circuit of 1,600 junior and entry-level tournaments, began in January to provide a streamlined progression between the junior and senior game, enabling more professional players to make a living.

Prize money pools of \$15,000 and \$25,000 will be available for entry-level men's and women's events while, crucially, "reserved places" will be available in higher level tournaments.

Jackie Nesbitt, Executive Director of the ITF Pro Circuits, said the initial indications were positive.

"As a sport it was clear we needed to do much better for the players," she told Reuters by telephone. "The new structure has a clear aim and that is to support the best young male and female players and to deliver them to the ATP and WTA Tours."

"It's about fast-tracking on merit, allowing the best players in the entry-level tournaments to move up through the professional pathway quicker and at less cost to themselves."

The new system features an ITF World Tour ranking list which will run separately from the ATP and WTA rankings, both of which will be trimmed back to 750 players.

Top-100 ranked juniors will be eligible for reserved places in \$15k tournaments, while Level 2 \$25k draws will also have places for players doing well at a lower level.

Four reserved places will be available for ITF-ranked players in ATP Challenger, one level below the full ATP Tour.

Frenchman Furness took advantage of a reserved spot to win a \$25k event in Hong Kong and then won another title in Switzerland — proof, Nesbitt said, that the system worked.

"We are really encouraged," Nesbitt said. "It shows they are competing at the right level and are competitive at that level." While reducing the quantity of players might seem counter-intuitive, ITF president David Haggerty said offering better rewards will help "retain the best talent". — Reuters

Sports

Klopp 'not over the moon' as Bayern frustrate Liverpool

Sadio Mane wasted the best chance

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp admitted an underwhelming 0-0 draw against old foes Bayern Munich on Tuesday was not what he "dreamed of", but remained confident of progressing to the quarter-finals of the Champions League.

Sadio Mane wasted the best chance when the Senegalese forward fired wide during an open first 45 minutes, but a cagey second half left it all to be decided when the sides meet again in Munich on March 13.

However, without the talismanic presence of Virgil van Dijk through suspension and the injured Joe Gomez and Dejan Lovren, Liverpool at least did not concede an away goal despite fielding a make-shift central defensive pairing of Brazilian midfielder Fabinho and Joel Matip. "It's not the result or the game we dreamed of," said Klopp. "It is not a game we will remember in 30 years. It's the result we have and we will work with that. "It was a clean sheet without the big man (Van Dijk). A lot of people wouldn't have expected that. The defending was good. A lot of things were really good, I'm not over the moon but I'm completely OK with the game."

That unfamiliarity in Liverpool's defence showed in the early stages as the hosts started nervously at the back. Matip breathed a sigh of relief when he turned Serge Gnabry's driven cross towards his own goal only for the ball to bounce to safety off Alisson Becker's chest. However, the Brazilian goalkeeper played his side

into trouble moments later to put pressure on Matip and when he was dispossessed by Robert Lewandowski. Kingsley Coman fired into the side-netting. Liverpool were also posing plenty of problems at the other end, although their final ball often lacked precision. "We made life more difficult with the last pass today about 10 or 12 times," added Klopp. "We can play better and we should play better."

Mohamed Salah headed wide at the back post from Trent Alexander-Arnold's perfectly measured cross.

Mane then passed up the best chance for either side as he shot wide on the turn after Naby Keita's initial effort was blocked by the arm of Niklas Sule. Bayern may not have hit the heights of previous years in the Bundesliga this season as they trail Borussia Dortmund by three points in their quest to land a seventh straight league title.

However, the German champions have made the last eight of the Champions League for each of the past seven seasons and had the experience to hold out for what they clearly saw as a valuable draw as they wound the clock down in the final stages.

"I can't remember that many clubs have not conceded at Anfield. They way Liverpool play, they are a sensationally good team. My team as a whole kept everything tight at the back," said Bayern boss Niko Kovac. "We didn't score but we didn't let one in. Home games are an advantage, we play in front of 75,000,

That would point the finger at agents Willie McKay and Mark McKay, who were hired by Nantes to secure the transfer. Willie McKay has accused Cardiff of "trying to throw me under the bus" in an attempt to avoid paying the transfer fee. Speaking to The Times, Willie McKay said his son Mark arranged the fateful flight carrying Sala and Ibbotson, just as he had organised several flights for brokers of the deal in the weeks previously, including Cardiff manager Neil Warnock.

Willie McKay also rejected a statement from Cardiff chairman Mehmet Dalman that the club were unaware of who made Sala's flight arrangements. In his published timeline of events, Willie McKay said: "Emiliano was due to be met by the Cardiff City player liaison officer who was waiting for him to arrive at the Signature Flight Support building at Cardiff Airport on Monday evening (January 21). Cardiff City knew of the flight and who organised the flight."

Cardiff have so far refused to pay the first instalment of the club record fee, believed to be £5 million, as they await the results of an Air Accidents Investigations Bureau (AAIB) investigation into the causes of the crash. The Telegraph reported on Sunday that Cardiff believe that if the AAIB find Ibbotson did not hold the necessary licence to carry passengers on a commercial basis, then a negligence claim could be launched against whoever arranged the flight.

However, that is a common, if dubious, practice among football agents and Cardiff's case to use that as a reason for avoiding any part of the transfer fee is unlikely to be met with favour should the case proceed



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Guinean midfielder Naby Keita (R) misses with this overhead kick during the UEFA Champions League round of 16, first leg football match between Liverpool and Bayern Munich at Anfield stadium in Liverpool, north-west England on Tuesday. — AFP

but we know if we concede we have to win."

Liverpool had 10 days off to prepare for Bayern's visit due to their early exit in the FA Cup and looked the fresher side as they pressed for a winner.

Mane forced Manuel Neuer to produce his best save of the night to turn a low header behind five minutes

from time. Klopp's men have lost all of their last five Champions League games away from Anfield, including last season's final.

The return of Van Dijk will aid their chances, but that rot will need to stop in Munich in three weeks' time if they are to reach the last eight. — AFP

Sala tragedy sparks unsavoury legal wrangle

LONDON: The tragedy of the plane crash that killed Argentine footballer Emiliano Sala has now entered an ugly aftermath as Premier League club Cardiff City and French side Nantes threaten to go to court over his £15 million (\$19 million) transfer fee.

Sala, who was buried at the age of 28 in the Argentine village of Progreso on Saturday, never played a game for Cardiff. The plane carrying the striker and pilot David Ibbotson came down in the English Channel en route to the Welsh capital on January 21, two days after he completed his transfer from Nantes.

Cardiff have so far refused to pay the first instalment of the club record fee, believed to be £5 million, as they await the results of an Air Accidents Investigations Bureau (AAIB) investigation into the causes of the crash. The Telegraph reported on Sunday that Cardiff believe that if the AAIB find Ibbotson did not hold the necessary licence to carry passengers on a commercial basis, then a negligence claim could be launched against whoever arranged the flight.

Barcelona draw blank in Lyon to leave tie open

LYON: Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde shrugged off his team's struggles in front of goal after they were held to a 0-0 draw away at Lyon in the first leg of their Champions League last-16 tie on Tuesday.

The Spanish side had most of the chances at the Groupama Stadium, with Luis Suarez firing just wide in the second half, although it was Lyon who came the closest when Martin Terrier hit the bar early on.

Lionel Messi and co. were once again left frustrated on the road at the business end of the competition, and have now gone six away matches without winning in the Champions League knockout rounds, scoring just a single goal in that time. It is a run that goes back three years.

Desperate to end Real Madrid's recent European dominance, Barca must now finish the job when the teams meet again at the Camp Nou on March 13, but Lyon remain in the tie. Barcelona's form needs to improve between now and then, though—they have drawn four of their last five matches in all, and have scored just once, from a penalty, in their last three outings.

"We played good football, but you have to hit the target as well, and we didn't," Valverde said. "We are on the right road, though, and the tie is still up in the air. We will try to win it in front of our fans."

He added: "I am not happy with the result, but I am happy with the performance and with what we created. "We didn't score, but that is how it is. It is not easy to win away from home in the Champions League."

The visitors—who started with Sergi Roberto in midfield rather than the out-of-form Philippe Coutinho—had good reason to be wary of their hosts, who have excelled in big games this season.

Bruno Genesio's team had taken four points from a possible six against Manchester City in the group stage and recently won at home to Paris Saint-Germain in Ligue 1. They are still unbeaten in Europe this season, although this was their sixth consecutive draw.

"It's a satisfying result because it leaves us with a chance for the second leg, and we didn't concede. If we can score at the Camp Nou we'll have a chance



DECINES-CHARPIEU: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (R) plays the ball during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 first leg football match between Lyon (OL) and FC Barcelona on Tuesday, at the Groupama Stadium in Decines-Charpieu, central-eastern France. — AFP

of going through," said Genesio. He admitted that he had hoped for an even better performance, but Lyon were missing their World Cup-winning captain Nabil Fekir due to suspension here.

It was the 21-year-old Terrier who surprisingly started in his place, and he delivered the most exciting moment of the first half for the crowd of almost 58,000 with a thunderous strike from 20 yards out in the ninth minute that was tipped onto the bar by Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

The same player later shot over at the end of a fantastic move, while Houssem Aouar had earlier been denied by the goalkeeper, but it was Barcelona who enjoyed the longer spells of possession. Ousmane Dembele—one of two Frenchmen in the away line-up—came closest for them in the first half, although their best chances came after he had

to court. Nantes believe the McKays' work for them ended when Sala's move was transfer was completed, therefore absolving them of any responsibility over the arrangements of the flight. The Guardian reported yesterday that Nantes will take their case to FIFA this week if the £5 million instalment is not paid. "FIFA has not been contacted on this matter," world football's governing body said when contacted by AFP.

A resolution via FIFA's players' status committee or even the Lausanne-based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) is likely unless Cardiff relent on their current stance. "There are, in my opinion, two possible solutions," sports lawyer Gianpaolo Monteneri, who was head of FIFA's Players' Status Department from 1997-2005, told the Press Association.

"The first one is that the parties have established to go to FIFA and, in such a case, the matter is submitted to the players' status committee in the first instance, with the possibility of an appeal to CAS.

"But it is also possible that the parties have decided to skip FIFA and go direct to CAS." Should Cardiff be found to have failed to comply with their contractual obligations without due cause, a range of sanctions are on offer to FIFA, according to Monteneri.

"If certain deadlines, which are mentioned in the transfer contract, are not met then these may trigger consequences for the club in question. "This can be from an admonishment right up to a withdrawal of league points." — AFP



Matches on TV

(Local Timings)

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE	
Arsenal FC v FK Bate Borisov	20:55
beIN SPORTS HD 1	
GNK Dinamo Zagreb v FC Viktoria Plzen	20:55
beIN SPORTS	
Red Bull Salzburg v Club Brugge KV	20:55
beIN SPORTS HD 6	
SSC Napoli v FC Zurich	20:55
beIN SPORTS HD 4	
Eintracht Frankfurt v Shakhtar Donetsk	20:55
beIN SPORTS HD 5	
Valencia C.F v Celtic	20:55
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
Zenit St. Petersburg v Fenerbahçe	20:55
beIN SPORTS	
Villarreal CF v Sporting CP	20:55
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Internazionale Milano v SK Rapid Wien	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4	
KRC Genk v SK Slavia Prague	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6	
Bayer 04 Leverkusen v FK Krasnodar	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 5	
Chelsea FC v Malmö FF	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1	
Real Betis v Stade Rennais	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Dynamo Kyiv v Olympiacos CFP	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 7	
SL Benfica v Galatasaray SK	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2	

Qatar eyeing Brazil friendly

DOHA: Newly-crowned Asian Cup winners Qatar could play friendlies against Brazil or Uruguay in June ahead of playing in the Copa America, the team's coach and officials said yesterday. The South American giants are among a list of teams Qatar are trying to secure matches against—others include Colombia, Panama and the USA—ahead of their first Copa America appearance.

"We need to finalise the preparations but sure we need to play a couple of games," said coach Felix Sanchez on the sidelines of an award ceremony for the winning squad in Doha. "We prepare a list of potential teams that we would like to play against but also we need to see their availability."

Qatar Football Association (QFA) president Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Bin Ahmed al-Thani said the team's first friendly would be in early June. "It will be [a team] from South America, we will announce it as soon as possible," he said.

Qatar have been drawn in a group with Argentina, Colombia and Paraguay in the Copa America, which starts on June 15. The 2022 World Cup hosts could also set up a training camp in the United States ahead of the tournament.

Qatar's inclusion in the Copa America—along with that of Japan—initially raised eyebrows but both teams reached the Asian Cup final. Qatar's victory, notably achieved in the backyard of political rivals United Arab Emirates, would help boost the country's "football" reputation, said Spaniard Sanchez.

Sheikh Hamad added that the QFA was "working" on a new contract for Sanchez following the Asian Cup triumph. Sanchez, however, said he did not need one, but when asked how long his existing contract was for, he said he could not "remember". — AFP

25 Southee, Taylor inspire Black Caps whitewash of Bangladesh

26 Pittsburgh Steelers and Antonio Brown decide to part ways

27 Klopp 'not over the moon' as Bayern frustrate Liverpool



Blues win record 11th straight

Josi's two 3rd-period goals lift Predators past Stars



ST LOUIS: Ryan O'Reilly #90 of the St. Louis Blues fights Nikita Zaitsev #22 of the Toronto Maple Leafs for control of the puck at the Enterprise Center on Tuesday in St. Louis, Missouri. — AFP

ST LOUIS: Ryan O'Reilly scored 34 seconds into overtime as the St. Louis Blues extended their winning streak to a franchise-record 11 games with a 3-2 victory over the visiting Toronto Maple Leafs on Tuesday night. Jaden Schwartz had a goal and an assist, and Colton Parayko scored a goal for the Blues, who built a 2-0 lead in the first period. Tyler Bozak added two assists. Zach Hyman and Auston Matthews scored in the third period for the Maple Leafs, who ended the Blues' shutout streak at 233 minutes and 50 seconds, second in franchise history to a run of 258:30 from March 16-29, 2016. Jordan Binnington, who made his first career start Jan. 7, recorded 31 saves for St. Louis. He is 13-1-1 with nine straight wins, a franchise record for a rookie goaltender. Frederik Andersen made 38 saves for Toronto.

LIGHTNING 5, FLYERS 2

J.T. Miller and Ryan McDonagh had a goal and an assist apiece, and Alex Killorn, Mikhail Sergachev and Yanni Gourde each scored a goal to lead visiting Tampa Bay past Philadelphia. Backup goaltender Louis Domingue was terrific with 28 saves as the Lightning

won their seventh in a row. Domingue also won his 11th in a row. Oskar Lindblom scored a goal, his third in two games, and Travis Konecny also scored, but the Flyers had their three-game winning streak snapped. Sean Couturier had two assists for Philadelphia.

PREDATORS 5, STARS 3

Roman Josi scored twice in the third period—the deciding goal and clinching empty-netter—and Ryan Ellis racked up three assists as visiting Nashville defeated Dallas. Josi netted the game-winner at the 7:35 mark of the third period as his shot deflected off the stick of Dallas' Andrew Cogliano then floated lazily over the head of goaltender Anton Khudobin and into the net. The Predators also got goals from Rocco Grimaldi, Brian Boyle and Filip Forsberg. Esa Lindell, Tyler Seguin and Jason Spezza scored for the Stars.

COYOTES 3, OILERS 2 (SO)

Vinnie Hinostroza scored once and then netted the shootout winner as visiting Arizona claimed a victory over Edmonton, which was without star forward Connor

McDavid because of illness. Coyotes goaltender Darcy Kuemper made 35 saves through overtime—including seven in the extra frame—and stopped three of four Oilers in the shootout. Edmonton's Ryan Nugent-Hopkins forced overtime by scoring with 11 seconds remaining in regulation. Mikko Koskinen made 33 saves for overtime for the Oilers, who had veteran defenseman Andrej Sekera in the lineup for the first time this season. He had been sidelined due to a torn Achilles tendon.

DUCKS 4, WILD 0

Ryan Miller made 31 saves. Jakob Silfverberg, Corey Perry, Ryan Kesler and Hampus Lindholm scored, and visiting Anaheim won at Saint Paul, Minn. Devan Dubnyk made 20 saves for the Wild, who have lost five straight games and haven't scored in the past seven periods and part of an overtime. Miller posted the 44th shutout of his NHL career, moving into a tie with Miikka Kiprusoff for 34th on the NHL's all-time list.

CANADIENS 3, BLUE JACKETS 2

Tomas Tatar scored the go-ahead goal with 6:52

left in the third period, and Montreal snapped a four-game skid Tuesday night with a win over visiting Columbus, which was minus ill star Artemi Panarin. Carey Price made 31 saves for the Canadiens, who prevailed despite blowing a 2-0 lead and earned at least a point in their seventh consecutive home game. Tatar proved to be hero, taking a nifty feed from Jordie Benn for the eventual winner. Sergei Bobrovsky made 29 saves for the Blue Jackets, whose four-game road winning streak ended.

RANGERS 2, HURRICANES 1

Vladislav Namestnikov scored with 13:50 remaining, and the goal held up as New York won at Raleigh, N.C. Namestnikov's goal came on the second rebound of a sequence and just seconds after a Rangers power play had expired. Connor Brickley scored earlier for the Rangers. Jordan Martinook collected Carolina's goal just before the midway mark of the second period. Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist made 43 saves and was under heavy pressure late in the game. Hurricanes goalie Curtis McElhinney stopped 24 shots.—Reuters

Kvitova, Halep breeze into quarters in windy Dubai

DUBAI: Former titleholders Petra Kvitova and Simona Halep battled through brisk desert winds to advance into the quarter-finals of the Dubai Championships yesterday. Second seed Kvitova, now the highest ranked player remaining in the field after the surprise elimination of Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka, outlasted American qualifier Jennifer Brady 7-5, 1-6, 6-3.

Crowd favourite and third seed Halep, supported even in the middle of a workday

by scores of chanting, enthusiastic local Romanian fans, beat Lesia Tsurenko of the Ukraine 6-3, 7-5, breaking seven times from 10 chances.

The challenger managed just a single point over the last three games as former number one Halep demonstrated her superiority by winning her seventh in the series without a loss. Slovak Viktorija Kuzmova reached a 2019 last-eight place for the second time this season after Auckland through a 1-6, 7-5, 6-2 defeat of American Sofia Kenin.

Kvitova, who won the Dubai trophy in 2013, admitted that she came into the week somewhat unprepared, last playing on the WTA in a St Petersburg quarter-final a fortnight ago. "When I came here, I didn't really have many days of practice, to be honest," the two-time Wimbledon winner said.

"I had something different to do in my life. I wasn't really that prepared for this tournament. "But I'm happy I was able to get two

wins. It's great when you're not playing your best and you still find a way to win."

The gusty conditions were testing inside the stadium at the Aviation Club which 2015 Dubai holder Halep managed to control as she rolled over Tsurenko. "The wind was difficult today. It didn't feel like last week (in Doha)," Halep said. "I know how she's playing, it's not my favourite style because she doesn't give any power on the ball."

"I've had many matches with her and won them. I feel confident when I play her." The Romanian who is currently without a coach, was more than pleased with her strong sprint finish to a match which lasted one hour, 20 minutes.

Last week's Doha finalist said: "My mindset now is just to finish the points as quick as possible. I'm trying to be more aggressive. I'm more relaxed. I don't put pressure on myself. Also I have no expectations. I feel that my game is pretty strong. "I feel close to my highest level." — AFP



Simona Halep