

Friday Times

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JAMADA ALTHANI 17, 1440 AH | FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2019

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Amir sends condolences



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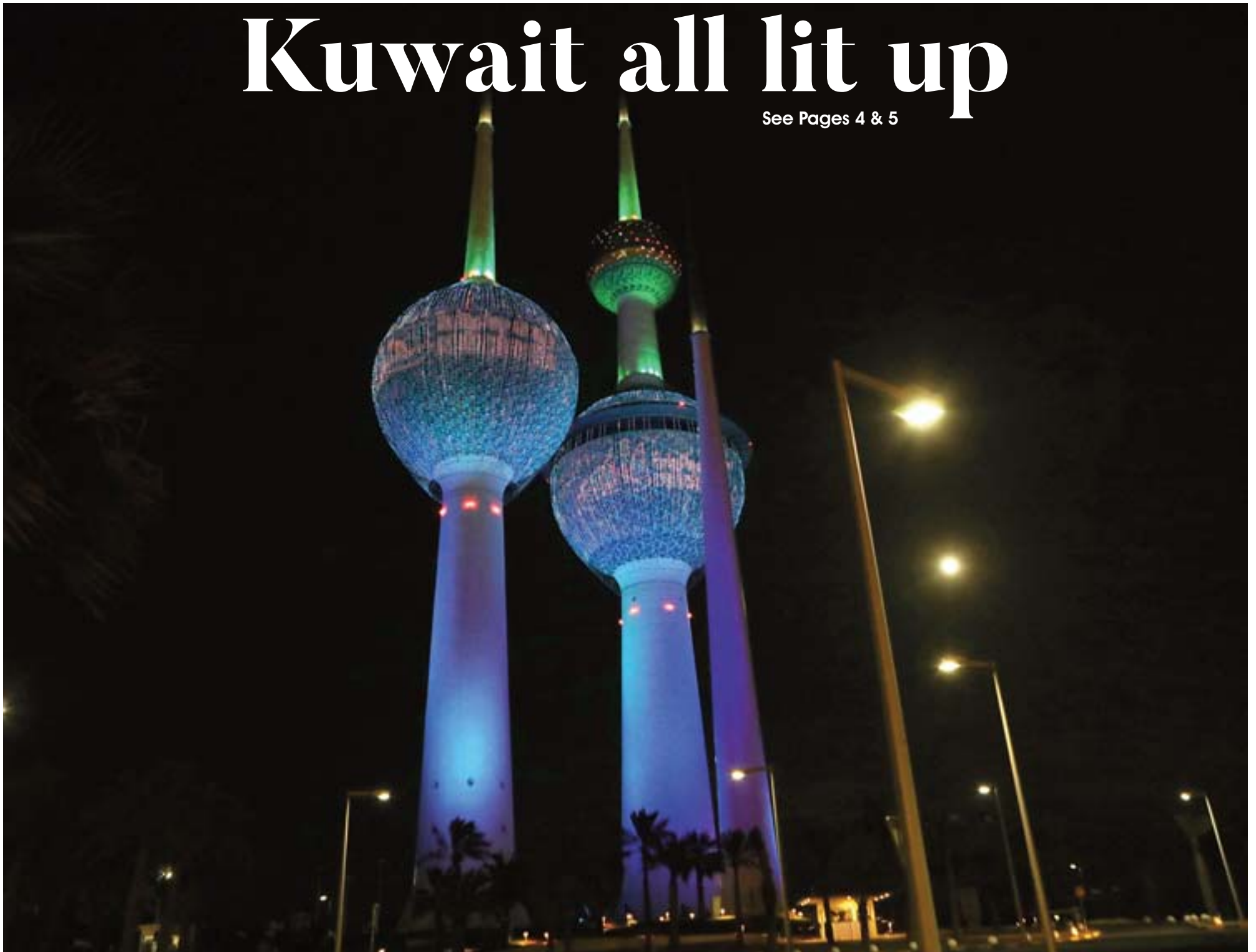


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Kuwait all lit up

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Local

World Government Summit



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

The three-day World Government Summit was sponsored by the Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum and was attended by more than 4,000 regional and international figures. It shed light on disturbing Arab and world realities. The speakers pointed out many important issues and challenges facing the world that need real efforts to combat them. The World Government Summit is a non-profit organization and a global platform that examines the areas of government action and innovation and explores the future of governments around the world.

The fact is that the world today, whether Arab or Western, faces many challenges. But the Arab world seems more influenced by the conflicts that have affected its development. For example, 57 million Arabs are illiterate and 13.5 million Arab children did not attend school this year! This is a very sad reality, especially since 30 million Arabs are living below the poverty line.

According to the Arab Organization for Education, Culture and Science (ALECSO), the illiteracy rate in the Arab countries in 2018 was 21 percent compared to the 13.6 percent global average, a rate that is likely to rise in light of the educational conditions experienced by some Arab countries because of the crises and armed conflicts there. Statistics also indicate that the illiteracy rate among males in the Arab world is 14.6 percent and 25.9 percent among females.

Also, from 2011 to this year, losses in Arab GDP reached \$300 billion. And of course, as expected, a trillion dollars was the cost of corruption in the Arab region. Unfortunately, according to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, six Arab countries are among the most corrupt nations in the world.

Some of what was said at the summit reviews the painful fact of the world today. Harrison Ford, US actor and environmentalist, said in a speech that climate change is the most urgent and dangerous ethical crisis for humanity in the 21st century. The World Government Summit focused on the development of human life based on the summit's aim to support governments' efforts to create a better future for seven billion people.

As I was thinking about my country Kuwait, I find there is a failure in the achievement of advanced regional and global positions in development, despite the availability of material, technical and human and financial resources. I believe the weak efficiency of the economic system, faltering decisions regarding public expenditure and the role of the private sector that is still dependent on government support result in no real initiatives or partnerships to support development of the country. Unless these obstacles are addressed, nothing will change.

I believe that the important thing that affects development in Kuwait is ignoring support to youth who will lead the future of the country, whether we like it or not. They must be given real support in leadership positions and supervision in the public and private sectors. Human development is based on the transmission of positive energy to individuals.

The summit in Dubai ended with recommendations that need to be addressed. I recall here words of the former president of Finland in an article that was published in 1992 on the secrets of his country's success in achieving development and progress and the transformation from a poor country in the fifties of the last century to a major industrial state in the eighties. He referred to three elements for the success of his country - high level of education, commitment to democracy in approach and behavior and the use of modern technologies in work and production.

I wonder how many tools we have today to achieve future progress.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Kuwait lights up during February in celebration of the National and Liberation Day holidays. See our photo feature on Pages 4 & 5 for more. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

A waste of Water



Kaffeeklatsch

By Shakir Reshamwala

Shakir@kuwaittimes.net

The national celebrations are upon us, and soon the streets will be full of children spraying water from water guns or hurling water balloons at each other or unsuspecting passersby and cars. A couple of years back there were reports that the Cabinet had banned the use of water guns after a lawsuit was filed, but it seems the directive was never enforced. All over Kuwait, stores - from large hypermarkets to tiny baqalas - are doing brisk business selling water guns and balloons of all shapes and sizes, while children are busy stockpiling enough water bombs to last the long weekend.

This affinity for water is not new, as the fortunes of Kuwait have always been tied to the sea. Being a small, arid settlement surrounded by powerful neighbors, the sea was a source of sustenance and livelihood. Pearl diving was an important activity, and thousands of families depended on this arduous profession.

Merchant ships and dhows also sailed from Kuwait to faraway lands to trade, with sailors being at sea for months on end. Lacking freshwater, Kuwait brought in drinking water by dhows from Iraq, the land of the mighty Tigris and Euphrates rivers. So in every way, the sea was intertwined with the lives of the residents of Kuwait.

The arrival in the market of cultured pearls decimat-

ed the pearl diving industry, but the discovery of oil during the same period blunted its impact, and soon, Kuwait was one of the richest and most developed countries of the world. The dependence on the sea continues today, albeit in a very different way. Nearly all of Kuwait's potable water is obtained by reverse osmosis, with millions of barrels of oil firing desalination plants in the state.

Because water is practically free (despite recent price hikes targeting commercial properties and residential buildings mostly inhabited by expats), its consumption and wastage rates are very high. Restrictions on using hoses to clean yards and cars are blatantly flouted, while water-saving nozzle attachments are rarely used, except maybe in mosques.

People in Kuwait have to realize that water is more precious than the black gold that is ensuring its easy availability. Playing with water seems like a bit of harmless fun, but by the end of the holidays, scores of gallons of water will have literally flown down the drain, and the roads will be littered with the limp carcasses of spent water balloons. These watery and rubbery remains will help Kuwait retain the dubious distinctions of being the top per capita consumer of water (500 liters daily) and collector of garbage (4,000 tons daily) in the world. Not something to be proud of.

Kuwait Times

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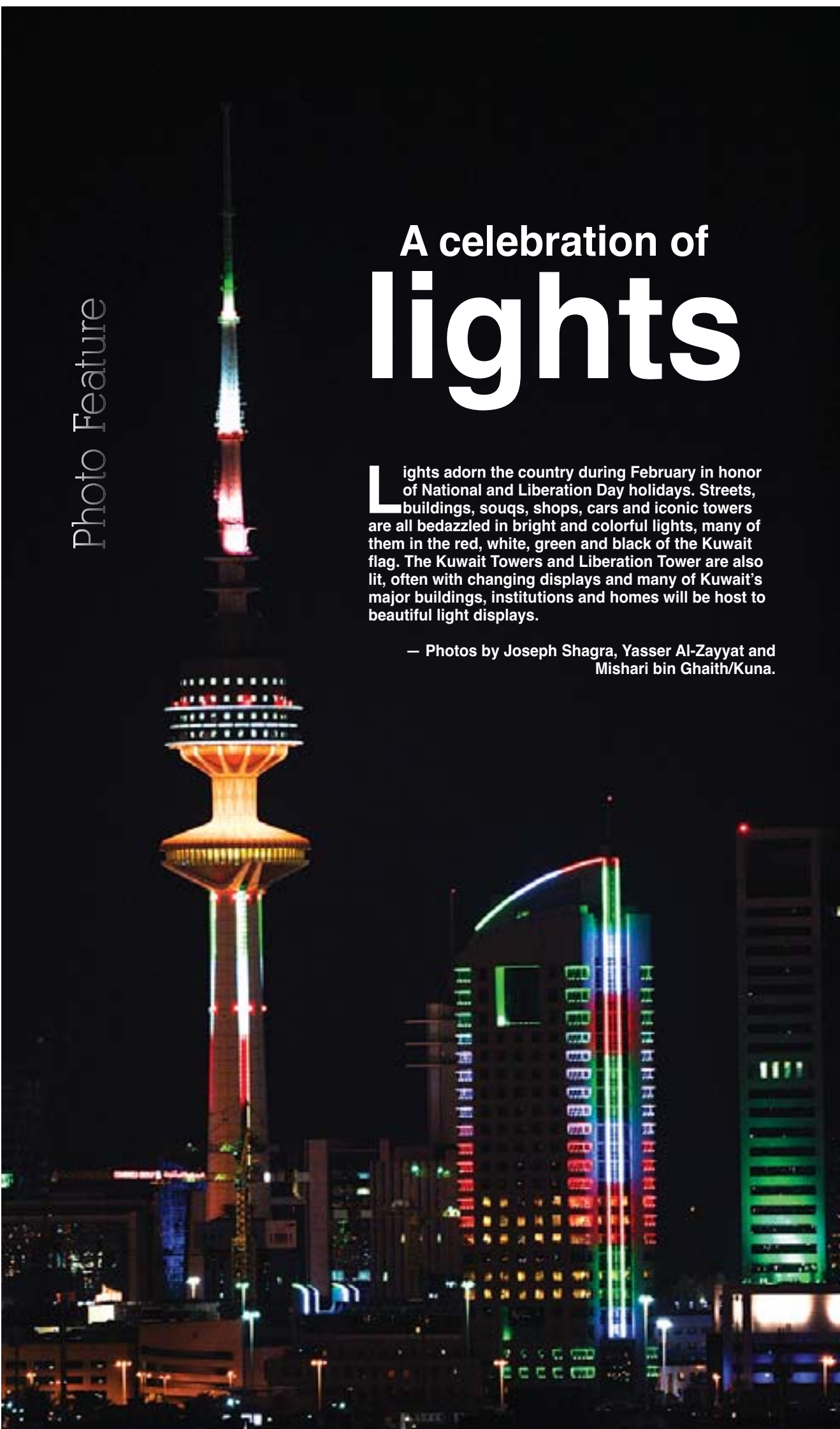
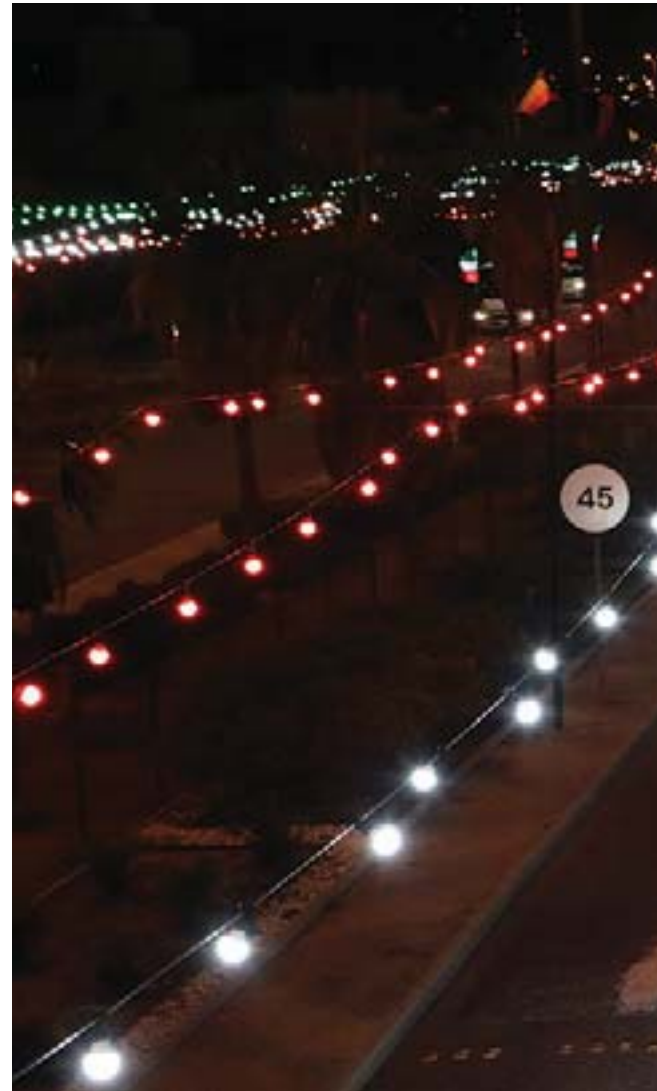
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Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7 | Fax: 24835620 - 24835621
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Photo Feature

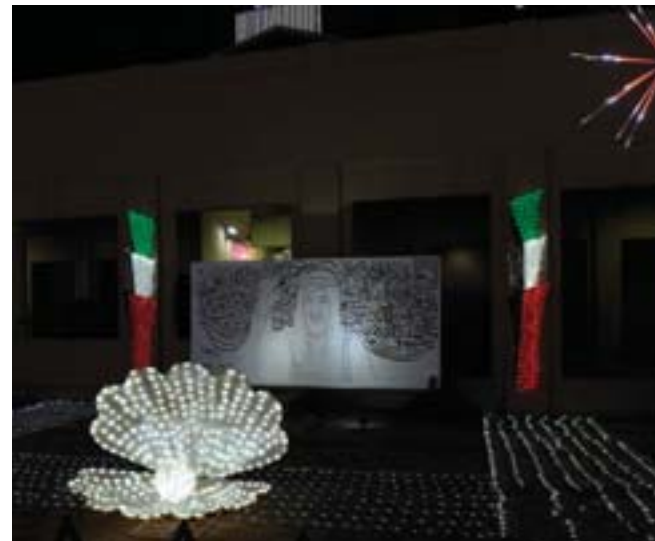
A celebration of lights

Lights adorn the country during February in honor of National and Liberation Day holidays. Streets, buildings, souqs, shops, cars and iconic towers are all bedazzled in bright and colorful lights, many of them in the red, white, green and black of the Kuwait flag. The Kuwait Towers and Liberation Tower are also lit, often with changing displays and many of Kuwait's major buildings, institutions and homes will be host to beautiful light displays.

— Photos by Joseph Shagra, Yasser Al-Zayyat and Mishari bin Ghaith/Kuna.



Local



Local

Prison reforms hailed; 3 lawyers sue Juwaiheli

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's human rights committee yesterday welcomed what it called important developments in the interior ministry's dealings with prisoners in the country. Head of the committee MP Adel Al-Damkhi said based on the panel's recommendations, the interior ministry has allowed public attorneys to make weekly visits to the central prison and the deportation center to listen to complaints from inmates.

Damkhi described the move as a very important development in improving the human rights record at the central prison and deportation center. The lawmaker also said the interior minister has ordered min-

istry officials to provide the committee with regular reports every three months on the situation of prisoners and inmates at the deportation center.

Meanwhile, three lawyers yesterday filed a lawsuit against former MP and candidate in next month's by-elections Mohammed Al-Juwaiheli after he allegedly insulted bedouin tribes and their folklore. The three lawyers - Nasser Al-Hasban, Nawaf Al-Tuwaijri and Mohammad Al-Muqahta - claimed in their complaint that Juwaiheli has made disrespectful comments against a well-known tribal folkloric dance staged by graduates of the police academy who were celebrating their graduation. They also alleged that such remarks trigger social discord and create divisions in the society.

Al-Seif: An important street in old Kuwait

Al-Seif Street was considered the most important and longest street in old Kuwait. It ran from Sharq to Qibla and included many famous landmarks and commercial and occupational centers that were the main backbone of the country's economy and a source of livelihood in the past. The street, which was six kilometers long and extended from the east of the old city to its west, had many important landmarks such as the Furdha vegetable market, and Naqaa on the beach, surrounded by rocks and used for docking ships and sometimes to repair them, apart from Al-Amayer - commercial shops.

Researcher in Kuwait history Mohammad Jamal in his book "Kuwait's Old Markets" says that among the most important landmarks of the street is Al-Seif Palace, which includes the governor's diwan which was built by Kuwait's late Amir Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah in 1906, and is located on the beach. He built another palace on the southern end as his residence, and they were linked with a wooden bridge.

Jamal added that in 1917, Kuwait's late ruler Sheikh Salem Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah refurbished the palace, which was built with "aajar" brought from Basra, and was built by craftsmen from Baghdad. A large yard was attached to the palace from the north end overlooking the sea, and had a pole with the Kuwait flag in the middle of it. He said on the east end of Al-Seif Palace overlooking the sea was "Niqaat Al-Shaheen" due to the presence of the building of late Shaheen Al-Ghanem, who built dhows, adding that the entire area used to be called Al-Shuyoukh Niqaa.

Jamal said Al-Seif Street used to include "Seif Al-Toub", an area that includes several Amayer, followed by Al-Kandaisha, which is a contraption to desalinate seawater to help compensate for a shortage in drinking water - the late Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah brought it in 1914. The iftar cannon was also in this area.

Jamal said to the east of Kandaisha there used to be the "Seif Maarafi" that included several Amayer that belonged to sheikhs, ship owners and merchants, the National Jaafari School and the Syrian clinic. Seif Maarafi in the east was followed by several Niqaat connected with each other and surrounded by a fence. On the extreme east there was Dasman Niqaa, considered the last Niqaa in Sharq that ended with the end of the wall.



On the southern end of old Seif street, Jamal said there was the "Rice of Ibn Umair", across from the entrance of the late Sheikh Mubarak's place from the south end, and was the place where rice was distributed free to the poor. He added when moving eastward from the Rice of Ibn Umar on Seif Street, there were the offices of the oil company, followed by Sayyed Hussein Baqer Al-Tabtabaei. To the east was the kiosk of Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, then the eastern mustawaf (polyclinic).

He said on the street itself was the Al-Saada School for orphans, Beit Dickson, which was the house of Colonel Dixon, the British commissioner accredited to Kuwait from 1929 until 1936, the Amiri hospital, the British consulate and Dasman Palace. Jamal said Qibla area starts from the west side of Dasman Palace with the customs building followed by the police station, then the vegetable market, a group of Amayer, Niqabas and cafes, and the diwan of late Ahmad Al-Ghanim. There was also the Al-Ahmadiya school, Al-Yusra, which is a long rocky coast and the American Hospital overlooking the sea in Al-Watiya area, which was an empty coastal area.

Jamal said Bahita hill was across Seif Street, and heading west was the office of Jamal Bashi that specialized in hauling goods from ships to the vegetable market. There were a number of shops and Amayer till the building of Al-Kharafi and Matrouk, which is considered as the first building built with bricks and concrete in Kuwait. It was followed by the road leading to the market and was named New Street, which is Abdullah Al-Salem Street now.

Sheraton Kuwait & Four Points By Sheraton Kuwait Celebrate the National & Liberation Days



On the occasion of the 58th National Day, the 28th Liberation Day and the 13 years of His Highness the Amir's reign, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah and Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Crown Prince of Kuwait. In honor of these momentous occasions, the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait is adorned with the Kuwaiti flag representing our high respect for this country and how thankful we are to have the opportunity to show our appreciation by engaging in the festivals on this meaningful occasions.

On the occasion of more than five decades of the opening of the Sheraton Kuwait Hotel, which has become a real milestone of its

landmarks, bringing up his track record of achievements and a prime location of successes, Mr. Fahed Abushaar expressed the pride in the role that the Sheraton Kuwait played, which extended for over 50 years as a pioneer and leader in the world of hospitality for Kuwait and its people. Mr. Abushaar the Complex General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait Hotels and Mr. Mounir Amer, the General Manager of Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait offer their most heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and all the people of Kuwait and its residents.

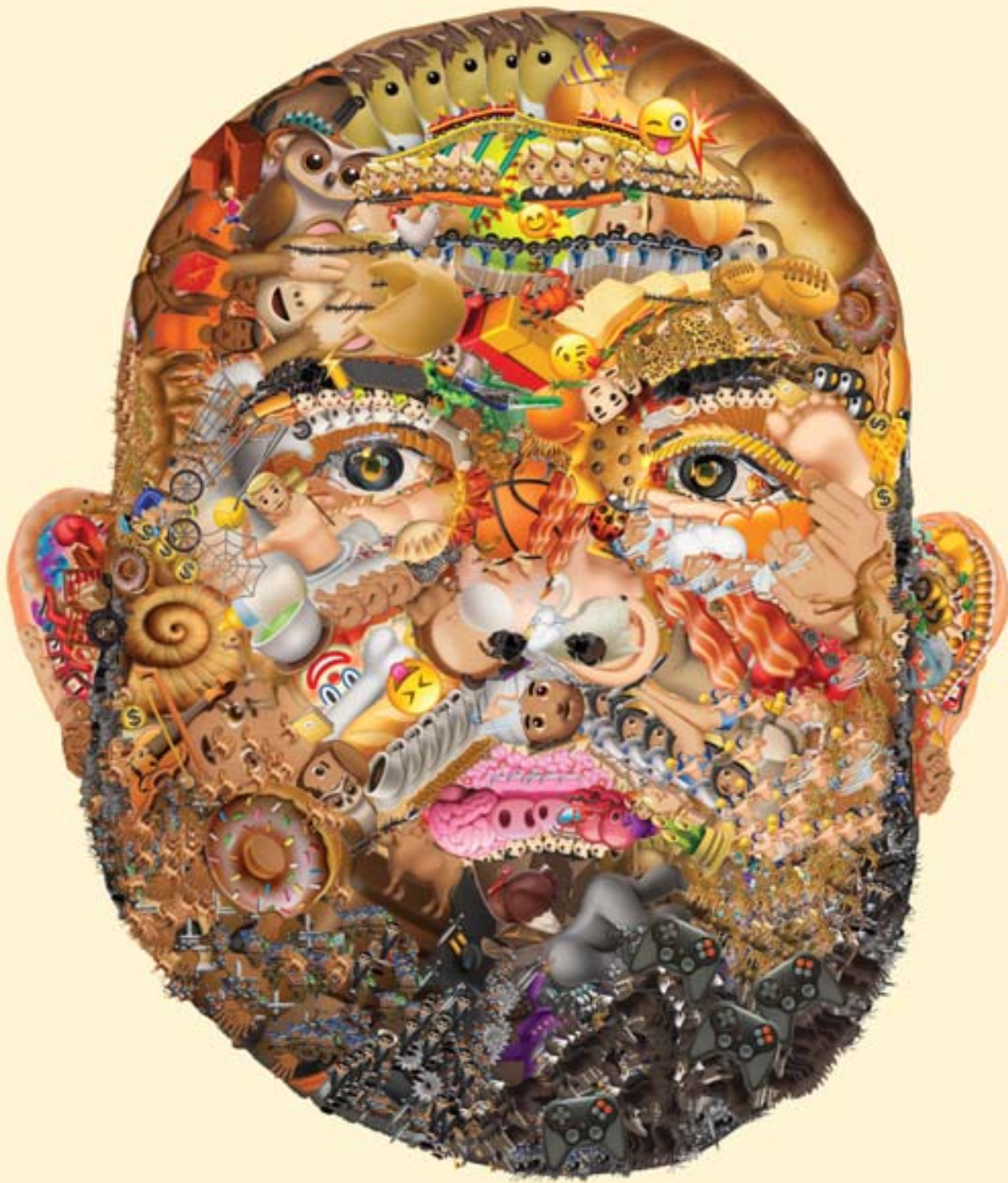
Kids and online dangers

The role of digital and social in our lives: the world wide web has opened up a world of opportunities and information for us every-day. But with this democratic influx of information for us to benefit from; there are also negative consequences impacting us and our most prized possessions, our children and loved ones.

Kids and online dangers: The Internet translates itself as wonderful world for our kids and child digital freedom is a great idea in essence. They use it every day for research, playing interactive games, education and connecting

with their friends. But online access also comes with risks, like inappropriate content, cyberbullying and opening a window for online predators to disturb and violate.

Educating and Supporting Parental control: Zain is an advocate for internet safety and is putting more importance in 2019 behind the education and awareness of cyberbullying for Kids. More so reaching out to Parents and the wider society to understand the dangers inappropriate content and how we can better keep our families and children safe.



MEET THE FACE
BEHIND THE 🙄🙄🙄



1 OUT OF 7 CHILDREN
ARE APPROACHED ONLINE
BY PEDOPHILES
ACTIVATE PARENTAL CONTROL
AND MAKE SURE THEY ARE SAFE.

@STEVETHEANGEL WAS CHARGED WITH ONLINE CORRUPTION OF A MIND.

Local

Kuwait against moves to destroy Jerusalem's Palestinian identity

Otaibi renews Kuwait's financial support for UNRWA

NEW YORK: Kuwait affirmed its stance against violations on Jerusalem with attempts to destroy its Palestinian identity, calling on the international community to stop siding with Israel on the matter. The remarks were made by Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, during the United Nations Security Council's (UNSC) session on Palestine late Wednesday. He spoke of the UNSC's resolutions number 476 and 478 and the UN General Secretariat's resolutions of 2017 against any action taken to affect Jerusalem's Palestinian identity.

Meanwhile, Otaibi noted the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Palestine due to the Israeli occupation for over 50 years. He added that a Palestinian family was kicked out of their home last Monday, where they've been living since 1951 by Israelis, in East Jerusalem. He

called on the UNSC to exert further efforts to resolve the situation in the city, adding that senior Israeli officials are promoting hate speech and making matters worse for Palestinians.

Violence against Palestinian civilians rose by 57 percent in 2018 according to UN statistics, the ambassador said, noting that it is the international community's responsibility to protect them. The UNSC must take serious measures to stop the Israeli violations and violence in accordance with the international law. He said that 263 Palestinians including children were killed since the beginning of the peaceful Great March of Return in March last year. Otaibi renewed Kuwait's financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). He also called on the international community to take part in supporting the agency financially. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi. — KUNA

MP: UNRWA plays major role in helping Palestinian refugees

NEW YORK: Kuwaiti MP Safa Al-Hashem asserted yesterday the important role played by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to help Palestinian refugees. UNRWA contributed to the provision of humanitarian relief, medical care, learning, and human rights for more than five million Palestinian refugee, Hashem, who is the Deputy Head of the Standing Committee on the UN Affairs of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) noted.

In a statement to Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), Hashem said that Kuwait's contributions to UNRWA comes from the humanitarian policy of Kuwait, drawn by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. It works within the framework of multilateral institutional action to support the Palestinian refugee under the supervision of the United Nations, she added.

During her visit, MP Hashem met with the Director of the UNRWA Representative Office in New York, Peter Muller. The meeting focused on the importance of developing a mechanism that would contribute to empower Palestinian refugees, and invest in human resources to improve the living standard inside camps. The meeting also discussed the UN decision to stop funding the UNRWA and the negative implications of this resolution on Palestinian refugees.

The issue of funding and supporting (UNRWA) was of great interest to the Kuwaiti delegation who participated in the 135th meeting of the IPU in October, in which both Kuwaiti and Jordanian delegations submitted a request for



NEW YORK: Kuwaiti MP Safa Al-Hashem meets UNRWA officials. — KUNA

the inclusion of an emergency item on behalf of the Arab Group on the suspension of aid to UNRWA. She stressed the importance of delivering the voice of UNRWA to all parliaments of the world through the IPU platform in order to continue to provide the necessary support to the Palestinian refugees so that they can stand on their own feet to build and develop their homeland.

Hashem pointed out that UNRWA has an impressive record of contributing to the education of half a million Palestinian children in schools, ensuring that millions of people enjoy health and food, and helps alleviate the burden on the host countries of the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon. She said Kuwait has continued its humanitarian role towards this important agency, where it has made an extraordinary contribution of USD 42.1 million recently, which raised the total Kuwaiti contributions to UNRWA's budget for 2018 to USD 50 million.

On the other hand, Hashem participated in a working lunch with the President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Gabriela Cuevas Baron. The luncheon was attended by IPU Permanent Representatives that have a seat in the Executive Committee. During the meeting, they exchanged views on a number of issues in the United Nations that are of interest to the IPU. — KUNA

Kuwait, Algeria ink 40 accords, memorandums

KUWAIT: Algerian Minister of Finance Abdulrahman Rawia said yesterday that the Kuwaiti-Algeria Committee wrapped up its latest meetings here today by signing four accords, bringing number of the inked agreements between the two countries to 40. Minister Rawia, in a statement to KUNA, said that the committee members discussed hurdles obstructing efforts for boosting the bilateral relations, adding that the regular holding of 10 sessions at this level signaled the two countries' serious approach toward boosting the bilateral economic and commercial relations. All recommendations of the 9th session, held in Algeria in Sept 2016, were approved in the latest commission ses-

sions, he added.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti ministry of finance said in a press release that Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf co-chaired the latest session with his Algerian counterpart. The two sides inked four accords and memos including one dealing with infrastructural construction. Moreover, a memo was inked by Bursa Kuwait and the Algerian stock clearing company. Hajraf said that the memo signaled a new chapter in bolstering cooperation in various fields, namely the stock exchange. The commission meetings kicked off on Feb 19 and concluded yesterday. The 11th round will be held in Algiers next year. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf and his Algerian counterpart Abdulrahman Rawia sign 40 accords and memos yesterday. — AFP

Local

Commerce minister urges Iraqi merchants to invest in Kuwait

Iraqi PM: Great prospects for cooperation with Kuwait

BAGHDAD: Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalid Al-Roudhan affirmed yesterday that the business environment in his country continues to improve toward becoming an attractive destination for foreign investments. Roudhan made his remarks on the sidelines of taking part in a joint dialogue symposium with his Iraqi counterpart Mohammed Al-Ani and a number of Kuwaiti state officials and prominent Iraqi businessmen Wednesday night.

The recent amendments and changes in Kuwaiti laws, particularly investment, made direct investment easier and more attractive for foreign merchants to increase their business ventures in the country, he said. He affirmed his ministry's aspiration to establish a number of new laws aimed to boost efforts toward transforming Kuwait into major financial and commercial hub in the region.

Meanwhile, the event highlighted significant key features of the Kuwaiti investment encouragement law, as well as business opportunities available for foreign investors inside Kuwait. The Kuwaiti officials affirmed their government has succeeded in improving the business environment in the country by recently attracting more foreign capitals, adding such a significant effort is part of Kuwait's 2035 vision. They also said the Kuwaiti market is currently more promising and

enjoys a higher purchasing power, adding it has also become a center of attention for foreign companies. Moreover, the Kuwaiti-Iraqi sides reviewed some the obstacles facing the growth of business between them, and ways to overcome those obstacles and increase investment opportunities in both markets. They also discussed ways to enhance border ports between the two countries, and ways to accommodate any future development of business exchange between them. Top Iraqi and Kuwaiti trade officials yesterday held a second round of discussions on boosting commercial cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

Earlier, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi hailed the special bonds and the huge prospects for economic cooperation between Iraq and Kuwait. In statements during his reception of Roudhan, Abdul-Mahdi described Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations as special. They are overwhelmed by cooperation, good intentions and mutual desire to develop them in all domains to serve stability, development and economic prosperity, he pointed out.

The Iraqi premier said his country was moving steadily towards overcoming hardships of the past and removing repercussions of the devastating war. Iraq now was focusing on rebuilding



BAGHDAD: Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi meets Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalid Al-Roudhan. — KUNA

through cooperation with brothers and establishment of economic and trade partnerships to materialize the interests of Iraqi people and other peoples of the whole region, he clarified. He expressed readiness to buttress cooperation with Kuwait and reinvigorate work at the border posts and offer all facilities for investors.

Abdul-Mahdi expressed appreciation for HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah's support for endeavors to expand cooperation with Iraq. Roudhan conveyed to the Iraqi premier the greetings of HH the Amir and his renewed backing to stability and rebuilding in Iraq as well all efforts exerted to help render Iraqi government plans successful. He voiced Kuwait's desire to upgrade trade exchange with Iraq, engage the private sector of both countries and enter into mutually beneficial partnerships. —KUNA

Kuwait, Jordan eye closer ties

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and his visiting Jordanian counterpart Omar Al-Razaz yesterday discussed ways of strengthening Kuwaiti-Jordanian relations. Both prime ministers also considered a set of regional and international issues and affairs that concern both Arab countries. HH the Prime Minister then held a luncheon banquet in honor of the Jordanian guest and his accompanying delegation. The Jordanian premier then left Kuwait, concluding a short official visit to the country. — KUNA



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and his visiting Jordanian counterpart Omar Al-Razaz are seen during his departure after a short official visit to the country yesterday. — KUNA



Fire, security exercises held

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's deputy director general for the firefighting sector Maj Gen Jamal Al-Bulaihees attended the Faza 2 exercise in Kabd held by the Kuwait search and rescue team. The exercise was held under the leadership of Lt Col Ahmad Askar in the presence and coordination of Lt Col Abdelwahab Faras, head of the technical rescue team.

KFSD also carried out an exercise at the air navigation department building, which is under the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, located near Kuwait airport, to gauge the fire teams' preparedness to deal with accidents and emergencies. The exercise simulated a chemical reaction in the ozone lab on the third floor and was dealt with accordingly.

Protection and backup command carried out the Peninsula Lion 3 exercises in the presence of National Guard Secretary Lt Gen Hashim Al-Rifae. The exercise included three scenarios - shooting at fixed and mobile targets; to activate the rain plan

to rescue those trapped in their vehicles; and professional training to fight terrorism.





Saudi crown prince arrives in China to boost bilateral ties

May hails Brexit talks 'progress' but no major breakthrough

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DHAKA: Relatives of victims mourn after a fire tore through apartment blocks in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka yesterday. — AFP

70 perish in major Bangladesh blaze

Amir sends condolences to President Hamid

DHAKA: As many as 70 people died in a major fire that engulfed several buildings in a centuries-old neighborhood of the Bangladesh capital, a fire official said yesterday, warning the toll could climb as fire fighters scour the rubble.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolences to President of Bangladesh Mohammad Abdul Hamid. His Highness the Amir expressed his utmost condolences and sincere sorrow over victims of the massive fire, which broke out through several apartment buildings in Dhaka earlier and left dozens of people dead and wounded.

His Highness prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow His mercy upon the deceased victims and place them in His heavens, and grant the wounded and injured with a swift recovery.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to President Abdul Hamid. Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim yesterday sent a cable of condolences to his Bangladesh counterpart Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury over the victims

of the fire.

Lax regulations

Lax regulations and poor enforcement of rules in impoverished Bangladesh have often been blamed for several large fires that have led to hundreds of deaths in recent years.

The city's worst fire since 2012 broke out late on Wednesday night in a five-storey building,

before spreading to others nearby in the Chawkbazar precinct, parts of which date back more than 300 years to the Mughal period. "So far, 70 bodies have been recovered," Julfikar Rahman, a director of the Fire Service and Civil Defence, told Reuters.

"The number could rise further as the search continues." At least a dozen of the roughly 50 people taken to hospital were in critical condition, Rahman added. Hundreds of distraught relatives thronged the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital to seek missing relatives, witnesses said.

"All of them were crying and desperate," said

a Reuters witness. "Relatives entered the morgue and searched a register for the names of their nearest and dearest."

About 200 firefighters had battled for more than five hours to contain the blaze in narrow lanes snaking between tightly-packed buildings in an area authorities say is home to more than 3 million people. Firemen said they struggled to

get enough water to douse the flames and had to pump supplies from a nearby mosque.

"The area is so congested, there is no wide space or spacious road to easily bring in water," fire official A K M Shakil Nowaz told Reuters at the site. "We didn't find

any water source nearby, so it took several hours to put out."

The fire broke out in a building with shops on its ground floor, a warehouse for plastics and flammable material on the first, and homes on three floors above, said Shamim Harun ur Rashid, a local police official. "It is unclear whether any-

one who lived on the floors above is alive," said Rashid, adding that the cause was being investigated. Witnesses said the blaze spread after the explosion of gas cylinders in an adjoining restaurant and a parked van. Hundreds of burnt perfume or deodorant cans littered the road near the partially collapsed building where the fire began, a Reuters witness said.

The fire has revived concern about lax enforcement of building safety regulations.

"This tragic incident happened due to the indifference and callousness of the government, as well as mismanagement," said Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). Residents had several times urged authorities to relocate the warehouses in the area, but were not heeded, said school teacher Mohammad Hemayet Uddin. "After the Nimtoli tragedy we urged our local leaders not to allow any more godowns that are a danger for us," he added, referring to a 2010 fire that killed at least 124.

"We need cooperation to find such illegal godowns as the area is vast and houses thousands of buildings," Sayeed Khokon, the South Dhaka mayor, told media.—Agencies



At least 50 in hospital, death toll could rise

International

Operation to end last IS Syria pocket hits evacuation snag

Fall of Baghouz marks a milestone, but IS still seen a threat

NEAR BAGHOUZ, Syria: The operation to destroy Islamic State's final vestige of rule in Iraq and Syria hit a temporary snag yesterday, as an expected evacuation of the remaining civilians from its last enclave in eastern Syria did not go ahead. The US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), which has steadily driven the jihadists down the Euphrates, has surrounded them at Baghouz near the Iraqi border, but does not want to mount a final attack until all civilians are out. Iraqi sources said the SDF handed over more than 150 Iraqi and other foreign jihadists to Iraq yesterday, under a deal involving a total of 502. The SDF had expected to pull the last civilians from Baghouz yesterday, but trucks it sent in left empty. "We can't get into details, but today no civilians came out," SDF official Mustafa Bali told Reuters. Baghouz is all that remains for Islamic State in the Euphrates valley region that became its final populated stronghold in Iraq and Syria after it lost its major cities of Mosul and Raqqa in 2017.

Its capture will nudge the eight-year-old Syrian war towards a new phase, with US President Donald Trump's pledge to withdraw troops leaving a security vacuum that other powers are seeking to fill.

Though the fall of Baghouz marks a milestone in the campaign against IS and the wider conflict in Syria, Islamic State is still seen as a major security threat. The group has steadily turned to guerrilla warfare and still holds territory in a remote, sparsely populated area west of the Eu-

phrates River - a part of Syria otherwise controlled by the Syrian government and its Russian and Iranian allies.

Bali told Reuters the SDF would attack Baghouz once the civilian evacuation was complete. He did not say how much more time was needed to finish off the remaining Islamic State militants, or give a new estimate of how many fighters remained. The SDF has previously estimated several hundred fighters - believed mostly to be foreign jihadists - are still inside.

A Reuters witness saw warplanes in the sky over Baghouz yesterday though there was no sound of fighting or shelling. The US-led coalition said on Wednesday "the most hardened" jihadists remain in Baghouz. More than 2,000 civilians left the enclave on Wednesday, the SDF said. It has said more than 20,000 civilians left Baghouz in the days leading up to the start of the SDF's final push to capture the enclave this month. The SDF has not ruled out the possibility that some Islamic State fighters had left Baghouz with the civilians. SDF and coalition forces are recording the names and questioning everyone who has left in the civilian convoys.

Many of the people who left the enclave in civilian convoys have been Iraqis, some of whom said they had crossed from Iraq into Syria as Iraqi government forces made gains against Islamic State on the other side of the frontier.

Two Iraqi military sources told Reuters the handover of Islamic State fighters yesterday was

in three states. Data is scarce on the number of people who are enslaved by or rescued from slavery in Brazilian cults, but forced labor is rife in certain groups, according to ex-members, law enforcement and faith experts interviewed by the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Cult followers who are exploited but do not see themselves as victims are the biggest obstacle that authorities face when building cases, according to labor inspectors and prosecutors. "This is a major difficulty to stop the (cults') criminal enterprises", said Marcelo Campos, a labor inspector based in Minas Gerais, who has investigated Traduzindo o Verbo for years. Traduzindo o Verbo denied that its members were kept like slaves, while Igreja Adventista Remanescente de Laodiceia refused to comment. Two other churches accused of exploitation, including one in the United States, denied all such allegations.

Manipulation

Thousands of denominations of Christianity exist in Brazil - the fifth largest nation in the world with 210 million people - offering varied interpretations of the Bible to suit all tastes. While some faiths may seem unusual, what separates a cult from a legitimate religion is not its set of beliefs, but the abuse of its members, said Rick Alan Ross, executive director of the Cult Education Institute, a U.S. non-profit in New Jersey. "(Modern slavery in cults globally) exists much more than we imagine", Ross said. "It's bizarre, but it's true. It's all about isolation and control. If you can control what (people) read,



BAGHDAD: Iraqi craftsmen make metal barbecues in an artisan workshop in Baghdad. The traditional manufacturing of one barbecue costs 10,000 Iraqi dinars (around eight US dollars) and they are sold in the market for \$12. — AFP

the first of several. "The majority of the fighters are Iraqi," said a military colonel whose unit is stationed at the Syrian border. "But we have a few foreigners."

The mayor of Iraqi border town Al-Qaim, Ahmed al-Mahallawi, said some fighters' families

were also transferred. The US-led coalition directed questions to the SDF. Islamic State, whose leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared himself "caliph", or leader of all Muslims, in 2014, attracted members from all over the world, including many Western states. —Reuters

Brazil raids expose dark side of cults

RIO DE JANEIRO: After four years of silence, Ronaldo Soares received a startling text message from his estranged daughter one day last December. "Help me get out of here please", the 19-year-old texted him from a cult in Brazil, having stolen a phone from another member of the church where she was held captive in domestic servitude. "I want to leave here, dad. I want to talk to you, but they won't let me," read the text from Soares' daughter, who followed her mother in 2014 to join Igreja Adventista Remanescente de Laodiceia - a religious community based on a farm in Brasilia.

After filing a police report, Soares drove 600 km to the farm, got his daughter back, and returned home. The woman, who declined an interview request, is yet another victim of abuse at the hands of a cult in Brazil - with a string of cases being investigated by authorities and sparking debate about where religious practices end, and modern slavery begins.

Brazilian officials are targeting labor exploitation among cults, and last year found 565 suspected slaves linked to one church - Igreja Crista Traduzindo o Verbo - who were working at its behest at farms, factories and restaurants

see and hear, you control their mind."

A famed Brazilian faith healer - Joao Teixeira de Faria - was charged in December with rape and sexual assault after allegations from hundreds of women who said he had abused them while seeking spiritual guidance or psychic healing from him. Faria, known as "John of God", became a celebrity after his healing methods were featured on Oprah Winfrey's television show in 2013 and drew thousands of Brazilians and foreigners to his faith center in Abadiania, a town in Goias state.

At Ministerio Evangelico Comunidade Rhema, a religious group in Franco da Rocha, S?o Paulo, followers were pressed to "open up" about their fears and shame, said Daniel - a former member. "They use your fears against you, if you do not do as you're told", he said, refusing to give his name for fear of reprisals. He worked for years for little to no pay selling paintings in a store partly owned by one of Rhema's leaders - a pastor.

Abused abroad

Rodrigo, another former member, also said that employees could go for months or years without compensation at the store. More than two decades since it was created, Rhema has sent several young people to the Word of Faith Fellowship (WFF), a US church based in North Carolina, said the Labor Prosecutors Office in Sao Paulo, which has investigated the Brazilian cult. Rodrigo was one of them. He was not just expected to pray and study but forced to do arduous work at a marble factory. "I once told my

brother that this work was not fit for a human", he said, adding that he was punished for complaining.

Rodrigo declined to give his real name as his whole family is part of Rhema. He left when he turned 18, five years ago. The WFF denied allegations of trafficking and forced labor. "No one is forced to work against their will," a lawyer for the U.S. church said in an email. "In 2018, a Brazilian labor court in Sao Paulo examined these or similar allegations (against Rhema). The Brazilian church (and, by implication, the WFF) was exonerated".

The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigations has a live investigation into WFF and has "had multiple cases with them", said spokesman Gerald Thomas, without providing further detail. Brazil's Federal Prosecutor's Office said Rhema is still under criminal investigation related to the labor abuse inquiry. A lawyer for Rhema denied the claims by its former members. "A person being enslaved does not keep returning to a place for 15, 20 years," said the lawyer, Jonatas Granieri. "This (federal investigation) is a persecution that the Bible ... (and) Jesus told us would happen in the last days."

Days after Soares took back his daughter in December, police went to the farm and found two women locked in a house. They rescued one, but the other said she was free and remained there. "She was clearly intimidated ... But she is of age and said that in front of people, so there was nothing we could do," said Vander Braga, the police officer who led the rescue operation.—Reuters

International

Saudi crown prince arrives in China to boost bilateral ties

Prince Salman aims to seal partnerships on high-profile Asia tours

BEIJING: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman arrived in Beijing yesterday as the monarch aims to seal partnerships on a high-profile Asia tour following a diplomatic crisis over a journalist's murder. Mohammed is expected to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping on his two-day trip to the Chinese capital following visits to Pakistan and India.

The Chinese foreign ministry said Beijing's ambitious Belt and Road global trade infrastructure initiative will be on the agenda, as the two countries look to improve their economic ties.

"Saudi Arabia has a lot of capital that needs to find profitable places to be deployed," Saudi energy and industry minister Khalid bin Abdulaziz Al-Falih told China's official Xinhua news agency.

"China is a great place to invest with a huge market and an improving environment," he said. The two countries will sign agreements and memorandums of understanding in the energy, investment, transport and technology fields, said

the Saudi ambassador to China Turki bin Mohammed Al-Madi, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

In Pakistan, the monarch signed a raft of investment deals worth up to \$20 billion for the cash-strapped South Asian country. On Wednesday, the monarch met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose country counts Saudi Arabia as one of its key crude suppliers.

Crack down on terrorism

After his meeting with Modi, Mohammed said the kingdom saw investment opportunities in "various fields to exceed \$100 billion". Mohammed also vowed to crack down on terrorism with Modi, as their meeting was overshadowed by a suicide bomb attack that India has blamed on Pakistan—a key Saudi ally.

His visit to China also comes on the heels of a visit by the parliament speaker of the kingdom's arch-rival Iran, Ali Larijani, who met with Xi on Wednesday. —AFP



BEIJING: The national flags of Saudi Arabia (R) and China are displayed from a road lamp at Tiananmen square in Beijing yesterday. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is on a visit to China.—AFP

Where Libya's revolution began, many now yearn for a strong hand

BENGHAZI, Libya: Sitting in his cafe near the spot where the protests against Muammar Gaddafi touched off the Libyan revolution eight years ago, Miiftah Atluba is not sorry the dictator has gone. Yet like many in Benghazi, who are tired after three years of street fighting that flattened whole districts, the 45-year-old thinks it's time to return to the old way of running things.

"Muammar needed to go but democracy hasn't worked out in Libya," he said, sipping coffee in one of the few buildings still standing in a city center where from 2014 to 2017 war raged between the forces of Khalifa Haftar, a general who turned against Gaddafi, and his mainly Islamist opponents.

Atluba's cafe was damaged. But the building survived, unlike the courthouse next door where the families of political prisoners gathered to demand their release in February 2011, triggering the uprising that toppled Gaddafi. "We've had chaos and terrorism. Now we need military rule to build a state," Atluba said. The United Nations wants to hold a national conference to prepare for elections and unite a country which sits on Africa's largest proven oil reserves and produces just under one million barrels a day. Currently, political control in Libya is split between rival tribes, armed groups and even administrations. The east has its own government, which is opposed to a UN-backed authority in Tripoli. But the scars of war in Benghazi show the difficulties of reconciling two rival camps - former soldiers and tribesmen in eastern Libya versus Islamists and urban elites in the west.

Pictures of a sombre Haftar, dressed in uniform, have adorned Benghazi's streets since his Libyan National Army (LNA) expelled their enemies. Many Haftar supporters see little point in reconciling with opponents, whom they call "terrorists" or "Muslim Brothers". That leaves limited scope for moderates who believe Libya can become a civil state without a dominant role for the military. "In Benghazi, most people would not allow you to criticize the army because they've paid a price," said Jamal Falah,

an activist, referring to Haftar's forces and the battles they fought.

Falah is trying to organize a forum for Libyans from different regions to discuss a political solution that does not involve the United Nations. He wants to include people in the east who say the UN is biased towards Islamists. But many LNA supporters are sceptical about dialogue. They are more encouraged by a military offensive in the south, where Haftar has challenged the government in Tripoli by taking control of the region's main city and biggest oilfield. Some say the 75-year-old general should order his troops to head for Tripoli without waiting for an election.

"The army has secured the east and, thank God, with the southern offensive now also the south," said Fawzeia al-Furjani, a business leader who is from Haftar's tribe. "How can you hold elections in the west when you have militias in control?" But a push to the west by Haftar seems unlikely for now as his forces are already stretched in the south. They would in any case face resistance in Tripoli and other cities in western Libya, where many are suspicious of Haftar as a new Gaddafi.

When asked about a possible offensive towards Tripoli, LNA spokesman Ahmed Mismari said only: "The army (LNA) is charge of protecting the whole of Libya." He said the force supported the idea of elections but saw no chance of reconciliation with former anti-LNA fighters.

Split

Benghazi was the first Libyan city to rise up, in February 2011, because Gaddafi had punished the east for disloyalty by essentially neglecting it during his 42 years in power. While Tripoli saw two years of relative stability once Gaddafi was killed, things went downhill within months in Benghazi as rival camps began to fight. By 2012, much of the city had poor security with Al-Qaeda flags at some checkpoints. The U.S. ambassador was killed by Islamist militants. Haftar assembled his old army comrades and declared war on the Islamists, a conflict he won only in November 2017. Since then, life in Benghazi has improved. Critics say Haftar has resurrected the old police state and his supporters have seized the property of opponents who fled to western Libya, charges denied by officials. But residents enjoy late-night shopping, theatres have reopened, and fuel shortages are a thing of the past.

Benghazi is however divided over how much power should go to Haftar. His supporters refer to him as "mushir", or field marshal, a title granted by the eastern parliament. He is seen as a candidate for eventual presidential elections.—Reuters

US envoy urges tighter ties between Israeli settlers, Palestinians

JERUSALEM: The US ambassador to Israel yesterday urged deeper business ties between Israeli settlers and Palestinian businessmen in the occupied West Bank, angering Palestinian leaders. David Friedman, who was appointed by US President Donald Trump, was speaking in Jerusalem at a forum to encourage business links between Israeli settlements and Palestinians. "There are many, many Palestinians that would like to be freed up to engage in business ventures with Israelis, and they're entitled to that opportunity," Friedman told Reuters at the two-day forum attended by Israeli government officials, international businessmen and a handful of Palestinians.

Friedman's remarks were immediately attacked by Palestinian officials as encouraging settlement activity in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, territory captured in a 1967 war and which Palestinians seek as part of a future state. "This constitutes a stab in the back of the Palestinian people," said Wasel Abu Youssef, a member of the Palestine Liberation Organization's executive committee.

"We warn against any involvement or participation of any Palestinian in projects with settlers, or meetings called by the American ambassador."

Most of the world considers the settlements illegal under international law, a position Israel rejects. US criticism of Israeli settlement building has died down since Trump took office. Many Palestinians view engagement with the settlements as "normalization," arguing that doing business with Israelis in the West Bank legitimizes their presence and hinders future Palestinian sovereignty. However, thousands of Palestinians work in settlements, often in manufacturing or construction jobs which they say offer higher wages than similar jobs in Palestinian cities.—Reuters

Despite Putin's swagger, Russia struggles to modernize its navy

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin calls improving the Russian navy's combat capabilities a priority. The unfinished husks of three guided-missile frigates that have languished for three years at a Baltic shipyard show that is easier said than done. Earmarked for Russia's Black Sea Fleet, the frigates fell victim to sanctions imposed by Ukraine in 2014 after Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula, prompting Kiev to ban the sale of the Ukrainian-made engines needed to propel them.

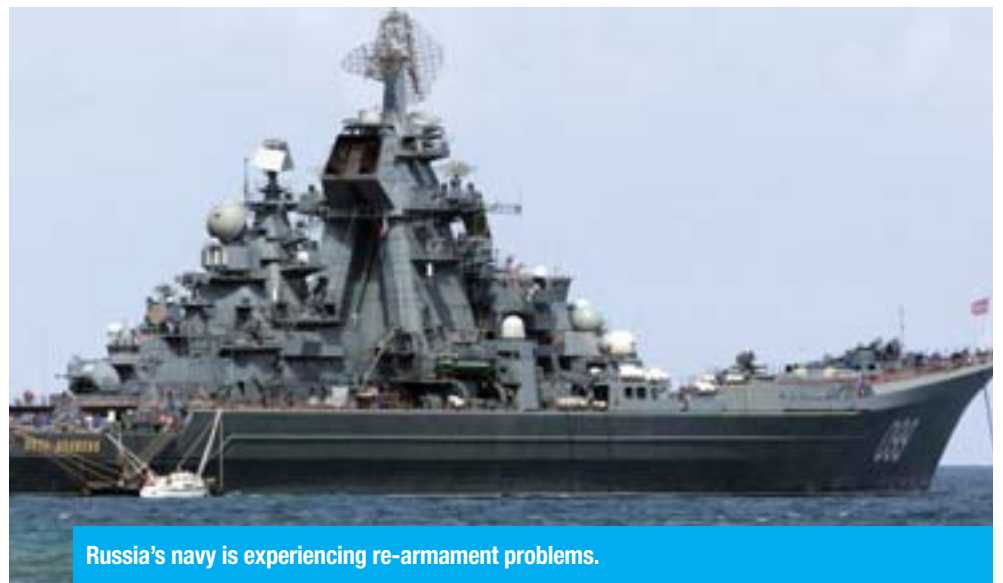
With Moscow unable to quickly build replacement engines for the Admiral Grigorovich-class frigates, construction stopped. Russia is now cutting its losses and selling the three ships to India without engines. The navy's problems stem largely, but not exclusively, from the Ukrainian sanctions. There are also problems, for different reasons, with new equipment for the army and air force. The picture that emerges is that Russia's armed forces are not as capable or modern as its annual Red Square military parades suggest and that its ability to project conventional force is more limited too.

"You need to always distinguish between reality and the shop window," said Andrei Frolov, editor-in-chief of Russian magazine Arms Exports. "Red Square is a shop window. It's like in restaurants in Japan where there are models of the food. What we see on Red Square are models of food, not the food itself." Western diplomats and military experts say Putin has long projected an image of military might to strengthen his and Moscow's image at home and abroad, but that Russia is overhauling its military far more slowly than China.

"Moscow's problems mean its ability to project conventional military force—something it is doing in Syria and has done in Ukraine—is not as great as the Kremlin would have the world believe," said one Western official with knowledge of Russia's military. In a speech on Wednesday, Putin did not mention the navy's engine problems, focusing instead on how it is due to receive seven new multi-purpose submarines ahead of time and 16 new surface ships by 2027. Defense spending has risen sharply under Putin. But Russian officials and military experts say Moscow has a shortage of modern factories and skilled labor and does not have the available financial resources needed to reverse decades of post-Soviet decline as quickly as it wants. Frolov said Russia had successfully produced prototypes of new weapons systems, but struggled to move to serial production.

That does not mean Russia's military is not a force with which to be reckoned. Some of its hardware, such as its S-400 air defense systems, is world-class. Putin has also spent heavily on missile technology, unveiling new hypersonic systems. But Russia's air force and army, like its navy, are experiencing re-armament problems. Its new stealth fighter first took to the air more than nine years ago and a super tank made its Red Square debut almost four years ago. Neither is due to be deployed in large numbers soon, government officials say.

The program to build Russia's most advanced stealth frigate, the Admiral Gorshkov-class, has been paralyzed by sanctions—even before the sanctions hit it took 12 years to build the lead ship,



Russia's navy is experiencing re-armament problems.

which entered service last summer. Russia hopes to add 14 more such ships to its navy, but has no engines for 12 of those vessels.

Moscow is trying to develop its own gas turbine engines and its own full-cycle manufacturing base. That task has been handed to aircraft manufacturer NPO Saturn, which is part of Rostec, an industrial conglomerate run by Sergei Chemezov, who served as a KGB spy with Putin. Ilya Fedorov, Saturn's then director, said in 2014 he had concerns about costs,

and the company failed to deliver the first engines to the navy in 2017.

Fedorov told the Russian news agency Interfax at the time that "all our ships run on these turbines, and if we don't make our own everything will grind to a halt." Fedorov is no longer with the company. Viktor Polyakov, Saturn's current director, said early last year that prototypes of its three new engine types had passed tests and that serial production had begun.—Reuters

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International

May hails Brexit talks 'progress' but no major breakthrough

Hammond expects breakthrough within days

BRUSSELS: Prime Minister Theresa May said she had made "progress" in talks with the EU on Wednesday as she sought to extract concessions on the terms of Britain's divorce, but as expected there was no major breakthrough.

With less than six weeks until Brexit day, May met European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker hoping for movement on the "Irish backstop" issue—after EU leaders insisted they would not restart negotiations. Fears are growing that Britain could yet crash out without a deal, and there was fresh drama just before May headed to Brussels as three of her MPs resigned from her Conservative party in protest over Brexit to join a new independent group of lawmakers.

Citing the risk of a "hard" Brexit, ratings agency Fitch on Wednesday warned it could downgrade Britain, while the pound slipped against the US dollar.

A joint statement from May and Juncker called their meeting "constructive", striking a slightly more positive tone than when they met a fortnight ago. "The two leaders agreed that talks had been constructive, and they urged their respective teams to continue to explore the options in a positive spirit," the statement said.

Separately, May said she had stressed the need for "legally binding changes to the backstop"—though the EU has ruled this out. "We've agreed that work to find a solution will continue at pace, time is of the essence and it's in both our interests that when the UK leaves the EU it does so in an orderly way. And so we've made progress," May said.

May and the other 27 EU leaders approved a Brexit withdrawal agreement at a summit on November 25 last year, but the British leader's own parliament rejected it overwhelmingly 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.



UK PM meets Juncker to iron out differences

'Backstop' stumbling block

The main stumbling block has been the Irish backstop, which 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. Brexiteers in May's own Conservative party see this as a "trap" to keep Britain tied to the bloc indefinitely, and have demanded a time limit or exit clause.

May said her Brexit Minister Stephen Barclay and



BRUSSELS: European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker (R) welcomes British Prime Minister Theresa May (left) as she arrives at the EU headquarters in Brussels to hold a meeting on Brexit talks on Wednesday.—AFP

Attorney General Geoffrey Cox would be back in Brussels on Thursday—just three days since their last visit—as the pace of negotiations picks up.

A European source said Cox, whose legal analysis of May's deal confirmed Brexiteer fears, will have a key role to play. If Brussels does enough on the backstop to persuade Cox to soften his advice, it could help swerving the parliamentary arithmetic behind the prime

minister. Britain's finance minister Philip Hammond said yesterday there had been "some movement" by the European Union that could lead to a breakthrough in Brexit talks in "the next few days".

Hammond said progress in the ongoing negotiations could result in a fresh vote next week on prime minister Theresa May's EU divorce deal, which was rejected by lawmakers last month.—AFP

Rights group accuses Mozambique of arbitrary journalists' arrests

MAPUTO: Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused the Mozambican government yesterday of arbitrarily detaining journalists covering the fight against a jihadist insurgency in the country's north.

About half-a dozen journalists have been arrested in the line of duty since last June, as well as drivers, interpreters, and other crew members, according to an AFP count. Two reporters remain in custody. "Mozambique's state security forces are intimidating, detaining, and prosecuting journalists covering the fighting against an armed Islamist group in the northern province of Cabo Delgado," HRW said in a statement. State forces are battling a group reportedly seeking to impose Sharia law in the Muslim-majority province. Originally known as Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama-Arabic for "followers of the prophet"—the group is commonly referred to by locals and officials as "Al-Shabaab", although it has no known link to the notorious Somali jihadist group of the same name. Since October 2017, Islamist fighters have terrorized remote communities in the gas-rich region, killing about 200 people and forcing thousands from their homes.

Rights groups have accused security forces combatting the group of serious abuses, including summary executions and arbitrary detention. "The Mozambican government's actions to silence the media in Cabo Delgado obstruct public scrutiny of the military operations and alleged abuses," said HRW's southern Africa director Dewa Mavhinga.—AFP

Violent street protests in Haiti hit tourism industry

PORT-AU-PRINCE: With flaming barricades and widespread looting, 10 days of street violence in Haiti have all but buried a tourism industry that managed to resurrect itself after a devastating earthquake in 2010. Ugly, violent footage beamed around the world has again sent the message that this impoverished Caribbean country is politically unstable and no place to go on vacation.

The final straw was the helicopter evacuation last week of 100-odd Canadian tourists trapped as angry protesters demanded the resignation of the president, whom they accuse of corruption.

"We have been through 12 days of hell. We managed the crisis but today we are suffering from the aftershocks," said Tourism Minister Marie-Christine Stephenson.

Blacklist

Beside the direct effects of the demonstrations, the United States delivered another crushing blow on February 14 when it urged its citizens not to travel to Haiti, which thus joined a no-go list with war-torn countries like Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan.

The minister said the US travel alert for Haiti was too harsh, calling the riots something that flared up unexpectedly and are now over. "OK, they lasted 12 days but I am not sure that other Caribbean countries, which have had riots of their own, have been punished as severely and quickly as we have," said Stephenson. Overnight, the decision by the US State Department hit the tourism industry hard. Travel web sites simply stopped offering flights to Haiti's two international airports.

Hotels are reporting cancellation of reservations and many empty rooms.

Officials in the industry have yet to tally up the damage but say that for the second time in less than a year, they will have to lay off workers. In July of last year, three days of riots over a government attempt to raise fuel prices ruined the summer vacation season for Haiti's tourism industry. It is not just hotels that will suffer again, said Beatrice Nadal-Meys, president of the Haitian Tourism Association. "This is going to affect everyday people because these are direct jobs that are going to be lost and supply chains will be threatened: farming, fishing, crafts, transport," Nadal-Meys said.

Mardi Gras cancelled

With the opposition planning more demonstrations to seek the resignation of President Jovenel Moise, the sector got yet more bad news with word that Carnival celebrations have been called off in the Haitian capital, Port-au-Prince. City Hall said it could not guarantee revelers' safety.

The festivities, which this year were planned for March 3-5, usually draw many Haitians living abroad and fleeing the winter cold in Canada and the eastern US.

Another major Carnival celebration is scheduled to take place in the city of Gonaives, but the government has not said if it will go ahead. As grim as things are, some foreign tourists have gone ahead with visits to Haiti. On Wednesday, a group of Australians under police escort visited a square featuring statues of heroes of Haiti's independence from France. Days ago, demonstrators at the same plaza were throwing rocks at police, who responded with volleys of tear gas grenades.

A woman named Carole, who did not want to give her last name, said, "I trust the company we're traveling with. They not only want to take us but they want to bring us back."

Kevin McCue, another of the people in the group of 20, said he was glad that their tour operator had not opted for Plan B, which would have meant skipping Haiti and spending the whole week in the neighboring Dominican Republic.

"Tourism is alive and well here. People should come. The more they come, the better they spread some money among people who need it and the better for Haiti," said McCue.—AFP

International

Sex abuse survivors describe horrors to world's bishops

Vatican holds landmark summit on the protection of minors

VATICAN CITY: Survivors of clerical paedophilia related their traumatic experiences to the world's top bishops yesterday at a landmark summit at the Vatican on the protection of minors. Here are some extracts from their video testimonies, the transcripts of which were provided by the Vatican, without identifying the speakers.

Victim from South America

"The first thing they did was to treat me as a liar, turn their backs and tell me that I, and others, were enemies of the Church. "You are the physicians of the soul and yet, with rare exceptions, you have been transformed-in some cases-into murderers of the soul, into murderers of the faith. "The only thing I ask of you-and I ask the Holy Spirit-to help restore that trust in the Church, so that those who do not want to listen to the Holy Spirit and who want to continue to cover-up, leave the Church to give way to those who want to create a new Church, a renewed Church and a Church absolutely free from sexual abuse."

Victim from Africa

"From the age of 15, I had sexual relations with a

priest. This lasted for 13 years. I got pregnant three times and he made me have an abortion three times, quite simply because he did not want to use condoms or contraceptives. "At first I trusted him so much that I did not know he could abuse me. I was afraid of him, and every time I refused to have sex with him, he would beat me.

"And since I was completely dependent on him economically, I suffered all the humiliations he inflicted on me."

Victim from Eastern Europe

"An encounter with a priest hurt me. As a teenager, after my conversion, I went to the priest so he could teach me how to read the Scriptures during Mass; and he touched my private parts. I spent a night in his bed. This hurt me

deeply. "The other thing that hurt me was the bishop to whom, after many years, as an adult, I talked about the incident... I met the bishop and he attacked me without trying to understand me, and this hurt me."

Victim from the United States

"I still carry pain. My parents still carry pain at the dysfunction, the betrayal, the manipulation that this

Trump bars US-born woman who joined IS from returning

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said Wednesday he is barring a US-born former Islamic State propagandist from returning home, making the highly unusual case that she is not a US citizen.

Trump's refusal to admit 24-year-old Hoda Muthana comes just as he is pressing Europeans to repatriate their own Islamic State fighters and will likely face legal challenges, with US citizenship extremely difficult to lose. Trump said on Twitter he has "instructed" Secretary of State Mike Pompeo "not to allow Hoda Muthana back into the country"-a break with usual US protocol not to comment on individuals' immigration issues.

"Ms. Hoda Muthana is not a US citizen and will not be admitted into the United States," Pompeo said in a terse statement. "She does not have any legal basis, no valid US passport, no right to a passport, nor any visa to travel to the United States," he added. The US generally grants citizenship to everyone born on its soil and the Alabama-raised Muthana is believed to have traveled to Syria on a US passport.

But a US official said a later investigation showed that she had not been entitled to her passport, adding: "Ms. Muthana's citizenship has not been revoked because she was never a citizen."

Officials declined further comment but in a loophole that could boost the government case, Muthana's father had been a diplomat from Yemen-and children of diplomats are not automatically given citizenship. Muthana's lawyer, Hassan Shilby, showed a birth certificate that demonstrated she was born in New Jersey in 1994 and said her father had ceased being a diplomat "months and months" before her birth.

"She is a US citizen. She had a valid passport. She may have broken the law and, if she has, she's willing to pay the price," Shilby told AFP at his office in Tampa.

He said Muthana wanted due process and was willing to go to prison if convicted. "We cannot get to a point where we simply strip citizenship from

those who break the law. That's not what America is about. We have one of the greatest legal systems in the world, and we have to abide by it."

US-born and radicalized

Just this weekend, Trump took to Twitter to chastise European allies that have not taken back hundreds of Islamic State prisoners caught in Syria, where Trump plans to withdraw US troops. Comparatively few Americans have embraced radical Islam, with the Counter Extremism Project at George Washington University identifying 64 who went to join the Islamic State group in Syria or Iraq.

Muthana, raised in a strict household in Hoover, Alabama, said she was brainwashed by social media messages and headed to Syria without her parents' knowledge in 2014. Shortly afterward, Muthana posted on Twitter a picture of herself and three other women who appeared to torch their Western passports, including an American one. She went on to post vivid calls on social media to kill Americans, glorifying the ruthless extremist group notorious for its beheadings that for a time ruled vast swathes of Syria and Iraq.

But with the Islamic State group down to its last stretch of land, Muthana said she has renounced extremism and wants to return home with her toddler son, born to one of her three jihadist husbands.

"To say that I regret my past words, any pain that I caused my family and any concerns I would cause my country would be hard for me to really express properly," she said in a handwritten note to her lawyer.

Tough to lose US citizenship

The US decision on Muthana comes amid rising debate in Europe on the nationality of extremists. Britain recently revoked the citizenship of Shamina Begum, who similarly traveled to Syria and wants to return to her country of birth. Britain asserted that she was entitled to Bangladeshi citizenship due to her heritage, but the Dhaka government on Wednesday denied that she was eligible, leading her to become effectively stateless. US citizenship is significantly more difficult to lose. The 14th Amendment to the US Constitution, ratified in 1868 after the Civil War as slavery was abolished, establishes that anyone born in the country is a citizen with full rights.

The US Supreme Court in the landmark 1967 *Afroyim* decision rejected the government's attempt to revoke the nationality of a Polish-born naturalized American after he voted in Israel. —AFP



VATICAN: Pope Francis arrives for the opening of a global child protection summit for reflections on the sex abuse crisis within the Catholic Church, yesterday at the Vatican. —AFP

bad man—who was our Catholic priest at the time—wrought upon my family and myself.

"I would ask the bishops for leadership. Leadership and vision and courage."

Victim from Asia

"I have been sexually molested for a long time, over a hundred times, and this sexual molestation has

created traumas and flashbacks all across my life. It's difficult to live life, it's difficult to be with people, to get connected with people. "They have all practically covered (up) every issue, covered (up for) the perpetrators and that kills me.

"I'll request the Bishops get their act clear because this is one of the time bombs happening in the church of Asia." —AFP

Keep calm and carry on: Northern France 'ready' for Brexit

LILLE: Northern France, with its huge ports and historic trading links to England, has more to fear than most if Britain makes a messy exit from the European Union next month, but local leader Xavier Bertrand insists everything is ready.

For months, politicians on both sides of the narrow stretch of sea that separates France and Britain have been warning about the consequences of a disorderly "no deal" Brexit, from transport chaos to major trade disruption. But Bertrand, who until recently feared monster traffic jams himself around the port of Calais, now predicts that cars, trucks and trains will continue flowing smoothly to Britain whatever the outcome of the tortuous Brexit negotiations.

"From our point of view, for the ports and the tunnel, we will be ready," he told AFP in Lille, the capital of the Hauts-de-France region that sits just 27 kilometers (17 miles) from southern England at the narrowest point of the Channel. "Perhaps having sounded the alarm, that woke everyone up," said the head of the region since 2015, a right-wing independent who is widely viewed as having national, perhaps even presidential, ambitions.

Finding solutions for Brexit, which will in theory see Britain leave the common customs system of the European Union on March 29, has entailed forward-planning, extra resources and technology, he explained. Around two million trucks head to Britain every year on ferries from Calais, while an estimated 17 percent of all goods exported from Britain travel in the opposite direction through Dover. —AFP

International

Kim must make 'meaningful' gesture to see sanctions ease, says Trump

As Trump and Kim prepare to meet, bars in Vietnam serve 'Peace Negroniations'

WASHINGTON: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un must make a "meaningful" gesture if he wants to see sanctions lifted, US President Donald Trump said Wednesday ahead of a second summit between the two men. "The sanctions are on in full. I haven't taken sanctions off," Trump told reporters at the White House.

"I'd love to be able to, but in order to do that, we have to do something that's meaningful on the other side." Trump and Kim are due to meet in Hanoi next week to discuss progress on the issue of North Korea's nuclear program since they first met in Singapore last year.

"Chairman Kim and I have a very good relationship. I wouldn't be surprised to see something work out," Trump said, without providing further details. Trump reiterated his view that North Korea has "great" potential for economic development and suggested the Vietnam summit would not be the last. At their landmark meeting in Singapore last year, the US and North Korean leaders produced a vaguely worded document in which Kim pledged to work toward "the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula." But progress has since stalled, with the two sides disagreeing over what that means.

Trump on Tuesday said that while he hoped his next meeting with Kim would yield much progress, he was also in "no rush" for results.

The two men are set to meet in Hanoi on February 27-28. White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders meanwhile said Trump spoke by phone with Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the

two men "reaffirmed their commitment to achieving the final, fully verified denuclearization of" North Korea. HANOI: Kim Jong Ale? Rock It, Man? Or how about a glass of Peace Negroniations? Bars in Vietnam's capital are cashing in on the second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un next week with special concoctions to mark the high-stakes diplomacy.

"This beer was inspired by the pure streams of Mount Paektu between North Korea and China," Nguyen Thi Huong Anh, manager of Hanoi's Standing Bar, said of the "Kim Jong Ale", brewed especially for the summit. The mountain is the highest on the Korean peninsula at about 2,750 metres (9,000 ft) and the official birthplace of the late North Korean leader, Kim Jong Il. "It's a volcano so the beer has a hot and spicy flavor with a soft and fresh aftertaste," Anh said.

Trump and Kim will meet on Feb. 27-28, following up on their historic first summit in Singapore in June, when they pledged to work towards the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. Enterprising businesses hope to cash in on the occasion.

One Hanoi barber is offering free haircuts to anyone wanting to copy Trump and Kim's distinctive locks.

But as in Singapore, where bars mixed up all kinds of concoctions to mark the event, it's Hanoi's bars and pubs where folks are getting creative this time too. Perhaps not surprisingly, Korea's favorite soju spirit has emerged as the



HANOI: A Vietnamese woman rides her bicycle past the Metropole Hotel in Hanoi yesterday ahead of the second summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. — AFP

ingredient of choice in Hanoi.

The Tannin Wine Bar in Hanoi's old quarter is offering the "Peace Negroniations", a summit-inspired take on the classic Negroni cocktail, made with pink-grapefruit flavoured soju, vermouth and a drop of Angostura bitters, manager Antoine Ursat told Reuters.

"I hope all the delegations come here and have a cocktail," Ursat said. "It'll facilitate the negotiations - after one or two drinks it's more easy to talk". The bitters reminded him of Trump, he said. The nearby Unicorn Pub is offering a

special summit drink named "Rock It, Man", which includes soju, bourbon and Fireball Cinnamon Whisky, along with pineapple juice, vanilla and grenadine.

"The Fireball is as strong as Trump. It's sweet but it's also very fiery," said the pub's co-owner, Trinh Xuan Dieu. "When you drink it, it tastes really hot at first but it ends with sweetness."

And the name of the concoction? Before they broke the ice at their Singapore summit, Trump mocked Kim and his efforts to build nuclear missiles by calling him "Rocket Man". — Reuters

Pentagon chief in spotlight over Trump's Syria plans

WASHINGTON: The fate of Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan was thrown into the spotlight Wednesday following media reports of a fraught discussion he had with senior US lawmakers over Syria. The exchange took place on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference last weekend, where politicians grilled Shanahan on President Donald Trump's contentious decision to withdraw US forces from Syria.

Many in Trump's own Republican Party have questioned the wisdom of the move, which the president announced in December after declaring victory over the Islamic State group in Syria—where thousands of jihadists remain and fighting continues around their last holdout.

According to The Washington Post, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, the leader of a delegation of lawmakers who had gone to Munich, asked Shanahan if he had told European allies that the US troop presence would be zero by April 30. "Yes, that's been our direction," Shanahan reportedly said.

"That's the dumbest fucking idea I've ever heard," Graham told the Post he had responded.

Shanahan had been trying to convince allies to maintain

a troop presence in Syria after the US pulls out, but struggled to persuade other countries why they should risk their forces with America gone.

Conservative news outlet Breitbart, which had been traveling with Graham in Europe, gave a similar account of the exchange. A US official told AFP that Graham's outrage was aimed more at Trump's withdrawal plans than it was at Shanahan himself.

Graham reportedly described a number of possible outcomes for a precipitous US withdrawal, including a Turkish attack on US-backed Kurdish forces and a resurgence of IS.

"If the policy is going to be that we are leaving by April 30, I am now your adversary, not your friend," Graham reportedly told Shanahan. Shanahan would need Senate confirmation if he is to lose his "acting" prefix. The former Boeing executive was previously deputy Pentagon chief until his predecessor Jim Mattis quit amid Trump's Syria decision and other disagreements.

Shanahan took the Pentagon helm January 1 but has so far not been nominated to become permanent defense secretary, and several other names have been floated in Washington circles as potential candidates. Shanahan's spokesman Joe Buccino said the closed-door meeting between his boss and the US politicians was broadly "a positive, productive discussion on a wide range of global topics."

Shanahan's trip to Europe, which marked his international debut as Pentagon chief, saw him also visit Afghanistan, where Trump wants to slash the US troop presence. — AFP

US sanctions Indian man, parents in alleged drug ring

WASHINGTON: US authorities imposed sanctions Wednesday on an Indian man and his parents for their roles in an alleged global smuggling network for heroin, opioids and other drugs.

The US Treasury Department said Jasmeet Hakimzada, who lives in the United Arab Emirates, is a "significant foreign narcotics trafficker" who since 2008 has laundered hundreds of millions of dollars.

"Hakimzada's global drug trafficking and money laundering network has been involved in smuggling heroin and synthetic opioids around the world," Sigal Mandelker, the Treasury's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, said in a statement. "This action is a result of years of effort with our US and foreign partners."

Treasury designated Hakimzada's parents, who also live in the UAE, as traffickers, describing the father as his "primary" trafficking and laundering partner and the mother as an officer for two front companies in India. Hakimzada has allegedly smuggled heroin, cocaine, ephedrine, ketamine and synthetic opioids into the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, Treasury said.—AFP

Pakistani-held Kashmir on alert as tensions with India rise

Afghanistan rebukes Pakistan envoy in ripple effect from Kashmir attack

CHAKOTHI: Bunkers are being rebuilt and a blackout has been ordered, but schools and bazaars remained open yesterday in Chakothi, a border village in Pakistani-held Kashmir, after a deadly attack sent tensions with neighboring India soaring. Residents were worried but life was going on in the village of some 3,000 inhabitants just three kilometers (two miles) from the "Line of Control", the de facto border which divides Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

Schoolchildren attended classes as usual and customers crowded the markets and stalls of the bazaar. India and Pakistan, both nuclear powers, have been fighting for seven decades over the Himalayan region of Kashmir, now one of the most militarized zones in the world.

Tensions have spiraled in recent days following a suicide attack in Indian-held Kashmir that killed 41 Indian paramilitaries and was claimed by Islamist group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), based in Pakistan.

Many observers expect Indian retaliation in the coming days. Pakistan has promised to fight back if it is attacked. Shabbir Ahmed Pirzada, a resident of Chakothi, decided to rehabilitate an old bunker next to his house that was first built in 2000, when the Indian army frequently bombarded the area.

Chakothi has not been touched since a ceasefire was declared in 2003.

"God forbid, if such situation develops, we can save ourselves in the bunker. We are not afraid, as we have seen Indian shelling in the past," he said.

'Mischievous action'

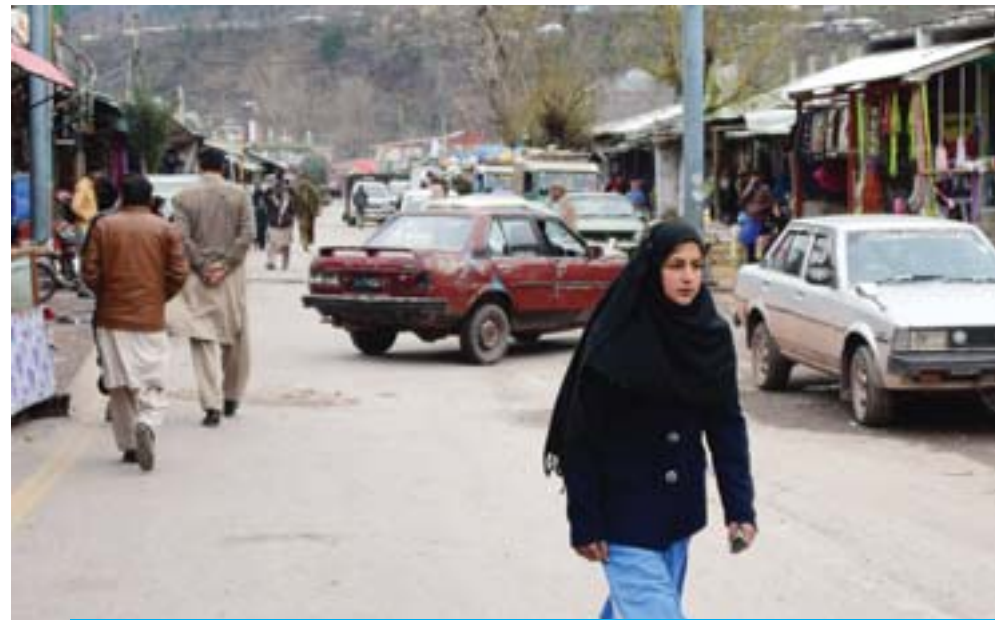
Local authorities have encouraged residents in areas near the Line of Control to take additional precautions against the risk of "mischievous action" by the Indian army. "Bunkers should be constructed in areas where they don't exist. Unnecessary lighting should be avoided after sunset and people should refrain from travelling on roads located close to LoC," the local disaster management agency has warned residents. "We are scared for our children when they go to school," said Jamila Kathoon, a housewife, pointing out that the local school had been hit by shelling in the past.

"We had built bunkers in our mud houses in the past, for our safety. Now we have houses with tin roofs, which are not safe. There will be more loss if there is shelling in the area," added another resident, Zaheer Ahmed.

"We are very worried," he said. Others are worried about the economic consequences of the crisis. The cross-border bus service serving both sides of Kashmir since 2005, as well as modest barter operations implemented in 2008 as part of peace efforts, were partially halted this week by Delhi. "There will be huge losses to the traders... The two countries should find a political solution to the Kashmir issue," said Jan Muhammad, a Kashmiri trader.

Afghanistan response

Afghanistan's Foreign Ministry summoned the Pakistani ambassador on Wednesday over his remarks that Afghan peace talks could be af-



SRINAGAR: A Kashmiri girl makes her way back to home from school in the border town of Chakothi in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, some 3 km from Line of Control (LoC). — AFP

fect if India resorted to violence after last week's attack on Indian paramilitary police in Kashmir. In a statement issued after the meeting with Ambassador Zahid Nasrullah, the Foreign Ministry said it deemed his comments to be "in contradiction with Pakistan's commitments with regards to realizing peace in Afghanistan".

Tensions between India and Pakistan have risen sharply since the suicide bomb attack in the disputed Kashmir region, which the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad militant group claimed responsibility for. India has blamed Pakistan, saying Islamabad has not done enough to control militants based on its soil.—Agencies

Kashmiri students flee Indian backlash after suicide attack

SRINAGAR: Junaid Ayub Rather covered alongside 30 other students in a small room for two nights while mobs chanted for their blood outside, before finally escaping an angry backlash over a suicide bombing in Kashmir. Similar scenes have played out across the nation as Kashmiris living away from home flee violent reprisals following the latest attack in the restive Himalayan region, which killed at least 40 Indian paramilitary soldiers. Rather said angry crowds gathered outside hostels and apartments rented by Kashmiri students in Dehradun, north of New Delhi, shouting for the "traitors" and "terrorists" inside to be shot.

"It took us four days to reach home in Kashmir with some help from police and a Muslim businessman," Rather, who had lived in the northern city for two years, told AFP after reaching his home south of Srinagar. "Thirty of us slept in one room for two nights before we could mobilize help to flee." The businessman let them take refuge in his home until buses could be organized to get them to safety.

Around 11,000 Kashmiri students enrol at Indian universities outside their home state each year. Many are now clamoring to return home to a region battle-scarred by 30 years of brutal

armed insurgency, fearing violent attacks if they stay. Video footage of Kashmiris being beaten and taunted in Indian cities has been widely shared on social media, while rightwing Hindu groups and pundits on TV news channels have encouraged reprisals. A professor from New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University this week publicly called for the execution of 40 Kashmiris to avenge the suicide bombing, while two other colleges announced they would no longer accept students from the territory.

More than 500 students, along with 100 businessmen, have already arrived back in Kashmir to flee a "climate of fear and intimidation across India", said Kashmir Traders and Manufacturers Federation chief Mohammad Yasin Khan. More were on their way, he said. "We are continuously receiving distress calls from all kinds of people asking for help," Khan said.

Some Kashmiri students have also been suspended by Indian universities for allegedly posting insensitive comments on social media about the suicide attack, while others have been arrested on sedition charges. India's interior ministry has ordered state governments to protect Kashmiri students—but several political leaders have also stoked aggressive anti-Kashmiri sentiment since the bombing.

"Don't visit Kashmir... Boycott everything Kashmiri," Meghalaya state governor Tathagata Roy wrote on Twitter. More than 500,000 Indian troops are stationed in Kashmir, a territory administered by New Delhi but also claimed by neighboring Pakistan. The two countries have battled three wars for control of the region, while an assortment of local insurgent groups have fought for a merger with Pakistan or outright independence.—AFP

Aung San Suu Kyi expected at UN in Geneva next week

GENEVA: Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been criticized by the West over the government's treatment of Rohingya Muslims and other human rights concerns, is scheduled to speak at the United Nations in Geneva next week, a UN official said yesterday. Her itinerary has not been made public but it could coincide with that of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who will open the UN Human Rights Council session on Monday, presenting the chance of a rare meeting. Suu Kyi is a former political prisoner who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 but her reputation has suffered badly in recent years.

Her government's relations with the United Nations are tense following the Rohingya crisis. It has banned the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, from coming to the country and Suu Kyi's administration has opposed raising the profile of the UN resident coordinator in Myanmar.

She has largely shunned travel to the West since the Rohingya crisis broke out in 2017 but she and senior officials in her administration travel regularly within Asia. Suu Kyi is listed as a speaker at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva next Wednesday, but UN officials were not immediately able to confirm any other details of her trip. About 730,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled from Myanmar's Rakhine State into Bangladesh since a military crackdown in 2017 after Rohingya insurgents attacked security posts.—Reuters

International

'Paradise on Earth': Ghost of North Korean propaganda still haunts

Ex-communist now looks back on repatriation scheme with bitterness

NIIGATA, Japan: Harunori Kojima still remembers the hot tears of joy that warmed his face against the sleet as he watched two Soviet ships set sail in December 1959 from Japan's Niigata port.

Destination: North Korea, which lured nearly 100,000 Koreans from Japan with fantastical propaganda promising returnees a "Paradise on Earth." Now 88, Kojima recalls how a brass band parped out patriotic tunes lauding then North Korean leader Kim Il Sung as some 1,000 people boarded the ships for a new life.

They were part of a grand repatriation program that continued on and off until 1984, carried out by the Red Cross Societies in Japan and North Korea and paid for by Pyongyang.

In all, 93,340 people—mainly Koreans but also Japanese spouses—enthusiastically moved to North Korea, blissfully unaware it was a land of no return. Initially reluctant, the Japanese government also backed the scheme, with media touting it as a humanitarian campaign for Koreans struggling to build a life in Japan.

But Kojima, who was a communist at the time and helped oversee the repatriation, now looks back on the scheme with bitterness. "I was actively involved

in the project, believing it was something positive. But as a result, I led people into Hell," he told AFP.

During Tokyo's 1910-1945 colonial rule of the Korean peninsula, millions of Koreans moved to Japan, either voluntarily or against their will. When Japan surrendered, hundreds of thousands of ethnic Koreans remained, reluctant to return to their devastated homeland. They were stripped of their Japanese nationality and became stateless.

According to journalist and expert Yoshiaki Kikuchi, Kim's North-economically better off than the South after the 1950-53 Korean war—wanted to use the mass repatriation to emphasise Socialism's "superiority" over the US-puppet South. Most Koreans in Japan hailed

from south of the 38th parallel but then South Korean President Syngman Rhee cut them adrift and former colonial ruler Japan offered no help to alleviate their poverty and discrimination.

For these reasons, many believed propaganda films portraying an idyllic life in North Korea and submitted to the agents of the General Association of Korean Residents or Chongryon—the de facto embassy of the North in Japan—as they went door-to-door.

“ Paradise was a far cry from the propaganda ”



NIIGATA, Japan: Harunori Kojima still remembers the hot tears of joy that warmed his face against the sleet as he watched two Soviet ships set sail in December 1959 from Japan's Niigata port. —AFP

Starving to death

But the reality in "Paradise" was a far cry from the propaganda. Eiko Kawasaki, now 76, was shocked to see the locals gathered to welcome them in the northeastern port of Chongjin.

"The way the local people looked was heartbreaking. Both the men and the women had lifeless faces with darkened, dry skin. All

wearing the same humble working clothes," Kawasaki recalled. She was 17 and had travelled alone, with her family set to follow, convinced by Chongryon propaganda. "They would say North Korea was a wonderful country where we could help build the Socialist state and then proudly go home after the North and South were unified," she said.—AFP

Gunmaker H&K convicted for illegal arms exports to Mexico

BERLIN: A German court yesterday fined gunmaker Heckler & Koch 3.7 million euros (\$4.2 million) and gave suspended jail terms to two of its ex-employees for illegally exporting thousands of rifles to violence-torn Mexican states. A former worker was given a suspended sentence of 17 months in prison and ordered to do 250 hours of social work, while the other person convicted got an 80,000 euro fine and a 22-month suspended jail term.

Three other former employees were cleared of charges. Germany is among the world's top arms exporters, along with the United States, Russia, China and France, and all its defense equipment sales abroad are subject to government approval. Prosecutors had charged that 15 shipments of the military-style weapons between 2006 and 2009 breached Germany's so-called war weapons control law because they ended up in especially violence-torn Mexican states in breach of the export license.

The Mexican defense ministry, which is in charge of gun imports, had approved the import of 9,652 H&K rifles, of which 4,796 went to states with particular human rights concerns, including Guerrero, German newspapers have reported. Activists say that G36 rifles were also sent to police in Iguala, Guerrero state, where the 43 students disappeared at the hands of corrupt police and were feared killed by a narco-gang in September 2014 in a case that sparked international condemnation.

A driving force in the investigation leading to the trial was German rights activist Juergen Graesslin, who first issued a criminal complaint against H&K staff over the Mexico sales in 2010. —AFP

Taiwan unveils long-awaited gay marriage bill

TAIPEI: Taiwan's ruling party unveiled its latest attempt to create Asia's first gay marriage law yesterday, a bill offering same-sex couples "permanent unions" as well as limited adoption rights, despite stiff opposition from conservatives. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has had a stuttering and troubled journey towards delivering on their 2016 election promise to grant same-sex couples equal marriage rights.

In November, conservatives won a referendum against revising the island's Civil Code to allow gay marriage, in a blow to President Tsai Ing-wen's party and a stark illustration of the social divide caused by the issue. The referendum came after Taiwan's Constitutional Court voted to legalize gay marriage in 2017 — the first place in Asia to do so—arguing that denying same-sex couples marriage rights was unconstitutional.

The court ordered the government to amend the law by May 24, 2019 but did not specify how it wanted gay marriage to be brought in. The bill published yesterday by the cabinet is the Tsai administration's attempt to square that circle—a new law that meets the court's demands while trying to respect the referendum result by not altering the Civil Code which currently defines marriage as between a man and a woman. The draft law released by the justice ministry proposes allowing "two persons of the same sex to create a permanent union of intimate and exclusive nature for the committed purpose of managing a life together to realize the equal protection of the freedom of marriage".

'Historic moment'

Gay couples will be allowed to adopt the biological children of their partner while both parties are financially responsible for

each other and are entitled to inheritance rights.

Premier Su Tseng-chang called the unveiling of the bill a "historical moment" and urged the parliament to pass it as soon as possible. "We are all of the same country, live on the same land and under the same heaven and earth whether you are straight or gay," he told a cabinet meeting.

"Every single person should be respected and treated equally. I sincerely hope that everyone will accept differences and treat each other cordially so Taiwan can become a country of mutual respect and friendliness". The law is set to take effect on May 24 but needs to pass parliament, where the DPP holds a majority. Rights groups noted some shortcomings, such as limited adoption rights and no mention of recognizing international gay marriage rights.

"The international community at the moment is closely watching the progress of Taiwan's gay marriage bill. We hope to let the world see that Taiwan is a diverse society that respects equality to become a beacon and model of human rights in Asia," the Marriage Equality Coalition Taiwan said in a statement. But conservative groups hit out at the bill—which avoids using the word "marriage" in its title.

"It is an irresponsible act to please both sides with a hidden agenda and trampling on public will," said Yu Hsin-yi, spokesman of "pro-family" group the Coalition for the Happiness of our Next Generation. Taiwan is seen as one of the most progressive societies in Asia when it comes to gay rights, and it stages the biggest gay pride parade in Asia annually. Gay marriage rights receives high approval ratings among young people in particular. But it also remains a staunchly conservative place with powerful religious lobbies, especially outside of urban areas, and analysts say DPP underestimated how controversial their gay marriage proposals would be.

President Tsai openly supported the legalization of gay marriage before she was elected but has since said there needs to be more consensus in society. If the bill is passed it would be Asia's first gay marriage law. In December Thailand's junta rulers proposed a similar bill but it has yet to make it parliament in the kingdom that is currently in the midst of an election campaign. —AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2019

www.kuwaittimes.net



A guest poses as he arrives to attend the Moncler women's Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection fashion show, on February 20, 2019 in Milan. — AFP

Oscars chef cooks up a storm for the big night

See Page 23



British band 'The 1975', Matthew Healy, Ross MacDonald, George Daniel and Adam Hann speak after collecting their British Album of the Year award during the BRIT Awards 2019 ceremony and live show in London. — AFP photos



Australian actor and singer Hugh Jackman performs on stage.

Pop rockers The 1975 win big at Brits

Pop rockers The 1975 stole the show at British pop music's annual celebration on Wednesday, winning the coveted Best Album Brit award, with US singer Pink also honored. The Manchester four-piece claimed the prize for their raw number one album "A Brief Inquiry into Online Relationships" ahead of Florence + The Machine and indie singer George Ezra. The band also claimed the best British group award—speaking out against misogyny in their acceptance speech—before performing "Sincerity Is Scary" for the thousands packed into the London's O2 Arena at the 39th annual ceremony, which recognized Britain's top talent of 2018.

Australian A-lister Hugh Jackman kicked off proceedings in a blaze of Hollywood razzamatazz, performing "the Greatest Show" from hit musical "The Greatest Showman" accompanied by scores of gravity-defying dancers. George Ezra was the night's early winner, taking the Best Male Solo Artist

award, beating off competition from garage pioneer Craig David, veteran avant-garde techno producer Aphex Twin and soul singer Sam Smith. He followed up by performing upbeat summer chart-topper "Shotgun", shortly before 21-year-old soul diva Jorja Smith was named best female solo artist.

US superstar Ariana Grande and hip-hop giants Drake and The Carters—comprised of power couple Jay-Z and Beyoncé—scooped the international awards, with the latter sending a video thank you message in front of a regal painting of Meghan, the Duchess of Sussex. Dua Lipa, the big winner of last year's Brits, made a show-stopping performance as part of a superstar collaboration with hit producer Calvin Harris and singer Sam Smith. Rising star Anne-Marie, who shot to fame as the vocalist on Clean Bandit's worldwide hit "Rockabye", was nominated for four awards, including for the Britney Spears-inspired video to "2002", but left empty-handed.



British singer-songwriter George Ezra collects his British Male Solo Artist award.



British singer-songwriter Tom Walker speaks after collecting his British Breakthrough Act award.



British band 'The 1975', Matthew Healy, Ross MacDonald, George Daniel and Adam Hann perform on stage.



British singer-songwriter George Ezra performs on stage.



British singer Jorja Smith speaks after collecting her British Female Solo Artist award.



British DJ and musician Calvin Harris (right) and British singer-songwriter Dua Lipa (left) collect their British Single award.



British girl group 'Little Mix', Perrie Edwards, Jesy Nelson, Jade Thirlwall and Leigh-Anne Pinnock collect their British Artist Video of the Year award.



US singer-songwriter Pink performs on stage.



British singer Jorja Smith performs on stage.



US actor Jared Leto presents the British Album of the Year award.



US singer-songwriter Pink (center) performs on stage.



US singer-songwriter Pink performs during the BRIT Awards 2019 ceremony and live show in London.

'This is all too much'

Multi-million record selling US artist Pink closed out the show with a medley of hits after being presented the outstanding achievement award recognizing her 20-year career. "This is all too much, my dad's really excited," she told the crowd. "It's beyond anything my brain can comprehend. It's been an awesome journey." 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 prime 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

Indulge in Luxurious Patriotism at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa

Kuwait's idyllic resort celebrates National & Liberation Days with new Stay Offers

In celebration of the National and Liberation days Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, Kuwait's idyllic resort, is proud to provide yet another vast array of appealing offers by which guests can indulge in the 'Stay Different' experience of luxury. The new room stay offer does not only provide an experience of a luxurious stay, but it also comes with the lavish National and Liberation Day Brunch at Garden Café on 25th and 26th of February, starting at 1PM. Kids and family can indulge in traditional henna designs being offered in the lobby to rejoice in celebration this National and Liberation day.



February 25th. Seafood lovers and meat lovers can surely rejoice as well, as they can indulge in lavish meals at the award-winning Salt and Pepper restaurants.

Once guests have settled in their rooms of choice, whether a deluxe room, or even a suite, they can enjoy the authenticity of Kuwait's culture in the traditional ambience of Arabesque restaurant and the exotic herbs and spices of its meals. Garden Café's National and Liberation Day Brunch will also deliver a luxurious sense of patriotism to visiting guests as they enjoy their national and liberation day themed meals. Barbecue lovers can enjoy National and Liberation Day BBQ by the pool with exciting live cooking stations starting at 7PM on Monday

"We are truly proud to contribute to the National and Liberation Days celebration with our offers to guests, where they can live patriotism with our 'Stay Different' touch of luxury." Shared Director of Sales & Marketing, Mr. Georges Akar, as he explained the details of the latest Room Stay Offer.

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa is an award-winning Hotel that rightfully earned its reputation as Kuwait's idyllic resort with award-winning restaurants.



A man sells sheeps in the market in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca State -hometown to Mexican actress Yalitza Aparicio.



Partial view of the Central Park of the city in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca State.



Yalitza Aparicio is seen as Vanity Fair and L'Oreal Paris Celebrate New Hollywood on February 19, 2019 in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos

'Roma' star's unlikely road from mountains of Mexico to Hollywood



Music students part in a rehearsal in "Casa de la Cultura" in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca State.



The director of the "Casa de la Cultura" Miguel Martinez gestures during an interview with AFP.



A man sells products for cooking in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca State.

Yalitza Aparicio once was a newly qualified pre-school teacher living in a dusty mountain town in Mexico. Now, the 25-year-old is the star of Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma" and an Oscar nominee—a fairy tale marred by racist barbs the indigenous actress has encountered along the way. Aparicio—who is part Mixtec and part Triqui—grew up in Tlaxiaco in the southern state of Oaxaca, home to about 40,000 people. She had never even seen a movie on the big screen until she was 15 and went on a school trip to Puebla, a city some 350 kilometers (220 miles) away.

Tlaxiaco closed its only movie theater years ago, explains Miguel Angel Martínez, who runs the small city's tiny cultural center. Even then, it had only shown films that had screened everywhere else years before. The theater's demise was hastened by the advent of pirated DVDs, a flourishing black market that at least brought more up-to-date movies to Tlaxiaco. Now, in an open-air market next to the church and clock tower, a stall advertises "Roma" on sale for 20 pesos, or one dollar.

In the film, Aparicio plays an indigenous nanny living with a family in Mexico City—a tale drawn from Cuarón's own childhood in the 1970s. In real life, Aparicio grew up in a tiny house among flowers, chickens and cows, before becoming Cuarón's unlikely on-screen muse.

Racist insults

Since bursting onto the big screen, her performance has been lauded from Europe to the United States, and her face has appeared on the covers of prestigious magazines. She is the first indigenous woman to be nominated for a best actress Oscar. But with her newfound fame has come a wave of racist comments on social media, and even some from fellow actors. Sergio Goyri, a 60-year-old Mexican soap opera star, was caught on camera criticizing the Academy for nominating an "Indian"—using a vile profanity.

Other actors have questioned her talent, sparking indignation from Cuarón. "Yalitza is one of the best actors I have worked with. It is wrong and racist to think that she



A woman sells vegetables and grains in a street in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca State.

is only playing herself," he said. "It sets such huge limitations on a woman, just because of her indigenous background."

Mixed response at home

But even in her hometown, Aparicio's work has often received a lukewarm response. "I don't like the movie, and I like her performance even less. It's all very trite," said Rogelio Lopez, a seller of costume jewelry. Others in Tlaxiaco are more

supportive. "I really want her to win an Oscar," said Catalina Chavez, a 39-year-old artisan. "I'm very proud that she is representing us—as women, as indigenous people, as Mexicans, as country people and as domestic workers, as so many things!"

Gladys Morales, a 24-year-old who went to school with Aparicio, says she admires the down-to-earth way her former classmate has coped with the international



Children play at the Jardin de Ninos Mexico.



A man sells hats in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca State.



People visit "Casa de la Cultura" in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca State.



A street stall offers the Rome movie in Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca State.

limelight. "I was here in December [for New Year's festivities]. I saw her just walking with her mom. They were doing some shopping," Morales said. "Everything here is as simple as ever." Aparicio has defended herself against "offensive comments," saying she hopes "we are done with this idea." "I personally always thought I could never be a part of this [showbiz]. It all seems like a fairy tale because all my life, I have been seeing women who didn't look like me on the screen," she told reporters.

'Not here for the casting call'

So how did this humble young woman reach the peaks of cinematic glory? That in itself is a fairy tale of improbable casting. In April 2016, Cuaron put out a casting call in Tlaxiaco and other towns to find the lead actress for "Roma." Martinez, the cultural center head, said he thought the role would go to Aparicio's older sister Edith, explaining that she has a "magnificent singing voice" and is "very talented, outgoing, with a lot of charm and charisma."

The two sisters went to the casting call together, and Edith threw herself enthusiastically into the session, which consisted of a photo shoot and questions about her personal life. But the casting official insisted that Yalitza also part. "I didn't come for the casting call. I only came to keep Edith company," Yalitza said, according to Martinez. But Edith "took her by the hand" into the test.

She quickly found herself cast in "Roma" without even knowing who Cuaron was, said

Martinez. "She was a 'virgin' for these sorts of things—that's what allowed her to act so naturally," he said. —AFP

Oscars chef cooks up a storm for the big night

They will nibble on Oscar-shaped flatbreads topped with smoked salmon and caviar, sip French drink and sink their teeth into tiny chocolate Oscar statuettes. Nothing is good enough for Hollywood's elite who will be wine and dined after the Academy Awards on Sunday by celebrity chef Wolfgang Puck. Puck has catered the extravagant post-Oscars party—the Governors Ball—for decades, preparing thousands of dishes for the 1,500 guests, including the night's winners, who attend the bash.

"We have been doing the Oscars for 25 years, which is really amazing," the 69-year-old chef told AFP on Thursday during a tour of his kitchen where he was prepping for the extravaganza. "I remember the first time we did it, it was in downtown LA, at the Shrine Auditorium," he added. "We built the kitchen in the parking lot, it was raining and windy, it was so difficult. Now we have two state-of-the-art kitchens, so it makes it much easier."

Sunday's menu, he said, will feature some classics that are always hits with partygoers, including wood-fired crispy flatbreads — 6,500 of them—with creme fraiche, smoked salmon and caviar. Among the other 60 dishes on the menu this year will be spicy fried quail, black truffle chicken pot pie, Wagyu beef and agnolotti (a sort of ravioli) with black truffle and spring peas. "We've got the black truffle from France," the Austrian-born Puck gushed as he showed samples of his dishes. "People love the smell, and we make a thousand of them, so the whole dining room smells like truffle."



Pastry chef Kamel Guechida poses in the kitchen while preparing the dinner for the 91st annual Academy Awards Governors Ball, in Hollywood.



Celebrity Chef Wolfgang Puck poses in the kitchen while preparing the dinner for the 91st annual Academy Awards Governors Ball, in Hollywood, on California. — AFP photos

On the sweet side, apart from the 24-karat dusted chocolate Oscars will be passion fruit and strawberry cookies, hibiscus orange pate de fruit and espresso macarons. Puck, a regular on television talk shows, said no less than 35 pounds (16 kilograms) of black truffle, 350 pounds of Atlantic bigeye tuna and 250 Maine lobster will be served at the event. And while the caviar (a mere 33 pounds) and the quail (400) are from the US, the champagne (about 1,400 bottles) is from France and the Iberico ham (five whole legs) hails from Spain.

Puck, who worked in some of France's top restaurants before relocating to the US at age 24, said the menu reflects the international flavor of the Academy Awards that honor movies and actors from across the globe. "I really believe the movie industry is worldwide," he said. "They have movies in France, in Italy, in England, and now Mexico is really strong, they have 'Roma'." "So our cooking here is a little bit like that. We have influence from Asia, from Italy, France."

In total, Puck—who heads an empire of restaurants stretching from Beverly Hills, to Las Vegas and Singapore—said he will be serving 16,000 individual dishes on Oscar night, including vegan dishes—enough to keep everyone satisfied through the evening. Helping him prepare the feast are 200 assistant chefs who will be backed by 850 servers and 10 maitre d's on Oscar night. — AFP

Pageant-mad Philippines welcomes home Miss Universe

The beauty pageant-mad Philippines welcomed home freshly crowned Miss Universe Catriona Gray yesterday with a joyous parade through the capital that drew tens of thousands of screeching fans held back by police. The 25-year-old danced, smiled and waved a tiny Philippine flag from atop a float, shielded from the pounding tropical sun by attendants holding pink umbrellas as some in the crowd scaled utility poles to catch a glimpse. Manila's already notorious traffic was brought to a complete stop by a police motorcycle escort that blocked roads as confetti cannons sprayed the crowd, which was pushed back by officers.

"I was overwhelmed when I saw her and she looked at me!" said Ednor Yaunbaes, 22, as he waved a pink flag. "At least I can say that before I die, I already saw a Miss Universe." Manila police estimated a crowd of some 10,000 at the final stop alone of the three-hour parade, which wound through the heart of the densely-populated metropolis that is home to some 12 million people.

Manila office worker Sharlene Panganiban told AFP her boss allowed her to leave early for the parade, which included a troupe of drummers in feather headdresses and bright masks. "Just the thought of seeing her gives me goosebumps. I feel like her crown will fall on me," said the 22-year-old, who added she too had competed in local beauty contests. — AFP



Miss Universe 2018 Catriona Gray of the Philippines waves to fans during a parade held in her honor in Manila.



KARL LAGERFELD'S FINAL FENDI COLLECTION WAS FILLED WITH HIS PERSONAL STYLE TICS



Karl Lagerfeld, who died on Tuesday of this week, was named creative director at Fendi in 1965. That's four years before man first landed on the moon. Five years before the Beatles broke up. Sixteen years before Prince Charles married Diana. Nineteen years before Steve Jobs invented the first Macintosh computer.

While Lagerfeld is synonymous with Chanel, which he transformed from a dusty brand into a multi-billion dollar company (total sales for 2017 were \$9.62 billion), he is also an honorary Fendi. The ultimate mentor to Silvia Venturini Fendi, who currently heads up the house, she also considered him flesh and blood. "I first met him when I was five years old," she said, in an interview last year. "In a lot of ways, Karl is family. Here is the kind of magical place where these values are very strong."

That meant that today's Fendi slot in Milan, for its autumn/winter 2019 show, was Lagerfeld's last. Small cards had been left on each seat, inscribed with Karl's signature and

19.02.2019, the date of his passing. "In his perpetual search for beauty and innovation, Karl's commitment to his craft never waned," read the show notes. A quote attributed to Silvia Venturini Fendi read: "The bond between Karl Lagerfeld and Fendi is fashion's longest love story, one that will continue to touch our lives for years to come. I am profoundly saddened by his passing and deeply touched by his constant care and perseverance until the very end. When we called just a few days before the show, his only thoughts were on the richness and beauty of the Collection. It's a true testament to his character. He shall be so missed."



Lifestyle | Fashion



The atmosphere was sombre. "Love KL", in Lagerfeld's florid script loomed large over the catwalk, while a calligraphic F, apparently also in his hand, had been stitched into the taupe catwalk that comprised the runway. Then a piano started up and Fran Summers walked out in a vague approximation of what Karl might have worn had he been a woman: a giant snowy white bow at the throat crowning a sharply tailored mushroom-coloured double-breasted jacket. There were more starched white collars, frock coats, a flash of yellow patent, and of course, ponytails - all memento mori for one of fashion's last kings.

As an emotional Silvia Venturini took her bow, David Bowie's Heroes boomed out over the audience. Lagerfeld, who had a uncomplicated way with words and wasn't afraid to roast celebrities grand and ignominious, was famously complimentary of Bowie. When he died, Lagerfeld told the Associated Press that Bowie was "a great artist and a timeless fashion icon... who will remain a reference."

A video then flashed up on a screen above the catwalk: "54 years together". It was Karl, being asked to draw a sketch of himself as he was when he arrived for his first day at Fendi. "Well that's prehistoric," he joked. "You know, in the Sixties, we didn't hold back." He begins drawing himself with a black sharpie: Ceruti hat, long hair, dark glasses, a printed lavallière tie, Norfolk jacket in Scottish tweed in red and yellow, French culottes, boots, and "a bag I found in Milan." As he said of Bowie - Lagerfeld will forever remain a reference. — www.vogue.co.uk

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





Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani acknowledges applause following the presentation of the Emporio Armani women's Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection yesterday in Milan.



Film Review

'Alita: Battle Angel'

By Aakash Bakaya

During the mid-2000's I spent most of my free time tumbling around various IMDB message boards. It was when internet message boards were in its hay-day and IMDB's blue texted grey backgrounds were a rite of passage for any movie buff. Rumors and production delays were a dime a dozen there and for all the talk of Peter Jackson's 'Halo' and Spielberg's return to 'Jurassic Park' - one film stood out from the rest. That film was James Cameron's dream project 'Battle Angel Alita'.

Very little real information ever came out from it but whenever it did, the skeptics usually outmatched the optimists. 'Battle Angel Alita' was far from the most popular manga of its time but it had an immense cult following and a Hollywood heavyweight of Cameron's stature being attached to the project only lead to a larger spotlight and greater scrutiny being put on it. But here we are 15 years later and after a brutal development hell we finally have 'Battle Angel' on the big screen and even for all its positives frankly I don't think it was worth the wait.

Few films have drawn such a wedge between my inner geek and my basic cinematic expectations. On one hand 'Alita' is a faithful, well-executed celebration of anime story-telling and world building but with the polish and production qualities of the highest level of Hollywood production. So its small wonder why the movie is resonating more so with anime and manga fans when compared to the general public. Yet on the other hand the terrible dialogue, the bad acting and a terrible final act that ends the film on a whimper rather than a bang makes you wonder if you've just wasted your time and money.

I had zero knowledge of the film's plot before going to the cinema so seeing that the film takes place 500 years in the future threw me off from the start. 500 years is a very long time and I was curious to see how they use that fact. I liked that it didn't dwell on the backstory too much and rather dived head first into the plot from the very beginning. Dr Dyson Ido (Christoph Waltz) discovers a disembodied female cyborg which happens to

have a fully intact human brain and decides to make it his pet project of sorts. He is Iron City's best cyber surgeon which in future means he will replace or fix your body up with electronics (it's easier I guess). Not long after, the female cyborg wakes up and she finds herself in a new body but with no memory of her past self or function. Ido proceeds to name her 'Alita' which we later find out was his daughter's name. His daughter's death and how his wife Chiren (Jennifer Connelly) is connected to it is told in a vague, ridiculous flashback which just left me quite confused. Sudden flashbacks are used as a storytelling device on more than a couple of occasions and usually I don't mind them. Here though, they seem cobbled together at the last moment and are awkward with little to no payoff by the end.

I am not trying to say the plot is overtly convoluted - it's simply presented to us in this uninteresting manner and filled with either heavy exposition or needless side-plots we never get proper conclusions to. Chiren in particular is a huge wasted opportunity. She and her now ex-husband are refugees from the last surviving sky-city (a floating metropolis of sorts) called Zalem and everyone dreams of getting the chance to live there. Just how humanity came to this point of building sky cities and the inter-planetary conflict that lead to their destruction is only teased to the audience but I found these more than satisfactory as the narrative behind was quite interesting.

Getting back to Chiren, her motivations much like every character except for Dr Ido is the same - find a way to Zalem no matter what the cost. This is also the sole driving factor for Hugo, a street kid who turns into Alita's eventual love interest. This motivation of "getting through the pearly gates" has been done to death and 'Alita' doesn't bother to do it any differently but by showing nothing of Zalem or what exactly makes it so worthwhile creates a heavy disconnect between the characters and what makes them in anyway relatable to the audience. Then there's Motorball, the city's most popular sport (for some reason) and is the weakest part of the film. There are attempts to tie this to the main plot but it seemed so overtly cliché. I honestly zoned out whenever it was spoken about. I wished it was either removed or reworked completely.

The main draw of the film though is the character of Alita herself and I can safely say the motion-capture technology that brings her and the other cyborg characters to life have reached an awe-inspiring peak. The way Alita's eyes seem to focus on something in the distance to how even the smallest of facial expressions is visibly identifiable and breaks the plastic and lifeless feel which has plagued other recent attempts at using this tech. The action in particular shines even more because of it. They are impactful and surprisingly unfazed to get increasingly violent as they go on especially for a film rated PG-13. They



aren't bloody per say but they will leave you breathless and keep you relentlessly on edge. However, the numerous scenes in between the action set pieces are slow and meandering. Rosa Salazar does a commendable job as Alita but both she and a cast with great actors like Mahershala Ali or Christoph Waltz cannot make this dialogue work.

Cameron is given top credit for this and it shows. Ever since 'Titanic', his scripts have lost any understanding of how two people actually talk to each other. Every confrontation is simply a set-up leading to yet another line that is supposed to sound cool or profound but ends up sounding nothing like that at all. The exposition is needlessly drawn out, the romance between Alita and Hugo starts off well but quickly rushes to an unsatisfactory conclusion and the inter-play between the characters definitely needed a tune-up.

How much one can swallow of a campy storyline where towns are called 'Iron City' and the law enforcement officers act as vigilantes called 'Hunter Warriors' will vary. Like I said earlier, it was just geeky enough without going too over-the-top so I really enjoyed the overall world-building and farcical plot devices. Still the fact that it doesn't really have much in the way of overarching themes nor does it question or probe at the world or its characters leaves 'Alita' feeling shallow. A weak script propping up a visual spectacle only provides a feast for the eyes but leaves a strain on the ears and little to no food for thought.



Try a dish with bold North African-influenced spices

Espinacas is a traditional tapas dish found in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia consisting of tender stewed chickpeas, delicate wilted spinach, and bold North African-influenced spices. We set out to develop an adaptation of this dish that could work as part of a larger meal. For the flavor backbone, we stuck with the classic southern Spanish flavors of saffron, garlic, smoked paprika, and cumin.

Tasters also liked the traditional addition of chorizo, which added meaty richness. Curly-leaf spinach was the best choice for its sturdy texture in this brothy dish. To keep the recipe streamlined, we opted to wilt the spinach and then set it aside before building the brothy base with canned chickpeas and aromatics. Including the chickpeas' flavorful, starchy canning liquid helped to give the dish more body.

Finally, we added a traditional picada, which is often used in Spanish cooking as a thickener. The bread crumb-based mixture gave the stewed beans and greens just the right velvety texture and flavor boost. Our finished dish would be equally at home as part of a tapas spread or served as an entrée over rice or with good crusty bread to sop up the flavorful broth. If you can't find curly-leaf spinach, you can substitute flat-leaf spinach; do not substitute baby spinach. For an accurate measurement of boiling water, bring a full kettle of water to a boil and then measure out the desired amount.

CHICKPEAS WITH SPINACH, CHORIZO AND SMOKED PAPRIKA

Ingredients

Servings: 4-6

Start to finish: 30 minutes

Pinch saffron threads, crumbled

2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil

8 ounces curly-leaf spinach, stemmed

3 ounces Spanish-style chorizo sausage, chopped fine

5 garlic cloves, sliced thin

1 tablespoon smoked paprika

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Salt and pepper

2 (15-ounce) cans chickpeas

1 recipe Picada (recipe follows)

Chopped or whole unsalted almonds can be substituted for the slivered almonds; however, they may require longer processing times.

1/4 cup slivered almonds

2 slices hearty white sandwich bread, torn into quarters

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1/8 teaspoon salt

Pinch pepper

Preparation

Combine 2 tablespoons boiling water and saffron in small bowl and let steep for 5 minutes. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add spinach and 2 tablespoons water, cover, and cook, stirring occasionally, until spinach is wilted but still bright green, about 1 minute. Transfer spinach to colander and gently press to release liquid. Transfer spinach to cutting board and chop coarse. Return to colander and press again.

Heat remaining 1 teaspoon oil in now-empty pot over medium heat until shimmering. Add chorizo and cook until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic, paprika, cumin, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in chickpeas and their liquid, 1 cup water, and saffron mixture and bring to simmer. Cook, stirring occasionally, until chickpeas are tender and liquid has thickened slightly, 10 to 15 minutes. Off heat, stir in picada, spinach, and vinegar and let sit until heated through, about 2 minutes. Adjust sauce consistency with hot water as needed. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.

For the Picada:

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 375 F. Pulse almonds in food processor to fine crumbs, about 20 pulses. Add bread, oil, salt, and pepper and pulse bread to coarse crumbs, about 10 pulses. Spread mixture evenly in rimmed baking sheet and bake, stirring often, until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Set aside to cool. (Picada can be stored in airtight container for up to 2 days).



CHICKPEAS WITH SPINACH, CHORIZO AND SMOKED PAPRIKA

BUTTERMILK DROP BISCUITS



Make some plain biscuits and then feel free to dress them up

These plain biscuits can be dressed up with any flavorful, relatively dry ingredient, such as herbs, scallions, cheese, dried fruit, or spices. For variations on the recipe, see below. Follow this recipe with your kids.

BUTTERMILK DROP BISCUITS

Ingredients

Servings: 10-12
 Prep Time: 15 minutes
 Cook Time: 30 minutes, plus cooling time
 Prepare Ingredients:
 2 cups all-purpose flour
 2 teaspoons baking powder
 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
 1 teaspoon sugar
 3/4 teaspoon salt
 1 cup buttermilk
 8 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted (see page 12 for how to melt butter)
 Vegetable oil spray
 Gather Cooking Equipment:
 Rimmed baking sheet

Parchment paper
 Large bowl
 Whisk
 Liquid measuring cup
 Fork
 Rubber spatula
 1/4-cup dry measuring cup
 Butter knife
 Oven mitts
 Cooling rack
 Start Cooking!

Preparation

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 450 F. Line rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. In large bowl, whisk flour, baking powder, baking soda, sugar, and salt until combined. In liquid measuring cup, use fork to stir buttermilk and melted butter until butter forms small clumps. Add buttermilk mixture to bowl with flour mixture. Use rubber spatula to stir until just combined.

Spray inside of 1/4-cup dry measuring cup with veg-

etable oil spray. Use greased measuring cup to scoop batter and use butter knife to scrape off extra batter. Drop scoops onto baking sheet to make 10 to 12 biscuits (leave space between biscuits and respray measuring cup as needed).

Place baking sheet in oven and bake biscuits until tops are golden brown 12 to 14 minutes. Use oven mitts to remove baking sheet from oven (ask an adult for help). Place baking sheet on cooling rack. Let biscuits cool on baking sheet for 10 minutes. Serve warm. Cheesy Drop Biscuits: When mixing in bowl, stir 1/2 cup shredded Monterey Jack cheese or mild cheddar cheese and 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese into flour mixture. Herby Drop Biscuits: When mixing in bowl, stir 1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme or 3/4 teaspoon dried thyme into flour mixture.

Nutrition information per serving:

191 calories; 91 calories from fat; 10 g fat (6 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 27 mg cholesterol; 375 mg sodium; 21 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 2 g sugar; 3 g protein.

The melt-in-your mouth consistency of eggplant shines here

Eggplant shines in this dish, where its melt-in-your mouth consistency and ability to soak up a flavor-packed sauce are on full display. But its excess moisture can be a serious liability, leading many recipes to require time-consuming salting, draining and drying. We wanted to use our Dutch oven to bring this versatile vegetable to its full potential without all the extra work. By cutting the eggplant into cubes and cooking it in two batches, we found we could take advantage of the Dutch oven's heat to drive away moisture and brown the eggplant at the same time.

To complement its earthy flavor, we also added sweet red bell peppers to the pot, along with a generous dose of aromatic garlic and ginger. A bold Thai-style sauce, flavored with potent ingredients like fish sauce, brown sugar, lime, and red pepper flakes, completed the dish. Basil and scallions added freshness and a pop of color. Do not peel the eggplant; leaving the skin on helps it hold together during cooking.

EGGPLANT WITH GARLIC AND BASIL SAUCE

Ingredients
Servings: 6

Start to finish: 1 hour

Sauce:

1 cup water
1/3 cup fish sauce
1/4 cup packed brown sugar
4 teaspoons grated lime zest plus 1 tablespoon juice (2 limes)
4 teaspoons cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes

Vegetables:

7 tablespoons vegetable oil
12 garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
2 pounds eggplant, cut into 3/4 inch pieces
2 red bell peppers, stemmed, seeded, and cut into 1/4 inch pieces
1 cup fresh basil leaves, torn into rough 1/2 inch pieces
4 scallions, sliced thin

Preparation

For the sauce: Whisk all ingredients together in bowl.

For the vegetables: Combine 1 tablespoon oil, garlic and ginger in bowl; set aside. Heat 3 tablespoons oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until shimmering. Add half of eggplant and half of bell peppers and cook, stirring often and scraping bottom of pan to loosen any browned bits, until tender, about 12 minutes; transfer to separate bowl. Repeat with remaining 3 tablespoons oil, eggplant and bell pepper; transfer to bowl.

Scrape away any remaining browned bits from now-empty pot. Return cooked vegetables to pot and push to sides. Add garlic mixture to center and cook over medium-high heat until fragrant, about 1 minute. Stir garlic mixture into vegetables. Whisk sauce to recombine, then add to pot. Cook, stirring constantly, until sauce is thickened, about 1 minute. Off heat, stir in basil and scallions. Serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

261 calories; 145 calories from fat; 16 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 0 mg cholesterol; 1268 mg sodium; 28 g carbohydrate; 6 g fiber; 17 g sugar; 4 g protein.



EGGPLANT WITH GARLIC AND BASIL SAUCE

Comic

Word Search

Weather

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional weather word.

FORECASTYWF OGRTO
 DPCWNTRTIN VTEBHD
 RITHOTENHENTSLEA
 ISHGONDMRUEUFIRN
 ZUGNHYS CPMNASZMR
 ZIUIPEAHOEHDCZOO
 LSONYSIRURRIEAMT
 ELRTTRAEEEMMALREP
 IEDHSBUNNAILTDTF
 ECOGROHONAADIUER
 NOOIAERUPUCMIARE
 OLLLITSFQNTIRTHE
 LDFTNTASHOWEROYZ
 CYTILIBISIVOERTE
 YTIMONSONONNDLUS
 C CLOUDSEIRRULFSH

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| BAROMETER | FLOOD | ICE | STORM |
| BLIZZARD | FLURRIES | LIGHTNING | SUNNY |
| CELSIUS | FOG | MIST | TEMPERATURE |
| CLOUDS | FORECAST | MONSOON | THERMOMETER |
| COLD | FREEZE | OVERCAST | THUNDER |
| CYCLONE | FROST | RAIN | TORNADO |
| DOWNPOUR | HAIL | SHOWER | TSUNAMI |
| DRIZZLE | HOT | SLEET | TYPHOON |
| DROUGHT | HUMIDITY | SNOW | VISIBILITY |
| FAHRENHEIT | HURRICANE | SQUALL | WINDY |

Yesterday's Solution

Washing a Car

SUBTLE BESOHNEDRAGIG
 NANSWAXSPACBUHER
 AUOISLEEHWMSTRI
 ESRONDORSISAUHM
 LHFMDDOEDRRLBEUE
 CYWASHSORYPEAGES
 HAIHNSUREEDUGGIS
 RWNCIRRISHLHENTIS
 OEDRIE SRNHIAELEER
 MVOLIEGGUNRGEF
 EIWOODCTHSUICDTLO
 SRSSFOTOSPULALLE
 CDPLWWSOAPBUNLAER
 RPREPARATIONSIAS
 UPLIDEADBUGSGEAN
 BS GURTYOFFSITREST

- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|-------------|------------|
| 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 | |

The hidden message is: BIRD DROPPINGS

Crossword 2143



ACROSS

- A tight-fitting headress.
- A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
- A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
- Jewelled pendant worn on a chain around the neck.
- 100 avos equal 1 pataca.
- Covered with paving material.
- Any of various thermoplastic resins used to make things.
- The first month of the year.
- (Sumerian) Water god and god of wisdom.
- (psychiatry) An abnormal absorption with the self.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Angola or its people.
- A metric unit of weight equal to one thousandth of a kilogram.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
- Concerning those not members of the clergy.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- The act of escaping physically.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- The waging of armed conflict against an enemy.
- African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
- A unit of current equal to 10 amperes.
- Belonging to or on behalf of a specified person (especially yourself).
- Tag the base runner to get him out.
- American professional baseball player who hit more home runs than Babe Ruth (born in 1934).
- A university town in east central Illinois adjoining Champaign.
- English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
- (anatomy) A fold or wrinkle or crease.
- Being one more than one.
- A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
- Made from residue of grapes or apples after pressing.
- A Hindu prince or king in India.
- Fraught with extreme danger.
- A boy or man.
- Very dark black.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- A sudden loss of consciousness resulting when the rupture or occlusion of a blood vessel leads to oxygen lack in the brain.
- Avatar of Vishnu.
- The great hall in ancient Persian palaces.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.

DOWN

- A small shelter for domestic animals (as sheep or pigeons).
- A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
- A kind of heavy jacket ('windcheater' is a British term).
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
- A unit of energy equal to the work done by an electron accelerated through a potential difference of 1 volt.
- Follower of Rastafarianism.
- An inflammatory swelling or sore.
- Affected manners intended to impress others.
- A cooperative unit.
- Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
- The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
- A means of serving.
- English clergyman and metaphysical poet celebrated as a preacher (1572-1631).
- (British) A minicar used as a taxicab.
- The inner and longer of the two bones of the human forearm.
- A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
- A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
- (Italian cookery) Squid prepared as food.
- A Nilotic language.
- Fallow deer.
- (computer science) A graphic symbol (usually a simple picture) that denotes a program or a command or a data file or a concept in a graphical user interface.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Informal terms for a mother.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- A Bantu language spoken in southern coastal Tanzania.
- A nobleman (in various countries) of varying rank.
- A particular environment or walk of life.
- A republic on the Isthmus of Panama.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
- A chain of connected ideas or passages or objects so arranged that each member is closely related to the preceding and following members (especially a series of patristic comments elucidating Christian dogma).
- Guinea fowl.
- A lizard of the family Agamidae.
- Tropical American trees with palmately compound leaves and showy bell-shaped flowers.
- A glancing rebound.
- Any of several tall tropical palms native to southeastern Asia having egg-shaped nuts.
- A capacity unit used for measuring fresh herring.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- An accountant certified by the state.
- (informal) Informed about the latest trends.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

Yesterday's Solution

CONBALARAMA OFO
 OBI ACICULAR MAC
 SEN WHEELING ADH
 TAGALOGY COSHER
 AHAB MED OHC ADE
 LIMA ARUBA
 ID LOWLIFE INTRA
 FULANI AGING AEC
 FEE KFAHD OTTAR
 YLEM MAESTHETE
 UTAHANEARAS
 ABASIC GILMAN
 PEDICAB LIBELER
 PLACID INANE ABA
 AIN NATIONAL MOM
 LEA OMNIVORE ANA

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



00:05 The Unseen
02:10 Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope
04:30 Nerve
06:25 Chasing Gold
08:05 Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope
10:20 Nerve
12:05 Cymbeline
13:55 The Magnificent Seven
16:15 Reign Of Fire
18:05 Hell Or High Water
19:50 Battleship
22:05 Message Man
23:40 Incoming



00:50 Into Alaska
01:45 North Woods Law
02:40 After The Attack
03:35 Shark Attack Survivors
04:25 Into Alaska
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
07:36 Meet The Penguins
08:25 Wildest Islands
09:15 Wildest Islands
10:10 The Crocodile Hunter: Best Of Steve Irwin
11:05 Crikey! It's The Irwins
12:00 The Crocodile Hunter: Best Of Steve Irwin
12:55 Crikey! It's The Irwins
13:50 The Crocodile Hunter: Best Of Steve Irwin
14:45 Crikey! It's The Irwins
15:40 The Steve Irwin Story
17:30 Wild Animal Rescue
18:25 Animal Cops Phoenix
19:20 Shark City
20:15 The Vet Life
21:10 Amanda To The Rescue
22:05 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
23:00 After The Attack
23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees



00:20 EastEnders
00:50 Our Girl
01:50 Holby City
02:45 Hold The Sunset Christmas Special 2018
03:15 Inside No. 9
03:45 Kat & Alfie: Redwater
04:40 Father Brown
05:30 Doctors
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 I Want My Wife Back
07:29 The Detectorists
08:00 Doctor Who
08:55 Death In Paradise
09:50 Father Brown
10:40 Hold The Sunset Christmas Special 2018
11:10 Inside No. 9
11:45 Doctors
12:15 EastEnders
12:50 Holby City
13:45 Casualty
14:40 Hold The Sunset Christmas Special 2018
15:10 Father Brown
16:00 Doctors
18:30 Agatha Raisin
19:20 Agatha Raisin
20:10 Our Girl
21:05 Line Of Duty
22:05 Luther
23:10 Father Brown



00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Surviving R Kelly
02:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
03:50 Crimes That Shook Britain
04:45 Evil Up Close
05:30 Monster In My Family

06:15 Cold Case Files
07:00 Homicide Hunter
08:00 It Takes A Killer
08:20 The First 48
09:05 Crimes That Shook Australia
09:50 Homicide Hunter
10:35 Crimes That Shook Britain
11:30 Crimes That Shook Britain
12:25 The First 48
13:20 Evil Up Close
14:15 Secrets Of The Morgue
15:10 It Takes A Killer
15:40 It Takes A Killer
16:05 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
18:00 Evil Up Close
19:00 Monster In My Family
20:00 Cold Case Files
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 Police Patrol
22:30 Police Patrol
23:00 Surviving R Kelly



00:30 Chappelle's Show
00:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:25 This Is Not Happening
01:50 John Oliver's New York Stand Up Show
02:35 Chappelle's Show
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:30 South Park
03:55 Chappelle's Show
04:20 Bondi Ink.
05:15 Catch A Contractor
06:00 The Dude Perfect Show
06:25 The Dude Perfect Show
06:50 Punk'd (Bet)
07:13 Punk'd (Bet)
07:35 Sweat Inc.
08:20 Bondi Ink.
09:15 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
10:05 Disaster Date
12:10 Workaholics
14:10 Friends
16:40 Impractical Jokers
17:50 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagaf
18:50 Takeshis Castle Thailand
19:40 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
20:35 Barely Famous
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Demetri Martin: Person
22:25 Comedy Central Stand Up Presents
22:50 Tosh.0
23:15 Tosh.0
23:40 Carlos Mencia: No Strings Attached



00:30 Xploration Outer Space
01:20 Pick A Puppy
01:45 Pick A Puppy
02:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
03:00 Ultimate Survival
03:50 How It's Made
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Xploration Outer Space
06:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
07:50 Ultimate Survival
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
10:20 Pick A Puppy
11:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Xploration Outer Space
14:30 How It's Made
15:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
16:35 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 Pick A Puppy
17:50 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
18:40 Breaking Magic
19:30 Deception With Keith Barry
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 Ultimate Survival
22:00 How It's Made
22:50 Xtreme Waterparks
23:15 Xtreme Waterparks
23:40 Deception With Keith Barry



00:50 Scene Of The Crime With Tony Harris
01:45 Dead Of Winter
02:40 Primal Instinct
03:35 Bride Killa
04:30 Reasonable Doubt
05:25 Broken Trust
06:20 Forbidden: Dying For Love
07:10 I Almost Got Away With It
08:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
08:25 Beauty Queen Murders
09:15 Blood Relatives
10:10 Broken Trust
11:05 Forbidden: Dying For Love
12:00 Diabolical: Deadly Love
12:55 Beauty Queen Murders
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Broken Trust
15:40 Forbidden: Dying For Love
16:35 Reasonable Doubt
17:30 Beauty Queen Murders
18:25 Blood Relatives
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Broken Trust
21:10 Forbidden: Dying For Love
22:05 Village Of The Damned
23:00 Dead Of Winter
23:55 Welcome To Killer Town



00:10 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Miniature Golf
03:30 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20 Hank Zipzer
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:35 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
07:25 Raven's Home
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Penny On M.A.R.S
08:20 Shake It Up
08:45 K.C. Undercover
09:10 Bizaardvark
09:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:25 Tangled: The Series
11:15 Bizaardvark
12:05 Liv And Maddie
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:45 Bunk'd
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
15:00 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
15:15 Shake It Up
15:40 K.C. Undercover
16:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
16:10 A.N.T. Farm
16:35 Penny On M.A.R.S
17:00 Tangled: The Series
17:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
17:50 Raven's Home
18:15 Stuck In The Middle
18:40 Bizaardvark
19:05 K.C. Undercover
19:30 Bunk'd
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Raven's Home
20:25 Liv And Maddie
20:50 K.C. Undercover
21:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:20 A.N.T. Farm
21:45 Bizaardvark
22:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:35 Stuck In The Middle
23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:50 Lolorock



00:00 PJ Masks
00:30 The Lion Guard
01:00 Sofia The First
01:25 Minnie's Bow-Toons
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:00 PJ Masks
02:50 The Hive
03:00 Zou
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 The Hive
04:40 Zou
05:25 The Hive
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
06:35 The Hive
06:45 PJ Masks
07:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
08:00 Disney Muppet Babies
08:20 Paprika
08:30 Paprika
08:40 PJ Masks
09:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:15 Puppy Dog Pals
09:30 Vampirina
09:45 Fancy Nancy
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Elena Of Avalor
11:00 Mission Force One
11:15 Mission Force One
11:30 PJ Masks
11:45 PJ Masks
12:00 Disney Muppet Babies
12:15 Disney Muppet Babies
12:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
13:30 PJ Masks: Friendship Special
14:30 PJ Masks
15:00 PJ Masks
15:30 Mission Force One
15:45 Mission Force One
16:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
16:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
17:00 Disney Muppet Babies
17:15 Disney Muppet Babies
17:30 Elena Of Avalor
18:00 Puppy Dog Pals
18:25 Trulli Tales Character Shorts
18:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
18:45 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:00 Fancy Nancy
19:30 Vampirina
20:00 PJ Masks
20:30 The Lion Guard
21:00 Sofia The First
21:25 Trulli Tales Character Shorts
21:30 Elena Of Avalor
22:00 Puppy Dog Pals
22:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
22:45 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
23:00 Fancy Nancy
23:30 Vampirina
00:15 Ultimate Survival
01:05 Impossible Engineering
01:50 Mythbusters Jr.
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Misfit Garage
04:05 Misfit Garage
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:15 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Container Wars
06:00 Storage Wars Canada
06:20 Container Wars
06:45 Ultimate Survival
07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Alaskan Bush People
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:10 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Misfit Garage
12:20 Misfit Garage
13:05 Storage Wars Canada
13:30 Container Wars
13:55 Alaskan Bush People
14:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
15:30 Man v Expert



16:15 Wheeler Dealers
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Misfit Garage
20:15 Misfit Garage
21:00 Sticker Shock
21:50 Wheeler Dealers
22:40 Twin Turbos
23:30 Deadliest Catch



00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Booster
01:00 Booster
01:25 Counterfeit Cat
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
02:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Booster
03:20 Booster
03:45 Dude That's My Ghost
04:10 Dude That's My Ghost
04:35 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
05:29 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:29 Big Hero 6 The Series
07:00 Phineas And Ferb
07:29 Phineas And Ferb
08:00 Gravity Falls
08:29 Gravity Falls
09:00 Supa Strikas
09:29 Milo Murphy's Law
10:00 Milo Murphy's Law
10:29 Lab Rats
11:00 Phineas And Ferb
11:29 Phineas And Ferb
12:00 Supa Strikas
12:29 Gravity Falls
13:00 Gravity Falls
13:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
14:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
14:29 Disney 11
15:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
15:29 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
16:00 Big City Greens
16:29 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
17:00 Milo Murphy's Law
17:29 Supa Strikas
18:00 Disney 11
18:29 K.C. Undercover
19:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
20:00 Big City Greens
20:29 Gravity Falls
21:00 Gravity Falls
21:29 Star Wars Resistance
22:00 Milo Murphy's Law
22:29 Furiki Wheels
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja



00:10 Culinary Genius
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 This Time Next Year
04:20 Big Star's Little Star
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 Culinary Genius
07:10 The Chase
08:05 This Time Next Year
09:00 Big Star's Little Star
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
10:55 Culinary Genius
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Culinary Genius
15:10 The Chase
16:00 Dancing On Ice
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 Dancing On Ice
22:50 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:30 Weapons At War
01:15 Ancient Aliens
02:00 Ancient Top 10
02:45 Engineering Disasters
03:30 UFO Hunters
04:15 Ancient Aliens
05:00 The Universe
05:45 Ancient Aliens
06:30 The Lost Evidence
07:15 Weapons At War
08:00 Ancient Top 10
08:45 Engineering Disasters
09:30 UFO Hunters
10:15 Ancient Aliens
11:00 The Universe
11:45 The Lost Evidence
12:30 Weapons At War
13:15 Ancient Aliens
14:00 Ancient Top 10
14:45 Engineering Disasters
15:30 UFO Hunters
16:15 Ancient Aliens
17:00 The Universe
17:45 The Lost Evidence
18:30 Weapons At War
19:15 Ancient Aliens
20:00 Ancient Top 10
20:45 Decoding The Past
21:30 UFO Hunters
22:15 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Stan Lee's Superhumans
23:45 The Lost Evidence



00:20 James Nesbitt: Disasters That Changed Britain
01:05 Mountain Men
01:50 Brothers In Arms
02:35 Truck Wars
04:15 Storage Wars
04:40 Storage Wars
05:05 American Pickers Best Of
06:00 Project Impossible
06:45 Project Impossible
07:30 James Nesbitt: Disasters That Changed Britain
08:15 James Nesbitt: Disasters That Changed Britain
09:00 James Nesbitt: Disasters That Changed Britain
09:45 Forged In Fire
10:30 Truck Wars
12:00 Mountain Men
14:15 Mountain Men
15:00 Detroit Steel
18:00 Detroit Steel
18:45 American Pickers Best Of
19:30 Truck Wars
21:00 Ice Road Truckers
21:50 Project Impossible
22:40 Project Impossible
23:30 James Nesbitt: Disasters That Changed Britain



00:00 Botched
01:00 Botched
02:00 E! News
03:00 Second Wives Club
04:00 The Platinum Life
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Botched
11:40 E! News
12:35 Very Cavallari
13:30 Very Cavallari
14:25 Very Cavallari
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
18:05 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched
21:00 Botched
22:00 Model Squad
23:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your bluntness may give you problems today when you point out to an underhanded person that they are just that. Try to temper your words though you know how hard that is. Someone like that isn't the person you want to be around and you probably tell them that also. Truth and compassion are on your mind today as the manner in which you feel you should live your life, Aries. Try to keep from letting others get under your skin because if they are able to create irritation in your life, then they're in control and you like to control your own life.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Invite friends and family that you want to spend time with to your home tonight. Others like sharing your beautiful furnishings and dwelling, not to mention your company. You can joke and cut up giving everyone a wonderful, refreshing break from the mundane which you need too, Taurus. Being with those you love can make your glad you're alive. Now is the time for romance. Bring take-out and flowers. Use that charming charisma that makes others seek you out and enjoy your party.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Home and family are important to you now. You could cave up for days with those close. Invite friends over. Have a bar b que or spaghetti. Make a day of it. Listen to those you love for the love of it rather than trying to help fix a problem. Chill in other words. If you have to work, stay away from arguments. As the old saying goes, "People on the outside of the argument don't know which one arguing is the idiot." You have a need to nurture. So, do it, Gemini. Hug everyone close.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You're pushy today meaning you want to get things done in the manner in which you want them completed. There could be conflicts with someone younger so reign in your voice. Compose a gentler tenor when you speak. What do they say? "You can get more flies with honey than vinegar." Make that your motto today, Cancer. You have the intensity and you can call up the drama at the drop of a hat but don't. You don't need to do that. Conservation of thought and mouth today will be good for you. Let loose tonight when with those who love you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

If you're not married you may be thinking strongly about it today especially if your lover is refined and isn't hard on the eyes. Not only do you love these areas of beauty but you know others do as well. Relationships can help or hinder you in your career, home life and more. You want to have the best in love. You're thinking is different and you can see how to make your life better. You need nurturing and also need to give the same to others. You're willing to give but you want to get a return as well.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may find yourself leading a conference on communication in advertising today. You're just the person for that job. You can win anyone over to your way of thinking now. It doesn't matter the type employment you're in but it does matter that you speak with a group, perhaps even a group of one at a time. You have a smooth easy manner in which to convey your message. That's for home too or with a new love. Today, Virgo, you know you could sell ice to Alaskans no matter the subject. Go for it and make your life more secure.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You're into the people who matter in your life most and that means family, closer friends and your loved ones such as one with whom you make love. You've started on the materialistic and emotional road to overcoming obstacles and more in order to make your best life which includes those for which you care. If a person gets in your way by underestimating your desire for better now, they'll live to regret that move. Coworkers should make sure that they keep the job site running in an orderly, progressive manner, Libra. You can't stand mess now and furthermore, won't tolerate it at work or at home.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You need every part of love from your significant other and he or she is ready to provide that emotional stimulation and release. Your coworkers will appreciate you more today if that's taken care of early. This is propelling you at work to making the best decisions and working harder than you generally do, Scorpio. Getting down to the nitty gritty in opportunities at work is your forte now. You get more accomplished. Your day is going great and you aren't ready for it to end tonight. Stretch it out with dinner and stimulating conversation with friends.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

If you don't care about a person such as one at work or on a shopping excursion, don't let them bother you when they cut you off in the middle of a statement. Ignore them. They don't pay your bills. They're not your friend. Seek out those for which you care. You need deep emotional ties around you today and only those that know and love you can give you that security. They're the only ones who have room to say anything to you in a critical manner, Sagittarius. Take people for what they are and let it go now. Enjoy your evening with people you love.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

It seems you keep inserting your foot into your mouth or at least others act that way. You might find the person you've just given great information about a work issue continues to stare at you as if he or she doesn't understand. Your usual sweetness and light doesn't quite keep the lid on your emotions now. You've had enough. Capricorn, you feel as if the last few days, you should've determined to spend alone in bed. Maybe it's all a bad dream. When you close your eyes and then reopen them you find this isn't a dream. The caveat is it will get better. Meditate and believe.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You want everyone happy especially if they work with you. Harmony is the basis for your emotional security now. You need peace. Work is a partnership you need to make better too or so you think. When all are in one mind, it gives a sense of comradeship instead of an unfocused group going nowhere. Your home life is more pertinent now as you're thinking of making more of a love commitment. It might mean a new baby or you may decide to make a marriage proposal with your love.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Partnerships mean more to you now. Perhaps you're thinking of marrying or you're going into business with a friend. Anything that creates work with another is going to gain prominence with you now. Beauty at home is another welcome place to be but if it's in your work too. It could be in a flower shop or some other enterprise where loveliness is shared. This could be a charity association too because of the manner in which it helps others and is beautiful to those people who need the assistance. You're happy. You feel loved especially by a father figure or someone much older. Reap your rewards now.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antigua	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Nigar	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
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Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
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Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
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Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
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Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
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Kuwait Times
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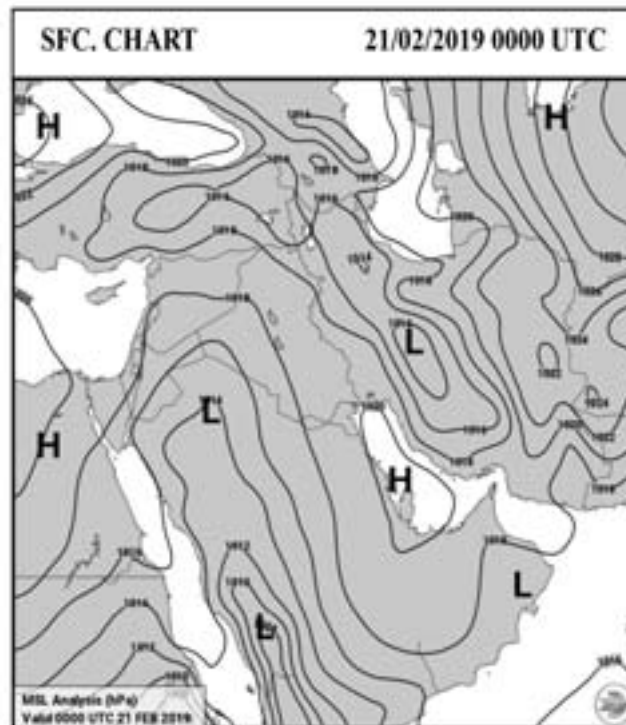
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Cold with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
-----------------	---------------------

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	22 °C	12 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	06 °C
ABDALY	21 °C	07 °C
BUBYAN	** °C	** °C
JAHRA	22 °C	10 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	21 °C	11 °C
SALMIYAH	20 °C	14 °C
AHMADI	19 °C	13 °C
NUWAISIB	22 °C	11 °C
WAFRA	22 °C	07 °C
SALMY	20 °C	06 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	02/22	Fair and Partly cloudy with a chance for fog forming at night	21 °C	07 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	02/23	Fair with a chance for fog forming at night and some scattered clouds will appear	23 °C	08 °C	E-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Sunday	02/24	Warm	25 °C	09 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 30 km/h
Monday	02/25	Warm and Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain later on	24 °C	11 °C	NE-SE	08 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:03
Sunrise	06:22
Zuhr	12:02
Asr	15:16
Sunset	17:42
Isha	18:59

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	07 °C
MAX. RH	82 %
MIN. RH	28 %
MAX. Wind	NW 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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I, **Putturu Lakshmi Devi** W/o Puttur Chandra Sekhar, holder of Indian Passport No: 5456069 & Civil ID No: 279060106203 has changed my name to Puttur Santhi, hereinafter in all my dealings and documents. (C 5447) 21-2-2019

I, **Poshan Singh Thapar** holder of Indian Passport No. L1458575 & Civil ID No. 272051502843 has changed my name from Poshan

Singh Thapa to Poshan Singh Thapar hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Poshan Singh Thapar. (C 5446) 20-2-2019

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

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

Business

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2019

39 Samsung announces folding new phone with 5G - at almost \$2,000

40 Stock markets mostly rise on bubbling trade confidence

41 Crunch time as high-level US-China trade talks resume



COFE App at Zain's main headquarters

Zain partners with COFE App

Exclusive and special offers for Zain customers and employees

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its partnership with COFE App, Kuwait's favorite online coffee marketplace. Through the partnership, Zain will offer exclusive and special offers to its customers and employees.

The year-long partnership will bring fun and exciting events and promotions to mobile users created to engage them while adding ease to their daily coffee routines. Starting February 2019, COFE App will be introducing unique offers and promotions as well as occasion based campaigns tailor-made for Zain customers and employees. Zain will also support the various special events held by COFE's team for coffee lovers in Kuwait, including the Wake Up Sunday event to be held every Sunday at Zain's main headquarters in Shuwaikh.

Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al Khashti commented: "we are delighted to announce Zain's partnership with COFE App, which comes under the umbrella of our strategy that closely focuses on en-

riching Zain's digital partnerships. We aim to expand the portfolio of innovative services and solutions - including mobile applications - we offer to meet the needs and aspirations of our customer base and business community, considered the largest in the Kuwaiti market. We are also fully committed to support innovative Kuwaiti tech startups to enrich the local entrepreneurial community".

CEO & Founder of COFE App Ali Al Ebrahim commented: "As a Kuwaiti tech startup, we have always aspired to collaborate with Zain. The kind of growth and innovation Zain has shown since its inception is something we constantly aim for at COFE. We are hoping that this partnership will add value to our app users, and give us an opportunity to learn from the best in the telecommunications sector".

COFE App enables customers to order and pay for their coffee, and choose from multiple delivery options, including fast delivery to their office or home, pick up service at counter, car and airport

departure gates. The entire selection and purchasing process takes place in the app, which offers comprehensive menus and drink customization options (for example: sugar preference, milk type preference, and other add-ons). COFE App was Beta launched in February 2018 in Kuwait and will soon be available in other countries.

By signing such digital partnerships, Zain seeks to meet its customers' needs and aspirations through the offering of the latest innovative services and technologies. The company is always keen on offering the most advanced tools to enhance its customers' experience, and offer them an unmatched telecommunications experience on its largest network in Kuwait. Zain's strategy is centered around digital transformation leadership and empowering the community to enjoy a smarter portable lifestyle, as well as using advanced technology to enable an easier and more flexible life. The company places itself as an active partner in creating the future of smart life in Kuwait.



Waleed Al Khashti and Ali Al-Ebrahim

Business

Why Germany is vulnerable to possible car tariffs by US

German carmakers could suffer huge losses

FRANKFURT: After years tangled in the “dieselgate” emissions cheating scandal, German carmakers could suffer huge losses if the United States carries out its threat to levy tariffs on European car imports.

Mammoth exports

Giants Volkswagen, BMW and Mercedes-Benz parent Daimler exported a total of 494,000 cars from Germany to the US in 2017, or 45 percent of all European auto exports to America. At 22 billion euros (\$25 billion), Germany accounted for 55 percent of the value of all European cars sold to the US that year, Pictet bank calculated in a research note.



Tariffs could prove a drag on German GDP

Margins squeezed

“If tariffs were imposed that would make it much harder for the import brands to offer those high incentives” like discounts in the US market, analyst Peter Nagle of IHS Markit told AFP. “The US brands could take advantage of those pricing mismatches.” Meanwhile, Pictet noted that American “demand for European cars declines by around 1.5 to 3.0 percent when prices rise by one percent”. Over the long term, the 25-percent tariffs mooted by President Donald Trump could halve the number of German cars shipped to the US as demand falls, the Munich-based Ifo institute predicted.

Ripple effect

Rating agency Moody’s reckoned tariffs could prove a drag on German GDP growth of around 0.2 percentage points, while Pictet’s estimate was higher, at 0.3 to 0.4 percentage points. “Amongst the EU countries, Germany is by far most strongly affected by potential new US tariffs on car imports,” Ifo economist Gabriel Felbermayr judged. He suggested that the tariffs would cost the European economy nine billion euros per year, including five billion in Germany.

And the consequences for Europe’s largest economy “would extend far beyond the directly affected firms,” an EY study published in December found. “given the high significance of the car industry in Germany and its weight in German-American trade relations.” After the federal government slashed its GDP growth forecast for 2019 to 1.0 percent early this

year, “the already shaky upturn would be in danger of ending,” analyst Charlotte Heck-Parsch of BayernLB bank warned. “A key question is whether the US administration will also impose tariffs on car parts,” said Pictet analyst Nadia Gharbi. “If excluded, that would reduce the negative impact on EU countries.”

Snowball effect

German carmakers could try and cushion the effects of tariffs by producing more at their massive American factories, car industry expert Ferdinand Du-



VANCE: In this file photo taken on June 8, 2017 employees inspect Mercedes-Benz C-Class cars at the Mercedes-Benz US International factory. —AFP

denhoeffler told AFP. But some brands, including Volkswagen subsidiaries Audi and Porsche, have no base in the US. Meanwhile tariffs would be the latest broadside against an already battered industry, pounded by “dieselgate”, the US-China trade conflict, a general economic slowdown, the threat of a no-deal Brexit and the burden of massive investments in electric cars.

With Germany and other EU members’ growth

slowing, “a tariffs hike would come at a time when confidence is already in decline and vulnerable,” ING bank economist Raoul Leering noted. What’s more, retaliation by Brussels with tariffs on American products “could well lead to further protectionist steps by the US government... which in turn will have a negative feedback into production and employment,” he added. —AFP

Eurozone industry slips into contraction

BRUSSELS: Eurozone manufacturing slipped into contraction in February, as an industrial slump in Germany continued to weigh down on the European economy, a closely watched survey showed yesterday. In a first estimate, data monitoring company IHS Markit said a pickup in the services sector had stimulated business, but that the eurozone economy still remained “close to stagnation” because of industry.

IHS Markit cited a “combination of intensifying headwinds and concerns” including global trade war worries, Brexit and the downturn of the auto sector, most worryingly in Germany. The IHS Markit purchasing managers’ index (PMI) for manufacturers only hit a lowly 49.2 in February - below the crucial 50 point level and signalling a contraction in activity. The composite number, that includes services, remained in positive territory however.

It rose to 51.4 points in February from 51.0 in January, and was better than a forecast of 51.1 points made by analysts surveyed by data firm Factset. The overall data indicates that gross domestic product (GDP) growth in the eurozone will struggle to reach a feeble 0.1 percent in the first quarter of this year. “The limited national breakdown showed improvements in both Germany and France,” said Analyst Jack Allen at Capital Economics. However, “all is not well in the manufacturing sector,” he added. Based on manufacturing problems, the European Commission this month sharply cut its eurozone growth forecast for 2019 to 1.3 percent. —AFP

Ghosn held \$260,000 Rio party billed to Renault-Nissan

PARIS: Former Renault and Nissan head Carlos Ghosn and his wife invited friends to a \$260,000 Carnival party in Brazil last year and charged it to his employers, documents seen by AFP show, a move Ghosn’s lawyer defended as a routine corporate function for a multinational CEO. News of the party is the latest evidence of Ghosn’s expensive lifestyle to emerge as his time as one of the top executives in the auto industry faces fresh scrutiny following his arrest in Tokyo last November.

According to documents seen by AFP, which confirm a report in the Express magazine, Ghosn invited eight couples to watch the Carnival parade in Rio de Janeiro in February last year from a beach-side luxury hotel. While the guests were asked to pay their own air fare, the invitations specified that local teams would take charge of transport, lodging and other expenses.

“On behalf of Mr and Mrs Ghosn, I have the pleasure to inform you that they would be delighted if you would accept to be their guest at the 2018 Rio Carnival,” according to the December 2017 email invitation. “You will be responsible to book your flight and the team will take care of you from the Rio airport,” it said, adding that the guests would be staying at the beachside Hilton Hotel in Copacabana. The event required costly security measures including two bullet-proof vehicles which were put at the guests’ disposal.

Nissan’s Brazilian subsidiary later sent a bill of \$257,872

(around 227,000 euros at current exchange rates) to the Renault-Nissan holding company based in the Netherlands. The Dutch firm coordinates the operations of the French-Japanese alliance, which Ghosn built into the world’s top-selling automotive group before his stunning downfall on charges of under-reporting his salary. The 64-year-old French-Brazilian-Lebanese executive has denied any wrongdoing, but remains in detention awaiting a trial in Japan which could still be months away.

“Friendly relations do not preclude business relations, they can even help them,” Ghosn’s French lawyer Jean-Yves Le Borgne said. “We’re told it involved Carlos Ghosn’s personal relationships, but does that mean we can conclude there was some form of misuse of funds at the alliance?” he said. Among the guests were Mario Saradar of the family-owned Lebanese banking group, where Ghosn sits on the board; and Misbah Ahdab, a Lebanese lawmaker. American property developer Harry Macklowe was also invited, as was Khalil Daoud, head of the Lebanese postal service.

“Before getting indignant, we should check if they were truly not involved in any Renault-Nissan business,” Le Borgne said, noting that the Lebanese post office “required a large fleet of automobiles.” Renault has said it is reviewing Ghosn’s tenure as chief executive, a post he resigned last month following his dismissal as chairman of Nissan and their other alliance partner Mitsubishi.

Earlier this month, Renault said it had informed prosecutors about a suspect transaction involving Ghosn’s extravagant wedding at the Versailles Palace outside Paris in 2016. Versailles waived the usual 50,000-euro rental fee for the wedding under a sponsorship deal signed between the palace and Renault months before. Le Borgne has said Ghosn is ready to repay the bill. —AFP

Business

Samsung announces folding new phone with 5G - at almost \$2,000

Samsung is also making improvements to its flagship Galaxy S devices

SAN FRANCISCO/LONDON: Samsung Electronics Co Ltd on Wednesday unveiled a nearly \$2,000 folding smartphone in a bid to top the technology of Apple Inc and Chinese rivals and reignite consumer interest amid slumping sales. The Galaxy Fold will go on sale on April 26 and take advantage of new and faster 5G mobile networks. The device looks similar to a conventional smartphone, but then opens like a book to reveal a display the size of a small tablet at 7.3 inches (18.5 cm). The device "answers skeptics who said that everything that could be done has been done," DJ Koh, chief executive of Samsung Electronics, said at an event in San Francisco. "We are here to prove them wrong."

Samsung remains the world's largest smartphone maker with nearly a fifth of global unit sales but underperformed a slumping market last year. Chinese rival Huawei Technologies Co Ltd - whose Mate series of phones also command premium prices - gained market share. Other Chinese makers like Xiaomi Corp have also been increasing prices, leaving Samsung to defend its turf against upstart rivals in addition to its long-time foe Apple.



Device opens like a book

With the foldable phone, Samsung is going on the offense on two fronts in the smartphone race: It is offering an eye-catching new feature with the big, bending screen and the first 5G connection in a premium phone, a feature analysts do not expect Apple to match until 2020. Samsung is also making improvements to its flagship Galaxy S devices and plans to offer a 4G version of its folding phone. It also challenges the notion of what a phone can cost, debuting at nearly twice the price of current top-of-the-line models from Apple and Samsung itself.

Patrick Moorhead, founder of Moor Insights & Strategy, said the new folding device could help Samsung stay at the top and lure consumers to upgrade devices that have looked largely the same over the past five years. "Samsung and Apple go back and forth" to lead the premium smartphone market, Moorhead said. "I think this is Samsung's chance to take back the innovation crown." And even though the \$1,980 starting price is steep, some dedicated Samsung fans said they would pay it. Navneet Kumar Singh, a Samsung enthusiast from India who traveled to San Francisco to watch the launch, is ready to place his order.

"The prices of the flagship models have been a little aggressive in India," he said,

"But in the end, if you invest the money you're getting a different experience." Samsung also introduced several accessories to compete against Apple, including a pair of wireless headphones called Galaxy Buds. The headphones include wireless charging, a feature that Apple has promised to put into its competing AirPods but has not yet released. Samsung also said that its new Galaxy phones will be able to wirelessly charge its headphones and new smartwatches by setting the accessories on the back of the phone.

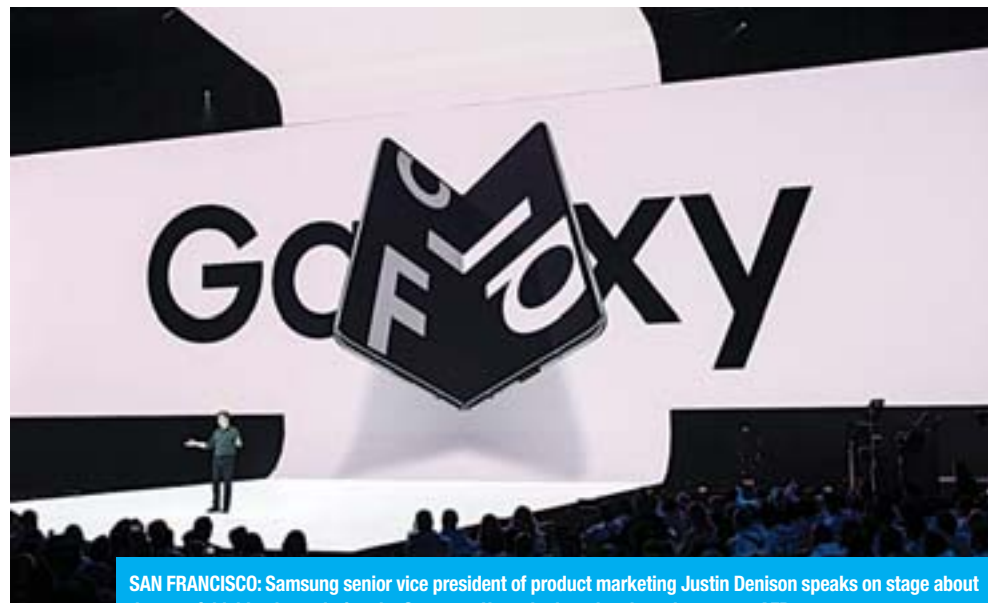
10 times faster

Along with the folding phone, Samsung also added new cameras and a 5G version to its Galaxy series of phones. Verizon Communications Inc will be the first carrier to offer service for Samsung's 5G phones. The networks are expected to be 10 times faster than current ones, improving viewing of live news and sports events.

With the 5G versions of its flagships, the Korean electronics maker looks to have beaten Chinese rivals in the 5G race, although the device will operate only on the small number of net-

works launching later this year. Apple is not expected to release a 5G smartphone until late 2020. The new networks are not available in many places yet but will roll out this year and next. Consumers who want to hold on to their phones for several years before upgrading may be tempted to buy a 5G phone now so that it will be able to take advantage of those networks later, said Bob O'Donnell of TECHanalysis Research. That could sway some Apple buyers over to Samsung and other Android makers with 5G devices.

"People are going to be thinking about, am going to be able to use this a year from now? Two years from now? Three years?" he said. Rival smartphone makers are expected to announce 5G models at next week's Mobile World Congress, the industry's top annual event, in Spain. Samsung said its 5G handset would be available in the early summer. The Galaxy 10 series needs to appeal to consumers who are reluctant to upgrade for only incremental technological improvements in performance. All of the Galaxy series of rigid phones except the 5G will be available from March 8, with the S10+ priced from \$1,000, the S10 priced from \$900 and the smaller S10e from \$750. The mainline S10 compares with \$999 for Apple's iPhone XS and \$858 for Huawei's premium Mate 20 Pro. —Reuters



SAN FRANCISCO: Samsung senior vice president of product marketing Justin Denison speaks on stage about the new foldable phone during the Samsung Unpacked product launch event. —AFP

Google's new cloud boss has big task to catch rivals

SAN FRANCISCO: Google has a new cloud computing boss and big ambitions to someday produce more revenue from that business than from advertising. Now comes the hard part: winning over big-spending customers. Alphabet Inc's cloud computing division remains a distant third behind Amazon.com Inc and Microsoft Corp in terms of global revenue, according to analysts' estimates. A few major companies manage their data on Google's servers. But Google has nowhere near the vast customer base of Amazon, according to a new Reuters analysis of company regulatory filings.

Businesses generally are not required to disclose their cloud vendors. Reuters found 311 out of about 5,000 worldwide that did so in 2018. While not comprehensive, the data provide a window into Google's challenge. Thirty five of those companies named Google as a cloud provider. The largest by market capitalization were oil major Total SA and bank HSBC Holdings Plc. Amazon Web Services led with 227 clients, including travel company Expedia Group Inc and industrial giant Siemens AG. Microsoft's Azure cloud had 69 firms, among them weapons maker Axon Enterprise Inc and business data firm Dun & Bradstreet Co. Thirty four of the companies cited multiple clouds.

The previously untracked data show the work ahead for Thomas Kurian, who is weeks on the job as chief executive of Google Cloud. Kurian has vowed to double down where Google has seen promising results. Specifically, he plans to target governments and top companies in retail, manufacturing, healthcare, media and finance. "A lot of our focus as we go forward is making sure that our

sales organization has the background and the ability to sell to large, more traditional companies," Kurian said at a Goldman Sachs investor conference last week. "There's enormous appetite in those companies to consider Google."

Google declined to comment or make Kurian available for an interview. People familiar with his plans said he is looking to reshape his division's culture. A key part is developing or acquiring easy-to-use, industry-specific corporate applications, an area that Amazon and Microsoft do not dominate. "It's about the on-ramp onto their cloud," said Daniel Ives, a New York-based financial analyst following the cloud industry for Wedbush Securities. "The main way to get that is through applications."

A 22-year veteran of Oracle Corp, Kurian gave the database company fresh life as the product leader behind its move to selling cloud services. His hire is already making potential customers reconsider Google, said Ray Wang, founder of Constellation Research, a Mont Vista, Calif.-based firm that helps businesses negotiate cloud deals. "They've worked with him," Wang said. "There's a trust factor that wasn't there before."

Kurian also must reassure some investors bewildered by Google's cloud ambitions: Diversifying revenue beyond advertising is a plus, but it is not coming cheap. Google, Microsoft and Amazon combined spent nearly \$53 billion on capital expenses last year, driven by data center projects to house their clouds. With gross margins of 20 percent or less, selling cloud storage or tools for which customers need specialized staff is less lucrative for a small vendor, industry experts said. But margins on the type of software Kurian likely wants to offer can top even the 60 percent of Google's ad business. "The next wave of growth is going to have to come from the heavy hitting applications," said Kerry Liu, chief executive at Rubikloud, which helps retailers with cloud projects. —Reuters

Business

Stock markets mostly rise on bubbling trade confidence

Global equities have enjoyed a stellar start to the year

LONDON: European stocks mostly rose yesterday after gains in much of Asia, as traders eyed growing optimism that China and the US will finally resolve their long-running trade war. Frankfurt and Paris benchmark equity indices advanced near the half-way mark, but London fell on poorly-received results including from British Gas owner Centrica.

The energy group's share price tumbled 11.4 percent to 122 pence after saying that a newly-introduced UK government price cap aimed at lowering the cost of domestic gas and electricity, would hurt Centrica's performance this year. On currency markets, the pound extended Wednesday's losses that came after Fitch warned it could slash Britain's credit rating owing to the economic hit from a potential no-deal Brexit.

Adding to sterling's weakness was Prime Minister Theresa May's failure to get a breakthrough in talks with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on revising their Brexit deal. With just over a month until Britain leaves the

bloc, May still has no agreement that she can push through parliament. Adding to her woes was news that three MPs had quit her ruling Conservative party. In Asia, stock markets mainly climbed on a report that Beijing and Washington were working on an outline for a deal.

Less sensitive

"Markets look towards the US-China trade talks for direction," said IG analyst Joshua Mahony. "Today sees the US and China return to the negotiating table, with markets hopeful that the sides will find some form of pathway to a solution. "Markets are becoming less sensitive to the fact that these talks are taking place, in some ways reflecting the weariness and skepticism that comes with each meeting."

Global equities have enjoyed a stellar start to the year on hopes for the negotiations and expectations the Federal Reserve will ease up on its pace of monetary tightening as growth at home and globally slows. The upbeat mood was en-

“ Markets look to towards the US-China trade talks for direction ”



NEW YORK: A trader works ahead of the closing bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. —AFP

hanced Thursday as Bloomberg News said US and Chinese negotiators were sketching out a number of memorandums of understanding on key issues including intellectual property and technology transfer.

Without naming sources, the report said no final agreement was expected in Washington

this week but that China's top negotiator Liu He would meet US President Donald Trump on Friday. While there has been no concrete sign of progress in the trade talks, Trump has insisted the talks are going "very well" and has indicated he could push back a deadline for a deal to be done. —AFP

Deutsche Telekom sticks to forecasts as profits ebb

FRANKFURT: Network operator Deutsche Telekom was under-terred yesterday from its optimism for 2019, even as it reported falling profits last year and looked ahead to massive investments in 5G networks and a hoped-for merger with Sprint in the US. Net profit at the Bonn-based giant fell 37.4 percent to 2.2 billion euros (\$2.4 billion), a slump the group said was mainly down to a fatter bottom line in 2017 thanks to tax reforms in the US.

Operating, or underlying profit also dropped 8.9 percent to 21.8 billion euros, although revenues grew 0.9 percent to reach 75.7 billion — in line with forecasts from analysts surveyed by Factset. "We're swimming against the trend across the telecoms sector" with "excellent numbers," chief executive Tim Hoettges said at a press conference. Looking to 2019, the group said it would stick to a forecast path set last year of average annual increases in revenue of between one and two percent until 2021, with adjusted operating profit projected to add between two and four percent each year.

Telekom highlighted strong performance at its T-Mobile US division as a powerful growth motor for the firm, as revenue grew 6.8 percent, to \$43.1 billion (38 billion euros), while operating profit increased almost twice as fast, rising 13.6 percent to reach \$11.9 billion. The group is still waiting for American competition watchdogs' go-ahead for the US division to merge with competitor Sprint, hoping to complete the tie-up in the first half of this year.

Meanwhile the former public provider — privatized in 1996 — said it plans 13 billion euros of investments in 2019, an "unremarkable" sum for the sector, Hoettges said. This year, the biggest cash pit will be building out next-generation 5G networks in Germany, with operators set to bid from March on the needed spectrum. —AFP

Brazil sees \$300bn in savings over 10 years with pension reform

BRASILIA: Brazil expects to save more than \$300 billion over 10 years through a bill presented to Congress Wednesday that aims to overhaul the country's unsustainable pension system, the government said. The bill, which requires constitutional changes to impose a minimum retirement age and extended pay-in periods for workers in both the public and private sectors, is a crucial plank of right-wing President Jair Bolsonaro's plan to overhaul Latin America's biggest economy.

Bolsonaro personally delivered the much-anticipated text to Congress, where he was jeered and booed by leftist deputies in the opposition. "We are all counting on your abilities and your patriotism to save the Brazilian economy. We don't have any other option," he told the lawmakers. Bolsonaro was to address the nation on the issue later Wednesday. Earlier this week he warned that pension spending would break Brazil's finances within four years if changes are not adopted. In Brazil's biggest city of Sao Paulo, around a thousand people protested the "end of Brazil's pension system" in a first sign of how unpopular the changes might be.

Retiring at 50-something

Injecting pro-business vigor and removing sclerotic regulations were principal election pledges that propelled Bolsonaro into the presidency. He took office seven weeks ago. "We need to change the rules of the pension system. People are living longer and women have fewer children, which means that the working population will decrease," Leonardo Rolim, the official responsible for pensions at the Economy Ministry, told a news conference.

Brazil is currently one of the few countries that has no minimum retirement age. Instead, workers can retire after contributing to the pension system for at least 35 years in the case of men, or 30 for women. Under the proposed reform, the minimum retirement age would be set at 65 for men and 62 for women. Full pensions would be paid after 40 years of contributions, with ac-

cess to partial pensions from 20 years of payments. The new system would be phased in over a 12-year period. The architect of the overhaul is Paulo Guedes, a US-trained free-marketeer who is Bolsonaro's economy minister. He had reportedly initially sought 65 as the minimum age for both sexes before Bolsonaro decided on a lower limit for women.

He and the government are concerned that Brazil's aging population will overwhelm the existing pension system. Official figures show that about nine percent of Brazilians were over age 65 in 2018 — but will jump to 26 percent of the population by 2060. "One of Brazil's problems ... is that there are people retiring at just over 50, and even younger in some categories such as police officers and teachers," observed Marcel Balassiano, an analyst at the Getulio Vargas Foundation.

Rush to retire

The prospect of changes for those currently nearing retirement has prompted many Brazilians to look at doing so early. That was the case of Silvia Oliveira, a 50-year-old secretary in Rio de Janeiro. "I have paid in for 30 years, but I haven't reached the minimum age that the government wants. That's why I'm seeing if I can retire now, because I'm worried I might be made to work 12 more years," she told AFP.

Public spending on pensions accounted for 13.6 percent of GDP in 2017. If that trajectory is not altered, it could rise to 23 percent in 2060. The government's room for maneuver has been cramped by a record-breaking 2014-2015 recession and subsequent tepid growth. The deficit in the pension system ballooned from 2.1 percent in 2011 to 4.3 percent in 2018.

According to the British economics consulting firm Capital Economics, the savings generated by the government's proposed reform would probably stabilize the public debt ratio at 90 percent of GDP by mid-2020. The proposal "lives up to high hopes ... but history suggests that the legislative process could take time, and will ultimately result in the bill being watered down from its current form," the firm said in a briefing note.

Bolsonaro theoretically can count on a majority in Brazil's Congress, drawing on supporters in several parties. But to modify the constitution, he needs a supermajority of 60 percent of the lower Chamber of Deputies — 308 of the 513 seats. His vice president, Hamilton Mourao, said on Tuesday that he believed the government already has 250 votes and needs another 60 to 70 to get the bill passed. —AFP

Business

Crunch time as high-level US-China trade talks resume

Any agreement must have teeth to ensure that China keeps its promises

WASHINGTON: With eight days left in their trade truce, top US and Chinese officials were due to return to the daunting task of bridging a chasm between the world's two largest economies. US President Donald Trump has repeatedly claimed the talks with Beijing are going "very well," but concrete signs of progress have not been apparent in the three months since the two sides agreed to pause their trade war.

Analysts say the distance separating Washington and Beijing and the short time remaining before the March 1 deadline make it likely the outcome would feature banner announcements but would fall short of Trump's most far-reaching goals. "I think the consensus of people that have been following this thing is that they're not making nearly as much progress as the president tweets that they've been making," said William Reinsch, a former US trade official now at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Chinese trade envoy Liu He will lead Beijing's delegation in meetings with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and other American officials Thursday and Friday as they work to head off an escalation of US tariffs. This fourth round of negotiations follow two days of preliminary talks at the deputy level. Trump this week said a March 1 deadline to reach a deal was in fact "not a magical date," raising hopes that he could delay the plan to more than double duties on \$200 billion in Chinese goods.

China's party-owned Global Times late Tuesday warned raising US tariffs would amount to

"a catastrophic strike" on global stock markets, which have been buffeted for months by the uncertainty and the prospects for slower global growth. Since July, Washington and Beijing have hit each other with tariffs on more than \$360 billion in two-way trade, weighing on the manufacturing sectors in both countries.

Washington has demanded that Beijing reverse much of its industrial policy, charging that China has sought global dominance through the alleged theft of American technology, massive subsidies and the promotion mammoth state-owned enterprises. US officials have stressed that any agreement must have teeth to ensure that China keeps its promises.

When Trump can claim 'victory!'

Demands for structural changes likely will be far harder to resolve than complaints about the soaring US-China trade imbalance, which has hit record heights since Trump took office.

Trump has said the ultimate bargain will be struck at a meeting with China's President Xi Jinping. Reinsch told AFP the two sides were likely to strike some kind of bargain.

"I'm sure they'll come up with something that will be more than cosmetic but less than we're asking," he said. "It'll probably be in the area of intellectual property theft and more open investment in China because they're the things that benefit them as well as benefit us." But other changes — such as subjecting China's state-owned enterprises to free-market principles — could weaken the communist party's hold on



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo taken on February 16, 2019 shipping containers from China and other nations are unloaded at the Long Beach Port. —AFP

power, making Chinese officials very reluctant to budge, he added.

Meanwhile, China's economy has begun slowing sharply as well, eroding prospects for global growth this year. Japan reported Tuesday that China-bound exports had dived 17.4 percent last month, the biggest drop in three years as demand there tumbled. But research by the Institute for International Finance, the impact of punitive US tariffs on \$250 billion in Chinese goods has been partly offset by last year's six percent depreciation of the currency.

While that softened much of the blow China's exports and on the US consumer, IIF chief economist Robin Brooks told AFP it has hit the bottom line of Chinese companies. Gary Clyde Hufbauer, a former US trade official now at the Peterson In-

stitute for International Economics, said he expected China to make a mega-bucks offer to buy more American exports — and possibly even unilaterally remove tariffs on US goods.

"I'm thinking there'll be an eye-catching announcement as to how much China will buy in the next year or so that will enable Trump to say 'victory! victory!'" he said. But should the agreement fail to hold — causing Washington to impose more tariffs while accusing Beijing of backsliding — that could pose prove embarrassing for the Americans, he said. "The question is a year from now, as we're going into the election cycle, how a renewal of testy trade relations with China will play politically and in the markets," Hufbauer said. "I don't think you want to go into an election with a downer stock market." —AFP



China has sought global dominance

Rivals circle King Power's Thai duty-free monopoly

BANGKOK: King Power, Thailand's duty-free juggernaut owned by the late billionaire Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, is facing intense pressure over its near-monopoly at the country's airports, with rivals calling yesterday for a break-up in an upcoming auction. The future of the company — which also owns English Premier League football club Leicester City, hotels and real estate — was thrown into uncertainty by Vichai's death last year in a helicopter crash at the stadium of his beloved club.

The tragedy has not forestalled moves by rivals to attack King Power's monopoly over Thailand's duty-free concessions — which generate an estimated \$1.9 billion a year, according to the Thailand Development Research Institute. "We want to have multiple players within the system... To have a monopoly or a sole player can easily lead to corruption," said Worawoot Ounjai, president of the Thai Retailers Association, a lobbying group. Worawoot is also a senior executive in shopping empire Central Group — which is hunting the airport concession alongside Thailand's Mall Group and South Korean duty-free giant Lotte.

"(King Power) will not be affected much — they have already profited so much from what they have," he added. The duty-free concession at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi, the main

airport in a country set to draw over 40 million tourists this year, will expire in September 2020, and is expected to go up for bidding later this year. State-owned Airports of Thailand (AoT), which awarded King Power the sole concession in 2006, on Wednesday announced Suvarnabhumi's commercial opportunities will be separated into three: duty-free, commercial including retail and food, and duty-free pick-up counters.

The potentially lucrative contracts will be offered "with a focus on being open and including free competition", AoT said in a statement. It did not provide further details on whether a single company can hold all three contracts. King Power could not be immediately reached for comment. Its founder Vichai was a supremely well-connected businessman with a sharp eye for opportunities in a kingdom where networks count. But he remained largely out of the public eye. Thailand's former king bestowed him the royal surname Srivaddhanaprabha meaning "auspicious and prosperous light", and after his death, the first three days of his elaborate funeral rites were sponsored by current King Maha Vajiralongkorn.

His son Aiyawatt now heads the unlisted family firm, which was started in 1989 with a single Bangkok shop. At the time of his death in October, Vichai's empire was worth around \$5.2 billion, according to Forbes. Last year, a Thai court rejected an attempt to sue King Power for hundreds of millions of dollars in unpaid revenue to AoT — a rare legal challenge issued by the company's enemies. —AFP

Fuel costs clip Qantas' wings as profits slip

SYDNEY: Australian carrier Qantas yesterday announced a 16 percent drop in net profit for the last six months of 2018, as rising fuel costs ended a record profit run for the company. Net profit for the period came in at AU\$498 million (US\$359 million), compared to the record AU\$595 million earned for the same period in 2017.

Underlying profit excluding one-off items fell 18.7 percent to AU\$780 million, the company reported. Qantas CEO Alan Joyce attributed the profit hit to a sharp AU\$416 million jump in the airline's fuel bill during the period to a total AU\$2 billion. "Higher oil prices were a significant headwind and we moved quickly to recover as much of the cost as we could," he said. "That's easier to achieve in the domestic market than on longer international routes, where fuel is a much bigger factor."

The airline said it expected to recover the higher fuel costs by the end of the 2019 fiscal year in June. Company revenue across all activities rose six percent over the same six-month period, boosted by a strong performance on domestic routes by both Qantas and its low-budget counterpart Jetstar. —AFP

Sports

Kane and Blackhawks keep rolling, beat Red Wings 5-4

Backes lifts Bruins to 7th straight win in SO

DETROIT: Patrick Kane scored his second goal of the game at 2:42 of overtime and the visiting Chicago Blackhawks won for the 10th time in 12 games, topping the Detroit Red Wings 5-4 on Wednesday. Kane stretched his point streak to 19 games, an NHL high this season. However, his assists streak ended at 17 consecutive games, tied for the third-longest such streak in NHL history. In OT, Kane fired a shot from the right circle past goaltender Jonathan Bernier after passes from Erik Gustafsson and Jonathan Toews. Artem Anisimov, Brandon Saad and Alex DeBrincat also scored for Chicago, which squandered a 4-1 lead in the third period. Gustafsson had three assists. Dylan Larkin and Andreas Athanasiou scored two goals apiece for Detroit. Anthony Mantha assisted on all four goals.

Bruins 3, Golden Knights 2 (SO)

David Backes scored in the sixth round of the shootout to give the Boston Bruins their seventh consecutive victory, a 3-2 win over the Vegas Golden Knights on Wednesday night in Las Vegas. Jake DeBrusk scored in the first round of the shootout for the Bruins but was matched in the next round by William Karlsson of the Golden Knights. After Boston goalie Jaroslav Halak made a pad save on Oscar Lindberg to begin the sixth round, Backes followed with a wrist shot past Vegas goalie Marc-Andre Fleury's glove and inside the right post for the game winner. Brad Marchand and DeBrusk scored goals for Boston, which improved to 9-0-3 since the All-Sta0072 break. Halak had 31 saves while improving to 7-0-2 against the Pacific Division this season.

Reilly Smith had a goal and an assist and Nate

Schmidt also scored for Vegas. Fleury, making his NHL-leading 52nd start, finished with 25 saves but was denied for the fourth straight time at recording his 30th victory of the season. DeBrusk gave Boston a 1-0 lead midway through the first period with his 19th goal of the season, taking a crossing pass in the slot from David Krejci and then spinning around defenseman Shea Theodore and firing a shot past Fleury's glove side. It marked the fifth straight game that DeBrusk has scored a goal.

Vegas tied it just before the end of the period when Smith tapped in a rebound of a Cody Eakin shot for his first goal in 13 games and 10th of the season. Marchand gave the Bruins a 2-1 lead at the 1:09 mark of the third period, one-timing a pass from Danton Heinen from the high slot past Fleury's glove side. It was his fifth goal in seven games and also the 250th of his career. But Schmidt tied it up just 27 seconds later, taking a pass from Smith at center ice and then deking defenseman Charlie McAvoy inside the blue line before beating Halak with a forehand shot top shelf.

Avalanche 7, Jets 1

Nathan MacKinnon and Matt Calvert scored 11 seconds apart to open Colorado's five-goal third period in a rout of Winnipeg at Denver. Carl Soderberg and Tyson Jost each had a goal and two assists for Colorado, Gabriel Landeskog added a goal and an assist, and Mikko Rantanen and A.J. Greer also scored. Semyon Varlamov had 26 saves for the Avalanche, who have won consecutive games for the first time since winning six in a row in November. Kyle Connor had a goal and Connor Hellebuyck stopped 39 shots for the Jets,



DETROIT: Dylan Strome No 17 of the Chicago Blackhawks battles for the puck with Filip Hronek No 17 of the Detroit Red Wings during the third period at Little Caesars Arena on February 20, 2019 in Michigan. —AFP

who have lost six of their past eight (2-4-2).

Flames 4, Islanders 2

Austin Czarnik and Johnny Gaudreau scored third-period goals 29 seconds apart to break open a tie game, and host Calgary beat New York for its third consecutive win. With the score tied 2-2, Czarnik netted the game-winning goal at 6:10 of the third. The fortuitous tally went off a defender

and into the net to give Czarnik goals in three straight games. On a power play right after, Gaudreau wired a slap shot for his 30th of the season, which matches his career high. Mike Smith made 17 saves for the Flames, who blew a 2-0 lead before recovering. Mikael Backlund and Travis Hamonic scored for Calgary in the first minute. Casey Cizikas and Anders Lee found the net for the Islanders. —Agencies

IAAF clears 21 Russians to compete as neutrals

PARIS: The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) said yesterday it had cleared 21 Russian athletes to return to international events, albeit competing under a neutral banner and not representing Russia. Athletics' governing body banned Russia in November 2015 because of evidence of state-sponsored doping, but Russian athletes cleared by the IAAF can compete as neutrals.

"The IAAF Doping Review Board has agreed that the applications of 21 Russian athletes have met the exceptional eligibility criteria to compete in international competition as neutral athletes in 2019," the IAAF said. "The application process for athletes seeking neutral status in international competitions in 2019 opened in December 2018. The Doping Review Board is prioritizing, wherever possible, applications from athletes wishing to compete in the current indoor season." The 21 athletes will now be eligible for the March 1-3 European Indoor Championships in Glasgow and the March 9-10 European Throwing cup in Samorin, Slovakia. —AFP

Stricker named US 2020 Ryder Cup captain

NEW YORK: Steve Stricker will captain the US 2020 Ryder Cup team, vowing Wednesday to do everything he can to help the Americans regain the coveted trophy from Europe. Stricker, 51, becomes the first US Ryder Cup captain never to have won a major championship. But 14-time major winner Tiger Woods lauded the appointment, saying Stricker was "the overwhelming choice" of the selection committee on which Woods himself served.

PGA of America President Suzy Whaley confirmed the appointment at a press conference with Stricker in Milwaukee, Wisconsin—Stricker's home state where the 2020 Ryder Cup will be held at Whistling Straits. "I'm very passionate about this competition," an emotional Stricker said. "We want to win this more than ever. I want to help any way I can." The Americans were routed 17 1/2-10 1/2 last September in France. The Europeans have won four of the past five editions of the biennial match-play showdown.

Stricker, who won three, lost seven and halved one in three Ryder Cups as a player, was a member of the 2014 task force that revamped the US Ryder Cup program and has served as a vice-captain for the past three editions. He served as the 2017 Presidents Cup captain when the hosts won over an International side at Liberty National. Stricker said he was confident the US team could bounce back from their thrashing in France last year. "While we were disappointed with the result in Paris, I am confident the setback will fuel our preparations for what will take place at Whistling Straits.

"Europe's talent will present a great challenge, but we will be focused on what we can accomplish together in 2020 in my home state, in front of a loyal legion of sports fans in Wisconsin. It's going to be a memorable week." Whaley praised Stricker's "wonderful ability to connect with players of all ages". Woods, speaking in Mexico City where he was preparing for the start on Thursday of the WGC-Mexico Championship, said Stricker's ability to communicate with players was just one of his many qualifications for the job. "What he has done as the leader both in the Presidents Cups and Ryder Cups has been tremendous and we just thought that with his leadership and the way the guys follow Stricks, that he would be the best captain there is for 2020," Woods said.

'Fiery' leader

"The players were unanimous, they wanted him on as their team leader and we felt the same way on the committee. "Everyone knows he's such a nice guy but beneath all of that exterior is this fieriness and this competitiveness and he's also one of the more detail-oriented guys that we know of. "He's very good at communicating with the guys, getting their opinions but putting his foot down when he has to."

Stricker's first move as skipper was to name Jim Furyk, who captained the US team in France, as one of his assistants. The system by which players earn the eight automatic berths on the team will remain the same, but in once change to team selection announced Wednesday, Stricker will announce all four of his captain's selections on September 1, 2020, immediately after the US PGA Tour's Tour Championship. Ireland's Padraig Harrington was named European captain last month. He is a three-time major champion who won nine, lost 13 and halved one in six Ryder Cups from 1999-2010 and was an assistant on Europe's past three teams. —AFP

Sports

Break-dancing set for Olympics debut in Paris 2024: Organizers

Governing bodies disappointed as squash misses out

PARIS: Break-dancing is set to make its debut as an Olympic sport at Paris 2024, the head of the local organizing committee said yesterday. Skateboarding, sport climbing and surfing, which have already been added to the program for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, have been invited to return in Paris four years later. Tony Estanguet, the head of the Paris 2024 organizing committee and a former Olympic gold medalist in canoeing, said the inclusion of the four sports responded to a need to make the Olympics "more urban" and "more artistic".

"This is a major step forward in our ambition to organize a unique Olympic Games," Estanguet said. "Right from the beginning, our aim was to offer Games that would have an impact and the element of surprise. This is why we have chosen to present the IOC with four sports that are as creative as spectacular, geared towards youth and completely in line with our vision. They reflect perfectly Paris 2024's identity." The choice of the four sports still needs to be rubberstamped by the International Olympic Committee.



Skateboarding, sport climbing, surfing added

of head-to-head "battles". Russia's Sergei Chernyshev, competing under the nickname Bumblebee, won the first break-dancing gold medal for boys in that event, while Japan's Ramu Kawai won the girls' title. The IOC had announced that the number of competitors at Paris 2024 would be restricted to 10,500, which limited the scope to add sports.

But the organizers said the inclusion of the four sports in Paris would not necessitate the construction of permanent facilities and would involve just 248 competitors, of which 32 would be in break-dancing.

The surfing events are likely to be held in established surf centers such as Biarritz or Lacanau in southwest France. "It is an incredible honor and privilege that, for the first time, a dance discipline is being considered for inclusion in the Olympic Games. It is a humbling experience for all members and supporters of DanceSport," said Shawn Tay, the president of the World DanceSport Federation.

He predicted that, if included, breaking would be "an outstanding success". The inclusion of break-dancing at Paris 2024 means that squash has missed out, to the deep disappointment of the sport's governing bodies. In a joint statement, the World Squash Federation (WSF) and the Professional Squash Association (PSA) said: "We truly believe



MONTPELLIER: In this file photo, members of Mortal Kombat crew from Japan perform during the first part of the "Battle of the Year", an international competition of breakdance (Boly), at Arena in Montpellier. Break-dancing, skateboarding, climbing and surfing have been invited to join the 2024 Paris Olympics, the head of the local organizing committee said yesterday. —AFP

Squash misses out

Break-dancing, known as breaking, appeared at the 2018 Youth Olympics in Buenos Aires, in the form

squash could seamlessly integrate into the Olympic program with minimal costs and an optimized pool of participants." Paris organizers also announced

that members of the public will be able to run the marathon course on the same day as the event, after the Olympic race. —AFP

Free spirit Lyles hip-hopping along medal trail

CLERMONT: The rain buffets the training camp tent as Noah Lyles offers up a hip-hop song that has been on his mind. The steady rhythm of the rain and the American sprinter's rapping travel to a different beat, as does Lyles, who, with Usain Bolt's retirement, has become one of the most talked-about athletes in track and field. Just 21 years old, he relishes running and a multitude of other activities, too many some have told him.

But this is Lyles, the free spirit who in the past few months has strolled down the runway at a Paris fashion show, painted his own special touch on a pair of shoes for his mother's birthday and offered up designs for Boston Marathon T-shirts. He has also cut extended play versions of his favorite hip-hop music and found time to become the man experts predict will be the next 200m gold medalist at September's world championships in Doha and the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. "I am really just being me," Lyles, who has never competed in a world championships or Olympics, told Reuters after a long workout. "I have always been into art, I have always been into clothes and recently it (music) has become one of my favorite hobbies," he said.

"I have always liked things that had to do with sound and making something beautiful in any form of art. Running has just come naturally and now that I have a great coach and amazing staff and a great mom, it has come easier and easier and more fun." There is no doubt about the fun part and his success in the 200m in which he has not lost since 2016. And victory usually means a show, maybe a few back flips or special dance moves. "Too many people go out and they are just here to get business done," the twice Diamond League 200m champion said. "When you put on a show, you are expressing your inner emotion, you are expressing what you love, the love you

have for the sport, the love you have for your life, the love you have for the people who helped you get there," he added. "Just running, that's boring." But boring would never be a word to describe this former high jumper who forsook the family tradition of being 400m runners to learn the short sprints.

Another Bolt?

Always animated and outgoing, the combination, along with his speed, brings out comparisons with Bolt, especially since their events are the 100 and 200m and Bolt and Lyles are the only two sprinters to run four 200m in 19.7 seconds or less in the same season. Yet Lance Brauman, Lyles's coach, frowns at such comparisons. "There might be some similarities," the coach told Reuters. "But there are similarities in different ways with a lot of different guys. I want him to be the first Noah Lyles." That would suit Lyles just fine.

"They (the media) are always going to be looking for the next something," said the sprinter who has personal bests of 19.65 in the 200m and 9.88 in the 100m. "I say wait, somebody is going to pull it out," he said, predicting Bolt's seemingly invincible 100 meters world record of 9.58 and 200m mark of 19.19 would eventually fall. "If I didn't think that, I wouldn't be here right now. I have dreams where I run 9.41. I have ideas where I run 18 seconds. But truthfully you are just going to wait." The Jamaican and the American have met only once. "We were both in the doctor's office in 2017," Lyles said. "He looked more beat up than me so I just decided I was going to go say 'Hey, you are an amazing athlete'. I just left it at that."

Brotherly dream

Lyles and his younger brother Josephus, a talented 400m runner, live together in a new home in Clermont. Josephus is the cook and enforcer. "If it was up to him we would probably eating cereal every night," Josephus said. Boxes of running shoes occupy one closet and upstairs there is what Noah calls his creative room. A full array of paints sit beside a table and Noah the rapper records his hip-hop in his own little studio. "I loved music since I was little," Lyles said. "I always listen to different things, find different artists, songs that express emotion." —AFP

Hamilton predicts 'most challenging season'

MONTMELO: Lewis Hamilton says he's feeling "better than ever" ahead of a 2019 season he predicts will be "the most challenging" since he joined Mercedes with Ferrari looking especially fast. The 34-year-old Briton enjoyed a near flawless run to secure his fifth drivers' title in 2018. He won 11 of the 21 races to beat Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel with two races to spare, and he expects the Italian marque to once again keep him on his toes. "Ferrari are very strong," Hamilton said in Barcelona on the third day of pre-season testing on Wednesday with Daniil Kvyat in a Toro Rosso topping the times from the Ferrari of Kimi Raikkonen. "It appears they have a better package than last year, which means it will be a bigger challenge for us," he suggested. "In the last few years, Ferrari has looked good from the very beginning so that's to be expected."

But he said it would be a mistake to draw any hard and fast conclusions from the evidence thrown up by testing. "We'll have a better idea I guess this time next week where we stand but still then we won't know what fuel loads everybody is on and who is showing their cars and who isn't." Hamilton, with a new two-year deal that will earn him £40 million (\$52 million) a season, is buzzing after the winter recess. "I feel in the best shape that I've been in," he assured his fans, as he embarks on his quest for a sixth championship and record sixth consecutive constructors' crown for Mercedes. —AFP

Sports

New soccer team gives hope to young cancer patients in Gaza

'We can play, defy the disease and defeat it'

GAZA: Fourteen-year-old Moatasem Al-Nabeeh suffers from a brain tumor. A new youth soccer team set up in Gaza for young Palestinian cancer patients has given him new hope. "I am happier now, I play and I made new friends," said al-Nabeeh. "They told us we can play, defy the disease and defeat it," he added as he hit the pitch for push-ups in his bright yellow and blue uniform. Champions Academy, one of Gaza's biggest soccer schools, began setting up the team up five months ago and in February "Team Hope" kicked off. Its 18 players, aged between 12 and 17, have all been diagnosed with cancer, and compete against other, non-patient teams in the academy's league.

"Like children anywhere in Gaza, or in the world, those boys have ambitions, they want to become footballers and we are trying to help them achieve that," said Rajab Sarraj, CEO of

Champions Academy. Team Hope's players are exempt from school fees and train for one hour per week, with doctors' advice, Sarraj said. Moatasem al-Nabeeh's mother, Suheir al-Nabeeh, said the soccer team has transformed her son's life. "He was depressed and lonely all the time. He likes football and now he feels his life has value," she said. Gaza, a narrow coastal strip that borders Egypt and Israel, is home to about two million Palestinians. Poverty and unemployment in the enclave run high.

Struggling with shortages of medical equipment and medicine, Gaza's hospitals are unable to provide proper care for cancer patients, according to the World Health Organi-

zation (WHO). Khaled Thabet, chief oncologist at Gaza's largest hospital, Shifa, said most cancer patients need to be transferred to Israel, the West Bank or abroad in order to receive adequate medical treatment. But Israel

and Egypt keep tight control over their border crossings with Gaza, which is run by the Islamist Hamas group. Israel and Hamas have fought three wars over the past decade.

Patients need to apply for special permits from Israel to leave Gaza for treatment. Israel, according to WHO, approved 75.6 percent of requests to exit Gaza for cancer treatment in 2018, an increase of 12 percent from 2017. Egypt has no restric-

tions on the travel of referred cancer patients from Gaza. But such measures still fall short, Thabet said. "We are talking about 1,800 to 1,900 new cases per year. The problem is that such an increase in cases isn't met by an increase in treatment capabilities," said Thabet.

On Tuesday, the US-based the Palestine Children's Relief Fund (PCRF) inaugurated a new department at Gaza's Rantissi hospital dedicated to the treatment of children with cancer at the cost of \$3.5 million. Steve Sosebee, PCRF's president, said the facility will afford full treatment for 80 percent of Gaza's child patients, with the hope that eventually no child will need to travel to hospitals away from home. "Until radiation therapy is permitted, until we can develop a bone marrow transplant department here, some kids do still have to travel outside for treatment," Sosebee said. —Reuters



'Team Hope' kicked off in February

Korean coaches 'stole tens of thousands' from 'Garlic Girls' curlers

SEOUL: South Korea's "Garlic Girls" curling team were exploited by their coaches who stole tens of thousands of dollars of prize money from the Olympic medal-winners, the sports ministry said yesterday. The curlers, who come from a town famous for garlic farming, were rank outsiders at South Korea's Pyeongchang Games last year, but became a media sensation as they swept their way to Olympic silver.

But last November they publicly accused their coaches of verbal abuse and intrusive control and claimed they had not received their prize money from previous competitions, prompting public outrage and a probe by the sports ministry. The team claimed the coaches were running Korean curling like a family fiefdom: the husband of their head coach, Kim Min-jung, is a former national men's team coach, while her father Kim Kyung-doo is a former vice president of the Korean Curling Federation (KCF). Following a five-week investigation, the sports ministry said Thursday that the allegations made by the curlers were "mostly true".

"It was confirmed that there was excessive control over privacy by the coaches... who strongly berated the athletes if they spoke with their previous coaches or athletes from other teams," the ministry said, adding that the coaches censored gifts and fan letters. The curlers were not paid properly as the coaches had "mismanaged" around 94 million won (US\$83,500) of the team's income, it said. They also embezzled around 30 million won, according to the ministry. The probe also found that the coaches had evaded taxes and hired unqualified family members to work on the national team.

The ministry said the case will be taken to the police. The curlers are also known as "Team Kim" for their shared surname, and use food-based nicknames for ease of identification: the captain is Annie - a brand of yogurt - while Kim Yeong-mi is Pancake, Kim Kyeong-ae is Steak, Kim Seon-yeong is Sunny - as in "sunny side up" - and Kim Cho-hee is Chocho, a type of cookie. The team's giant-killing feats at the Olympics, despite limited funding, boosted the popularity of their little-known sport in South Korea. —AFP

Rugby talking points: Weighty issues, Nonu no-go and Beale's back

SYDNEY: Five talking points ahead of Super Rugby's second round of matches this weekend:

The biggest loser

Queensland Reds coach Brad Thorn has hailed Feao Fotuika as a "feel-good story" after naming the big prop to make his debut against the Highlanders in Dunedin today. The 25-year-old shed a colossal 16 kilos in pre-season to earn a crack at Super Rugby after being told he must lose weight. "Feao is a feel-good story. He was out of shape and on the verge of giving up the game," said Thorn. "We identified him playing club rugby last year and his transformation since has been something to admire. "Feao has dropped 16 kilos in the pre-season and his scrummaging is now very dominant." He joins a heavyweight pack loaded with five Wallabies-Brandon Paenga-Amosa, Taniela Tupou, Izack Rodda, Lukhan Salakaia-Loto and Caleb Timu.

Don't bet on Nonu

Ma'a Nonu may have ambitions to rejoin the All Blacks at this year's World Cup but bookies are not convinced. The two-time World Cup winner has returned to Super Rugby after three years in France and played in the narrow Auckland Blues loss to Canterbury Crusaders last weekend. But the block-busting centre will be 37 when this year's tournament rolls around and New Zealand's TAB bookmakers rate him a 20-1 outsider to pull on the famous black jersey again. Winger Rieko Ioane is the shortest-price player-at an unbackable 1-10 - to make the team. And Nonu's dream suffered a further blow Thursday when the Blues left him out of the 23-man squad to play Coastal Sharks in Durban tomorrow.

Bad boy Beale's back

Controversial Kurtley Beale will return to the NSW Waratahs starting line-up at number 12 against the Sunwolves in Tokyo after breaking his silence over two videos showing him in the presence of an unknown white powder. Beale has apologized after footage from three years ago showed him laughing as a man snorted the powder-the latest in a string of misdemeanors during the Wallaby's career. Beale, who was dropped by the Wallabies for the final Test of 2018 for disciplinary reasons, conceded the videos-which surfaced online last month-had been "a bad look" for the game. "I apologized at the time and now my full focus is on the Waratahs and adding my bit to hopefully a successful



Ma'a Nonu

campaign," he said. Beale's captain Michael Hooper and coach Daryl Gibson will both hit half-century milestones in Saturday's match. Hooper will mark his 50th game as captain, while Gibson will bring up the landmark as head coach.

Lions wary of wounded Stormers

The Golden Lions are expecting a chastened Western Stormers side to hit back hard when the two face off in the South African derby in Cape Town on Saturday. The Newlands-based Stormers were stampeded 40-3 by the Northern Bulls at Loftus Versfeld last weekend, while the buoyant Lions celebrated a first ever victory in Argentina 25-16 against the Jaguares. "We're expecting a backlash," said Lions attack coach Neil de Bruin this week. "Playing against them in Cape Town is always difficult, but they'll be up for it even more. "There's a lot of pride in rugby and they'll be going all out to prove last weekend's performance was a mis-step. We're going to have to be at our best. We're under no illusions that it's going to be a very difficult match."

All Blacks rest plan has problems

The All Blacks' plan to nurse top players through the rigors of Super Rugby to protect them for the World Cup is already facing problems after just one round. The New Zealand Herald reported that rugby chiefs wanted All Blacks to play no more than 60 minutes in the first three rounds to ease them through the often brutal all-Kiwi derbies. But 16 of the 26 All Blacks who played in the first round exceeded the quota, including Waikato Chiefs lock Brodie Retallick who had to leave the field after suffering a head knock in the 67th minute. New Zealand Rugby are also insisting Super Rugby clubs don't play their internationals for more than five consecutive matches and give them at least two games off, creating a dilemma. "Players want to play, and they want to do the right thing for their teammates, so they are often reluctant to limit their minutes or leave the field," the Herald said. —AFP

Sports

Manchester United primed to dent Liverpool's title bid

United could have a big say in who win Premier League

MANCHESTER: Manchester United may not be in the title race but Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side could have a big say in who does win the Premier League, starting with Sunday's clash against Liverpool at Old Trafford. Manchester City lead the Premier League on goal difference from Juergen Klopp's Liverpool with both teams on 65 points - 14 ahead of fourth-placed United.

City do not feature in the Premier League this weekend as they face Chelsea in the League Cup final, giving Liverpool an opportunity to return to the top of the table. United still have to play City again in this campaign, but, perhaps surprisingly to some, their fans would probably prefer them to do more damage to Liverpool's ambitions. Liverpool haven't claimed the league title since 1990 while United have won 13 in that period and their supporters love to remind their bitter north-west rivals of that fact.

Local pride aside, however, this is also a crucial game for Solskjaer as he bids to convince the Old Trafford hierarchy that he is the right man to lead the club on a permanent basis after his interim period runs out at the end of this season. The Norwegian is already a highly popular figure with United's fans after leading the team to 11 wins in his first 13 games in charge and if he were to claim the scalp of Klopp's Liverpool his approval ratings would go through the roof. It was a defeat by Liverpool which of-

fered Solskjaer his chance when Jose Mourinho was sacked following a limp 3-1 loss at Anfield in December.

United moved into the FA Cup quarter-finals with an impressive 2-0 win at Chelsea on Monday while Liverpool head into this weekend's game after a 0-0 home draw with Bayern Munich in the Champions League. "It is a big game against Manchester United, it's always big against them. It's a game in hand as well and we look forward to that," said Liverpool left back Andrew Robertson. "It's a huge game and they're a different team playing some really good football, I think we need to be wary of them but they know what they're coming up against and they need to be wary of us," he added.

United are hoping Anthony Martial and Jesse Lingard recover from muscle injuries in time to face Liverpool—the pair missed the Chelsea game after picking up the injuries in the Champions League defeat by Paris St Germain last week. "You look at their teamsheet or squad list and it's full of stars. They came to the party and they have a fantastic team. They've got people back from injury as well which always helps and they've got a strong squad as well," Robertson said. Tottenham Hotspur will also hope to close the gap on City and their captain Harry Kane could be back in the starting line-up at Burnley on Saturday after a few weeks out with an ankle injury. — Reuters



LONDON: Manchester United's Norwegian caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer gestures on the touchline during the English FA Cup fifth round football match between Chelsea and Manchester United at Stamford Bridge in London. —AFP

Icardi uncertainty is good news for striker Martinez

MILAN: The uncertainty over the future of leading scorer Mauro Icardi, which is still hanging over Inter Milan, has proved to be good news for his fellow Argentine striker Lautaro Martinez. The 21-year-old joined Inter at the start of the season after an impressive three years at Racing Club but his similarity to Icardi has made coach Luciano Spalletti reluctant to field both, with Martinez invariably the one to lose out. "They are very similar and you need to find the right moment to play them," said Spalletti after the 1-0 win at Parma two weeks ago when Martinez scored the winner two minutes after coming on as a substitute.

But that has changed since Icardi was stripped of the captaincy last week because of the uncertainty caused by protracted negotiations over the renewal of his contract. Icardi has missed two matches since the announcement, with Martinez starting both, and he is not in the squad either for the Europa League match at home to Rapid Vienna later on Thursday. It was not clear whether Icardi would be available for Inter's next match in Serie A which is away to Fiorentina on Sunday—a tough fixture against opponents who are unbeaten in eight games in all competitions.

Although Icardi has been Inter's leading scorer in Serie A for the last four seasons, they have won their last two matches without him, beating Rapid 1-0 one week ago in Vienna and then Sampdoria 2-1 on Sunday. Martinez was singled out for praise after scoring the winner in the Rapid game. "He held the ball up, he pressed, he won the penalty and converted it," said Spalletti. "Much of the result is due to his desire to fight for every ball. "He is comfortable in the centre-forward role but he will have to prove that he can always be lethal inside the area."

Inter remain third in Serie A with 46 points, 20 behind leaders Juventus but on course for next season's Champions League. The Icardi saga continued on Sunday when his wife and agent Wanda Nara made a tearful television appearance where she said that being stripped of the captaincy was like "losing a leg" for Icardi. Icardi has also complained of knee pain and underwent an MRI scan on Wednesday, but the club said it found nothing wrong. "The scans didn't reveal significant changes compared to those performed before the start of the current season," said Inter in a statement.

Nara has made a number of comments on social media but Spalletti said the issue should be settled face-to-face, the old-fashioned way. "These things can't be fixed via a chat, tweets, views or likes (on social media)," he said. "You resolve them face-to-face, with words. "Maybe if we could remember how we used to fix these things, it would be easier. Back in my day, we used to go around things that way and it is still useful despite the world's advance in technology." — Reuters

Dortmund desperate for Reus return to revive title chase

BERLIN: Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund are hoping captain Marco Reus will be fit for Sunday's match against in-form Bayer Leverkusen as they look to reignite their stalled title run. The Ruhr valley club have seen a seven-point lead over champions Bayern Munich cut to three after three consecutive draws. They have also been eliminated from the German Cup and lost 3-0 to Tottenham Hotspur in the first leg of their Champions League last 16 tie, making it five games in all competitions without a win.

Dortmund CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke said his club were not concerned about Bayern Munich, despite the champions looming large in the rear view mirror. "They have not been an issue for us and they will not become one," Watzke said. "We are working on our things, to reduce mistakes and to work with this young team that currently has to make do without Reus,

(Manuel) Akanji and Lukasz Piszczek." Reus has been out injured since their Feb. 5 German Cup exit to Werder Bremen, after scoring 13 goals and setting up another six in the Bundesliga.

He has been training alone as he recovers from a thigh muscle injury but could still be a surprise addition to the squad on Sunday. His return cannot come quickly enough for Dortmund, who toiled to a goalless draw at bottom club Nuremberg on Monday and showed little of the attacking spirit that has put them in the Bundesliga driving seat. Dortmund are also missing fullback Piszczek but fellow defender Akanji, sidelined for two months with a hip injury, could return and help plug a leaking defense that will be tested by one of the most lethal attacks in the league at the moment.

Fifth-placed Leverkusen have scored 13 goals in their last four league matches, with young Germany internationals Kai Havertz and Julian Brandt blossoming under new coach Peter Bosz and his attacking style of football. Teenager Havertz has scored three times in their first five league games of the year, while Brandt needed a game less to net three and set up another three. Bosz will also be relishing his first trip back to Dortmund, where he was coach last season only to be sacked in December when his team imploded after a fine start to the campaign. Dortmund are top on 51 points with Bayern, who host Hertha Berlin on Saturday, on 48. — Reuters

Sports

Formidable Atletico Madrid stun Ronaldo and Juventus

Atletico restore belief but Juventus not done yet

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo's Champions League mission with Juventus stalled on Wednesday as Atletico Madrid secured a deserved 2-0 victory from a thrilling first leg at the Wanda Metropolitano. Ronaldo returned to the Spanish capital, where he enjoyed unprecedented success in this tournament with Real, but it was their rivals celebrating at the final whistle as goals from Jose Gimenez and Diego Godin put Atletico within sight of the quarter-finals. "We are not through yet," Atletico coach Diego Simeone said. "There is another match to play and we know we will have to suffer."

"Fortunately we didn't concede a third," said Juventus boss Massimiliano Allegri. "Because 2-0 is a result that can be turned around. We're not dead yet." But

this was a victory that Simeone's side fully deserved. Antoine Griezmann had hit the crossbar while VAR twice intervened, correctly, in Juve's favour, cancelling a penalty for a foul on Diego Costa and then ruling out an Alvaro Morata header just before Gimenez struck. While Juventus tried to preserve the stalemate, Atletico were bold. Simeone introduced Morata, Thomas Lemar and Angel Correa, all around the hour-mark, and his daring paid off. "I showed balls," Simeone said.

Juve are certainly not dead and buried, particularly given Costa and Thomas Partey will both be suspended for the return in Turin after each picked up yellow cards. But the failure to score

an away goal, and their clear inferiority in the second half does not bode well for any hopes of a comeback. "They don't give you chances," said Allegri. "They make you play badly." Defeat in the last 16 for either team would be unthinkable, for Atletico, who know the final will be played here, at their own stadium, on June 1, the perfect chance to wrestle the trophy off Real in the very city they share.

Ronaldo subdued

And for Juventus, whose wait for Europe's premier prize has now entered its 23rd year, when expectations are higher than ever given they now boast the tournament's most prolific ever player. Ronaldo, though, endured a disappointing night, suffocated

We are not through yet: Atletico coach



from the outset by a typically relentless Atletico backline. Perhaps it was frustration that made him wave five fingers in the direction of the baiting Atletico crowd, presumably to signify his five Champions League triumphs. His best contribution was an early, driven free-kick from 30 yards, that had to be pushed over by Jan Oblak, and the dummy-shot before it, that exposed Costa as encroaching, for which he received his yellow card.

Costa was his bristling self and almost won a penalty when referee Felix Zwayer thought he was tripped by Mattia de Sciglio. But VAR showed he had not only exaggerated the contact but also extended his run into the area. The rest



MADRID: Juventus' Polish goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny (right) jumps to clear the ball during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 first leg football match between Club Atletico de Madrid and Juventus FC at the Wanda Metropolitan stadium in Madrid on February 20, 2019. — AFP

of the half was tighter but Atletico had two golden opportunities early in the second. First, Griezmann volleyed Costa in behind but the Spaniard sidefooted wide with only Wojciech Szczesny to beat. Then, it was Griezmann's turn, this time Szczesny intervening, tipping the Frenchman's lob onto the crossbar before Giorgio Chiellini stopped Costa from reaching the rebound.

Atletico were pushing and it was Morata, on for Costa, who made the difference. He powered in a brilliant header only to see it chalked off for a

push but he was not deterred, and when Juve failed to clear his knock-down at a corner, Gimenez was perfectly placed. Juve were rattled and their failure to rally could cost them dear. Atletico scored again as Godin rose to head in at the near post, only to turn and find Mario Mandzukic had cleared the ball to his feet. The angle was tight but the net was open. Juve might have snatched an away goal late on but Oblak pushed over Federico Bernardeschi's shot. They have it all to do. —AFP

Di Maria, Mbappe shine as PSG win big again

PARIS: Angel Di Maria scored a sumptuous free-kick and Kylian Mbappe was also on target as Paris Saint-Germain continued their relentless march towards another French title by hammering Montpellier 5-1 on Wednesday. With Neymar and Edinson Cavani still absent, Layvin Kurzawa also scored for PSG at the Parc des Princes, while two own goals completed the rout.

Florent Mollet had equalised at one point in the first half for the visitors before they crumbled in a rearranged fixture that had initially been postponed in early December due to disruption caused by "yellow vest" anti-government protests in France. As they warm up for the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie against Manchester United on March 6, PSG are now a huge 15 points clear of second-placed Lille, and still have a game in hand as they race to a sixth Ligue 1 title in seven seasons.

"It came down to patience, and quality, and a bit of luck as well," said PSG coach Thomas Tuchel after his side maintained their perfect home record in the league this season.

It was also their ninth win by a margin of at least four goals in the current campaign. "It was not our best performance, but with

our attacking quality it was a deserved victory," added Tuchel. He was missing a host of players for this game, with skipper Thiago Silva suspended. French international left-back Kurzawa was making his first start in the league in an injury-hit season and he opened the scoring in the 13th minute with a header from a Daniel Alves cross.

However, Montpellier recovered well from that and claimed a deserved leveller just after the half-hour mark from a Mollet free-kick. Gianluigi Buffon thought he had kept it out, but goal-line technology confirmed the ball had just crossed the line. Nevertheless, Di Maria restored PSG's lead in first-half stoppage time with a stunning dead-ball strike from 30 yards that went in off the underside of the bar for his sixth league goal of the season. PSG then ran away with the game in the closing stages, although only after both Mbappe and substitute Eric-Maxim Choupo Moting had efforts disallowed for offside.

It was 3-1 in the 73rd minute when Christopher Nkunku, on a rare start, saw his header deflect off Petar Skuletic, and Mbappe then took centre stage. The young World Cup winner turned in a Kurzawa centre in the 78th minute, but the goal was attributed to Montpellier's 41-year-old defender Hilton. From the restart, PSG won possession back and Mbappe beat Montpellier goalkeeper Benjamin Lecomte with the aid of a huge deflection off Hilton. This time the goal was given to Mbappe, who now has 20 goals in 19 league appearances this season, and 25 in all competitions. Montpellier remain sixth, while PSG now host mid-table Nimes on Saturday before a French Cup quarter-final against Dijon and then a visit to Caen, as their busy schedule continues before the visit of United. The other game in France on Wednesday saw bottom side Guingamp draw 0-0 at Bordeaux. — AFP

Sevilla ease past Lazio to reach Europa last 16

SEVILLE: Wissam Ben Yedder scored his second goal of the tie as Sevilla eased to a 2-0 second-leg win over Lazio on Wednesday to reach the Europa League last 16. The record five-time winners had claimed a 1-0 first-leg victory in Rome last week thanks to a Ben Yedder strike, and the Frenchman doubled their overall lead on 20 minutes by tapping in after Pablo Sarabia's shot was saved by Thomas Strakosha.

Ben Yedder has now scored 21 goals this season, including eight in the Europa League. Franco Vazquez's sending off on the hour mark gave Lazio hope of an unlikely comeback, but visiting midfielder Adam Marusic was also dismissed 11 minutes later. Sarabia wrapped up a 3-0 aggregate success by lashing home Jesus Navas' pass with 12 minutes to play. Pablo Machin's Sevilla, who sit fourth in La Liga in the race for Champions League qualification, are playing in Europe's second-tier competition for the first time since winning their third straight title in 2015-16. — AFP

Sports

Sterling's winner caps late Man City comeback against Schalke

Sane 'sorry' for stunning free-kick against ex-club Schalke

GELSENKIRCHEN: Raheem Sterling sealed a dramatic 3-2 Champions League win for 10-man Manchester City at Schalke on Wednesday as the English champions scored twice in the last five minutes. Sterling tucked away the winner at the Veltins Arena in the 90th minute just after substitute Leroy Sane fired home a stunning free-kick for the Premier League leaders against his former club in the last 16, first leg.

Meanwhile, Leroy Sane admits feeling 'sorry' for his stunning free-kick against ex-club Schalke which helped 10-man Manchester City seal a dramatic 3-2 away win. Premier League leaders City were in trouble at 2-1 down in the last 16, first-leg tie, playing with 10 men after Nicolas Otamendi was sent off on 68 minutes, before Sane struck. "I waited for my chance and wanted to shoot from there as I had previously scored from that position and it restored our confidence," a delighted Sane told broadcaster DAZN after his equalizer. Schalke led 2-1 at half-time as the video assistant referee (VAR) twice intervened to award penalties, both converted by Nabil Bentaleb, cancelling out Sergio Aguero's opener in Gelsenkirchen.

City were in real trouble with 22 minutes left when Nicolas Otamendi, who gave away the controversial first penalty, was sent off for a second yellow card before Sane's moment of brilliance and Sterling's winner. "We will not go far in this competition unless we improve," said City manager Pep Guardiola. "At the end the quality of Sane and Sterling made the difference." However, City still have some work to do in the return

leg on March 12 with Fernandinho, who was booked when conceding the second spot-kick, and Otamendi both suspended.

Schalke are just above the Bundesliga's relegation places and winless in their last four league games, yet they gave Premier League leaders City an almighty scare. The hosts initially struggled to get out of their half as Man City dominated the opening 30 minutes, until the game swung dramatically Schalke's way with the two penalty decisions. Schalke shot themselves in the foot for City's opening goal on 18 minutes when a lazy pass from goalkeeper Ralf Faehrmann to Salif Sane was snapped up by David Silva. The Spaniard drew Faehrmann and selflessly served up a simple tap-in for Aguero to claim his 10th goal in his last seven City appearances.

Schalke sparked into life

However, falling behind sparked life into Schalke. Striker Mark Uth fired wide, then ex-Tottenham Hotspur midfielder Bentaleb got the better of Ilkay Gundogan in midfield. Likewise, a cheer went up when US international Weston McKennie nicked the ball off Kevin De Bruyne. Schalke drew level after Daniel Caligiuri fired in a speculative shot which clipped Otamendi's arm.

There was a delay of nearly three minutes for a VAR review, which Sky reported was caused by a technical problem as referee Carlos del Cerro Grande could not view the replay. Despite City's furious protests, the spot-kick was duly awarded, which Bentaleb tucked away to the de-



GELSENKIRCHEN: Schalke's German goalkeeper Ralf Faehrmann catches a ball during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 first leg football match between Schalke 04 and Manchester City on February 20, 2019. —AFP

light of the home crowd on 38 minutes and they would be celebrating again soon after. The Germans took the lead when Fernandinho pushed Senegal defender Salif Sane when a free-kick flew into the box, and VAR again intervened and another penalty went Schalke's way. Bentaleb stepped up to smash the spot-kick past Ederson

and put Schalke ahead.

The second half was a much more even affair with Schalke no longer intimidated to be playing star-studded City. In turn, the visitors' problems were compounded on 68 minutes when Otamendi clattered Schalke's replacement forward Guido Burgstaller and was dismissed. —Agencies

Things we learned from Schalke and City match

GELSENKIRCHEN: Manchester City staged a fine fightback from 2-1 and a man down to beat Schalke 3-2 in Germany on Wednesday and take a huge step towards the Champions League quarter-finals. The Premier League leaders had to work harder than imagined against a Schalke side languishing 14th in the Bundesliga as two Nabil Bentaleb penalties gave the hosts a 2-1 half-time lead after Sergio Aguero's early opener. Nicolas Otamendi was then sent off to leave Pep Guardiola's men down to 10 men, but former Schalke favorite Leroy Sane's brilliant free-kick leveled for City before Raheem Sterling completed the comeback in stoppage time.

AFP Sport looks at three things we learned from a dramatic night at the Veltins Arena: VAR issues remain. - VAR had its first big night in the Champions League and not for all the right reasons with long delays over the decisions to award City's opener and the controversial first penalty that got Schalke back

in the game. Spanish referee Carlos del Cerro Grande took an age to finally point to the spot and it was hard to argue he had made a clear and obvious error when deciding Otamendi had not deliberately handled inside the area in the first instance.

Sane sucker punch

Schalke looked set for a massive upset until the man they formed came off the bench to ride to City's rescue. Sane came through Schalke's academy before joining the Premier League champions in 2016. The German international had to wait to make an impact as he was left on the bench by Guardiola, as has often been the case this season. But the 23-year-old possesses game-changing ability and his free-kick five minutes from time swung the game and tie back in City's favour.

Late show saves more away day blues - Guardiola had to face questions before the match on his inability to win the

Champions League since leaving Barcelona, where he won the competition twice in four years in charge. The root cause of Guardiola's failure to lift the trophy in three years at Bayern and so far in his third season at City is a consistent struggle on the road in knockout games. This was just a second win for Guardiola's sides in their last 12 away games from the last 16 onwards.

The Catalan coach's decision to drop Fernandinho into the back four alongside Otamendi, with his best centre-back Aymeric Laporte again switched to left-back, backfired. If Otamendi's first yellow card for the handball leading to the first penalty was harsh, the Argentine stupidly got himself sent off with a second booking and Fernandinho is also banned for the second leg after picking up a yellow card. The star power of Sane and Sterling saved the day, but City will need to be much better on the road in tougher tests to come if they are to win the Champions League for the first time.—AFP

Chelsea face a make-or-break week: Rudiger

LONDON: Chelsea's next two fixtures will go a long way to determining the success of their season, defender Antonio Rudiger has said, with the club set to face Malmo in the Europa League on Thursday before taking on Manchester City in the League Cup final. Chelsea lead Malmo 2-1 from the away leg in Sweden but Rudiger said they could take nothing for granted in the return. "We need to be prepared because the game is not over, nothing is decided," he told Chelsea's website. "Then looking forward to the Cup final, we need to gain confidence and have a good performance."

"On Sunday it's a big game at Wembley against City and that will show our truth, or way, for the season. The truth in terms of keeping up with opponents like City, but also Liverpool and Tottenham." Manager Maurizio Sarri is under pressure after recent defeats to City and Manchester United in the league and FA Cup, where his 'Sarri-ball' tactics were denounced by the fans. "You always play for your manager but first of all you want results, you want to win," he added. "There is no player on Earth that wants the results we've had." —Reuters



Formidable Atletico stun Ronaldo, Juve

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