



7 400 troops to stay in Syria as Trump insists no U-turn



22 R&B star R Kelly jailed on sex abuse charges



24 'Abused' sisters trapped in Hong Kong risk deportation



28 Kane scores on return but Spurs fall at Burnley



Amir pardons tens of prisoners ahead of national anniversaries

Dubai celebrates national days with huge sand portrait of Amir

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah issued an Amiri decree pardoning dozens of prisoners held on various charges, the interior ministry said on Thursday. The move comes on the occasion of the 58th National Day and the 28th Liberation Day anniversaries, the ministry added in a press statement. The decree no. 38/2019 included an immediate release of 161 prisoners as of Feb 25, it said, noting that it also involves the reduction of penalties for 545 others. The order contains the lifting of judicial proceedings against 97 prisoners (illegal residents) and the dropping of fines against 1,074 others, the statement added.

The Amiri decree comes after fruitful cooperation amongst the Amiri Diwan, the public prosecution and the interior ministry to accelerate completing the list of prisoners, it made clear. The aim of this order is to give a chance to those who are released to benefit the society, according to the statement. The Amiri forgiveness is conditional, assistant undersecretary for implementing verdicts Maj Gen Farraj Al-Zokhbi was quoted in the statement as saying. He explained that if any of the released inmates commits a crime, they will be jailed again. He expressed his gratitude and appreciation to HH the Amir's initiative.

Meanwhile, Dubai on Thursday celebrated Kuwait's national days with a

170,000 cu ft sand portrait of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in the sands of the Dubai desert. On his official Twitter account, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum posted a clip of Emirati youth drawing the Amir's photo in the sand. "This image embodies the fraternity, unity and strong bonds between the two sisterly nations," Sheikh Mohammad tweeted.

He stressed that "the love of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti people is engraved in our land, hearts and history. We wish 'the Kuwait of Love' and its Amir, the Humanitarian Leader, a new year of glory, progress and peace". At Dubai airports, volunteers with Kuwaiti flags received arriving Kuwaiti travellers with flowers, sweets and gifts, and greeted them on the occasion.

Kuwait Consul General in Dubai Theyab Al-Rashidi praised on Friday the brotherly initiative made by the UAE. Rashidi said in a statement to KUNA that this initiative by Sheikh Mohammad affirms the deep and brotherly relations between the UAE and Kuwait. "This portrait reflects the personal love Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid has for His Highness the Amir," Rashidi said. "The UAE has regularly surprised us with celebrations of the Kuwaiti national holidays, which always have a special place in Kuwaitis' hearts," he added. — KUNA



DUBAI: A sand portrait of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen in the Dubai desert. — KUNA

Day into emergency rule, Bashir names VP, prime minister

KHARTOUM: President Omar Al-Bashir named a new prime minister yesterday as he pressed on with a shakeup at the top, even as protest leaders dismissed his move to impose a state of emergency across Sudan to quell nationwide demonstrations. Bashir's three-decade rule has been rocked by two months of protests that a deadly crackdown has failed to suppress. On Friday, he imposed a nationwide state of emergency and dissolved the federal and provincial governments.

In a televised speech to the nation, the veteran leader pledged to form a government of technocrats to address Sudan's chronic economic woes, which have been the driving force behind the protests. Yesterday, Bashir sacked his vice president and long-time ally Bakri Hassan Saleh, replacing him with Defense Minister General Awad Ibnouf.

Continued on Page 24

Bootleg alcohol kills 98 in India, 200 hospitalized

GUWAHATI, India: Ninety-eight workers have died and at least 200 others have been hospitalized in northeastern India after drinking toxic liquor, officials said yesterday, in the latest case of alcohol poisoning in the country. The deaths in Assam state came less than two weeks after tainted liquor killed about 100 people in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. In addition to the latest toll, at least 200 more people were still hospitalized, according to a statement by the Assam government.

Golaghat district deputy commissioner Dhiren Hazarika said people started falling sick after consuming a batch of illegally produced liquor late Thursday. The victims, who include many women, worked at local tea estates in the region. The death toll could rise further as both officials said some of the afflicted were in a critical condition. "The people came to the hospital with severe vomiting, extreme chest pain

Continued on Page 24



GOLAGHAT, India: A patient who drank toxic bootleg liquor is treated at Kushal Konwar Civil Hospital in this district in the northeastern Indian state of Assam yesterday. — AFP

Trump and Kim lookalikes held for questioning



HANOI: US President Donald Trump impersonator Russel White and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un impersonator Howard X pose together for photographs outside the Opera House on Friday. — AFP

HANOI: Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump impersonators were held for questioning by Vietnamese police after they appeared in Hanoi, where the US and North Korean leaders will meet next week for a second summit. Kim impersonator Howard X and Donald Trump lookalike Russell White staged a "meeting" in downtown Hanoi Friday ahead of

a second summit between the real Trump and Kim on February 27-28 in the Vietnamese capital.

About 10 police officers later showed up at a local TV station where they were giving an interview, and told them to stop making media appearances or risk being deported.

Continued on Page 24

Saudi crown prince meets Xi, bags oil deal

BEIJING: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met China's President Xi Jinping on Friday and bagged a \$10-billion oil deal, pressing on with his diplomatic charm offensive in Asia. Prince Mohammed arrived in Beijing on Thursday following visits to Pakistan and India. "China is a good friend and partner to Saudi Arabia," Xi told Prince Mohammed in a meeting in the Great Hall of the People. "Saudi Arabia's relations with China can be traced back a very long time in the past," the crown prince said. "Over such a long period of exchanges with China, we have never experienced any problems with China." He met with Chinese Vice Premier Han Zheng earlier on Friday.

"Is the crown prince's tour symbolic of Saudi Arabia's pivot to the East? Yes," Najah Al-Otaibi, a senior analyst at the pro-Saudi think-tank Arabia Foundation, told AFP. "Riyadh wants to strengthen alliances in Asia - especially now with the continuing fallout with the United States over (Saudi journalist Jamal) Khashoggi's murder and other issues and attempts by the EU to put Riyadh on a black list over money laundering allegations."



BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping receives Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Great Hall of the People on Friday. — SPA

But China is looking to strengthen its economic ties with the kingdom, as Beijing pursues its ambitious Belt and Road trade infrastructure initiative, while Riyadh rolls out "Saudi Vision 2030" - the crown prince's major program to diversify the national economy away from oil. Mohammed told the Chinese President they could join the two projects "to realise more progress and jointly confront challenges". Vice Premier Han suggested during his meeting with the crown prince that the two countries deepen part-

nerships in energy, infrastructure construction, finance, and high-tech.

Riyadh's national oil giant Saudi Aramco said it had signed an agreement to form a Saudi-Chinese joint venture - worth more than \$10 billion - to develop a refining and petrochemical complex in northeastern Liaoning province. The Saudi Arabian General Investment Authority also announced the signing of 35 non-binding memorandums of understanding, including deals related to energy, mining, transportation

Continued on Page 24

Local

Amir heads to Egypt today to take part in Arab-EU summit

Sharm El-Sheikh summit to open new horizon in Arab-Europe relations

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is heading with an official accompanying delegation to Egypt today to participate in the Arab-European summit, scheduled to take place in the city of Sharm El-Sheikh.

The EU-Arab summit is held amid aspirations to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the Arab League and the European Union to promote regional and international security and stability. The two-day summit is the first of its kind between the two sides, especially in light of their emphasis on the importance of dialogue between the Arab and European regions. Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, whose country is hosting the summit, stressed that this is an "excellent opportunity" to find common ground to address regional issues. "The Arab world is Europe's first partner," Sisi said during a meeting at the Munich Security Conference last week. Sisi noted that Sharm El-Sheikh summit is an "important step" for the development of relations between the two sides, pointing out that stability and security in the Arab region is affected by stability and security in Europe.

Greater cooperation

Klaus Iohannis, the current president of the European Union, also stressed the importance of the first EU-Arab summit in light of the need for deeper and greater cooperation. Iohannis affirmed that it is time to hold a summit of European and Arab leaders, expressing optimism that all problems could be resolved through joint action and dialogue on regional crises, migration, economic development and security cooperation. On February 17, the European Union said that the EU-Arab summit, to be held under the chairmanship of Egyptian President and European Council President Donald Tusk, aims to strengthen relations between the two sides. The summit will focus on a number of common issues and challenges, the most important of which are multilateralism, trade, investment, migration and security, in addition to the situation in the region, said the EU in statement.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed About Gheit said in a joint press conference at the end of the Brussels meeting that the two sides pledged to make additional

efforts to ensure the implementation of UN resolutions, the Security Council and various related initiatives, especially the Arab peace initiative in the Middle East. EU High Representative for Foreign, Political and Security Affairs Federica Mogherini affirmed that the two sides "agree" on 95 percent of all issues under discussion. During the press conference, Mogherini pointed to the "conformity" of the positions of the EU and the Arab League on the most important current regional crises, noting that the two sides agreed on finding a political solution to the crisis in Syria and their adherence to the two-state solution in the Middle East peace process. She noted that the ministers



Summit aims to enhance cooperation

focused in the joint meeting, which she described as "good and constructive" on the regional and international challenges facing the two parties, including "terrorism," climate change, migration and the human rights situation in the world.

Kuwait participated in the joint ministerial meeting in Brussels with a delegation headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The EU-Arab summit is likely to address a number of regional issues and common challenges affecting the Arab and European regions such as the situation in Libya, the Syrian crisis, the peace process, combating terrorism and illegal immigration, as well as ways to enhance cooperation between the two sides in various fields. Observers see the importance of establishing the first EU-Arab summit bases of institutional and permanent cooperation between the two sides in the framework of a



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

strong partnership that meets the aspirations and interests of both sides to promote peace, security and prosperity in the two regions.

New horizon

The meeting of European and Arab leaders in Sharm El-Sheikh is historic in all sense of the word. The summit between the 28-member European Union and the 22-member League of Arab States (LAS) will bring together for the first time ever heads of state or government

from both sides. Mogherini lamented in a recent press conference in Brussels that "with the League of Arab states we never had a summit before and this is the paradox of our region."

"This is our closest partner in terms of regional dimension, in terms of geography, history and cultures," she said and noted that the EU holds regular summit with Asia, African Union, Latin America, China and the US, but "we never had a summit with the Arab world." A senior EU official told journalists in Brussels Friday that leaders from both sides will seek to strengthen Arab-European ties. They will address a wide range of issues and common challenges, such as multilateralism, trade and investment, migration, security, the situation in the region including Palestine, Syria, Yemen, Libya.

The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that 24 EU leaders out of 28 will be present at the Sharm El-Sheikh a clear indication of the high importance and value that Europe is attaching to the two-day meeting. Tusk will represent the EU along with the European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. Mogherini and the EU Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Johannes Hahn will also attend the summit.

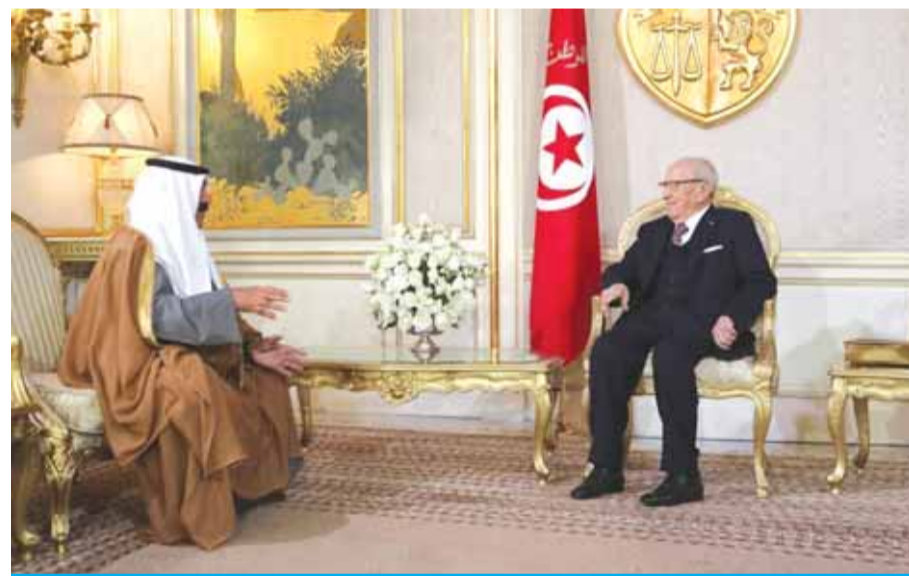
A common past, geographical proximity and interdependence have contributed to strengthen cooperation between the EU and the Arab world. Working together will also further enhance the multilateral, rules based global order, said the official. "The key word is engagement and this summit is not against anybody," clarified the official. "We do not see eye-to-eye on all issues as we see reality in different terms. But we agree that there can be no military solutions (to the regional crises)," said the EU official. The two sides are working on the text for the final statement expected to be released by the summit. Foreign ministers from the EU and the LAS held a meeting in Brussels on February 4, 2019 to prepare for the summit. "Whatever happens in the Arab world affects Europeans and whatever happens in Europe affects the Arab world. We have the responsibility of joining forces to find common solutions to common challenges," Mogherini told reporters after that meeting. — KUNA

Tunisian President thanks Kuwait for support

TUNIS: Tunisian President Beji Caïd Essebsi on Friday thanked Kuwait for the support it gives to Tunisia to achieve success in democracy and economic growth. The Tunisian Presidency said in a release, during the reception of Kuwait's First

Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, that the bilateral ties between the two countries are firm and dominated by affection. It noted that Kuwait has an important role in supporting the Tunisian economy in general and the Tunisian tourism sector in particular.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah expressed his appreciation to the fraternal ties between Kuwait and Tunisia, and he also showed confidence in Tunisia to defeat all the challenges it faces. The meeting was attended by Kuwait's Ambassador to Tunisia Ali Al-Dhafiri, and Tunisian Ambassador to Kuwait Ahmad Al-Sagheer. — KUNA



TUNIS: Tunisian President Beji Caïd Essebsi meets with Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Saudi Arabia honors Kuwaiti singer

RIYADH: Saudi Deputy Minister of Culture Hamed bin Mohammad honored Kuwaiti

veteran singer Abdulkareem Abdulqader at the Maraya Theater, part of the Winter at Tantora Festival at Al-Ula County. A performance by singers Majed Al-Muhandes and Rashed Al-Majed, who also sang some of Abdulqader's songs, was held in honor of the Kuwaiti singer. Winter at Tantora began on December 19, and hosted many artists and singers, including Andrea Bocelli, Yanni, Omar Khairat, Majda Al-Roumi and Mohammad Abdo. — KUNA



RIYADH: Kuwaiti singer Abdulkareem Abdulqader is honored during the Winter at Tantora Festival in Saudi Arabia. — KUNA

Kuwait regrets critical conditions in Central Africa

NEW YORK: Kuwait has voiced regret at very critical conditions in Central African Republic where half of the population are in dire and urgent need for humanitarian aid — a country where security has remained largely fragile despite noticeable conciliation efforts among warring parties. The number of people, half of whom children, who need assistance and protection in the CAR, has recently climbed from 2.5 million to 2.9 million, 16 percent higher as compared to figures of the same period in 2017, said Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the United Nations, Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi, during a session of the UN Security Council (UNSC) on the African country, held late on Thursday.

"Considering the fact that the most significant development in the CAR since last UNSC session to debate conditions in that country, on February 7, 2019, was the inking of the conciliation agreement by the CAR Government with the 14 armed groups and representatives of the civil society, I join those (states) that have expressed satisfaction for inking this accord officially on February 6, 2019, under umbrella of the African Union, according to the African initiative for peace and reconciliation, with backing and facilities from the United Nations," said Otaibi.

Ambassador Otaibi expressed gratitude to the Sudanese Government for hosting negotiations in Khartoum on January 24-February 5, 2019, and expressed hope that the deal would end armed strife that have been witnessed in the republic since 2012. He lauded the stakeholders' decision to establish a follow-up mechanism to oversee effective implementation of the political concord. There have been positive developments with respect of some African strife, he said, singling out the conciliation efforts between Ethiopia and Eritrea, also observing that there has been noticeable stability in



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks during the session of the UN Security Council (UNSC) on Central African Republic. — KUNA

Somalia, a concord worked out for South Sudan, security improvement in Darfur, first peaceful power transition in the Democratic Republic of Congo, along with emerging chances to establish peace in North Libya.

"These positive winds that constitute a glimmer of hope in the African continent could not have been available without efforts by the African Union, regional organizations, desire of the African states' governments to attain development and enforce tangible security, with UN support, and undoubtedly due to the cooperation by the regional states among themselves," Otaibi continued.

The Kuwaiti representative hoped cooperation among concerned parties would proceed till establishing a comprehensive and lasting peace in all regions of the CAR that are rich in natural and human resources, so that people may enjoy security and stability and capitalize on progress and development efforts in the run-up to presidential election the years 2020 and 2021. Nevertheless, violent incidents in the CAR remain a significant challenge to the government, Otaibi said, affirming that, in spite of the political progress, conditions in the CAR capital, Bangui, and some regions in the African republic, have remained unstable.

Since flare-up of violence in the CAR in 2013, security conditions in the African country have remained alarming due to escalation of clashes

among the warring armed groups and parties, as a result of inflammatory rhetoric of hatred, religious and sectarian incitement, he adds. Moreover, he expressed concern due to the recurring violations and attacks by radical armed groups on UN staff and the UN mission entrusted with seeking stability in the republic, as well as workers of philanthropic agencies.

Ambassador Otaibi strongly denounced these assaults, some of which have targeted Muslims and their religious symbols and sacred worshipping places. Equally, he condemned all attacks on peoples of diverse religions and their sacred shrines and places where they practice their rituals. The senior Kuwaiti diplomat expressed support for efforts by the CAR authorities to halt armed action, educate the people to restrain the rhetoric of hatred and bolster the principle of peaceful co-existence among all segments of the society. Furthermore, Otaibi affirmed that the government must bring to account all culprits of violence, cancel the culture of pardoning criminals, urgently, and prosecuting them for sake of conserving the peace. If the efforts of dialogue culminate with success and sustainable concord among all the political parties in the CAR, there will be positive impact on the humanitarian, economic and conditions as well as development in the country, in addition to return of the displaced and the refugees, he has concluded. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard's (KNG) training and operations commander Major General Faleh Shoja' Faleh and a number of KNG officers recently visited the King Fahad exhibition at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.

Local

More than 421,000 passengers to use airport during national holidays

Including 202,750 departing and 218,390 arriving passengers

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A special plan is in place to facilitate passenger traffic at Kuwait International Airport as thousands of travelers are expected to use the busy terminal during the national holidays. Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) figures show that 421,140 passengers are expected to use Kuwait airport during the 10 days from Feb 21 to March 2, 2019, including 202,750 departing and 218,390 arriving passengers.

The total number of passengers travelling through Kuwait airport this year is twice the number of those who travelled last year, when the national holidays were for only five days. DGCA's deputy director for aviation and air transport safety Emad Al-Jelawi said. He noted that DGCA's operations department is fully coordinating with the interior ministry and the customs department.

Performance evaluation

Several departments at the Ministry of Social Affairs have already completed evaluating their employees' performance pending granting them excellent performance bonuses, said informed sources, noting that the ministry has set no deadline to receive the evaluation reports and that it needs at least a month after receiving them to input the data into the system, taking into consideration that the ministry has around 7,000 employees.

Notably, the excellent performance bonus is set according to seniority, with a maximum of KD 2,000 for assistant undersecretaries, KD 1,500 for directors, KD 1,250 for managers, KD 1,000 for heads of departments, KD 800 for employees in grade four, KD 600 for employees in grades 8-5 and KD 300 for employees doing supplementary jobs.

Fish farming

Head of the ports projects committee at Kuwait

Ports Authority Essa Abdullah said the authority had approved the fish farming project to be constructed in collaboration with Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and Kuwait Municipality. In a letter he sent to the municipality, Abdullah stressed that the project is approved provided it does not conflict with future plans to build the authority's southern port included in Kuwait structural plan for the southern region.

Road projects

Minister of Public Works (MPW) and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri met representatives from Kuwait University, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Defense Ministry and Public Authority for Roads and Transportation to discuss plans to pave various roads with a new layer of asphalt, said informed sources. The sources added that ideas and visions were exchanged on when to commence the plan, noting that a further meeting would be held on Thursday to define the role to be played by each of the participating bodies.

In a related development, the sources said Bushehri reviewed the public works ministry's plan to fill vacant leading positions in various sectors and the ministry's structural organizations and the possibility of amending it. The sources added that Bushehri urged various sectors to submit their proposals by mid-March, when a meeting would be held to make the final decision and report it to the Civil Service Commission.

Municipal proposals

Responding to a proposal made by the Municipal Council's deputy chairman concerning shading the Naayem scrap market, Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi said according to law number 33/2016, the scrap market in Naayem comes under the Public



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows passengers at Kuwait International Airport. — KUNA

Authority of Industry (PAI). Meanwhile, the municipality's deputy director for organization Mohammad Al-Zobi said a proposal by Municipal Council member Ahmed Al-Hadban concerning planting trees in various desert areas will be taken into consideration and that the needed coordination would be made with various related bodies including the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources.

In another development, a proposal by former councilmember Abdullah Al-Kandari concerning allocating special locations for vending trucks and providing them with power, toilets and garbage containers in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the National Fund for SME Development and Touristic Enterprises Company (TEC) was approved. Zobi said, noting that the approved locations will include under-construction residential areas, parks' parking areas, parking spaces outside sport clubs, TEC parking areas and sites used by government bodies to hold public ceremonies.

Mohammad Al-Sabah and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas and Plenipotentiary Minister Reem Al-Khaled attended the Middle East Strategic Alliance Political and Security Pillar Consultations between the GCC, Egypt, Jordan and the US. The talks, held in Washington, discussed means to boost cooperation and coordination between these countries in all domains, particularly politics and security. They were also attended by Brig Gen Mohammad Al-Dhafiri and Lt Col Sheikh Sabah Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and other senior officials. — KUNA

Kuwait attends political-security talks in Washington

WASHINGTON: Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Office Affairs Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-



WASHINGTON: A group picture of officials attending the Middle East Strategic Alliance Political and Security Pillar Consultations between the GCC, Egypt, Jordan and the US. — KUNA

Security forces geared up to keep order during celebrations

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior is executing a full-scale plan to maintain law and order throughout the country during the national days' celebrations. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Interior Undersecretary Essam Al-Naham have given instructions to the concerned officers to secure facilities for easy traffic, as well as for the citizens and residents of the country, said Brig Tawheed Al-Kandari, the acting director general for public relations and security media at the ministry. Ministry personnel are ready to deal, promptly, with any situations for sake of preserving public security and order, as well as for facilitating traffic flow and providing facilities to the nationals and residents, he affirmed in a press statement. The ministry will stage intensive patrols and deploy units at road intersections to take instant action against reckless conducts and behaviors, he warns. Najda Police are also involved in the extraordinary law and order operation. He has revealed that up to 5,292 personnel and 1,619 vehicles will be deployed for executing the special plan during the national occasions. Brig Kanderi urged citizens and expatriates to cooperate with the security and traffic forces for sake of keeping public safety. — KUNA



Brig Tawheed Al-Kandari

MPs should have say in UN reforms: Kuwaiti lawmaker

NEW YORK: Inter Parliamentary Union's (IPU) deputy head of UN affairs committee Safaa Al-Hashem said Friday that MPs should have a say in UN Security Council's reforms, and parliaments should ultimately endorse plan to reform the UNSC. "Any reform plans will ultimately be at the table of many national parliaments, and parliamentary committees should examine government's positions regarding UN reforms," Hashem, a Kuwaiti MP, said in a speech before a meeting of IPU's Standing Committee on UN Affairs.

Hashem called on importance of reforming UNSC in order to reflect the "current international reality," citing the rising number of UN members, emergence of oil economic and military powers. Countries and regions should be better represented at the UNSC, she

said, in order to boost the credibility and legitimacy of the council. Hashem said use of veto by five permanent members resulted, in many cases, in failure of UNSC to restore international peace and security, because those countries would weigh their personal interest on top of the general ones.

Hashem, meanwhile, said the recent IPU assembly called for punishing UN peacekeepers who sexually assaulted local civilians. She cited a proposed solution by South Africa to form a mobile military court to prosecute any peacekeeper convicted of committing crimes. Hashem noted that coming week would mark the anniversary of the liberation of Kuwait from Iraq, when forces invaded the North Gulf State in August 1990 and occupied the State seven months until they were driven out by an international coalition in February 26, 1991. She said when the UNSC became united, just like when it was like during the Iraqi invasion, international peace and security would be maintained.

Meanwhile, Hashem praised the "symbolic" participation of UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres at the IPU Assembly in April. The plans are an "important step in illustrating the



NEW YORK: Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) deputy head of UN affairs committee Safaa Al-Hashem attends a meeting of IPU's Standing Committee on UN Affairs. — KUNA

UN's support for the IPU's role and boosts cooperation between both," the Kuwaiti lawmaker said after attending talks between Guterres and the IPU head. The meeting highlighted challenges facing the UN Palestinian refugee

relief agency, UNRWA, in regards to unearthing sustainable funding solutions to prevent a budget deficit, she said. The issue will continue being a topic of discussion at the Doha-held IPU Assembly in early April, she added. — KUNA

local spotlight

National holidays

By Muna Al-Fuzal

Muna@kuwaittimes.net

With the beginning of the weekend and the national holidays, which fall on Monday and Tuesday this week, many of us have been feeling a calm on the streets - I mean less traffic congestion, which is expected as this year's holiday is almost a week long. The national and liberation day holidays are only for two days, but as usual here, they have been extended for a week. Maybe some will remain on vacation until the end of this week, so things will only get back to normal again by Sunday.

Now, how do we celebrate the national holidays? Let me start with the water scene. Young people will run in the streets with water sprays or foam or I don't know what else, encouraged by parents. Stores will be delighted to sell all these harmful and annoying tools, making big profits. Kids and teenagers will end up spraying millions of gallons of water under the pretext of celebrating the national days and bringing joy to the hearts of young people. I fail to see any connection between celebrating the national holiday and harming people.

How do nations celebrate their national holidays? Most countries of the world celebrate this day with carnivals, fireworks and military parades. As for us, the celebrations start by wasting water, raising large flags on cars, dancing in the streets, and annoying people and pedestrians, especially those waiting for the bus or taxi.

How can the state intervene and stop it? I think through the environment police, the state can penalize all the people who allow their children to spray water on pedestrians and cars on the streets. The state should impose steep fines on violators who expose the lives of people to danger and harm and spray people with water, foam or any other substance that puts the lives of innocent people at risk. Is it not the duty of the state to prevent such ill behaviors?

Those scenes have become common during the past years and I do not know if this scene will be repeated this year too, but time will tell. I wonder how much clean water will be wasted, while in some parts of the world, people are dying of thirst. It's good that some people can travel abroad to visit their families during the week-long holiday, and those who own chalets can stay away and be comfortable. Some may avoid going out unless they want to participate in the so-called national processions and spray people with water on roads that are full of potholes and loose gravel.

I see that whoever has traveled during this national holiday did well. I was not so lucky this time. I will spend most of the time reading, watching movies and monitoring the conditions on the streets. Happy holidays!

Gulf militaries take part in joint drills in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: The Gulf Cooperation Council army, navy and air forces are taking part in the two-week 'Joint Peninsula Shield 10' military drills held in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Region, the Saudi military said yesterday. The exercises aim to improve coordination, exchange expertise and raise efficiency between the neighbouring Gulf states' militaries, Joint Forces Commander Maj Gen Abdullah Al-Qahtani told Saudi News Agency (SPA). Kuwait's military had announced on Wednesday that its units departed the country to join its Gulf counterparts. The "huge and advanced exercises," which include academic and wartime scenario-based training, aim to prepare the troops in handling different situations in order to ensure regional and global security and stability, added the commander. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The sun sits over a camp in the country's southern desert. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwaiti embassies worldwide celebrate national days



Kuwait's embassy in Rome celebrates the national days.



Kuwait's embassy in the Netherlands celebrated the national days.

KUWAIT: Kuwait's embassies have continued celebrating the 58th National Day and 28th Anniversary of Liberation Day, as well as the 13th anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's accession to the senior post. The State of Kuwait's Ambassador to Germany, Nejuib Abdulrahman Al-Badr, held a broad reception: attended by Bundestag chairman Thomas Oppermann, senior officials, VIPs, Arab and foreign diplomats, renowned social and cultural personalities.

Ambassador Badr addressed the guests, expressing congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, the leadership and people of Kuwait on the accomplishments that have been made since the 1961 independence of the Gulf state. Germany, during the 1990-1991 aggression on Kuwait, presented the Gulf country with significant financial and logistical support, although the European nation was preoccupied with re-unification, he has recalled.

In Rome, the charge d'affaires, Counselor Samir Al-Zamanan, received well-wishers on the national occasions at the Grand Hotel in the Italian capital. Among the incoming VIPs were representatives of the Italian president, the prime minister, ministries, ranking military officers, the FAO and other international agencies. In Budapest, the ambassador, Dr Hamad Bou-Rehama, held a reception at the Marriott Hotel, marking the two national occasions as well as the 13th anniversary of His Highness the Crown Prince accession to the leading post. More than 700 personalities, including officials and diplomats, attended the activity. At a corner of the reception venue, Kuwaiti artifacts and relics were displayed.

In the Czech Republic, the envoy Rashed Al-Hajeri organized a similar activity. He addressed the attendees, noting that the State of Kuwait has been playing a key role, through its UN Security Council membership, for establishing global security and peace. Meanwhile, the embassies in Austria and Mauritania, followed suit. Sadeq Maarefi, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Austria and the Permanent Representative to the International Organizations in Vienna, affirmed on the national occasions, the people's allegiance to the sagacious leadership. Khaled Al-Shibani, the envoy in Mauritania, held a gathering to mark the occasions, boasting of the solid and brotherly relations between his country and Mauritania.

Also, the Kuwaiti embassies in Slovakia and Senegal celebrated the country's national holidays. Ambassador to Slovakia Issa Al-Shimali addressed heartfelt tributes 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 the kind people of Kuwait, on the happy occasions. The envoy added that he was greatly elated with reliving these occasions that depict the close bonds between the sagacious Al-Sabah leadership and people of Kuwait. Accomplishments that have

been made for developing the homeland are largely attributed to the shrewdness and vision of His Highness the Amir, he affirms.

In Dakar, Senegal, the Kuwaiti diplomatic mission held a broad reception at the hall of the Great Theatre in the city. The reception was attended by senior officials, diplomats and media personnel. Ambassador Saleh Al-Sagabi expressed congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, the well-guided government and the people of Kuwait on the national days. Kuwaiti missions worldwide have been celebrating the national days. Marks of the celebrations are also visible in Kuwait, with national flags decorating public places and children wearing dresses depicting it. Many people have also adorned their cars and vehicles with the flag.

In The Hague, Kuwaiti Ambassador to the Netherlands Abdulrahman Al-Otaibi extended his congratulations 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, the Kuwaiti people and government. "Under His Highness the Amir's instructions and guidance, our country will prosper more and more and have a good standing in the international community," Otaibi said. He also expressed his happiness toward the guest turnout at the reception representing the Dutch government, international institutions such as the International Court of Justice and Organization for Prevention of Chemical Weapons, in addition to foreign diplomats, journalists, artists, and business representatives. "We are also celebrating the establishment of the 55 years of relations between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the state of Kuwait," said the Kuwaiti diplomat. "Our relations are excellent. But our ambition is to push ahead for many more achievements and more progress in cultural and economic domain, as well as to boost people-to-people contacts," Otaibi added.

In Jakarta, the Kuwaiti Ambassador Abdulwahab Al-Saqer greeted his guests that included, notably, Indonesian Deputy Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Arcandra Tahar, in addition to state officials, Arab diplomats and nationals, and Kuwaiti nationals in the country. Saqer expressed his joy toward marking the occasion, extending, in his name and on behalf of the embassy's staff, utmost congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, and the Kuwaiti people on the advent of national celebrations. He also wished perpetual development and stability for both countries under their wise leaderships, lauding their "distinctive" bilateral relationship in all fields. Meanwhile, Tahar extended his congratulations to the Kuwaiti leadership, government, and people on the national celebrations, wishing further progress and prosperity for the Kuwaiti-Indonesian relationship and people.

In Phnom Penh, Head of Mission at the Kuwaiti

Embassy Zaher Al-Khurainej lauded, while addressing guests of the embassy's reception, the Kuwaiti-Cambodian relationship and Kuwait's humanitarian efforts in Cambodia through its philanthropic societies, Awqaf ministry, and Zakat House. He also extended his congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, Al-Sabah ruling family, and the Kuwaiti people on the national celebrations.

In Rabat, Kuwaiti Ambassador Abdullah Al-Yahya expressed his utmost congratulations to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince, and the Kuwaiti people on the advent of the national festivities. The large Moroccan and Arab guest turnout at the embassy proves the distinguished place that Kuwait and its wise leadership enjoy on Arab, regional, and international levels, in addition to its multiple honorable stands in favor of members of the international community, including Morocco, said Al-Yahya. The Kuwaiti-Moroccan relationship continues to prosper, the Kuwaiti diplomat affirmed, wishing the two countries and people further progress and prosperity under their wise leaderships.

In the meantime, the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Greece Saud Faisal Al-Dowaish hosted a reception that gathered senior Greek officials foremost among who were Minister of Foreign Affairs Giorgos Katrougalos and Minister of Defense Admiral Evangelos Apostolakis, as well as representative of the parliament speaker, head of the parliament's international relations committee, secretary general of the Foreign Ministry, undersecretary of the Ministry of Economy, undersecretary of the Ministry of Finance, deputy chief of staff of the Armed Forces and commander of the Naval Force. The dignitaries in attendance also included dozens of MPs, representatives of the political parties, religious leaders, business leaders, media celebrities, and heads of the foreign diplomatic missions based in Greece.

On behalf of the Embassy staff, Ambassador Al-Dowaish congratulated 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 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people on his occasion. Speaking at the function, he recalled Kuwait's valiant struggle to gain independence and liberation, and paid homage to the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the dignity and prosperity of "our dear homeland." Ambassador Dowaish prayed to God that Kuwait will continue to enjoy security and peace under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir - the humanitarian leader, and His Highness the Crown Prince. "The Kuwaiti people are proud of the great achievements made in strengthening the role of the constitutional institutions and deepening the democratic principles, which thanks to the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir, turned Kuwait into a haven

of stability and security amid the turbulent conditions in the neighborhood," he stressed.

Ambassador Dowaish renewed gratitude to the people and government of friendly Greece for their honorable stance in support of Kuwait during the Iraqi invasion in 1990 and contributing to the international coalition to liberate Kuwait. He expressed Kuwait's determination to augment the relations with Greece in all domains through the joint ministerial committee on economic and technical cooperation which is scheduled to meet on March 13-15. Minister of Finance Dr Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf will lead the Kuwaiti side in the meeting, which is expected to lead to several agreements and memoranda of understanding on cooperation, he added.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Consulate General in the Pakistani city of Karachi held a function to mark the 58th National Day and the 28th Liberation Day. The ceremony was attended by Sindh Province Governor Imran Ismail, Chief Minister of the Sindh Government Murad Ali Shah, heads and staff members of Gulf and foreign consulates as well as a large number of political, economic, and media figures. Kuwaiti Consul General in Karachi Mohammad Abdullah Al-Khaledi congratulated 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, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and Kuwaiti people on these dear occasions. Khaledi wished Kuwaiti people everlasting peace, security, stability and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Furthermore, Kuwait's Embassy in Portugal held a reception to mark the country's 58th National Day and 28th Liberation Day. Speaking to the attending crowd at the Epic Sana Lisbon Hotel, Ambassador Sheikh Fahad Salim Al-Sabah expressed joy over the occasion. He congratulated 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 His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the Kuwaiti people. The event was attended by Chief of Staff of the Presidential Palace Pereira Coutinho, Advisor for International Affairs to the President of the Portuguese Republic Portuguese Ambassador ANA Martinho, Chief of the Presidential and Foreign Ministry Protocol Clara Nunes dos Santos, External Policy Department Sub-Director Ana Paula Moreira and Director of the Maghreb and Middle East Affairs Department Pedro Carneiro. Also attending were Portuguese politicians, Presidential Advisor for International Affairs Ana Martinho and lawmakers Duarte Pacheco, Lara Martinho and Manuel Caldeirinhas as well as several Arab and foreign diplomats. — KUNA

Local

Professional Certificate in English Language Teaching program concludes at AMIDEAST

US Ambassador congratulates new batch of graduates



KUWAIT: US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman speaks during the ceremony.



US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman honors one of the graduates.



A graduate receives her certificate from US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman. —Photos by Joseph Shagra

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The closing ceremony of the Professional Certificate in English Language Teaching (PCELT) program was held on Thursday at AMIDEAST's headquarters in Sharq. US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman congratulated the new batch of graduates. "The US Embassy is proud to fund PCELT for the third straight year in an effort to enhance the teaching of English in Kuwait," he said.

The envoy extended his gratitude to Suzan Al-Bashiti and to "all our friends at the ministry of education" for their generous support of the PCELT program. "I know that taking teachers away from their schools for a month is not easy. But I think you would agree that the benefits far outweigh the temporary dislocations. We appreciate your recognition of the value of this training, and we value the partnership that we have built with you to help enhance the skills of Kuwaiti teachers," he said.

Silverman said everyone must continue learning throughout their lives. "I hope you all feel that this training was well worth the time and energy you invested in it and that you will not only impart this knowledge to your students, but share it with your fellow teachers - to multiply the effect of this course," he added. He said he himself witnessed the transformation when he

met the last set of teachers taking the course. "I saw the transformative effect of the training, the new confidence the teachers exuded and the eagerness they showed to apply the techniques they had learned and share them with their colleagues," he said.

Silverman said that with their help, Kuwait seeks to prepare its young people to be competitive and productive members of the national workforce. He added that strong English skills will ensure that Kuwaitis can access information, communicate and take part in the global competition that will drive innovation and economic growth. "Education is a key dimension of the US-Kuwait relationship at the ministerial level. When Secretary of State Pompeo visits Kuwait soon for the third US-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue, we will discuss how we can improve our cooperation in education and academic exchanges."

Silverman took pride in his nation's global standing, which remains the top study abroad destination for Kuwaiti students. "We believe that no other country can offer Kuwaitis the variety and high quality of universities that are found in the US, and that a US education is the best preparation to succeed here in Kuwait. We at the US Embassy stand ready to help build these educational bridges in any way we can," the ambassador concluded.

Kyrgyz pavilion set up at Sabah Al-Ahmad village

KUWAIT: Kyrgyz Minister of Culture Zhamankulov Azamat Kaparovich said on Friday a pavilion representing his nation was set up at Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village for partaking with Kuwait in its national celebrations. The minister was speaking to journalists after he opened the section at the village, located west of the Kuwaiti capital. It marked the 25th anniversary of establishing ties between the two country. Meanwhile, the general supervisor of the village and the Amiri Diwan Advisor, Mohammad Daifullah Sharar, indicated that the pavilion depicted the special relationship between the two states. Special celebrations and activities have been planned at the site on the national occasions. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kyrgyz Minister of Culture Zhamankulov Azamat Kaparovich and the general supervisor of Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village and the Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Daifullah Sharar open the Kyrgyz pavilion.



A band performs at the Kyrgyz pavilion. —KUNA

long live Kuwait



Burgan Bank Group would like to extend its congratulations to Kuwait and its people on the occasion of the National and Liberation days. May every year bring happiness and prosperity to our beloved country.

Burgan Bank Group:
Kuwait - Turkey - Algeria - Iraq - Tunisia - UAE - Lebanon

Contact us on: [f](#) Burgan Bank Official page [t](#) @burganbankgroup [v](#) Burgan Bank [i](#) @burganbankkuwait [s](#) +965 55804080

For more information call 1804080, or visit www.burgan.com

بنك بروتان
BURGAN BANK
driven by you



India, Pakistan crank up war of words over Kashmir bombing

Warning issued over attacks on internet infrastructure



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis (right) addressing cardinals and bishops during the third day of a global child protection summit for reflections on the sex abuse crisis within the Catholic Church, at the Vatican. —AFP

Nun scolds bishops at abuse summit

Why did we keep silent for so long? Nigerian nun asks

VATICAN CITY: A Catholic nun told bishops yesterday to acknowledge the church's hypocrisy in its handling of the sexual abuse crisis, and a cardinal admitted case files had been destroyed. Sister Veronica Openibo, a Nigerian who has worked in Africa, Europe and the United States, spoke with a soft voice but had a strong message for the prelates sitting before her, telling them: "This storm will not pass".

She delivered her talk at the start of the penultimate day of a Vatican summit of some 200 senior Church officials convened by Pope Francis to confront what he has called the scourge of sexual abuse by the clergy. "We proclaim the Ten Commandments and parade ourselves as being the custodians of moral standards and values and good behavior in society. Hypocrites at times? Yes! Why did we keep silent for so long?" she said.

She told the pope, sitting near her on the dais, that she admired him because he was "humble enough to change your mind," apologize and take action after he initially defended a Chilean bishop accused of covering up abuse. The bishop later resigned. "How could the

clerical Church have kept silent, covering these atrocities? The silence, the carrying of the secrets in the hearts of the perpetrators, the length of the abuses and the constant transfers of perpetrators are unimaginable," she said.

She spoke of her shock when she watched the 2015 Oscar-winning film *Spotlight*, which uncovered how Church leaders in Boston moved predator priests from parish to parish instead of defrocking them or turning them over to civil authorities. "At the present time, we are in a state of crisis and shame. We have seriously clouded the grace of the Christ-mission," Openibo said. "We must acknowledge that our mediocrity, hypocrisy and complacency have brought us to this disgraceful and scandalous place we find ourselves as a Church. We pause to pray. Lord have mercy on us!" she said.



Four-day conference ends on today

Destroyed files She said Church leaders must shed their habit of hiding events for fear of making a mistake. "Too often we want to keep silent until the storm has passed. This storm will not pass by. Our credibility is at stake," she said, adding that the Church's male hierarchy should allow more women to be involved in fight against abuse. German Cardinal Reinhard Marx called for more "traceability and transparency" in dealing with the issue, such as limiting pontifical secrecy in cases of abuse handled by the Vatican, releasing more statistics and publishing judicial procedures.

"Files that could have documented the terrible deeds and named those responsible were destroyed, or not even created. Instead of the perpetrators, the victims were regulated and silence imposed on them," Marx, a

leading progressive, said. "The rights of victims were effectively trampled underfoot, and left to the whims of individuals," Marx said. "The thoughts of some abuse victims can be summarized as follows: If the Church claims to act in the name of Jesus, yet I am treated so badly by the Church or its administration, then I would also like to have nothing to do with this Jesus," he said. The abuse crisis has made 2018 one of the toughest years for the pope since his election in 2013.

Chile's 34 bishops offered to resign over the scandal, the pope's trip to Ireland exposed decades of abuse in the once staunchly Catholic nation and a grand jury in Pennsylvania revealed priests sexually abused about 1,000 people over seven decades in that US state alone. Victims, some of whom told painful stories of abuse and cover-up when the conference began on Thursday, rallied in a Rome square before a march to the Vatican to demand change and justice. The conference ends today when the pope will make a final speech. The Vatican says it will formulate follow-up measures to make sure all bishop return home knowing how to put anti-abuse procedures into place. —Reuters

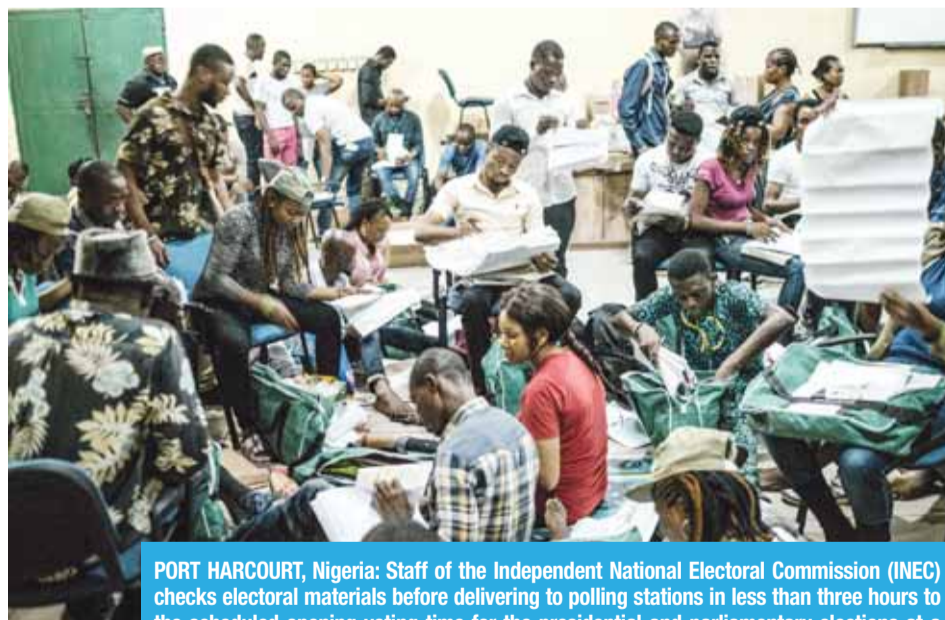
Delays, threats and attacks fail to deter Nigerian voters

LAGOS: From first-time voters and the displaced to the elderly and infirm, Nigerians on Saturday defied delays, intimidation and violence to cast their ballots. The presidential and parliamentary elections are the sixth since the return of civilian rule in 1999 and are seen as another step forward on Nigeria's democratic journey. But while focus may be on the two main candidates, President Muhammadu Buhari, and Atiku Abubakar, most voters said regardless of who wins, they just want life to improve.

"I came out because I want to vote for a good leader," said 80-year-old Hannatu Audu Kallo, as she waited to vote in Buhari's home town of Daura, in northwest Nigeria. "I don't have much time left on Earth and my concern are my grandchildren... A secure future for my grandchildren is my reason for coming out to vote," she said. The election was supposed to have taken place last Saturday but was delayed because of difficulties in delivering ballot papers and other election material. In Lagos, the country's megacity commercial capital in the southwest, there were chaotic scenes as vehicles expected to distribute ballots and staff failed to arrive on time. Materials were instead stuffed into motorized three-wheeled rickshaws and whisked away to polling units.

Civic right

Across the mainly Muslim north, men and women waited patiently in separate queues to register and vote, braving high temperatures and crowds. Voting was taking place at nearly 177,000 locations across Nigeria, with polling units set up under trees, on open scrubland, in schools and by the roadside. In Daura, civil servant Musa



PORT HARCOURT, Nigeria: Staff of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) checks electoral materials before delivering to polling stations in less than three hours to the scheduled opening voting time for the presidential and parliamentary elections at a Regional Area Centre in Port Harcourt, southern Nigeria. —AFP

Abubakar, 45, said the week-long delay was "unfortunate" but he was not discouraged. "It's a sacrifice we have to make for a better Nigeria."

"I don't mind how long it takes me to cast my vote. If it is going to take me the whole day to vote I'll stay until I exercise my civic right and vote for my choice." In the northeastern city of Maiduguri, dense crowds surrounded polling booths set up in camps for those made homeless by Boko Haram, just hours after another attack. "The election is going on peacefully for now," said Goni Ali, a former speaker of the Borno state parliament, as he voted with displaced from the Abadam area in Maiduguri.

Warnings have been sounded about vote-buying during the campaign, and there were reports of sporadic violence to coerce people to vote for a particular candidate. Explosions were heard as voting got under way in the southern city of Port Harcourt, the hub for Nigeria's oil and gas industry. Police and residents blamed "hoodlums" setting off

dynamite to scare voters away from opposition strongholds. "In this state, we're used to this kind of thing," said local resident Godspower Ekaete. "We only hope it does not escalate into violence."

Rich vs poor

Enthusiastic voters had been in line from before dawn. With traffic banned from the streets during polling, many children took the rare opportunity to play football in the empty streets. "I want to vote for the candidate that will improve my life," said Jude Nwoke, 19, a first-time voter in Port Harcourt. For many, improvement means a better economy, with Nigeria limping out of recession and the gulf growing between the haves and have-nots. Most of the 72.8 million voters are among the latter. "The stakes are big this year," said Emmanuel Udayi, 34, a businessman in Kaduna. "The economy is really bad compared to 2015, the unemployment rate is high. We... want a government enabling equal competition not only favouring the elite." —AFP

US 'House of Horrors' couple pleads guilty to torturing kids

LOS ANGELES: A California couple pleaded guilty Friday to imprisoning and torturing 12 of their 13 children in a grisly "house of horrors" case that gained international attention. David Allen Turpin, 57, and his wife Louise Anna Turpin, 50, each pleaded guilty to 14 felony counts—including one count of torture and three counts of willful child cruelty—involving their children who range from three to 30 years old, the Riverside County District Attorney's office said.

There were no charges involving the youngest child. "This is among the worst, most aggravated child abuse cases that I have ever seen or been involved in my career as a prosecutor," District Attorney Michael Hestrin told reporters following the court hearing. Hestrin said he was satisfied with the plea as it would spare the children from having to testify at a trial. "We needed to determine whether proceeding to trial was worth having the victims testify in this case that has received worldwide media attention," he said.

"We decided that the victims have endured enough torture and abuse. I personally met with the victims and, rest assured, they all are relieved to know this case has been resolved." The elder Turpins, who had initially pleaded not guilty in the case, face between 25 years to life in prison at their sentencing in April. The case came to light last year when one of the children - 17-year-old daughter Jordan-escaped through a window from the couple's home in the town of Perris, about two hours southeast of Los Angeles, and called the emergency services.

'They chain us'

According to excerpts of the call released during court proceedings, she told the dispatcher that two of her siblings were chained to their beds so tightly that their skin was bruised and she struggled to tell the operator the home address. "I've never been out. I don't go out much," the teen said in the call. She told responding officers that the house was so dirty she couldn't breathe and that she and her siblings never took baths.

"They chain us up if we do things we're not supposed to," she said. "Sometimes, my sisters wake up and start crying (because of the pain)." An officer who interviewed the teen after her escape said she was so emaciated that he first thought she was a child. He said the girl described a routine in which the children were forced to sleep 20 hours a day and in the middle of the night ate a combination of lunch and dinner that most often consisted of peanut butter sandwiches, chips and microwaved food.

Hestrin said during previous court hearings that the children had been subjected to prolonged abuse, were allowed to shower once a year and never saw a doctor. "If the children were found to wash their hands above the wrist area, they were accused of playing in the water and they would be chained up," he said. One of the older children also told investigators that the couple would lock him and his siblings in cages as punishment and beat them with paddles.

Since their rescue, the children have been in the care of child and adult protective services. "I met with all the victims prior to today, all of them, including the three-year-old," Hestrin said. "I was very taken by them, by their optimism, by their hope for their future. They have a zest for life and huge smiles and I'm optimistic for them. And I think that's how they feel about their future." The Turpins moved from Texas to California in 2010. Investigators have said it is unclear what prompted the abuse. Under California law, both will be eligible for parole in 25 years because of their age. —AFP

International

Clashes as hundreds protest fifth term for Algeria leader

Dozens arrested in protests against fifth term for Algeria president

ALGIERS: Security forces arrested 41 people during angry protests that rocked Algeria's capital against ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika seeking a fifth term, authorities said yesterday. Police fired tear gas on Friday afternoon to block a protest march on the presidential palace, prompting demonstrators to respond with stone-throwing. The Directorate General for National Security (DGSN), said yesterday it had detained 41 people over "public disorder, vandalism, damage to property, violence and assault". Despite the arrests, protests around the country were largely tolerated by authorities, even in the capital, where demonstrations have been strictly banned since 2001.

The police did not give an estimate of the number of protesters, but a security official speaking on condition of anonymity said that around 20,000 people had demonstrated nationwide, around a quarter of them in Algiers. The official said 38 of the arrests were in the capital, and that no security personnel had been wounded. Activists had used social media to call for nationwide protests against Bouteflika on Friday after weekly Muslim prayers. The 81-year-old, who uses a wheelchair and has rarely been seen in public since suffering a stroke in 2013, announced on February 10 that he will run for another term in an April presidential election.

Clashes broke out in the Algerian capital between security forces and demonstrators opposed to a bid by ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika to run for a fifth term. AFP correspondents said. Police in riot gear fired tear gas and set up a security cordon to block access to the presidential palace by demonstrators who responded with stone-throwing. Hundreds of demonstrators had gathered despite a ban on protests in the capital, for a march which also took them to the Mediterranean city's landmark Grand Post Office. The clashes broke out when some protesters headed for the palace, four kilometers away and a number of arrests were made.

"No fifth mandate," chanted the mostly young demonstrators,

many waving Algerian flags, as they started to march through central Algiers. "Ouyahia, get out!" the crowd also cried, referring to Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, a Bouteflika loyalist heading the government for a third term. Some demonstrators in Algiers scaled the outside of a building and tore down a poster bearing the portrait of the 81-year-old president. An official ban on demonstrations in Algiers was imposed in 2001. But in February 2018, thousands of trainee doctors tried to hold a protest at the same venue. They were rapidly encircled and their path blocked by police.

Activists used social media to call for Friday rallies against Bouteflika across the country after the weekly Muslim prayers, also filling the main square in Annaba, 400 kilometers east of Algiers with demonstrators, the TSA news website said. Other gatherings were reported in several other cities, including in Oran, Algeria's second largest. French-language daily El Watan, on its website, said crowds also gathered in Ourgla where it said "thousands of demonstrators chanted "the people want the fall of the regime", the slogan of the Arab Spring revolts of 2011.



'Ouyahia, get out!'

'Routine medical tests'

Bouteflika, who uses a wheelchair and has rarely been seen in public since suffering a stroke in 2013, announced on February 10 that he will run for another term in April presidential polls. He spoke of an "unwavering desire to serve" despite his health constraints and pledged to set up an "inclusive national conference" to address political and economic reforms. His office has announced that Bouteflika will travel to Switzerland on Sunday for "routine medical checks" ahead of the April 18 election. He has had a long battle with illness and frequently flown to France for treatment. Bouteflika is Algeria's longest-serving president and a veteran of its independence struggle, who has clung to power for two decades despite long years of ill health. Even before his stroke, a year before the last presidential polls, Bouteflika had repeatedly shown himself to be a wily political survivor.



ALGIERS: Algerian protesters take part in a demonstration against Algeria's president candidacy for a fifth term in Algiers. Abdelaziz Bouteflika's decision to seek a fifth term as president stirred mixed reactions in the Algerian society. —AFP

He came to power in 1999 with the support of an army battling Islamist guerrillas. He ran unopposed for the presidency in polls later the same year and has been re-elected since 2004 with an official tally each time of more than 80 percent of the vote. "Boutef", as many Algerians have nicknamed him, was instrumental in fostering peace after a decade-long civil war in the 1990s. Known for wearing a three-piece suit even in the north African nation's stifling heat, he gained respect from many for his role in ending the war, which official figures say killed nearly 200,000 people.

But he has also faced criticism from rights groups and opponents who accuse him of being authoritarian. After his stroke, Bouteflika consolidated power in a country where the shadowy intelligence service has long been viewed as a "state within a state". When the Arab Spring erupted in January 2011, Bouteflika rode out the storm by lifting a 19-year state of emergency and using oil revenues to grant pay rises. In early 2016, he dissolved the all-powerful DRS intelligence agency after dismissing its leader General Mohamed Mediene, known as "Toufik", who had clung to the post for a quarter of a century. —Agencies

France kills Al-Qaeda commander in Sahel

BAMAKO: French armed forces have killed a top jihadist leader in an air and ground ambush in Mali, the government said yesterday, ending a years-long hunt for a man accused of masterminding the kidnapping of Westerners in the Sahel region. Djamel Okacha, an Algerian commander in Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), was killed on Thursday after French commandos, helicopters and a drone hit a column of vehicles he was travelling in north of Timbuktu, French officials said.

Okacha, a jihadist veteran known also as Yahya Abou El Hamame, was "the mastermind and financier of several attacks," the defense ministry said. US officials had accused him of kidnapping a number of Westerners in North and West Africa. French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe arrived late Friday in the capital, Bamako, along with Defense Minister Florence Parly, on a visit to show "support" for Mali, where some 4,500 French troops have been deployed since 2014 to retake the north of the country after it fell to jihadist fighters.

Earlier Parly had described the killing of the jihadist commander as a "spectacular action", saying it followed a manhunt which lasted several years. His death "deals a very

hard blow to terrorist groups in the Sahel," she said. "When commandos approached, (jihadist) pickups opened fire, prompting the helicopters to return fire," a spokesman for the French military command said. A total of 11 "terrorists", including El Hamame, were killed, he said. El Hamame is suspected of involvement in the 2009 assassination of a US citizen, Christopher Leggett, in Mauritania, along with an attack the same year against the French embassy in Nouakchott.

Jihadist history

El Hamame reportedly served as AQIM's "governor" in Timbuktu when the city was held by Islamist militants from April 2012 to January 2013. The jihadist commander was believed to be second in command of the Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM), also known as Nusrat al-Islam, led by Iyad Ag Ghali. The group was formed by the merger of Ansar Dine, the Macina Liberation Front, Al-Mourabitoun and El Hamame's Sahel branch of AQIM. El Hamame, aged about 40, took charge of Al-Qaeda's operations in southern Algeria and northern Mali in 2013 when he replaced Abdelhamid Abou Zeid, who was himself killed in fighting French-led forces in northern Mali.

El Hamame rose in the ranks of the group despite not having gone to Afghanistan as other key militants such as Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the one-eyed Islamist leader who masterminded an assault on an Algerian gas plant that left 37 foreign hostages dead in January 2013. Born in the north Algerian town of Reghaia, El Hamame spent 18 months in



BAMAKO: French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe (2nd right) visits the Kabala water treatment plant in Bamako yesterday, during a two days visit in Mali. —AFP

prison in Algeria in the 1990s when the country was mired in Islamist violence. In addition to French troops in Mali, around 15,000 peacekeepers have been deployed in the country as part of the United Nations stabilization mission known as MINUSMA. This followed the signing of a peace accord in 2015 between the Bamako government and armed groups.

'Sustained cessation of hostilities'

The US-based Carter Center, an independent observer to the implementation of the accord, released its third report on Friday noting "the sustained cessation of hostilities between the signatories" but

stressed that "the core commitments of the agreement remain unfulfilled." The actions needed include "creating the new, decentralized political system, including devolving significant powers to the regions and putting in place the reconstituted armed forces through the equitable integration of the ex-combatants," said the report from the center founded by former US president Jimmy Carter. But jihadist groups have continued operating in Mali and neighboring countries. Supported by France, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger have formed the so-called G5 Sahel group to fight the jihadists. —AFP

In Nigeria's Kaduna, cry of 'thief' sparks mass murder

KADUNA: Kajuru district in northern Nigeria once boasted a number of bustling villages with Christian farmers of the Adara tribe living side-by-side with Muslim Fulani herders. But since February 11, it has been a place of desolation. At the end of several hours of dirt track, the Fulani village of Unguwar Busa, which was previously home to Adara and Fulani camps, is deserted. All that is left of the round mud huts of the herders are fire-blackened walls. Motorcycle carcasses, burnt cooking pots and the metal skeletons of beds litter the barren landscape.

In a village that was once abuzz with the sounds of people going about their lives, only bird song and cricket chirps pierce the near-deathly silence. On the eve of presidential elections scheduled for last Saturday but delayed at the last minute, the governor of Kaduna state said 66 people had died in fresh fighting between Adara and Fulani. A few days later, he adjusted the toll to 130. The reality is that no-one knows the exact

body count, nor what really happened. There are as many versions as there are people in these parts.

According to witness testimonies gathered by AFP, a dozen Adara farmers were killed on February 10 just a few kilometers from Kajuru. According to pastor Yohanna Buru, this was revenge for the killing of two Fulani nomads "after trespassing on a farm with their herds."

'Living together 50 years'

A day after the Adara killings, attackers armed with traditional rifles and machetes - their faces masked or painted with charcoal - burst into Unguwar Busa and a dozen other Fulani encampments. "We don't know who attacked the Fulani," said Dio Dogora, one of the few remaining inhabitants of the area. "We have been living together for more than half-a-century. What happened is terrible. Even our own people (Christians) have fled the village." Husaina Saidu, eight months pregnant, was taken to the hospital at Kaduna with wounds sustained in the attack. But her biggest pain is not knowing where her husband is. Is he dead, buried in a mass grave with dozens of other Fulani neighbors still missing?

Shooting everywhere

"They came into our home and started shooting everywhere. In a panic, I saved myself by running away with my children," the 25-year-old said. Doctors had



KADUNA, Nigeria: A policeman checks the remains of a burned house at Unguwar Busa in Kaduna yesterday. —AFP

to extract 13 home-made bullet fragments from the belly of her oldest child, four-year-old Ibrahim. Stories like these are all too common in Kaduna state, in the midst of a fertile agricultural belt. The ongoing strife between Muslim herders and Christian farmers, which claimed nearly 2,000 lives in 2018 and displaced hundreds of thousands of others, is a divisive issue for Africa's most populous country of some 190 million people.

And in this highly-religious nation —

made up of a mosaic of more than 200 ethnic groups - any rumor can prove explosive. Sensitive to the tinderbox conditions, local police chief Ahmad Abdulrahman refused to be drawn on the death toll. "It may be more, it may be fewer" than the official tally, he told a press conference. "In a crisis of this magnitude it is better to await the results of the investigation before giving any figures," he added, in a bid to calm rising passions. —AFP

High turnout, low expectations for first EU-Arab summit

CAIRO: Egypt will host the first joint summit of Arab League and European Union leaders starting today, a gathering overshadowed by internal divisions in both alliances and last-minute talks on Brexit. The two-day summit at the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh is billed as a starting point for the two regional bodies to boost cooperation on shared strategic priorities including migration, security and climate change. Economic development, the Palestinian question, and the conflicts in Libya, Syria and Yemen are also up for discussion.

But after a build-up in which officials struggled to settle on an agenda or final declaration, expectations for concrete action on any of those subjects are modest at best. "We don't see on all these issues eye-to-eye with the Arab world," said a senior EU official. "But interdependence calls for dialogue and mutual engagement. Whatever happens there is very relevant to us and vice versa." More than 20 European heads of state or government will be at the summit, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister Theresa May.

But many confirmed their attendance only after it became clear that neither Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir nor Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman would show up. The Saudi de facto ruler has been shunned since US-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October, and the Saudi delegation is expected to be led by King Salman. Bashir is subject to an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court and facing protests in which dozens have been killed. —Reuters

As US troops stay in Syria, Trump insists no U-turn

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump insisted yesterday he was not pulling an about-face on his Syria withdrawal plans, after it was announced hundreds of US troops would remain in the war-torn country. The White House quietly dropped the news late Thursday that around 200 American "peace-keeping" soldiers would remain in northern Syria indefinitely, amid fierce criticism of Trump's decision to withdraw America's more than 2,000 troops there by April 30. "I am not reversing course," Trump said at the White House, noting that 200 soldiers was only a "very small, tiny fraction" of the overall presence.

Senior Republican Senator Lindsey Graham heralded the move, claiming the residual forces would somehow catalyze a bigger presence by European allies who had balked at the idea of committing troops to Syria minus an American ground presence. "This 200 will attract probably 1,000 Europeans," Graham said in an interview with Fox News. Trump, an avid Fox viewer, said he watched Graham and supported leaving "a small force with others. Whether it's NATO troops or whoever it might be, so that (IS) doesn't start up again."

Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Sean Robertson said the US troops would be part of a "multinational observing and monitoring force" that would be made up "primarily" of NATO allies in a northeast Syria "safe zone." Robertson added the US would also maintain its presence at Al-Tanaf, a desert garrison in southern Syria where some 200 US soldiers are presently based. Trump declared victory over IS in December despite thousands of fighters remaining and a continued effort to clear jihadists from a final scrap of territory. The decision prompted his defense secretary Jim Mattis to quit. —AFP

International

Venezuela in aid showdown; Guaido claims military help

Venezuela opposition confronts border troops

CUCUTA: Venezuela braced for a showdown between the military and regime opponents at the Colombian border yesterday as self-declared acting president Juan Guaido vowed humanitarian aid would enter his country despite a blockade. Socialist leader Nicolas Maduro has vowed not to allow in the aid, which he's dismissed as a show and pretext for a US invasion. Humanitarian aid has become the centerpiece of the stand-off between Maduro and Guaido, the 35-year-old leader of Venezuela's National Assembly who declared himself interim president exactly one month ago.

Guaido has accused Maduro of rigging his re-election and is demanding a new vote. Venezuela is gripped by a humanitarian crisis that has seen poverty soar during years of recession. As many as 300,000 Venezuelans are in dire need of food and medicine after years of shortages and malnutrition, according to Guaido. United Nations figures show that some 2.7 million people have fled Venezuela since 2015 amid the crisis, and some 5,000 Venezuelans emigrate from their country each day.

On the eve of the face-off Guaido defied a government ban on leaving the country and attended the "Venezuela Live Aid" concert organized by British billionaire Richard Branson just over the border in Colombia. The concert is aimed at raising funds to help the relief effort. Guaido sensationally claimed that the Venezuelan military, whose high command has repeatedly declared absolute loyalty to Maduro, "participated in this process" to get him into Colombia.

Hours later, Caracas said it had closed much of the Colombian border, citing threats to Venezuela's security. Guaido said that aid would come in regardless of any military blockade. His supporters plan to drive the aid from Colombia into Venezuela at the closed border crossings supported by a flood of volunteers and accompanied by Catholic priests in an attempt to avoid arrest. Colombia and Venezuela share a 2,200 kilometer

(1,370 mile) long border, and trucks carrying aid could also drive across some of the countless illegal dirt roads that link the two countries across the porous border.

Two killed

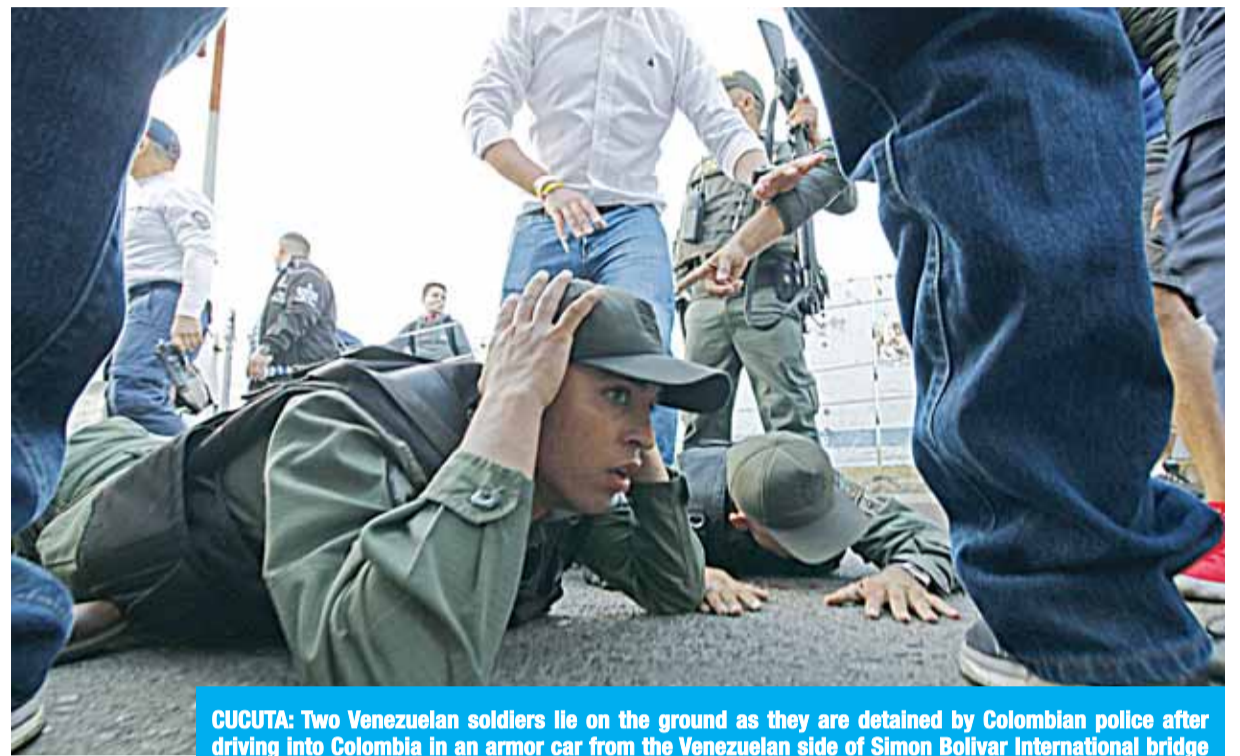
On Friday the tense stand-off turned deadly when two people were killed and 15 wounded as they tried to prevent Venezuelan troops from blocking an entry point on the Brazilian border. "An indigenous woman and her husband were killed and at least 15 other members of the Pemón indigenous community were injured," said a local human rights group, Kape Kape. The clash occurred in southeastern Bolívar state close to the border with Brazil, which Maduro ordered closed on Thursday. Guaido called on the military to arrest those responsible for the killings, "or you will be responsible." "It wasn't a clash, it was an attack," said Salomon Perez, who accompanied a brother and two nieces suffering from gunshot wounds by ambulance to a hospital in Brazil.

Venezuela gripped by humanitarian crisis

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged Venezuelan authorities to refrain from using lethal force against protesters. The United States "strongly condemns the Venezuelan military's use of force against unarmed civilians and innocent volunteers" on the border with Brazil, the White House said. "The world is watching," the statement added. Early yesterday two large trucks carrying eight tons of emergency aid left Boa Vista in Brazil en route to the Venezuelan border. The vehicles are driven by Venezuelans and escorted by Brazilian police, organizers said.

Battle of the bands

The "Venezuela Live Aid" concert, which featured some of the biggest names in Spanish-language music, was broadcast live online. Branson said he hopes to raise \$100 million for humanitarian aid over the next 60 days via internet donations. Meanwhile aid is being



CUCUTA: Two Venezuelan soldiers lie on the ground as they are detained by Colombian police after driving into Colombia in an armor car from the Venezuelan side of Simon Bolivar International bridge yesterday. —AFP

stockpiled in Colombia, Brazil and the Caribbean island of Curacao because of Maduro's ban. Guaido rallied his supporters when he showed up at the concert on Friday joined by Colombian President Ivan Duque, Chile's Sebastian Pinera and Mario Abdo of Paraguay. The leaders greeted the crowd before the concert ended.

Maduro's rival concert, decidedly smaller and featuring Cuban and local artists, began hours later nearby on the Venezuelan side of the border in Urena. Performers took to the stage against a giant backdrop emblazoned with the words "#Trump Hands off Venezuela," with around 2,500 people in attendance. "We don't want to be interfered with, we don't want to be invaded," said Johana Suarez. Maduro said the event would last until

today. Maduro, who has support from China, Russia and the military high command, accuses the United States of plotting a military intervention.

Moscow has blasted Washington for using aid as a "convenient pretext for conducting military action." US special representative Elliott Abrams kept up the foreign pressure on Friday when he joined a Cucuta-bound plane carrying medical supplies and food. Peter Hernandez, a former Bolivarian National Guard member who fled Venezuela nine months ago and settled in Cucuta, told AFP that he was urging his ex-comrades "to think about your families, because that aid is... for everyone, and the Venezuelan people these days have great needs." —AFP

News in brief

2 monks sentenced to death

CAIRO: An Egyptian court yesterday sentenced two monks to death over the murder of a bishop, a judicial source said, in a case that shocked the Middle East's largest Christian community. Coptic Bishop Epiphanius was found dead with a head wound in July at the Saint Macarius monastery in the plains of Wadi Al-Natrun, northwest of Cairo. Prosecutors said one of the monks Isaiah confessed to striking the abbot with a metal bar as the second monk Philotheos kept watch. The authorities blamed the killing on unspecified "differences" between the two monks, one of whom was later defrocked, and the bishop. The sentence against the two monks was referred to Egypt's Grand Mufti. The country's top theological authority is required by law to give its legally non-binding opinion in cases of capital punishment. —AFP

40 guns for 'personal protection'?

BEIRUT: A Lebanese lawmaker said yesterday he had received 40 Swiss guns for his "personal protection" after Switzerland said some of them had gone missing and suspended arms deliveries to Lebanon. "We are surprised by the fuss in the media... and we confirm they are in the possession of MP Ghazi Zeaiter's escort," his office said in a statement carried by Lebanon's official NNA news agency. Zeaiter, a former agriculture minister and deputy with the Shiite movement Amal for the Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon, bordering war-devastated Syria, said they were purchased for his "personal protection". Swiss authorities announced the suspension of arms sale to Lebanon on Thursday because three quarters of a consignment of 40 guns had gone missing and an inspection mission been unable to account for them. —AFP

Acid truck spill kills 20

KINSHASA: About 20 people died on Wednesday when a truck carrying acid to Glencore's Mutanda Mine in Democratic Republic of Congo collided with two other vehicles, Glencore said yesterday. The accident occurred in the evening about 50 kilometers from the copper and cobalt mine in the southeast of the country. The truck was owned by a logistics company contracted by the mine, Glencore said, without giving its name or any other details on whether those who died were all workers at its mine. It said in an emailed statement to queries from Reuters that it "will continue to work with the logistics company and relevant government agencies, including the emergency services to provide support". —Reuters

Apps send intimate data

SAN FRANCISCO: A news report Friday said many smartphone apps were sending highly personal information such as menstrual cycles and body weight to Facebook, without notifying users. The Wall Street Journal report based on its own in-house tests showed that intimate data could be shared with Facebook using a tool designed to help target ads, even if app users were not members of the leading social network. Information collected by apps included personal details regarding body weight, pregnancy status, ovulation, and home shopping, according to the Journal. Facebook said data sharing across apps on iPhones or Android-powered devices is standard industry practice when it comes to how mobile advertising works. —AFP

Forced to beg, Senegal's 'talibes' face abuse and exploitation

SAINT-LOUIS: An eight-year-old boy fled his Quranic school in Saint-Louis, Senegal this month after he said a teacher threatened to beat him for not earning enough money begging on the street. Hours later, alone in the corner of a low-lit bus station, he was raped by a teenager. The child, whose name is not disclosed for privacy reasons, was rescued mid-assault by a local non-profit called Maison de la Gare that patrols Saint-Louis at night battling what has become a deep-rooted problem in Senegalese cities: thousands of young boys sent to religious schools end up begging on the streets, or worse.

"These things are still shocking, even when it is the tenth or fifteenth time you see them," said Maison de la Gare's founder, Issa Kouyate, referring to the boy's case. A Reuters witness also saw the rape before it was stopped. Teachers from the school the boy fled declined repeated requests for comment. His parents were not reachable.

Kouyate said that he was making inquiries about the background of the teenager who committed the rape, and will then report him to the police. On Thursday, Saint-Louis police said in response to a phone call from Reuters seeking comment that the appropriate officer for such a case was not available to speak. On Friday,

Accused of bullying staff, Amnesty top brass offers to quit

NEW YORK: Apologizing for a workplace climate of bullying, harassment and public humiliation, top officials at the influential rights group Amnesty International offered to resign in a letter made public on Friday. Working conditions at Amnesty were exposed in a review, launched after the suicides of two staff members last year, that found "organizational culture and management failures" were the root cause of deep staff unhappiness. The poor management compounded job pressures for the Amnesty staff of about 2,500 who routinely work on cases of detentions, disappearances, killings, torture and other human rights abuses around the world, an external review found.

Amnesty's senior leadership team members wrote in their letter that they "take shared responsibility for the climate of tension and mistrust." "Whilst it was never our intention to inflict pain on anyone, we must accept that this did unfortunately occur," they said in the letter dated Feb. 21, 2019. "Everyone of us is ready to step aside." The head of Amnesty, Secretary-

Reuters calls to the police station went unanswered. Families across Senegal have long enrolled their children in schools called daaras to learn Islamic scripture and build character. Historically, part of that teaching included begging for food to instill humility.

Many daaras are free from problems of abuse. Success in a daara and strong knowledge of the Quran can lead to a prestigious position as an Imam or a Quranic teacher, known as a marabout. Many parents, often far away back home, are unaware of the risks some children face in the process, said Mamadou Gueye, 57, who works with abused children in Saint-Louis. In recent decades, some rights groups say the school children, called talibes, have at times been kept by marabouts in dire conditions, forced to beg for money and beaten if they do not come back with enough. There are no safeguards for children who escape and then themselves alone on the streets, they say.

Learning karate

The ill-treatment of talibes was a largely taboo subject in Senegal, but awareness campaigns have slowly provoked debate. President Macky Sall, who touts himself as a modernizing president with a series of large infrastructure projects to his name, in 2016 launched a plan ordering the removal of children from the streets and said those who force them to beg would be jailed. About 300 hundred were helped by the program in 2018, government figures show. "These are our children, and we are trying to involve everyone in protecting them," said Alioune Sarr, head of Child Protection in the

General Kumi Naidoo, said he may not accept all the resignation offers but that his priority is to rebuild trust. "These are dangerous times, and Amnesty is needed now more than ever," he wrote in an emailed statement on Friday.

The scathing 56-page external review cited a "disconcerting" number of incidences of bullying, racism and sexism and multiple cases of managers belittling and publicly humiliating staff and making "demeaning, menacing", profanity-filled comments. Poor handling of an effort to decentralize the organization from its London base and put staff in high-risk regions put workers' lives in unnecessary turmoil, the review, revealed late last month, said. Triggering the review were the deaths of Gaetan Mootoo, a 30-year Amnesty veteran who killed himself in Paris in May 2018, leaving a note citing work pressures, and Rosalind McGregor, a 28-year-old intern in Geneva who killed herself in July 2018.

Efforts by the organization to address its problems have been "ad hoc, reactive, and inconsistent," the report said, and the senior leadership team was described by staff as out-of-touch, incompetent and callous. The leadership team members signing the letter were the senior directors of research, the secretary-general's office, global fundraising, global operations, people and services, law and policy and campaigns and communications. —Reuters



PIKINE, Senegal: A masked man performs a dance as supporters of Senegal's presidential candidate Madicke Niang attend a rally in The Alassane Djigo Stadium in Pikine. —AFP

Senegalese government. The government has set up a free hotline to report cases of child abuse, he said. The issue has come into focus ahead of Sunday's presidential election. Two of the five candidates, Ousmane Sonko and Issa Sall, said their programs include measures to regulate the daaras system and end child begging.

Human Rights Watch says over 100,000 children are still sent out to beg. In Saint-Louis, as in the capital Dakar, groups of children weave through traffic asking for money, wearing shorts and ragged football shirts bearing the names of their millionaire heroes. At Maison de la Gare, talibes can eat a sandwich, shower,

wash their clothes and receive first aid assistance. There are opportunities to learn English and play sport.

"I'm learning karate so I can defend myself," said eight-year-old Demba, who said he was once forced by a teacher to stay out all night and beg for money, only to be robbed by a drunk man at 6 am. He did not give the name of the marabout, or the school. After being away from home, Demba expressed mixed feelings about the family that sent him to the school in the first place. "I no longer feel anything towards my parents," Demba said. "I don't even know if I'm angry at them or not." —Reuters

Chagos Islands: International dispute and human drama

PARIS: Britain separated the Chagos Islands from its colony Mauritius more than 50 years ago, expelling the entire population to make way for a strategic US military base. Britain's 1965 acquisition of the remote Indian Ocean archipelago of about 55 islands has been disputed ever since, with Mauritius demanding its return. As the UN's International Court of Justice (ICJ) prepares to give a legal opinion on the long-running case on Monday, here is some background.

Indian Ocean colony

Located several hundred kilometers (miles) south of the Maldives, the Chagos Islands were colonized by France in the 18th century and African slaves shipped in to cultivate coconuts and copra. In 1814 France was made to cede the islands to Britain, which in 1903 merged them with Mauritius, its colony around 2,000 kilometers to the southwest. After the abolition of slavery in 1834, Indian workers arrived and

mixed with the first settlers. Only three of the islands were inhabited: Diego Garcia, Salomon and Peros Banhos.

Mass eviction

In 1965 Britain separated the Chagos islands from the rest of Mauritius, then a semi-autonomous British territory and eyeing independence, paying three million pounds for them. When Mauritius became independent three years later, the islands remained under British control, renamed the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). In 1966 Britain leased the islands to the United States for 50 years so that it could set up a military base. In 2016 the deal was extended to 2036. Between 1968 and 1973 around 2,000 Chagos islanders were evicted, described in a British diplomatic cable at the time as the removal of "some few Tarzans and Man Fridays". Most were shipped to Mauritius and the Seychelles. Mauritius argues it was illegal for Britain to break up its territory. It claims sovereignty over the archipelago and demands the right to resettle former residents.

Strategic military base

The US military base on Diego Garcia, the largest island, became of major strategic importance during the Cold War. It offered proximity to Asia as an assertive Soviet navy was extending communist influence in the Indian Ocean. —AFP

International

India, Pakistan crank up war of words over Kashmir bombing

'Don't mess with Pakistan,' army spokesman warns

NEW DELHI: India will use "all instruments at its command" to respond to Pakistan over its alleged role in a deadly bombing in Kashmir, a government minister said on Friday, hours after Islamabad warned it would respond with "full force" if attacked. Tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors have escalated since a suicide car bomb in the disputed region of Kashmir killed 40 Indian security personnel. Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed claimed responsibility for the attack.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who faces a general election by May, has said he has given a free hand to security forces to avenge the killings in Kashmir. "India will exercise all instruments at its command, whether it is diplomatic or otherwise," Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said in New Delhi. "India has all options. You need not exhaust all options on day one. This is not a one-week battle. It's to be undertaken in various forms."

Referring to Islamabad's alleged support for Islamist militant groups, he added, "I think Pakistan is riding a tiger on this issue, and a tiger never spares its own rider." Pakistan said on Friday it had seized Jaish's headquarters in a southern district of Punjab province bordering India. Jaish, a jihadist group that seeks the independence of all of Kashmir from India, has offices and infrastructure in Pakistan where its leader, Maulana Masood Azhar, is based.

Authorities had taken over Jaish's headquarters in Bahawalpur and appointed an administrator to look after its affairs, a government statement said. It said the headquarters and an attached seminary has 600 students and 70 teachers. India's top military commander in Kashmir has alleged that Pakistan's main Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) spy agency was involved in the attack. "We have no intention to initiate war, but we will respond with full force to (a) full spectrum threat that would surprise you,"

Pakistani army spokesman Major General Asif Ghafoor told reporters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi. "Don't mess with Pakistan."

Offer of dialogue

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan urged India on Wednesday to share any actionable evidence about the bombing, offering full cooperation in investigating it. He also offered talks with India on all issues, including terrorism, which India has always sought as a prerequisite to any dialogue between the south Asian arch-rivals. India and Pakistan have fought two wars since independence in 1947 over divided Kashmir, all of whose territory is claimed by both countries.

"Kashmir is a regional issue," Ghafoor said. "Let us talk about it. Let us resolve it." On Friday, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said it has written to the game's governing body urging the cricket community to sever ties with any nation from which "terrorism emanates". The neighbors, who have not hosted a cricket series between them since 2013 due to political tensions, are set to clash in one of the most anticipated matches of the May 30-July 14 World Cup in England and Wales.

India accuses Pakistani Islamist militant groups of infiltrating its part of mountainous Kashmir to fuel an insurgency and help local separatist movements. The United States and India allege that the Pakistani army nurtures the militants to use them as foreign policy tools to expand Islamabad's sway in India and Afghanistan. The army denies this.

One such group is Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which India blamed for a wave of attacks in Mumbai in 2008 which killed 166 people, saying its founder, Hafiz Saeed, was the mastermind. The United States has offered a \$10 million



CHAKOTHI, Pakistan: Local residents remove things from a bunker in the border town of Chakothi in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, some 3 km from Line of Control (LoC). Bunkers are being rebuilt and a blackout has been ordered, but schools and bazaars remained open in Chakothi, a border village in Pakistani-held Kashmir, after a deadly attack sent tensions with neighbouring India soaring. — AFP

reward for information leading to his conviction over the Mumbai attacks. Pakistan has put him under house arrest several times and banned his groups, Jamaat-ud-Dawa

(JuD) and Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation (FIF). But Saeed remains free, able to roam around Pakistan, make public speeches and deliver sermons. — Reuters

Warning issued over attacks on internet infrastructure

SAN FRANCISCO: Key parts of the internet infrastructure face large-scale attacks that threaten the global system of web traffic, the internet's address keeper warned Friday. The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) declared after an emergency meeting "an ongoing and significant risk" to key parts of the infrastructure that affects the domains on which websites reside. "They are going after the internet infrastructure itself," ICANN chief technology officer David Conrad told AFP. "There have been targeted attacks in the past, but nothing like this."

The attacks date back as far as 2017 but have sparked growing concerns from security researchers in recent weeks, which prompted the special meeting of ICANN. The malicious activity targets the Domain Name System or DNS which routes traffic to intended online destinations. ICANN specialists and others say these attacks have a potential to snoop on data along the way, sneakily send the traffic elsewhere or enable the attackers to impersonate or "spoof" critical websites.

"There isn't a single tool to address this," Conrad said, as ICANN called for an overall hardening of web defenses. US authorities issued a similar warning last month about the

DNS attacks. "This is roughly equivalent to someone lying to the post office about your address, checking your mail, and then hand delivering it to your mailbox," the US Department of Homeland Security said in a recent cybersecurity alert. "Lots of harmful things could be done to you (or the senders) depending on the content of that mail."

Middle East targets

DNSspionage attacks might date back to at least 2017, according to FireEye senior manager of cyber espionage analysis Ben Read. The list of targets included website registrars and internet service providers, particularly in the Middle East. "We've seen primarily targeting of email names and passwords," Read said of what is being dubbed "DNSspionage." "There is evidence that it is coming out of Iran and being done in support of Iran."

ICANN held an emergency meeting and is putting out word to website and online traffic handlers to ramp up security or leave users vulnerable to being tricked into trusting the wrong online venues. DNSspionage hackers appeared intent on stealing account credentials, such as email passwords, in Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates, according to CrowdStrike cyber security firm vice president of intelligence Adam Meyers.

Similar attacks took place in Europe and other parts of the Middle East, with targets including governments, intelligence services, police, airlines, and the oil industry, cybersecurity specialists said.

"You definitely need knowledge of how the internet works you and have to handle a lot of traffic being directed to you," Meyers said of the DNSspionage hackers. "With that access, they could temporarily break portions of how the internet works. They chose to intercept and spy on folks." — AFP

Hidden chemical 'bomb' found in devastation of Dhaka fire

DHAKA: Mass funerals were held Friday for victims of a devastating fire in Dhaka-fueled by illegally stored chemicals—that killed nearly 70 people, as investigators revealed that an even bigger disaster was narrowly avoided. Hundreds of chemical drums were found in the basement of one of five blocks engulfed by the inferno in the Bangladesh capital's historic Chawkbazar district.

"A huge bomb" would have gone off had the fire spread to the basement, according to Mehedi Hasan Ansary, a professor at an elite engineering university who is a member of

an official probe committee. "The impact would have been devastating," he said. City authorities said 46 bodies from a disaster that saw victims burned alive by fireballs in the street have been identified and handed over to families for burial. Many were from Noakhali district in southwest Bangladesh, where funerals were quickly organized in line with Muslim tradition.

Special prayers were also said at Friday prayers in mosques across the country. Police forensic experts were brought in to carry out DNA tests on at least 21 other bodies burned beyond recognition. The discovery of the huge consignment of drums raised new fears about the extent of the deadly danger in storerooms across the labyrinthine Chawkbazar district. "We were just lucky," said national fire chief Ali Ahmed. "The whole neighborhood would have been engulfed if the fire had reached the chemicals in the basement. It would have been like a bomb and the building would have collapsed," Ahmed told AFP. The fire is believed to have

been started late Wednesday by a gas cylinder explosion which quickly spread to at least five buildings. Victims were burned alive by exploding canisters that sent fireballs into the streets, smothering people in flames as they walked, rode in rickshaws or ate in local restaurants. Dozens were injured, including nine listed in critical condition.

The disaster was a repeat of a June 2010 fire in the nearby neighbourhood of Nimtoli in which 123 people were killed. Again a blaze ripped through residential buildings that doubled as chemical warehouses. While a criminal inquiry has been launched, authorities faced difficult questions over why action promised after the Nimtoli disaster was not carried out. Dhaka Mayor Sayeed Khokon vowed to launch a new crackdown and move chemical warehouses from residential buildings to an industrial area outside the capital. "We will sit with law enforcement agencies, do our homework and then launch the drive," he told AFP, promising to start the crackdown by next month. — AFP

Employers urged to stop asking women about marriage, babies

KUALA LUMPUR: Chinese authorities have urged employers not to ask women about their marital status or childbearing plans in job interviews, in the latest step to tackle discrimination at work and boost female participation in the labor force. Women's rights

campaigners have highlighted what they called widespread sexism in recruitment among Chinese firms, which routinely favors men or specifically bars women applicants.

In a notice, nine government agencies, including the education and human resources ministries, said gender bias is not allowed when it comes to hiring. This includes refusing to hire women or restricting their employment due to gender, or asking them about their marital or childbearing status. Pregnancy tests as part of the recruitment process is also barred.

"Gender equality is our country's fundamental policy," said the notice posted on a government website on Thursday. "Promoting equal employment for women

would help to enhance their wider participation in social and economic activities," it added.

China, the world's second largest economy, has one of Asia's highest rates of female participation in workforce but that has declined in recent years and the government is keen to keep women at work as its population ages rapidly.

About 61 percent of women aged 15 and above were in work in 2018, compared to 73 percent in 1990, World Bank data shows. In the wake of the global #MeToo movement last year, Chinese women have spoken out against sexual harassment in schools and the workplace, and the need for more robust rights. — Reuters

Premier Brands

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

32"
SAVE 17,000
ان الان 27,000
قبل 44,000

55"
SAVE 75,000
ان الان 199,000
قبل 274,000

58"
SAVE 95,000
ان الان 249,000
قبل 344,000

best 1 809 809
www.best.com.kw

AL-YOUSIFI

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

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

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

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

Washington Watch

Challenge to West

By Dr James J Zogby

In 1971, my family and I spent some time in London on our way to and from Lebanon where I was going to visit family and to conduct research for my doctoral dissertation. It was my first time outside of the US and so, while in the UK, I read as many of the British dailies as I could get my hands on. I did so because I wanted to know about the events that shaped daily life and understand how people in that city viewed the world.

As it turned out, 1971 was quite eventful. There were the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland, ethnic/tribal conflict in Nigeria, tensions brewing between India and Pakistan, a coup and counter-coup in Sudan, and unrest in South Africa and in Israel/Palestine.

What I remember most about the British press coverage back then - whether in news reporting, commentary, editorials, or political cartoons - was how dismissive and even racist it all was. Terms of derision for the competing groups in the countries involved were commonplace. The conflicts, themselves, were written off as "par for the course" - the expected behavior of the uncivilized.

It wasn't until we were nearing the end of our stay in London that it dawned on me that the British had played a significant role in exacerbating all of these conflicts and tensions. They had been the colonial power in each of these countries and, as had been their practice, they had either pitted one indigenous group against others or had set up settler regimes to assist their rule. When the mess they created had become ungovernable for them, they had jumped ship leaving the "natives" or the "natives" and "settlers" to their own devices.

What was, therefore, especially galling about this British press coverage was their total lack of self-awareness and their refusal to acknowledge their country's culpability in the tragedies they helped to create, and the derision they demonstrated toward the victims of their policies. With some variations much the same occurred with the French in North Africa and the Levant and the domination and exploitation of Central America by my own country.

While the British and French dominated, colonized, and economically exploited the far-flung regions of their empires, they also saw their role as spreading their "civilizing" culture. This was brought home to me in 1970 while taking an intensive Arabic language course at the University of Pennsylvania. I was surprised to learn that most of the students in my class were Algerian! It was through them that I became aware of the way the French had ruled their country - sometimes referred to derisively as "the other side of France". The French had attempted to erase all manifestations of their Arab/Muslim history, culture, and even their language. They had to come to the US to learn to read Arabic.

The American imperial role with our southern neighbors was different. We did not colonize, nor did we settle, or try to impose our culture. We were satisfied with economically dominating these areas, exploiting their resources, and insuring that whatever governments were in power were supportive of "our interests." It is precisely because of this sordid legacy of imperial and colonial conquest that I was indignant when I hear political leaders in the West speak of "our values", - by which they usually mean human rights, democracy, and religious freedom. These were the very values that had been denied to the peoples who had been conquered, whose resources they plundered, whose countries they destabilized, and whose lives they manipulated and impoverished in order to maintain their hegemony.

Imperial legacy

Looking at the world today, it's clear that the consequences of this imperial legacy are still with us. If anything has changed it is that we are now beyond just viewing the former "natives" as far-away oddities. They are now living within our borders, having come to find the opportunities they were denied at home. So when I hear the reactions in the West to the influx of South Asians going to the UK, or North Africans going to France, or Central Americans migrating to the US, I can only say "Guys, these are the fruits of your conquest - your chickens coming home to roost."

It's a strange period in which we are living. While some still engage in empty boasts about "our values", there also is a dangerous xenophobia that has taken hold among some who, without a hint of irony, seek now to protect "our values" by removing or, at the very least, limiting the numbers of "foreigners" from coming into our countries, out of the fear that they will dilute "our culture" and erode "our values."

Where do we go from here? In the first place, we, in the West, need to acknowledge our history. One byproduct of understanding how we and the world got to where we are today, will be to help us to shed our hubris and approach the world with humility - a sort of collective mea culpa. Honestly asking ourselves and those whom whose lives we dominated - "How did we get into this mess?" is the first step to finding our way out of it. A corollary to this is to understand where we are going. Our world has changed. We are now interdependent. The West is no longer apart from the world - it is a part of it: East and West, North and South, are now inextricably woven together.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute



Supporters of Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaidó wait to take part in a rally in Caracas yesterday. — AFP

How opposition leaders seized Citgo control

Asdrubal Chavez, chief executive of Houston-based Citgo Petroleum Corp, boarded the Venezuelan-owned firm's corporate jet in Caracas on Jan. 30, after meeting with top officials of the embattled administration of socialist President Nicolas Maduro about the latest US oil sanctions. Upon landing in the Bahamas - where Chavez has worked for about a year after being denied a US visa - he had received word from Houston that it would be his last trip on a company plane and that his Citgo email account had been shut off.

Day-to-day control of the company had passed to Citgo's top US executive, Rick Esser, who with the backing of Venezuela's rising political opposition and the US government would begin clearing the way for a new, anti-Maduro board of directors at Citgo. Esser oversaw the moves to isolate Chavez - a cousin of the late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez - and would soon start ousting other Citgo executives close to the Maduro administration.

The house-cleaning at the prized US-based subsidiary of Venezuela's state-owned oil firm, Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), marked a crucial early victory for the country's rising opposition government - led by self-declared president Juan Guaidó - as it struggles to remove Maduro from office and break his grip on the OPEC nation's oil assets. The account of the transition of power at Citgo is based on Reuters interviews with more than a dozen current and former Citgo and PDVSA executives, employees, and US and Latin American advisors.

Guaidó, head of the nation's congress, announced he would seize the presidency on Jan 23 because Maduro's re-election last year was a sham, rendering the socialist leader illegitimate under Venezuela law. Guaidó's claim to interim leadership, until fair elections can be held, was quickly backed by the United States and dozens of other nations. But Maduro remains in control of the nation's military and PDVSA - making Citgo the obvious first target among

national asset for Guaidó's opposition movement to claim, with the help of the US government. The battle for Citgo could prove pivotal in the effort to unseat Maduro because full control of a major US refiner would provide a crucial source of revenue to a post-Maduro administration.

Citgo, with more than \$23 billion in annual sales and operations that supply about 4 percent of US fuels, may be the last remaining asset owned by PDVSA with a healthy balance sheet. As PDVSA's oil production and revenue have plummeted amid crippling debt, mismanagement and international political pressure, Citgo's US location and financial independence have shielded the firm from the worst of its parent company's meltdown.

At the end of September, Citgo had net income of about \$500 million, according to a creditor with access to financial statements that are not public. The company had almost \$500 million in cash and an available credit line of \$900 million. Inside Citgo's Houston headquarters, many employees weary of operating under the control of a failing socialist state eagerly await an expected official announcement of the appointments of new company directors, who were chosen by Venezuela's congress. The new board met together for the first time in Houston on Thursday and named executives to replace those who were ousted, according to two Citgo employees with knowledge of the board actions, which the company has not publicly disclosed. "We are not expecting any resistance" to the new board inside the company, said one manager who spoke on condition of anonymity. "On the contrary, we are waiting for directions to lay out the red carpet." Spokespeople for Citgo and Esser did not respond to requests for comment or declined comment. PDVSA did not respond to requests for comment. The White House did not immediately respond to a request Friday morning.

Shifting allegiances

As US sanctions on Jan. 28 shifted the balance of power

Young and restless: Albanian youth see a future elsewhere

After emerging from his hiding place inside a truck packed with children's toys at a British port, Alban Tufa saw the police and realized his attempt to slip into the country had failed. Several weeks later, the 21-year-old was put on a plane back to Albania. That was six years ago but Tufa still longs to leave his home country - a desire he shares with most other young people in the Balkan state. Their country is not at war nor ruled by an authoritarian regime, and not battered by natural disasters.

And yet Albanians' desire to emigrate is among the strongest on the planet. "In Albanian villages, all families have a member who emigrates. So I went for it too," Tufa said of his failed attempt to sneak into the UK, which involved travelling across Europe by plane, train and truck with the help of smugglers. "My idea was to work, I was not interested in what, as long as my job was honest," he added.

According to a 2018 Gallup poll, 60 percent of Albanians would like to leave their homeland, a figure that ranks it fourth globally. The hunger is even stronger among the youth. Back in 1990, Albania had a youthful population of some 3.3 million people. But with falling birth rates and huge numbers of people leaving, it now has an ageing population of some 2.9 million, World Bank statistics show. And although the government does not track data on emigration rates, there are believed to be nearly 1.2 million Albanians living abroad - a figure equivalent to some 40 percent of the population.

Student revolt

The longing to leave is driven in large part by economics, with Albania having one of the lowest average monthly wages in Europe at around \$400 (\$453). Unemployment is also high, with one in three young people jobless. Another major factor is the widespread culture of corruption and clientelism, or jobs and favors in exchange for political support. "If you don't have a powerful friend you can't find a job," explains Daniela Duli, an 18-year-old law student in Tirana who is hoping to work in Italy after she grad-

uates. The only other option to secure work is "to give a lot of money", she says with a sigh.

The angst bubbled over in December when thousands of university students took to the streets to demand a reform of the education system. "Most of (my friends) have emigrated... because they don't see a future here, they see no employment here, no quality of studies," said 23-year-old student Armando Xhaxho, one of the last holdouts of the strike that ended this month.

After several weeks of protests which drew thousands onto the streets, Prime Minister Edi Rama reshuffled his cabinet and promised investments in education infrastructure. He also said his government would hire 1,000 graduates to work in public administration, giving preference to those who have studied in the West in a bid to encourage returnees. Yet Rama has shrugged off talk of any emigration "crisis". "There are people all over the world who move from one country to another and nobody talks about it," he said in December.

What worries Adrian Civici, an economics professor in Tirana, is that most youth who emigrate express little desire to return, creating a "brain drain" effect that further degrades the economy. Among youth living abroad, "almost 80 to 85 percent of them say that they do not consider the idea of coming back in Albania," said Civici.

Open doors

The restlessness has roots in the country's unique history. Until 1991, Albania spent nearly four decades as one of the most isolated nations on the planet under the grip of communist dictator Enver Hoxha. Those who tried to leave risked being shot at the border. "Once the doors were opened, Albanians saw the West as an opportunity to provide a better future for their children, a future that they did not have," said Drita Teta, a sociologist in Tirana. "For many Albanians, the West is still a great illusion, a great paradise that will solve all of the family's economic and social problems," she added.

In recent years, despite being labelled a "safe country", Albania's citizens have been counted among the leading claimants of asylum within the EU. In the year to mid-2018, they filed more than 17,000 applications in what was the top number of claims among European states. Ninety percent of such applications are rejected, although the waiting process allows some to find other ways to remain in Europe illegally. — AFP

Smashing away anger at Indonesia's 'Temper Clinic'

Armed with crowbars and wearing protective gear, three women assembled at a Jakarta stress clinic survey the cluster of bottles they're about to smash to pieces. "I feel relieved. It's like something I have been holding inside is finally released when I smashed those bottles," Genta Kalbu Tanjung, a 20-year-old university student, told AFP as blaring rock music pulsed in the background. Tanjung and her two friends paid 125,000 rupiah (\$8.85) each to unleash their pent-up rage at the Temper Clinic, which also lets clients bust up old televisions and printers for a slightly higher price.

Inside a bare smash room, one wall is covered with a written reminder: "Holding on to anger is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die." Aliya Dewayanti Senoajie wanted to use the students' half-hour session to channel her frustrations as a school holiday quickly comes to an end. "The break is over - it was too short and I'm not ready to go back to school," Senoajie said, declaring her bust-it-up session a success. "It was really fun. My adrenaline was pumping."

The clinic opened last summer in a posh Jakarta neighborhood after co-owner Masagus Yusuf Albar returned from an overseas holiday where he saw similar businesses sprouting up. The first dedicated space for such destruction therapy opened in Japan in 2008, with a view to helping stressed salarymen relieve their pent-up frustrations. It has spread in popularity and temper clinics, also known as rage rooms, can be found in most key US and European cities. The trend has taken off in Asia in the past two years with similar ventures opening in China, Singapore, and Hong Kong. But the service might not immediately make sense for a place like Indonesia - its citizens regularly rank high among the world's least-stressed people. That wasn't lost on Albar, who conceded that life in places like Bali or jungle-clad Sumatra was pretty relaxed.

But not so in Jakarta, a city of 10 million plus with hours-long traffic jams that can drive the most patient mad and where school and work are becoming increasingly competitive. A 2017 survey done by dry cleaning firm Zipjet found Jakarta was one of the world's most stressful cities based on criteria including traffic, air and noise pollution and unemployment. "Try to go anywhere on Friday night and it's very annoying. My friend once got caught in the traffic and she ended up crying. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2019

12 Australia, China deny ban on coal imports amid tensions**13** Months-long slide in German business morale deepens**14** EQUATE sponsors 3rd conference and exhibition KHSSE in Kuwait

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump (right) takes part in a meeting with China's Vice Premier Liu He (left) in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC Friday. — AFP

Trump hints at trade summit with Xi

China trade deal likely after 'very good talks'

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said on Friday a trade summit with Chinese leader Xi Jinping was likely next month, and hailed two days of "very good talks" by negotiators. The negotiations were extended through Sunday as officials race to reach a deal ahead of a deadline next week when US duty rates are due to rise sharply.

But Trump again said he was considering pushing back the deadline for raising tariffs on more than \$200 billion in Chinese exports. "We expect to have a meeting sometime in a not too distant future," he said of the meeting with Xi. "Probably fairly soon in the month of March."

Xi also sounded a positive note in a letter delivered to Trump by China's lead negotiator Liu He.

The Chinese president expressed hope that the talks maintain "a mutually respectful, cooperative and win-win attitude" and lead to a "mutually beneficial" agreement.

"I am ready to maintain close contact with the President through various means," state-run China Central Television quoted Xi's letter saying. Details

remained scant about any concrete progress in the seven-month-old trade war, which has rattled global markets and prompted stark warnings about the risks to the world economy. "I think there is a very, very good chance that a deal can be made," Trump told reporters at the White House on a second day of trade negotiations with Chinese officials.

"If we are doing well, I could see extending that" deadline for the end of the three month tariff truce.

And Trump said an agreement on currency manipulation will be included in the trade pact. Officials from Beijing also expressed optimism about a positive outcome.

"From China, we believe that it is very likely that it will happen," Liu said, speaking through an interpreter.

Winning streak

Global stock markets were higher on expectations the two sides would avoid further deterioration in their trade relations. Wall Street rose to a banner finish, posting its longest streak of weekly gains in nearly 24 years. Analysts say the two sides are likely to trumpet

mutual agreements to resolve the easier parts of the trade dispute-increasing purchases of American goods, more open investment in China and tougher protections for intellectual property and proprietary technology.

The harder parts covering issues like scaling back China's ambitious industrial strategy for global preeminence, are another question.

Christine Lagarde, head of the International Monetary Fund, again warned that the US-China trade tensions a "major risk" to world economic growth. Since July, the countries have hit out with tariffs on more than \$360 billion in two-way trade. While the tariffs alone are having "minimal" effect on global trade, they are damaging business confidence and weighing on stock markets. Lagarde told the US radio program Marketplace on Thursday.

"I cross my fingers every morning and my toes every evening because I hope that it is going to end up with a way to fix the system, not break it," she said.

The IMF has cut its forecast for global growth this year due to the combined impact of the trade war.

Good faith

Beijing has reportedly proposed an increase in its imports of US energy and agricultural exports significantly. US Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue tweeted that China has committed to buying "an additional" 10 million metric tons of soybeans as a "show of good faith," but he did not give any details or specify the timeframe.

Still, a broader deal could be difficult given the US demands for far-reaching structural changes. Gary Clyde Hufbauer, a trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said China may have to remove its tariffs in order to increase purchases of US goods, but Trump may feel no pressure to roll back the duties he imposed last year. "The big surprise would be a complete removal of tariffs by Trump but I'm expecting an asymmetrical removal of tariffs by China in order to get to some of these numbers," he said.

China's retaliation has hit US farm exports hard. The US Agriculture Department estimated this month that US soy exports would not turn to their pre-trade war levels for another six years. —AFP

Virgin Galactic takes another step toward space tourism

MOJAVE, Calif: A Virgin Galactic rocket plane on Friday soared to the edge of space with a test passenger for the first time, nudging British billionaire Richard Branson's company closer to its goal of suborbital flights for space tourists.

Virgin Galactic's chief astronaut instructor Beth Moses, who will train future space tourists, joined pilots onboard SpaceShipTwo VSS Unity to evaluate the customer experience and cabin.

"This is what we're here to do, we're here to fly people in the back of our spaceship, that's what it's all about," said pilot David Mackay, who is now the first Scottish-born

astronaut. "So for me it was an important step towards that operation." The WhiteKnightTwo carrier airplane took off soon after 8 am local time (11 am ET) from the Mojave Air and Space Port in California. It released the SpaceShipTwo passenger craft at an altitude of about 44,000 feet and then the spaceship was catapulted to 55 miles above Earth.

The reusable SpaceShipTwo craft previously flew to an altitude of more than 51 miles in December 2018, marking the first US commercial human flight beyond the atmosphere since the end of America's shuttle program in 2011.

Hundreds of spectators, including Virgin Galactic ticket holders and CEO George Whitesides, gathered on a clear morning in the desert to watch this latest test flight. The flight was postponed from Wednesday due to winds.

"We're in the 50th anniversary year of Apollo, and just like they had to do each step, we have to expand the envelope and do something more," Whitesides told the crowd. Moses, now the first woman to fly onboard a

commercial space vehicle, called it an "indescribable ride," adding: "Richard, you're going to love it."

Branson is racing against competitors such as Blue Origin, the space business of Amazon.com Inc founder Jeff Bezos, and Elon Musk's SpaceX to bring tourists into space. Branson has said he plans to be the first passenger on SpaceShipTwo's first commercial flight in mid-2019. More than 600 people from 58 countries, including actor Leonardo DiCaprio and pop star Justin Bieber, have paid or put down deposits to fly on one of Virgin's suborbital flights. Some of Virgin Galactic's ticket holders have been waiting over 14 years for their trip.

A 90-minute flight, which allows passengers to experience a few minutes of weightlessness and see the Earth's curvature, costs \$250,000. Whitesides said he expected that price would initially increase before going down. After he founded the company in 2004, Branson's ambitious timeline for taking customers into space suffered delays and a fatal setback when the original SpaceShipTwo crashed on a test flight in



In this image courtesy of Virgin Galactic, VSS Unity and WhiteKnight Two takes off from Mojave Space Port on Friday, in Mojave, California. — AFP

2014 that killed the co-pilot and seriously injured the pilot.

The company's two latest test flights mark the only times a crewed spaceship built to carry private passengers has reached what NASA defines as the boundary of space.

Bezos' New Shepard rocket has already reached the Karman line, an internationally recognized space boundary at 62 miles above the Earth and a higher point than reached by SpaceShipTwo, but Blue Origin's trips did not carry humans. — Reuters

Business

Australia, China deny ban on coal imports amid tensions

Canberra seeking to quell fears over worsening trade relationship

SYDNEY: China and Australia on Friday denied reports Australian coal was being blocked from entering the Asian country, with Canberra seeking to quell fears that worsening diplomatic tensions are damaging the nations' crucial trading relationship. Industry experts have noted recently that China appeared to be delaying customs clearances for Australian coking coal used in steel-making, but a report late Thursday that ports in the northern city of Dalian had banned the shipments sent the Aussie dollar plunging.

China is Australia's biggest trading partner and coal is the resource-rich country's most valuable export.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said reports of a ban in Dalian were "false".

"Chinese ports are receiving coal import declarations from all countries including Australia," Geng said at a regular briefing. The spokesman said Chinese customs have stepped up efforts to analyse and monitor the quality and safety of imported coal in recent years because the product sometimes fails to meet environmental standards.

"The purpose is to better safeguard Chinese importers' rights and interests and better protect the environment," Geng said. Australian Trade Minister Simon Birmingham said there was "no basis to believe that there is a ban" on Australian imports.

"We believe and understand that these are simple import quotas, consistent with what China has applied before and continues to apply and apply equally to all countries," Birmingham told reporters.

"This is not the first occasion where Australian coal exports to China have slowed in terms of the pace at

which they are processed or assessed and let into the country... It is unlikely and unhelpful to try to conflate other unrelated issues."

He added that officials were seeking reassurances from Beijing that Australia was not the only country being targeted. Prime Minister Scott Morrison said earlier that regulatory rather than political issues were at play and stressed there was "no evidence" any hold-up of imports was related to other issues between the two nations.

There has been speculation about whether the delays have been about addressing domestic pressures, or retribution over Canberra's decision to ban Chinese communications giant Huawei's 5G equipment over security risks. Canberra and Beijing have sparred diplomatically in recent months over the 5G ban. China's growing drive to increase its influence in the Pacific and the expulsion of a Chinese billionaire who donated to local political parties.

'Knee-jerk headlines'

Australian central bank governor Philip Lowe said Friday it would be "concerning" if the diplomatic spats were spilling into the trading arena, but added that it would be prudent to "wait and see" what the motivations were behind the Chinese actions.

Lowe, echoing analysts, said it was also important to note that the current amount of coal reportedly blocked by Dalian was small. Coal shipped from Australia to Dalian accounts for about 10 percent of Australia's exports of the commodity to China, and only two percent of overall exports.



China is Australia's biggest trading partner and coal is the resources-rich country's most valuable export. —AFP

Westpac senior currency strategist Sean Callow told AFP that while the Australian dollar dropped one percent to 70.90 US cents following the initial reports Thursday, the market was calmer early Friday.

"Those knee-jerk headlines of 'Australia's number-one export destination has a ban on Australia's number-one export' were enough to knock the Aussie lower," Callow said. —AFP

Bayt.com weekly report

10 effective ways to stay motivated during your job search

The job hunt can get quite stressful at times, especially in the Middle East region. But, no matter how hard things get, you should never lose hope. There are many opportunities for you and all you need to do is keep up your energy and positive spirit.

Experts at Bayt.com are here to help with this list of top 10 ways to get you motivated during your job search:

1. Break down your job search into small, manageable goals

Instead of just saying, "I need to find a job," write down specific tasks that you can accomplish daily. These tasks can be "set up two informational interviews" or "review my CV with two colleagues." This will keep you from being overwhelmed, but still keep you on track for landing your dream job.

2. Find your career crush

Who do you aspire to be in your career? Is it a VP of Marketing or a renowned journalist? Look them up and see what steps they took in their career path. This can give you some inspiration or even some new ideas on what kind of job roles can lead you to your dream job.

3. Take a day off!

If you've been at this for a long time, then you probably need a day to rest! Take a day or two for some self-care and de-stressing. When you land an interview, you don't want to be burnt out and on the brink of a mental breakdown. So, take some time to relax and then get back to it with fresh eyes and a rested mind.

4. Get feedback and constructive criticism from a trusted source

It can be intimidating to pass around your CV or cover letter to friends and colleagues but feedback is key, especially if your job search has been unsuccessful so far. Send it to people you trust to give positive and negative feedback. The positive feedback will keep your confidence up while the negative feedback can encourage you to make changes and take another stab at the job hunt. If you're stuck, remember that you can always opt for a professionally written CV and cover letter.

5. Keep structure in your day!

Maybe you don't have a work schedule yet, but that doesn't mean that you shouldn't have a schedule at all. It's easy to lose motivation when you lack structure in your time and this can lead to feeling unproductive and less motivated. Wake up every morning at the hour you would normally wake up for a job, dress up like you're going to work, and then tackle the job search like you would tackle a full-time job.

6. Set targets

Set targets for how many jobs applications you want to send or informational interviews you want to set up each week. Having weekly quotas can give you the extra motivation when you're feeling a midweek slump or have had a bad day. It also gives you the flexibility if you need to take a personal day.

7. Reward yourself!

When you hit targets or have a great interview, make sure you reward yourself. You can reward yourself with a free night to spend with friends, your favorite meal or restaurant, or even a spending budget to go shopping. Looking forward to these little rewards can lift your mood while keeping your eye on the prize.

8. Have a hobby you're passionate about

It's easy to get fully sucked into the job hunt, but make sure you're also taking time to pursue your passions outside of the job search. Doing something you love a few times a week will keep you in good spirits and help you through the harder parts of the job hunt.

9. Get inspired!

Don't underestimate the benefits of an inspiring talk that you can find on Google or YouTube. Listening to the stories of others and finding parallels in your journey can give you just the encouragement you needed.

10. Remember your self-worth!

It's easy to lose confidence and lose sight of your self-worth when you're facing rejection over and over. Write down some positive things about yourself whether it's a long history of volunteering or stellar recommendation letters. Make sure to also include redeemable personality traits about yourself, such as having a lot of compassion and empathy, or you tell the best jokes. This will ensure that you keep perspective during your job hunt and a well-rounded perception of yourself.

Bonus point: Don't forget the abundant resources and tools that are available for you on Bayt.com for free. Apply for 10,000+ jobs on any given day, read up the industry's latest research, engage with your fellow job seekers, and establish your own personal brand online.

Kraft Heinz announces \$15.4 billion write-down

WASHINGTON: The US packaged food giant Kraft Heinz has announced a \$15.4 billion write-down on some of its most iconic brands, reflecting a big change in what people like to eat. In its fourth quarter earnings report, the company said Thursday that the write-down resulted in a net loss of \$12.6 billion. The company also announced it was subpoenaed late last year by the Securities and Exchange Commission over its procurement procedures.

All this and weak fourth quarter earnings figures caused the stock price to be down nearly 21 percent after regular trading concluded. Kraft Heinz said the write-down cut the balance sheet value of United States and Canadian operations and the famed Kraft



SAN RAFAEL, California: Packages of Kraft mozzarella cheese are displayed on a grocery store shelf yesterday in San Rafael, California. —AFP

and Oscar Mayer trademarks.

US news outlets said it appeared to stem from shifting consumer preferences in favor of fresh products over processed ones like Kraft Heinz classics such as Oscar Mayer hotdogs and Cheez Whiz. —AFP

Global equities climb on hopeful trade talk vibes

NEW YORK: Boosterish claims of progress in US-China trade talks lifted global stocks on Friday, sending Wall Street to its longest winning streak in more than two decades.

Asian and European markets likewise were mostly higher, amid signals from Chinese and American officials building expectations the two sides will successfully resolve their seven-month trade war, which has knocked equities prices sideways for much of the last year.

In Washington, US President Donald Trump said the latest round of trade talks had been extended by another two days as the two sides raced to strike a bargain ahead of a March 1 deadline to avoid sharp increases in US duties on Chinese goods-and he again said he might be willing to push back the deadline. "I think there is a very, very good chance that a deal can be made," Trump told reporters at the White House.

In New York, the blue-chip Dow Jones Industrial Average closed higher, marking its ninth straight weekly gain-the longest such streak since May 1995. Despite the Dow's advance since December-when the Federal Reserve all but announced a halt to its interest rate hikes-the benchmark index is still below where it was in mid-January of last year.

"Markets are responding to what seems like meaningful progress on the trade dispute between us and China and given the president remarks this afternoon it looks like a deal is very close," Alan Skrainka of Cornerstone Wealth Management told AFP.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) forecast that the two sides would make "some progress"-but were unlikely to clinch any "meaningful" deal. "The likelihood that the US and China will make some progress in the ongoing trade talks has increased as a result of mounting domestic pressure in both economies," noted EIU global economist Cailin Birch in a report. "Nonetheless, we do not expect a meaningful agreement, as the US and China enter into a strategic competition for economic-and particularly technological-dominance." The EIU added that any deal would therefore only provide "temporary relief" from trade tensions.

Shares exposed to trade with China rose: Boeing, which depends on the Asian giant for much of its aircraft sales, jumped 12.6 percent but construction equipment manufacturer Caterpillar fell 0.1 percent. Details remained scant about any concrete progress in the trade war, which has prompted stark warnings about the risks to the world economy, although Trump said there was a deal on currency manipulation.

Meanwhile, Kraft Heinz nosedived 27.4 percent, a day after reporting a quarterly loss, a \$15 billion write-down and disclosing that US securities regulators were investigating the company's procurement procedures. Europe's key equity markets were modestly higher at the close, building on earlier Asian gains. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.300
Euro	346.420
Sterling Pound	400.460
Canadian dollar	233.720
Turkish lira	58.410
Swiss Franc	307.370
US Dollar Buying	297.000

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.749
Indian Rupees	4.280
Pakistani Rupees	2.221
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.691
Nepali Rupees	2.668
Singapore Dollar	226.840
Hongkong Dollar	38.773
Bangladesh Taka	3.583
Philippine Peso	5.851
Thai Baht	9.764
Malaysian ringgit	77.826

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.201
Qatari Riyal	83.633
Omani Riyal	790.903
Bahraini Dinar	808.560
UAE Dirham	82.904

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.600
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.332

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.222
Tunisian Dinar	103.150
Jordanian Dinar	429.500
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.407

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.140
Canadian Dollar	230.090
Sterling Pound	394.795
Euro	346.100
Swiss Frank	308.365
Bahrain Dinar	808.820
UAE Dirhams	83.210
Qatari Riyals	84.445
Saudi Riyals	82.000
Jordanian Dinar	430.255
Egyptian Pound	17.298
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.697
Indian Rupees	4.265
Pakistani Rupees	2.189
Bangladesh Taka	3.625
Philippines Peso	5.815
Cyprus pound	18.095
Japanese Yen	3.750
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.675
Malaysian Ringgit	75.265
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.370
Thai Bhat	10.720

Turkish Lira	57.705
Singapore dollars	223.338

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.390912	0.404812
Czech Korune	0.005452	0.014752
Danish Krone	0.042210	0.047210
Euro	0.338345	0.352045
Georgian Lari	0.132000	0.132000
Hungarian Lari	0.01337	
Norwegian Krone	0.031336	0.036536
Romanian Leu	0.065204	0.082054
Russian ruble	0.004658	0.004658
Slovakia	0.009095	0.019095
Swedish Krona	0.028580	0.033560
Swiss Franc	0.298208	0.0309208
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.209074	0.221074
New Zealand Dollar	0.202421	0.211921
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.226667	0.235667
US Dollars	0.300200	0.305500
US Dollars Mint	0.300700	0.305500
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003051	0.003852

Chinese Yuan	0.043813	0.047313
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037023	0.039773
Indian Rupee	0.003704	0.004476
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002666	0.002846
Korean Won	0.000260	0.000275
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070778	0.076778
Nepalese Rupee	0.002609	0.002949
Pakistani Rupee	0.001559	0.002329
Philippine Peso	0.005811	0.006111
Singapore Dollar	0.219939	0.229939
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001363	0.001943
Taiwan	0.010157	0.010337
Thai Baht	0.009399	0.009949
Vietnamese Dong	0.000013	0.000013

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.792591	0.809091
Egyptian Pound	0.017111	0.019711
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000211	0.000211
Jordanian Dinar	0.424898	0.433898
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022112	0.046112
Omani Riyal	0.784071	0.789751
Qatar Riyal	0.079294	0.084234
audi Riyal	0.080060	0.081360
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.095364	0.103364
Turkish Lira	0.050829	0.062329
UAE Dirhams	0.081425	0.083125
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

Business

Months-long slide in German business morale deepens

Euro dips on downbeat German business morale

FRANKFURT: Confidence among business leaders in Germany fell for the sixth month in a row in February, a closely-watched survey showed Friday, as global trade struggles cast a pall over Europe's powerhouse economy.

The Munich-based Ifo institute's business confidence index slid 0.8 points this month to reach 98.5, its lowest level in four years. "The German economy is experiencing a downturn," Ifo president Clemens Fuest said in a statement. A sub-index measuring companies' view of the present business situation dipped 1.1 points, to 103.4, while another gauging expectations for the coming months lost 0.5 points, to 93.8.

Looking to different areas of the economy, manufacturing firms had "far more pessimistic" expectations compared with January. Services, trade and construction indexes also fell-with the building sector losing ground "for the first time in years," Fuest noted. Friday's Ifo release comes one day after an account of the European Central Bank's January meeting highlighted fierce headwinds in international trade weighing on the 19-nation eurozone. With its export-oriented manufacturers and massive trade surplus, Germany is one of the countries most exposed to the uncertainty caused by rising protectionism and trade conflicts.

"The threat from the USA of punitive tariffs on our most important export good-cars-is hovering closer than ever," noted Joerg Zeuner, chief economist at public investment bank KfW.

US President Donald Trump on Monday received a Department of Commerce report that sources said classed European car imports as a national security threat-potentially justifying swingeing new tariffs. Meanwhile "our

important partner Great Britain continues to race towards the Brexit cliff... and the global economy is no longer running smoothly," Zeuner added.

Such fears have prompted downgrades to the growth outlook by private- and public-sector observers, with Germany's economy ministry now forecasting just 1.0 percent expansion in 2019, compared with a 1.8 percent prediction last autumn. The euro dipped on Friday after a survey showed German business morale fell for the sixth month in a row, while the Australian dollar rebounded after China denied it had banned imports of the country's coal. Weak data since January has undermined support for the euro, which edged lower but remained in positive territory against the dollar at \$1.1351. It hit a two-week high of \$1.1371 on Wednesday, helped by hopes for an easing of the US-China trade conflict. Analysts assessing the euro's prospects are focused on whether a slowdown in European growth is likely to be protracted. A survey on Friday showed business morale fell in February for a sixth straight month in Germany, the mainspring of the European economy.

"In the end, it is mainly the prospect of the stuttering growth driver Germany that is contributing to the uncertainty regarding the EUR outlook," said Esther Reichelt, an FX strategist at Commerzbank in Frankfurt. Traders will scrutinise comments by European Central Bank President Mario Draghi later on Friday, especially if he elaborates on plans for further monetary policy easing. The Australian dollar rebounded after tumbling more than 1 percent on Thursday, when Reuters reported the Chinese port of Dalian had banned imports of Australian coal indefinitely. China said on Friday imports would continue, but customs has stepped up checks on foreign cargoes. — Agencies



BERLIN: A picture taken yesterday shows a view of the Axel Springer Campus, still under construction, located just opposite German media giant Axel Springer's current headquarters in Berlin. — AFP

Xi urges financial risk prevention while seeking stable growth

BEIJING: China should seek stable development of its economy while not forgetting to fend off risks to its financial system, Chinese President Xi Jinping said, state news agency Xinhua reported yesterday.

China's economy is growing at its slowest pace in almost 30 years, spurring policymakers to bolster growth by easing credit conditions and cutting taxes. "It is necessary to focus on preventing risks on the basis of steady growth, while strengthening the countercyclical adjustment of fiscal policy and monetary policy and ensuring that the economy operates in a reasonable range," Xi said. Preventing and resolving financial risks, especially systemic financial risks, is a fundamental task, the agency cited Xi as telling a study session for senior Communist Party officials on Friday.

On Wednesday, Premier Li Keqiang reiterated that China would not resort to "flood-like" stimulus such as it unleashed in past downturns. But after a spate of weak data, investors are asking if Beijing needs to speed or

boost support to reduce the risk of a sharper slowdown. Until now, China has refrained from cutting benchmark interest rates to spur the slowing economy, which would ease financing costs but risk adding to a mountain of debt. To free up more funds for lending to small and private businesses, the central bank has cut the reserves that banks need to set aside five times in the past year.

Last month, Chinese banks made the most new loans on record, a total of 3.23 trillion yuan (\$481 billion). A central bank official said previously that no credit floodgate had been opened, and the lending jump showed recent easing steps were working. China's financial sector must serve the real economy, Xi said, but stable growth and risk prevention must be balanced. — AFP

CBK to serve clients during National Days

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced that with would continue to serve its customers during the National Day holidays at Kuwait International Airport's two branches that work 24/7.

The bank also noted that the bank's services provided by the bank's call center on 1-888225 would also be available around the clock during the vacation.

The CBK added that clients can also do various transactions (deposit and withdrawal) through ATMs located throughout Kuwait in addition to using online transaction at www.cbk-online.com and CBK Mobile application. The bank will officially resume work at all branches on Wednesday, February 27.

Brazil govt warns of recession without pension system overhaul

BRASILIA: Brazil's Economy Ministry warned on Friday that the economy will slip into recession next year and official interest rates could more than double unless Congress approves measures to reduce the deficit in the country's pension system. The warning comes days after President Jair Bolsonaro presented his ambitious social security reform plan to Congress, which aims to save over 1 trillion reais (\$295 billion) in the next decade.

Overhauling the creaking social security system is seen as critical to shoring Brazil's public finances, boosting investor confidence, fostering growth and keeping interest rates and inflation under control, most economists say. In its first official forecast on the potential impact on the economy over the next five years of reform or no reform, the Economy Ministry laid out starkly contrasting scenarios.

"In the event of no pension reform, GDP growth in 2019 will be 1 percent lower and Brazil will enter recession in the second half of 2020, approaching the level of losses seen in the 2014-2016 period," the ministry's economic policy division warned in the report.

It said growth this year would slump to 0.8 percent from 1.3 percent last year-far weaker than the market consensus of around 2.5 percent and much worse than the 2.9 percent "best case" scenario of reform being passed. Recessionary forces would also deepen over coming years



SAO PAULO: View of the US automaker Ford plant in Sao Bernardo do Campo in Sao Paulo, Brazil. The company announced it was pulling out of the commercial heavy truck business in South America, closing its plant in Brazil - which employs 2,800 workers and has been operating for half a century. — AFP

if the pension system stays unchanged, the ministry said. The economy would shrink by 0.5 percent in 2020, by 1.1 percent in 2022 and as much as 1.8 percent in 2023.

It said benchmark interest rates will soar past 11 percent by year end from the current record low of 6.50 percent, and as high as 18.5 percent by 2023. Most economists expect rates to be on hold for the rest of this year. But if reform is passed, growth will accelerate, job creation will surge and interest rates will fall, the Economy Ministry predicted. The benchmark Selic rate could be reduced to a

new low of 6.0 percent later this year while the economy could create as many as 8 million new jobs by 2023, it said.

Economists have already factored in pension reform into their forecasts and say the outlook is not that strong even if something is approved this year, most likely a diluted version of Bolsonaro's bill.

Corporate and household balance sheets have not been fully repaired since the 2014-16 recession, the international picture is cloudy, and not everyone is convinced the new administration will deliver on its pledges. — Reuters

Sri Lanka economic growth slowest in 17 years: CB

COLOMBO: A political crisis in Sri Lanka last year led to the slowest economic expansion in 17 years, the central bank said Friday.

Growth for 2018 was cut from a forecast above 5.0 percent to about 3.0 percent because of damage to the economy from a conflict between the president and prime minister, Central Bank of Sri Lanka governor Indrajith Coomaraswamy said. President Maithripala Sirisena sacked Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe in October and dissolved parliament even though he did not have a majority to back the move. The showdown was only ended by the Supreme Court in December when it held that Sirisena's actions were unconstitutional and illegal.

The bank governor said he expected better growth in 2019 as the outflow of foreign capital had reversed. "All in all, we are in a better place this year," he said, warning however that there could be fiscal slippage because the government was likely to offer sweeteners to the people during a presidential election this year.

Coomaraswamy noted that Sri Lanka's Supreme Court had demonstrated its independence underscoring that

key institutions functioned despite the crisis.

"Our systems stood up very well in the last few months," Coomaraswamy told reporters. "But businessmen have concerns about political stability."

During the crisis, three international credit rating agencies downgraded the country's debt, making it more expensive to borrow abroad. Sri Lanka had to abandon plans to raise loans abroad. An International Monetary Fund program was also suspended, though the government has opened talks to revive the three-year \$1.5 billion bail-out which began in 2016.

The 2018 growth compares with 3.1 percent in 2017 when the country faced the twin effects of a major drought followed by floods that killed more than 210 people.

The economy contracted by 1.25 percent in 2001 after Tamil rebels devastated half a dozen aircraft at the country's international airport dealing a major blow to tourism, a key foreign exchange earner.

The economy has been performing well, however, since the end of a decades-long Tamil separatist war in 2009. —AFP

Shareholders of Jet Airways approve debt for equity swap

MUMBAI: India's Jet Airways Ltd said late on Friday that its shareholders approved a plan to convert existing debt to equity, paving the way for the troubled company's lenders to infuse funds and nominate directors to its board. Jet's board last week approved a plan by lenders, led by State Bank of India, for an equity infusion, debt restructuring and the sale of sale-and-lease-back of aircraft.

The plan will mean the lenders will have a

bigger holding than any other shareholder. Currently, Chairman Naresh Goyal owns a 51 percent stake in the company and Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways owns 24 percent. Jet, which had net debt of 72.99 billion rupees (\$1.03 billion) as of end-December, has debt payments looming next month, according to rating agency ICRA. It has been unable to pay pilots' salaries and has outstanding bills to aircraft lessors.

The company, India's biggest full-service carrier, is struggling with competition from budget rivals, high oil prices and a weaker rupee. The share price took a beating in 2018, losing nearly 70 percent of its value. In a regulatory filing, Jet said on Friday that 98 percent of its shareholders voted to increase the share capital to 22 billion rupees (\$309.8 million) from 2 billion rupees at a special meeting. Jet, whose financial woes are set against the backdrop of wider aviation industry problems, has been in the red for four straight quarters. — Reuters



BERLIN: An EasyJet Airbus A-320 passenger aircraft is reflected in a glass door as it sits on the tarmac at Berlin's Tegel airport. — AFP

Consumer groups protest being left out of Senate privacy hearing

WASHINGTON: Consumer groups voiced dismay Friday after a US Senate panel considering privacy legislation scheduled a largely industry-packed witness list for an upcoming hearing.

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Roger Wicker, a Republican, announced the witness list for Wednesday's hearing on "policy principles for a federal data privacy framework in the United States."

The list "is stuffed with well-paid 'inside the Beltway' lobbyists from the data gathering industry," said Jeffrey Chester of the Center for Digital Democracy, a privacy rights group.

"Senator Wicker's lineup raises questions about whether he can be trusted to develop legislation that will empower the public and rein in what is now a 'wild west' data collection industry."

The witnesses on the list include executives from the Internet Association, Retail Industry Leaders Association, BSA/The Software Alliance and the Interactive Advertising Bureau. It also includes a representative from the 21st Century Privacy Coalition, which is funded by cable and telecom firms.

Amie Stepanovich of the digital rights group Access Now also expressed concern, writing on Twitter: "Five witnesses. Every last one of them represents corporate interests." "This is the second hearing the United States Senate has held on consumer privacy where literally all of the companies that want your personal information are the only ones invited to talk to Senators about your privacy rights," tweeted Ernesto Falcon of the Electronic Frontier Foundation.

The Politico news website, which first reported the witness list, said Wicker would speak at a fundraiser hosted by industry groups the day ahead of the hearing. The Mississippi senator said in a statement on the committee website that he wants "a federal privacy standard to protect consumers without stifling innovation, investment, or competition."

A separate hearing on privacy legislation has been scheduled for Tuesday by a House panel that has yet to release its witness list. Chester said he expected to see "more balanced representation" on the House side, "including from civil rights groups."

Lawmakers have pledged draft new privacy rules aimed at reining in data abuses following a series of scandals and breaches involving Facebook and other internet platforms.

Most tech companies are pledging to accept new regulations to set a uniform standard in the United States following a sweeping set of rules that went into effect in the European Union in 2018. But a fierce debate is expected over the details of any new law. — AFP

Business

EQUATE sponsors 3rd conference and exhibition KIHSSSE in Kuwait

Event seeks to enhance culture of safety and security in oil sector

KUWAIT: EQUATE, a global producer of petrochemicals and the second largest producer of Ethylene Glycol worldwide, continues to take part of initiatives and programs as part of its commitment to industrial and professional development, and technological and operational innovations that aim to advance the standards of environment, health, safety, and security in the oil, gas and petrochemical industries.

In these endeavors, The Company was a main sponsor and participant of the third Kuwait International Health, Safety, Security & Environment (KIHSSSE) Conference and Exhibition, the flagship event that has become an international platform dedicated to enhancing the culture of safety and serving the industry, community, academic institutions and non-profit organizations.

Held under the patronage of Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, Minister of Oil, Minister of Electricity and Water and Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), KIHSSSE focused this year on the theme "Transforming HSE Culture for a Resilient Future" in an aim to attain business excellence in the practice of HSSE.

Stressing on how HSSE commitment is key to reliability and better performance, field in which EQUATE excels, four of the Company's engineers conducted sessions on sustaining a culture of HSSE, Industrial Security and Occupational Health, as well as gave an outlook on the field.

Also speaking in the conference, Mohammad Al-Shammari, Global EHS Director at EQUATE, said:

"EQUATE has successfully fostered and sustained an interdependent health and safety culture built on caring, teamwork and ownership of Health, Safety, Security and Environment. We uphold the highest standards in the industry and have been recognized year after year by our peers and independent organizations for our efforts. We are glad to take part and share our knowledge with the industry at large in such an established platform and work together to improve the EHS&S performance of organizations."

Throughout its global operations, EQUATE has also heavily invested in the latest advancements to enhance its EHS standards in operations and was honored for its outstanding safety procedures, leadership engagement, rigorous reporting standards and its dedication to the protection of people, communities and the environment. EQUATE is also the first company in Kuwait to have obtained the Responsible Care (RC) accreditation and certification, and sets example globally through its fully-owned subsidiary MEGlobal, which was named one of Canada's Safest Employers last October, winning Gold in

the Chemistry category at a ceremony hosted by Thomson Reuters and Canadian Occupational Safety Magazine in Toronto.

EQUATE invests significantly in collaborations in the industry to improve EHS standards as part of its belief that partnerships and knowledge exchange with peers, academic institutions and stakeholders are a necessity to create a platform that would benefit the employees and the industry.



NBK welcomes customers at its airport branch during National Days

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) remains at the service of customers throughout the National and Liberation holidays, giving them access to various services provided at its branches across Kuwait.

NBK's Airport branch will continue to receive customers around the clock, seven days a week during the holidays, providing all various banking services available at other branches. The branch also exclusively carries Multi-Currency ATMs to allow travelers to withdraw from six currencies that are the Kuwaiti Dinar, US Dollar, Euro, British Pound Sterling, UAE Dirham, and Saudi Riyal. The ATMs are conveniently located between the departure gates and the arrival area.

Customers can also continue benefiting from all our added-value service through the Online and Mobile banking services to manage their accounts and finances via NBK Online Banking or NBK Mobile Banking available for all smartphones. NBK's call center will also be available to customers round the clock. Ghadeer Al-Awadi, NBK's Head of Branches, said: "NBK's advanced ATMs are ready to serve the increasing number of transactions during the holidays, as our ATMs are equipped with the latest technologies to ensure it provides safety and security to our customers' transactions."

Al-Awadi reaffirmed the Bank's commitment to serving customers through a well-established network across Kuwait and always remaining the first choice for customers thanks to its proximity to them. Al-Awadi added: "We monitor our ATMs and ensure they are filled whenever they drop below the limit, especially in locations where our customers tend to withdraw the most such as shopping malls, markets and leisure parks. Filling these machines is not only done with cash, but also with enough paper for customers who want to check for their account information."

In addition to the branch, NBK has made available its toll-free numbers for travelers to connect with the Bank while traveling. Providing convenience and reliability when travelling, NBK continues to offer its customers a wide range of exclusive services for their specific needs when they travel. These services accompany customers from the moment they get on their flight and until they land safely in Kuwait. NBK also protects customers from theft, fraud and other situations they may face while traveling.



Ghadeer Al-Awadi

UPAC commences operations at Terminal 4 parking

KUWAIT: United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC), a leading commercial real estate and facilities management company, announced that it has commenced operations of the parking lot and related facilities at the Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 4 (T4) on 7 February 2019.

The T4 parking lot holds a total capacity of 2,457 shaded parking spaces (657 in the long-term parking and 1,800 in the short-term parking - divided into two parking lots, which includes 650 parking spots dedicated for employee access only).

The pricing scheme at T4 parking as set by DGCA is as follows for the short term parking 500 fils for the first hour, 500 fils for the second hour and KD 1 per hour for each additional hour or a portion of an hour thereafter. The long term parking area costs are set at KD 2 per day.

Infiniti Al-Babtain's Infiniti VC-Turbo wins coveted award

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, announces that the world's first production variable compression ratio engine - INFINITI's VC-Turbo - received the Driveline Technology of the Year Shift Award from Roadshow by CNET, selected for its ability to optimize engine compression for both power and fuel efficiency.

The Roadshow Shift awards recognize the best in innovative, disruptive technologies and products in the automotive world. The VC-Turbo engine was selected for this award because of its ability to provide excellent efficiency and strong performance in an environ-

mentally responsible package.

In operation, the QX50's VC-Turbo engine offers any compression ratio between 8:1 (for high performance) and 14:1 (for high efficiency). The engine delivers 268 hp at 5,600 rpm and 280 lb ft at 1,600 - 4,800 rpm. The VC-Turbo's specific power output is higher than many competing turbocharged gasoline engines, and it comes close to the performance of some V6 gasoline engines.

The VC-Turbo's powerful-yet-compact footprint allows the entire cabin to move forward, revealing more interior space and making the 2019 QX50 one of few vehicles in its segment to offer sliding and reclining rear seating. The QX50 also boasts rear legroom of up to 38.7 inches and a trunk that can accommodate a stroller situated length-wise without letting down the back seats, with space for additional cargo. Available at the INFINITI showroom in Al Rai, the 2019 QX50 is the brand's most advanced



vehicle to date and embodies everything advanced technology and empowering INFINITI stands for: Beautiful design, performance features.

Renault Al-Babtain brings fans closer to owning unstoppable SUV - the Duster

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait invites its customers to experience the unstoppable SUV - Renault Duster.

With a starting price of KD 3,999, the all-new Renault Duster boasts brand-new exterior styling, delivering a distinctly assertive and robust look, as well as an upgrade in perceived quality with a totally redesigned interior for a comfortable and user-friendly driving experience.

The all-new Duster is available in both 2WD and 4WD specifications and offers among the market's very best off-road capability. With a choice of two petrol engines: 1.6L (4x2) mated to a CVT automatic transmission, and 2.0L with automatic transmission (4x4), the Duster is an

SUV equipped for any terrain.

The Duster's roominess, affordability, and off-road capabilities have long been recognized as the model's strengths and the all-new models continue to carry these desirable attributes.

The SUV's exterior has been given a more robust look thanks to the addition of a wide chrome-finish grille which extends to the head lights positioned at the car's front corners. A front skid plate reinforces the Duster's adventurer credentials and ensures that the vehicle never loses its smart looks. Finished with Renault's signature C-shaped lighting with LED daytime running lights the Duster is a modern SUV with a rugged personality.

Inside, the Duster is equipped with new, high-quality, driving aids and new equipment, making it a genuine adventure-ready SUV which offers the versatility and comfort for everyday driving. On stepping inside the cabin, the noticeable difference in quality is instantly recognizable - packed with 'Easy Life' features like Hill Descent Control, Multiview camera and Blind Spot Warning, 4x4 monitor,



automatic air conditioning, Remote Engine Start (GCC only), seven-inch touchscreen tablet and Renault smart card with keyless entry system - as well as quality trims and materials.

Renault Al-Babtain encourages its customers to discover the 'best in class' model by visiting the showroom located in Al-Rai and enjoy the test drive experience.

KIB sponsors 5th FIA Sport Regional Congress MENA

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently offered its platinum sponsorship of the 5th International Automobiles Federation (FIA) Sport Regional Congress MENA, which was organized by the Kuwait International Automobile Club (KIAC). Held under the patronage of the Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Mohammad Al-Jabri, the conference took place in Kuwait recently and aimed at identifying the best ways to develop motor sport in the future.

On this occasion, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia said: "KIB remains committed to its social responsibility strategy that promotes the culture of sports across the local community. For this reason, we sponsored this one-of-a-kind event that aims at promoting this sport across the region. Our region has always played a leading role in this sport and we are sure that it will continue to do so with the help of the FIA."

KIB's sponsorship of this event reflects its ongoing



belief in the importance of sports and its positive impact on the wider community, encouraging everyone to take part in sports of all kinds. It is worth noting that, as part of its leading social responsibility program, KIB strives to participate in events and activities that support all segments of the local community.

It serves to note that the three-day conference was attended by a number of notable figures and

gathered motor sport senior officials from around the world. The event featured a series of discussions related to the development and promotion of motor sports and the challenges facing the sport in the region, as well as visits to Kuwait Motor Town. Additionally, the conference included workshops which aimed at examining the issues and problems of motor sport in the world and finding solutions to develop the sport, with a particular focus on safety.

What's On



LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Celebrate Kuwait' promotion

LuLu Hypermarket, the leading hypermarket in the country, launched its month-long Hala February promotion under the banner of 'Celebrate Kuwait', with festivities also marking the country's upcoming National and Liberation days. Famous Kuwaiti TV host Salah Al-Rashed inaugurated the event on 20 February at LuLu's Al-Qurain outlet in the presence of top management from LuLu Hypermarket, special invitees, media representatives and a large gathering of well-wishers.

As part of the country's National Day celebrations, a

special cultural program was held where performers enchanted onlookers with their representation of Kuwait's traditions and culture.

During the Hala February promotion, which runs at all LuLu Hypermarket outlets, a range of attractive activities and promotions offer an enticing incentive to shop at LuLu outlets. Discover amazing low prices and big discounts on an assortment of products, in addition to exclusive prices on selected 'product of the day' and 'brand of the week' items. Digital aficionados can avail of the best discounts on the latest

electronic gadgets during the 'Digital Expo'. Shoppers can also take advantage of the Farm Fresh produce sale, where fresh fruits and vegetables are available at attractive prices.

Returning for another year, the much-anticipated promotion on the special occasion, LuLu's unique 'Trolley-Free' promotion that will run from the 21 to 26 February. The exciting promotion allows lucky customers to win back the full cost of contents in their trolley after a shopping spree at the hypermarket's outlet. During the six days of this promotion, lucky winners

will be picked at random by the point of sale (POS) system at all the check-out points, and they will walk away with the contents of their trolley fully free of cost.

Since its inception, LuLu Hypermarket has displayed its commitment to customer satisfaction by tailoring shopping experiences to suit shopper preferences, particularly on special occasions. The brand has also consistently launched innovative and exciting promotions that offer a variety of products at competitive prices, which has prompted customers to make LuLu Hypermarket their preferred retail destination.



Symphony Style Kuwait brings sea life to seafood nights

Symphony Style Kuwait, a Radisson Collection Hotel and the jewel of Kuwait City brings seafood lovers an immersive experience at Cucina restaurant with its weekly alluring seafood nights every Wednesday. The vibrant night of seafood, happening to cater to those who enjoy the delight of the sea, will have a vast variety of meals from salads, sushi, soup and impeccable main-courses.

Cucina's seafood nights will have guests indulge in the elegance of the sushi corner, and the warm touches of the thoughtfully crafted seafood gratin with roasted baby potato, grilled vegetables and the seductive penne with cream shrimp sauce. There's far more variety in the weekly night's main courses, as guests can also taste the rich flavor of the lemon butter sauce that stylishly surrounds salmon. Those who enjoy distinctive meals will surely enjoy the lobster termidor and plenty more intriguing options.



The Exceptional ensures an exceptional meal that is concluded with a savory dessert that outstandingly ends a vibrant feast with its vast array of options. Guests can enjoy diversity in desserts through Arabic sweets, Um Ali, creme caramel, cheese cakes, fruit tarts and plenty more. The Exceptional's Cucina holds its seafood nights on a weekly basis every Wednesday. For more information on bookings and the prices of intriguing seafood meal.



South African embassy closure

On the occasion of the National Day and Liberation Day, the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa will be closed from Monday, 25th February 2019 to Tuesday, 26th February 2019 and will reopen on Wednesday, 27th February 2019 with its official office hours from 8h00 to 16h00 & the Consular Section operation hours will be from 8h30 to 12h30. For Emergency calls please contact 94924895.

Marina Hotel has remarkable offers for Hala February

With the onset of Hala February and the festivities of National and Liberation Day, Marina Hotel Kuwait is delighted to welcome all its guests to have a memorable experience with their friends and family. Guests can avail the special offer that includes spacious sea-view room with buffet breakfast, in addition, Marina Hotel's stunning coastal setting provides a broad range of leisure options with access to the hotel's various facilities, gym, private beach and three swimming pools.

Overlooking the azure waters of the Arabian Gulf, Marina Hotel features an excellent choice of dining options. Unwind in the finest ambiance at the hotel and start your morning with steaming coffee and a delicious buffet breakfast at the Six Palms restaurant followed by a delectable lunch and dinner buffet at the Atlantis



Restaurant with a magnificent sea view. Apart from the comprehensive hotel facilities, Marina Hotel is located right in the heart of one of the most prominent places in Kuwait. Guests from abroad can visit Marina Mall, which is among the best shopping malls in Kuwait and is only walking distance from the hotel, and Marina Crescent which houses a variety of international restaurants and coffee shops.

KAC launches its transit lounge at T4

Under the auspices and with the attendance of Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC)'s board chairman, Yousif Abdul Hameed Al-Jassem, DGCA director, Yousif Al-Fauzan, Incheon International Airport Corporation (IIAC)'s CEO, Kwang-Soo Lee and top KAC and DGCA officials, KAC recently launched its transit lounge at T4.

Speaking on the occasion, Al-Jassem said that launching the new lounge is part of T4 plans to provide various services to passengers using KAC flights. He added that the new lounge is an addition to KAC's numerous achievements after launching the first class, business and Oasis club lounges; Bayan and Mubarakiya during the past few months. On his part, DGCA director, Yousif Al-Fauzan congratulated Al-Jassem and all KAC board and staff on launching the new lounge noting that the new lounge is part of T4's operation plan.

KAC's new transit lounge includes 107 modern designed seats with various sizes to provide utmost com-



fort for passengers. The seats are lined with leather and fabric and equipped with USB ports. The lounge has 19 screens showing TV programs and flights traffic in addition to three reception desks, special food courts and 30 deposit boxes.



Health & Science

Swedish teenager Thunberg brings climate action campaign to France

16-year-old Swede calls for bold efforts to combat global warming

PARIS: Teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg brought her class-boycott campaign to Paris on Friday, hoping to encourage more French students to hit the streets with demands for bold efforts to combat global warming. The Friday protests that the 16-year-old Swede launched in August have gained little traction so far in France, where the landmark COP21 international accord on cutting emissions was signed in 2015.

After urging the EU in Brussels to move more aggressively on greenhouse gas cuts on Thursday, Thunberg then travelled to Paris where she met up with young activists from France, Belgium and Germany for a march which was also joined by French actress Juliette Binoche. "I never thought it would get so big and I think it's amazing," she said of her campaign, speaking to journalists ahead of the march. "We, children, we should not have to do this, adults should be taking responsibility." A crowd of around 1,000 people took part in the protest in central Paris, one of dozens planned in cities across Europe as part of her "Fridays For Future" movement.

But outside Paris, only two other class-cutting marches have been organized-one in Beauvais just north of Paris and one in the southwestern city of Dax. Last Friday, only

around 200 students protested outside the environment ministry in Paris.

'It takes time to mobilize'

"I don't know why young people mobilize massively in some countries and not others," Thunberg said in an interview with Le Parisien which was published on Friday.

"France, the country of COP21, needs to do what it says it will," she added. Under the 2015 Paris deal to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), the 28-nation EU has pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions by at least 40 percent by 2030, compared to 1990.

Still, France's climate efforts have come increasingly under the spotlight since August when high-profile green activist Nicolas Hulot resigned abruptly as environment minister saying the government was not making enough progress. "There have been other social movements which were very active" in France, said 22-year-old Romaric Thurel, one of the coordinators of Youth For Climate France. "France is a big country and it takes time to mobilise, but we feel a shift."

'Any concrete promise'

Thunberg's determined campaign to hold

adults accountable for looming climate change consequences has gained global resonance since she began skipping class for weekly Friday protests in Stockholm six months ago. She made global headlines in December with a strong-willed speech at a UN climate meeting in Poland, and last month took her message to the top corporate echelons at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

In the last six months, tens of thousands of high school students-in Sydney, Brussels, Berlin, The Hague, London and other cities-have followed her lead.

On Thursday, she joined around 7,500 Belgian student activists who staged a march in Brussels, their seventh such protest. "I think it is very good that the young protest in the streets of Europe to defend the environment," European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker said on Thursday, urging adults to join them.

But despite the enthusiastic reception, Thunberg said she had received little indication on Thursday that EU leaders were ready to heed her call for faster action.

"I didn't hear any concrete promise by political leaders and officials; they only say that they are going to try their best," she said. — AFP



PARIS: Greta Thunberg, the 16-year-old Swedish climate activist, takes part in a march for the environment and the climate organized by students, in Paris on Friday. — FP

CLINIC

PAGE






248 33 199

Dr Sahar Ghannam

Dermatology consultant, skin treatment and laser



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

Friday is a holiday.

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

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

saharpolyclinic
 Dr.saharghannamclinic
 Email: drsgderma@gmail.com

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

Dr. Ala' Groof

Consultant Surgeon
Canadian board certified.

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

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

We cover GIG insured patients- KPC/AFYA

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

WELCOME

Dr Tammam Abou Ali

Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon.

Fellowship of the royal college of surgeons in UK and Ireland.
 10 years work experience in Zain Hospital MOH Kuwait.
 In Head of ENT department in Farwajia Hospital, MOH Kuwait
 10 years work experience in UK and Ireland.

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

1 888 883

www.qmc-kuwait.com

qmckuwait



To advertise on this Page

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

Dr. Husain Alenezi

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



Expert in diagnosing and treating:

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

Contact Taiba Hospital: 1808088 94449452 Twitter: @DrHusain_UroI

Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family

Book your appointments today!



Dr. Kiran Turaka
Ophthalmologist



Dr. Zareena Zahir
Ophthalmologist



Dr. Hasan Khan
Senior Cardiologist



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

50721507 24551555

EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER

Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

Tel : 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.com

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

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

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

Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122

@Malhajry

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

ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

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

SPECIALIZED IN:

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

SHARQ, Ahmad Aliebar st., Building b8, Floor 13.
Tel.: (+965) 22060777.
@Drbuhaimed, @Renovabb, @dardonabb
Email: drbuhaimed@beautybeyond.com.kw
www.beautybeyond.com.kw

Renova BEAUTY & BEYOND

To advertise on this Page

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

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

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

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa

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

Specialized in:

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

alsalam.int.hospital

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

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

Specialized in:

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

alsalam.int.hospital

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

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

Dr. Hani Haider
General Surgery Consultant

http://www.international-clinic.com Tel: 1886677

Scope of Clinical Practice:

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

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

مستشفى دار الشفاء
Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tele:1802 555

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM
Consultant Pediatrician

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

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

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

Academic Certificates - Training

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

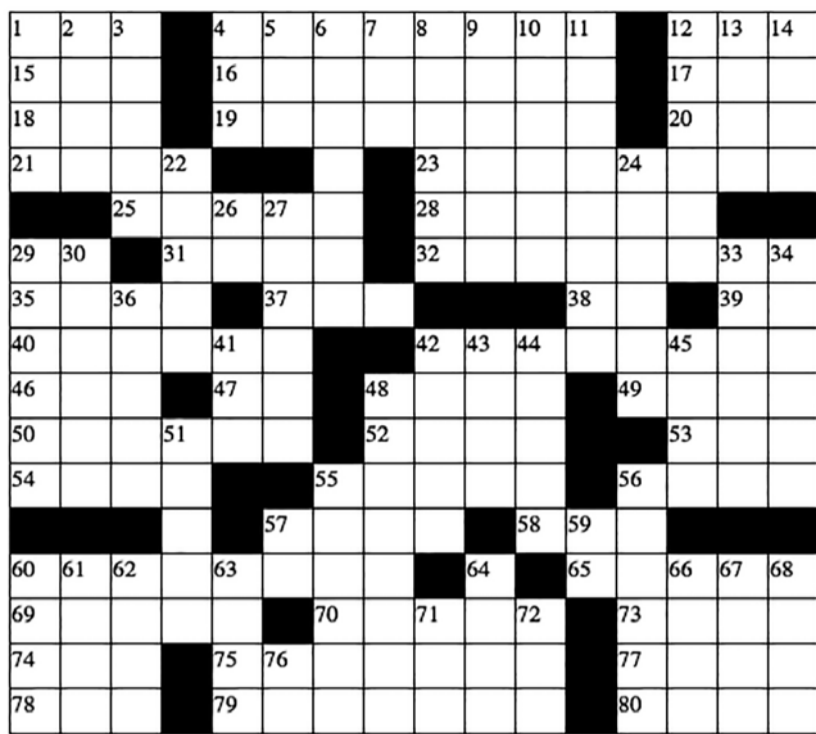
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

Stars

CROSSWORD 2144



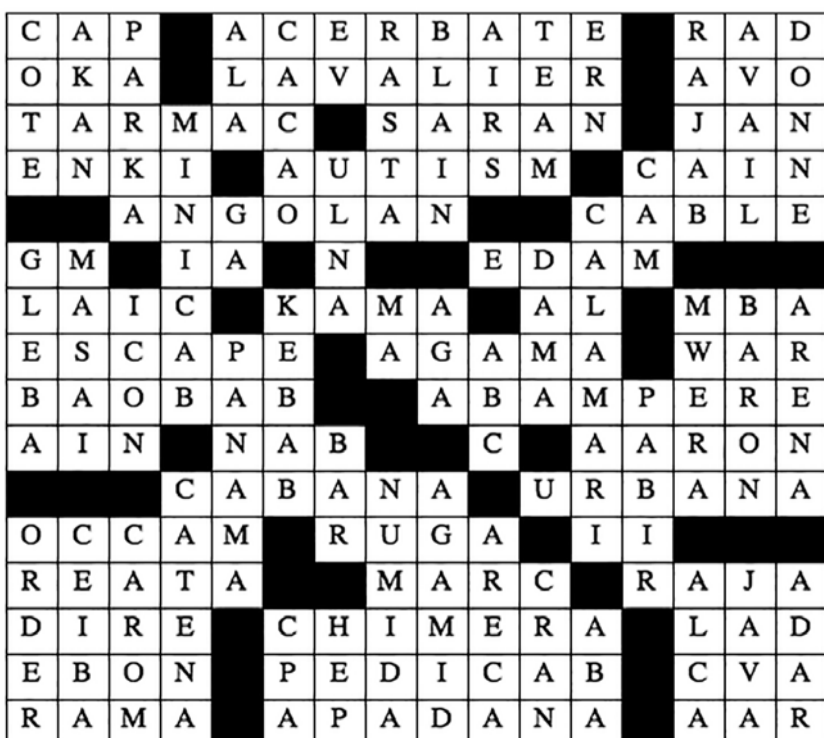
ACROSS

- Sandwich filled with slices of bacon and tomato with lettuce.
- Worshipper of Shiva.
- Take something away by force or without the consent of the owner.
- The syllable naming the sixth (submediant) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
- Combine into one.
- Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
- (Old Testament) Adam's wife in Judeo-Christian mythology.
- For or by a group rather than individuals.
- The last (12th) month of the year.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Languishing because of love.
- Moth having nonfunctional mouthparts as adults.
- Accumulation in the blood of nitrogen-bearing waste products (urea) that are usually excreted in the urine.
- A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
- A system of one or more computers and associated software with common storage.
- Living quarters reserved for wives and concubines and female relatives in a Muslim household.
- A program under which employees regularly accumulate shares and may ultimately assume control of the company.
- Having leadership guidance.
- A radioactive gaseous element formed by the disintegration of radium.
- A nonmetallic largely pentavalent heavy volatile corrosive dark brown liquid element belonging to the halogens.
- One of the most important fungi cultivated in Japan.
- A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
- The square of a body of any size of type.
- A large city of central Poland.
- A historical region on northwestern India and northern Pakistan.
- Especially one side of a leaf.
- (British) A waterproof raincoat made of rubberized fabric.
- Type genus of the Amidae.
- A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
- A familiar name (often a shortened version of a person's given name).
- A grant made by a law court.
- Squash bugs.
- French anthropologist who studied the craniums and brains of different races of people.
- A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
- French magnetic tape recorder for recording (and playing back) TV programs.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- The basic unit of money in Papua New Guinea.
- Take in solid food.
- A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
- Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.

DOWN

- (pathology) An elevation of the skin filled with serous fluid.
- Rock that in its molten form (as magma) issues from volcanos.
- 100 thebe equal 1 pula.
- Intentionally so written (used after a printed word or phrase).
- Group insurance that entitles members to services of participating hospitals and clinics and physicians.
- Thrust or throw into.
- A healthy capacity for vigorous activity.
- A toroidal shape.
- Refuse to acknowledge.
- A person engaged in slave trade.
- A turn made in skiing.
- Relating to or near the radius.
- An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- A beckoning gesture.
- With the mouth wide open as in wonder or awe.
- Notably out of the ordinary.
- A ductile silvery-white ductile ferromagnetic trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- Great coolness and composure under strain.
- Wild ginger.
- A large Yoruba city in southwestern Nigeria.
- Mexican painter noted for his monumental murals (1883-1949).
- Of or relating to Oman or its people.
- Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
- Botswanan statesman who was the first president of Botswana (1921-1980).
- East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
- Having the leading position or higher score in a contest.
- A (usually) large and scholarly book.
- A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- Plaything consisting of small 6-pointed metal pieces that are used (along with a ball) to play the game of jacks.
- The 11th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- New Zealand timber tree resembling the cypress.
- Informal terms for a mother.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
- A heavy open wagon usually having two wheels and drawn by an animal.
- Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
- A fraudulent business scheme.
- An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
- Type genus of the Ranidae.
- East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
- South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your thoughts may appear a little old-fashioned to you today but that's okay everyone does it occasionally. You're in the mood for antiquated ideas such as having a home and family where the wife stays home caring for your perfect children, cooking and cleaning and taking care of her hard-working husband. Maybe that's your sexual fantasy too. Whatever it is you're taking an emotional jaunt into the past with thoughts of recreating the image in your mind. Aries. Power and money are a very strong desire and you're searching for the manner in which to achieve this goal.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Be careful of whom you put your faith into. This is a time that it's easy to be misled even though you're looking your life over thoroughly and feel you have a great grasp on your situation. You're more secretive now but don't like that in others. Power and money are huge motivators today and will cause you to look for ways to diversify. Taurus, which means you could find an added job similar to what your career is now. Opportunity will present itself for just that. Be open to learning.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Get away from your normal routine today. You'll find yourself with a need to study or learn facts that aren't quickly evident. If you're a reporter today would be a great day for indebt research. If not a reporter act like one to learn what you can do to make your life better in every way. You have a quick wit which helps creates the opportunity with others for that exploration. Gemini. You draw a crowd but it's a crowd that can supply you with information you need. Go to a comedy club and laugh. Maybe you might want to attempt for the job of comic with your comedic take of life.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You need to be in control and powerful in your own right. You've got it. You want to take what you like and do with it as you will. Well guess what, your lover will love this you and you're ready. Your confidence level is great at work and you exert powerful influence over those you wish to command, even your boss. How could you go wrong with that kind of confidence. Cancer? You need to be careful that your ideas aren't too far out at work though. It could cause problems later. Have a late dinner and relax later.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your sense of adventure could find you turning your life upside down now. You yearn for more in every life's department. Be careful. Change for change sake can cause you issues. You've decided your love life was good yesterday. Now you might look elsewhere. Work isn't what you think you want but you had made your part of work what you wanted. You're bored. And that might be the very reason you want to change. Leo. You could come up with a new invention or manner in which to work smarter. Let your mind flow but don't change anything until tomorrow.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Power and money call out to you now. Instinct drives you on in your work life towards the goal your thinking. Being better than another in the same business is your longing. Go slow as you take this step. Set into motion what you desire but be gentle and learn so that you make it the best. That doesn't mean you leave your old career before you start your next. Learn and walk as a toddler would with care. The other thing you have on your mind today is just what most powerful people think of too and that's sex and control. You can take care of that now.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Sex, money and power are high on your mind and have been for a few days. Your thinking runs much deeper now especially since someone is making you think about them along with your work. Unless your lover is in your business this is going to a hard few days, maybe even longer. Your head is in the clouds where no one but the person and work you're concerned about can reach you. You're going through all kinds of scenarios because you want financial security and love. Take your time to make up your mind.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

New ideas and the examination of those ideas might prompt you to greater things. You may find yourself looking for people who can teach you about these novel concepts at a local library or through friends. You're open to discovery about you and your life. Learning what makes others tick turns your inquiring mind on and helps you to achieve your desires at work and at home. Furthermore, it gives you peace. Your inquisitive mind makes you excel at finding and trying a new diet. Taking care of you and your family in a manner you consider better is paramount.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You're willing to work for what you want and you've started the process towards just that. Be careful that you don't push yourself or others too hard. You might not like what happens when you do. Injury or sickness could stop something you desire because you shove yourself too hard. You've settled down to being more introverted so that you can see the whole picture and what you're getting yourself into or out of. Sagittarius. This is a great time to progress towards obtaining material possessions either by study or by career.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Sex, power and money are right back where they should be with you. You feel powerful and you're sought after again for advice. Now you feel at home again. At work you're giving your time and effort and it's being appreciated. Enjoy Capricorn. What goes around comes around and you're happy now after your small vacation yesterday. Aren't you glad you gave yourself that one frivolous moment in time? The birds are singing and everything is beautiful. Plus, you got an emotional boost from your lover too. Can't beat those odds. You might even have a new invention in mind.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Yes, you feel better today even if you are a little more conservative in your thinking now. If you don't have to work today, you can make the most of being at home with those you love or with friends. Make love to your life's partner early on today. Then discuss what you consider the best for the two of you for creating your future. You might find that your lover is more attuned and encouraging of your needs than you thought. Aquarius. Enjoy life and be happy.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may find yourself taking a class on the unknown today or buying a book to study. Anything that isn't the norm is in your wheel house. You realize how all these spiritual items come together to make a place in your life. You might try to find out what psychic impressions you've experienced means to you. Meditation may be another goal now for envisioning what you desire in work and in your life. Pisces. This is a good day to sit home and read or work in the garden. Anything that gives you a moment to be tranquil and at peace is a great time for you now.

Wordsearch Puzzle

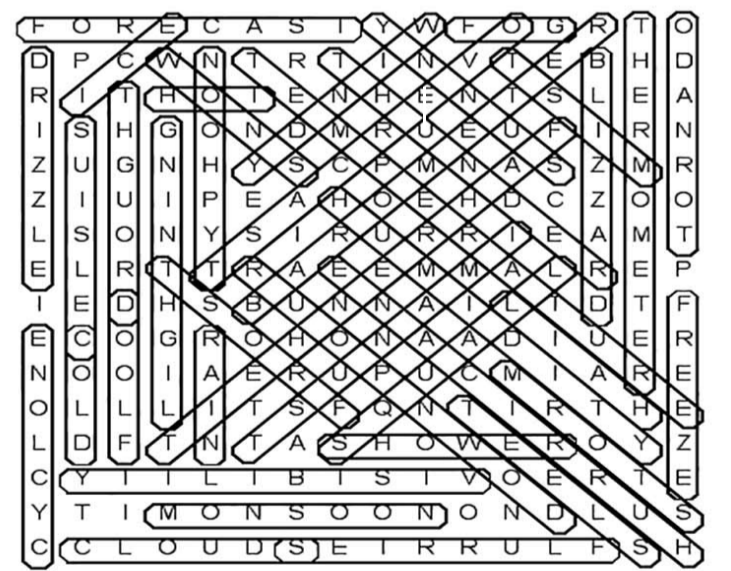
What's the Point?

Find and circle all of the things with points that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.

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

- ANTENNA
- ANTLER
- ARGUMENT
- ARROW
- BACKGAMMON BOARD
- BALLPEN
- BEAK
- BIRD TALON
- COMPASS
- CONE
- CORKSCREW
- CRAYON
- DART
- DECIMAL
- FINGER
- FISH HOOK
- FORK
- ICE PICK
- ICICLE
- JAVELIN
- KNIFE
- MAIL
- NOSE
- PENCIL
- PINE NEEDLE
- POINTER STICK
- PYRAMID
- QUILL
- RHINOCEROS HORN
- ROCKET
- SCALPEL
- SCISSORS
- SEWING NEEDLE
- SHARK TOOTH
- SHERIFF'S BADGE
- SPEAR
- SPIKE
- STAPLE
- STAR
- STYLUS
- SWORD
- THORN
- THUMB TACK
- TOOTHPICK
- TRIANGLE
- TRIDENT
- VULCAN EAR
- WOODEN STAKE

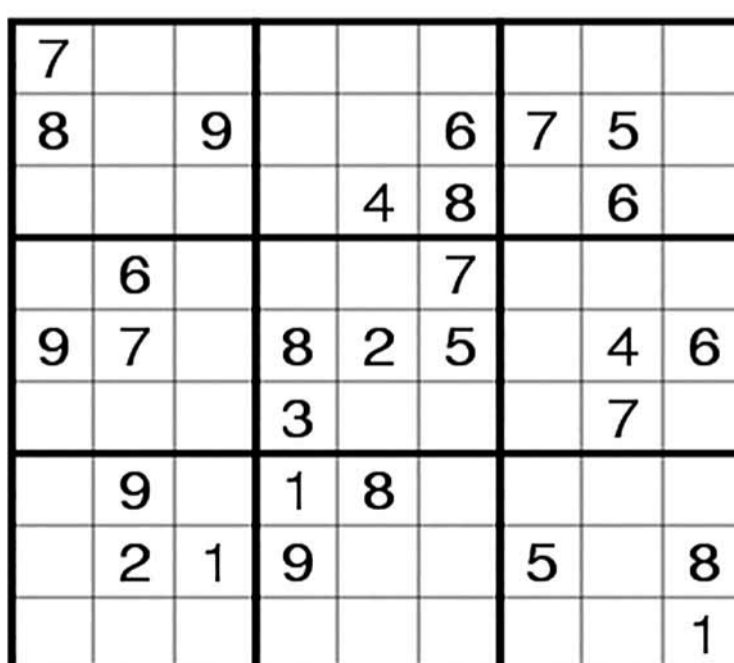
Weather



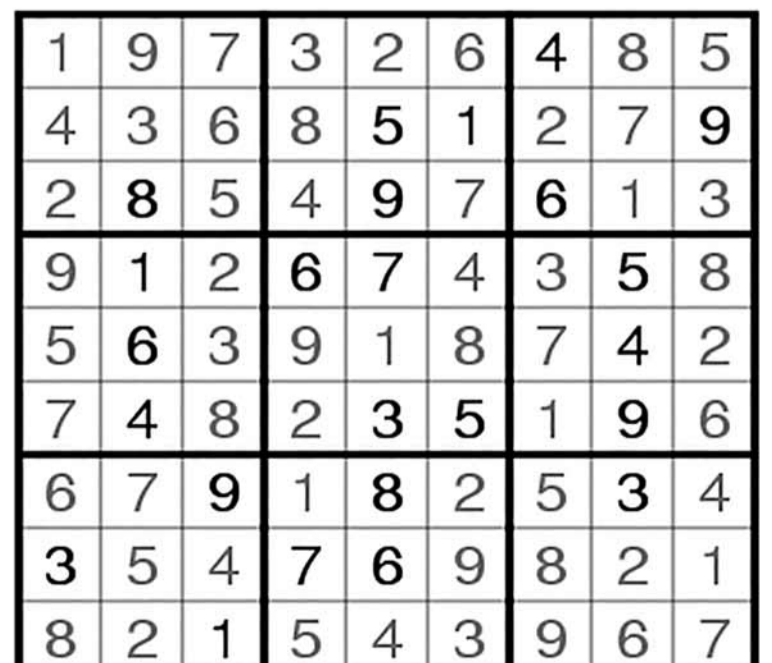
- BAROMETER
- BLIZZARD
- CELSIUS
- CLOUDS
- COLD
- CYCLONE
- DOWNPOUR
- DRIZZLE
- DROUGHT
- FAHRENHEIT
- FLOOD
- FLURRIES
- FOG
- FORECAST
- FREEZE
- FROST
- HAIL
- HOT
- HUMIDITY
- HURRICANE
- ICE
- LIGHTNING
- MIST
- MOONSOON
- OVERCAST
- RAIN
- SHOWER
- SLEET
- SNOW
- SQUALL
- STORM
- SUNNY
- TEMPERATURE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

The hidden word is: PRECIPITATION

Daily SuDoku



Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2019

This file photo taken on July 2, 2018, shows the Statue of Liberty in New York City. — AFP



The eight contenders for the best picture Oscar

From a superhero blockbuster to an offbeat royal comedy of manners to an intimate black-and-white ode to 1970s Mexico City, the contenders for this year's best picture Oscar are as varied as ever. Here is a brief summary of the eight films vying for the most prestigious prize at Sunday's Oscars ceremony:

'Black Panther'

Director Ryan Coogler took Hollywood by storm with his take on Marvel's "Black Panther," a visually stunning film about a mythical, hidden, technologically advanced African kingdom called Wakanda. The title character is also known as T'Challa, the heir to Wakanda's throne who takes over as king when his father is assassinated. But he is challenged by Killmonger, a US black ops soldier with nefarious intentions who also happens to be T'Challa's cousin. The film earned an impressive seven nominations overall, and made history by becoming the first comic book film to win a best picture nomination. It won top honors at the Screen Actors Guild awards for best ensemble cast.



'BlackKlansman'

Is this Spike Lee's year? The veteran director turned out a blistering drama based on the real-life tale of a black cop in Colorado who decides to try to infiltrate the Ku Klux Klan with the help of his white partner. The film — which earned six nominations — stars John David Washington (son of two-time Oscar winner Denzel) as Ron Stallworth and Oscar nominee Adam Driver as his partner Flip Zimmerman. "BlackKlansman" unfolds in the 1970s, but the film ends with images of rallies in Charlottesville two years ago, becoming a searing indictment of divisions in

today's America. Lee has notoriously been denied on Oscars night, including a snub 30 years ago for his seminal work "Do The Right Thing." While he has an honorary Oscar, he has never won a competitive Academy Award.

'Bohemian Rhapsody'

The biopic about legendary Queen front-man Freddie Mercury earned lackluster reviews when it opened, but its surprise inclusion — and wins — at the Golden Globes in January propelled it into Oscars contention. Rami Malek is a top contender for best actor for his portrayal of Mercury, and critics have especially hailed his strutting, pitch perfect recreation of the band's iconic Live Aid performance in 1985. The film, which earned a total of five nominations, did not escape scandal — it was directed by Bryan Singer, who is facing a raft of sexual misconduct allegations, some of them involving teenage boys. Singer was fired shortly before "Bohemian Rhapsody" wrapped, and has not been involved or even mentioned during the film's awards season campaigns. But his name remains in the movie's credits.



'The Favourite'

A film with a decidedly female perspective has not won best picture since "Million Dollar Baby" in 2005 and "The Favourite" would be a welcome way to break that streak. Greek

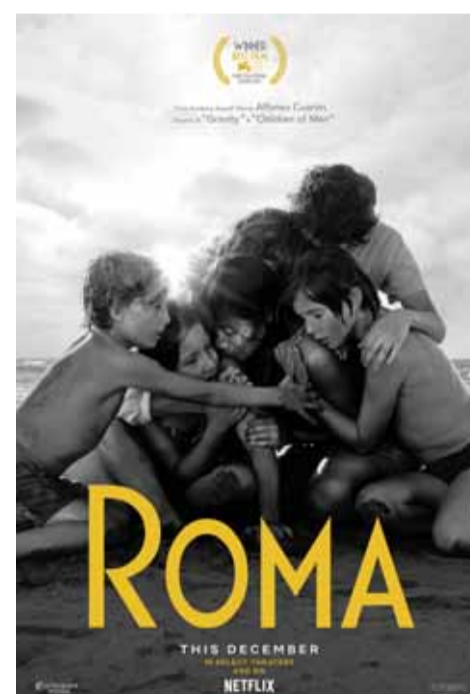
director Yorgos Lanthimos hired a trio of powerhouse actresses — Olivia Colman, Rachel Weisz and Emma Stone — to bring to life his feminist reimagining of the life and reign of Britain's Queen Anne. Colman plays the ailing, paranoid monarch, while Weisz plays her best friend, advisor and (in the film) lover Lady Sarah, and Stone appears as Abigail, Sarah's distant cousin looking to move up at court. What ensues is a dark, farcical yet affecting look at a queen in turmoil, who falls victim to her scheming female companions. It earned 10 nominations, tying with "Roma," and all three women got Oscar nods.



'Green Book'

Can a classical black pianist and a rough-and-ready Italian-American bouncer-turned-driver become friends in the 1960s as they travel through the segregated Deep South? "Green Book" says yes. The civil rights comedy, based on the real-life experiences of musician Don Shirley and Tony "Lip" Vallelonga, is running behind "Roma" in most Oscar predictions for best picture honors. The movie — which explores race relations and questions about identity — soars thanks to its lead actors Viggo Mortensen (Vallelonga) and Mahershala Ali (Shirley), who are both Oscar nominees. It endured its fair share of criticism and controversy, including over whether it is the latest in a stream of "white savior" movies,

but the stars and the film's team have vigorously defended it.



'Roma'

Alfonso Cuarón's love letter to his childhood — and the two women who guided him, his mother and his nanny — has been the overwhelming favorite to win the top prize on Sunday. If it does win, it will be the first foreign-language film to do so, and the first best picture winner for streaming giant Netflix. "Roma" tells the story of an indigenous woman named Cleo — played by first-time actress Yalitza Aparicio — who works as a housekeeper and nanny for a middle-class family in Mexico City during the 1970s. The movie, shot in a mixture of Spanish and the indigenous Mixtec language, is a personal triumph for Cuarón, already an Oscar winner for best director in 2014 for space epic "Gravity."

'A Star Is Born'

At the start of Hollywood's awards season, "A Star Is Born" looked like the natural leading contender. The retelling of a classic Tinseltown tale — an addicted singer on the wane, a young ingenue on the rise and their doomed love affair in the balance — had Oscars gold written all over it. It had mega-star power in actor-director Bradley Cooper and co-star Lady Gaga. It enjoyed massive success at the box office. Critics loved it. So what happened? Despite earning eight nomi-

nations, Oscarologists see the film as a lock for best original song ("Shallow") but not for much else.

'Vice'

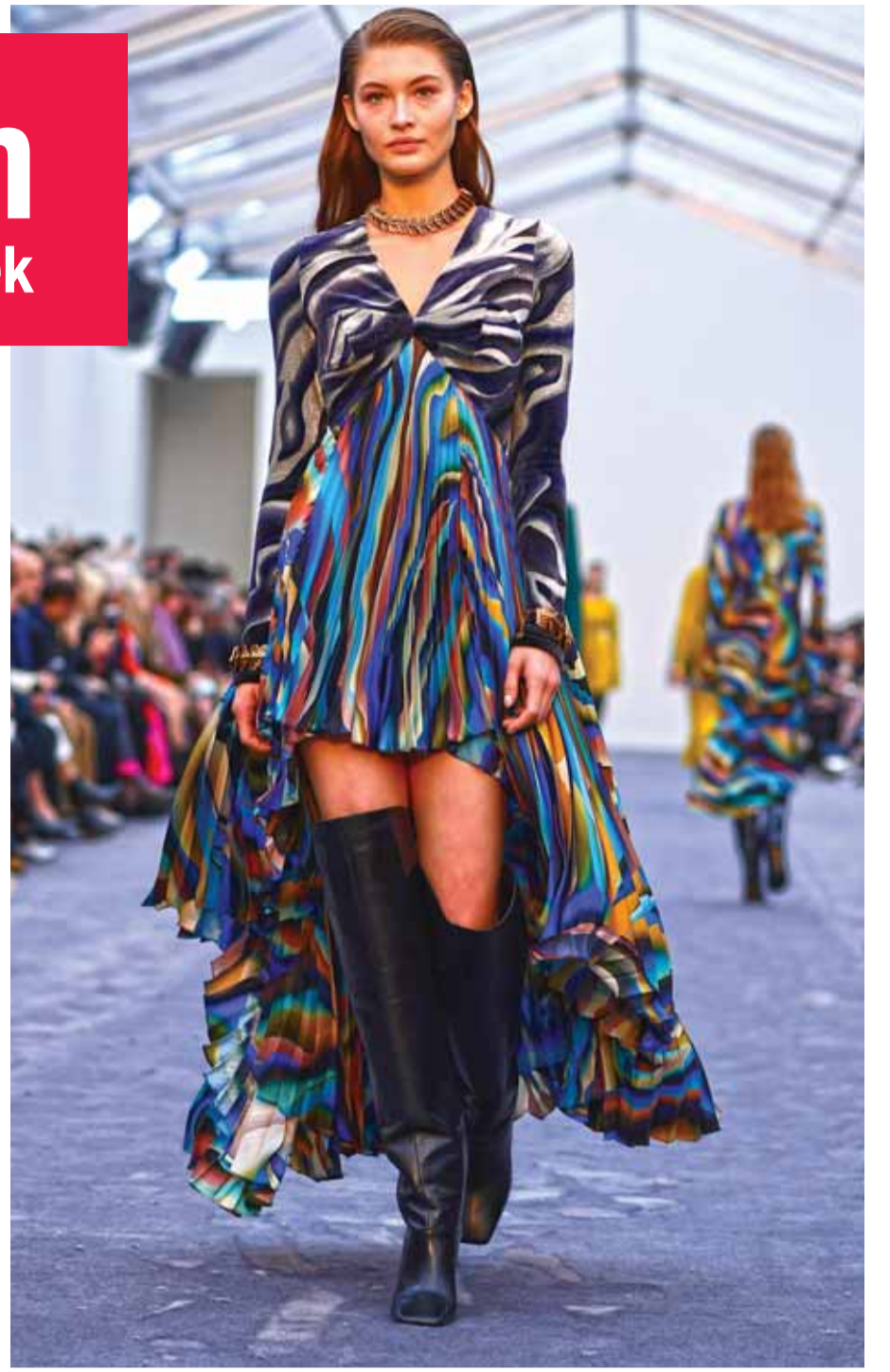
Adam McKay brought his offbeat sense of satire to the life of former US vice president Dick Cheney for "Vice," charting the rise of George W. Bush's veep from Montana to the West Wing. Christian Bale earned widespread praise for disappearing under extra pounds and a mountain of make-up into the role — and earned a Golden Globe and a Bafta for his efforts. Bale, along with co-stars Amy Adams (Cheney's wife Lynne) and Sam Rockwell (Bush), received Oscar nominations, but the film's mixed reviews stalled its awards campaign for the bigger prizes. — AFP

Best picture winners of the past 20 years

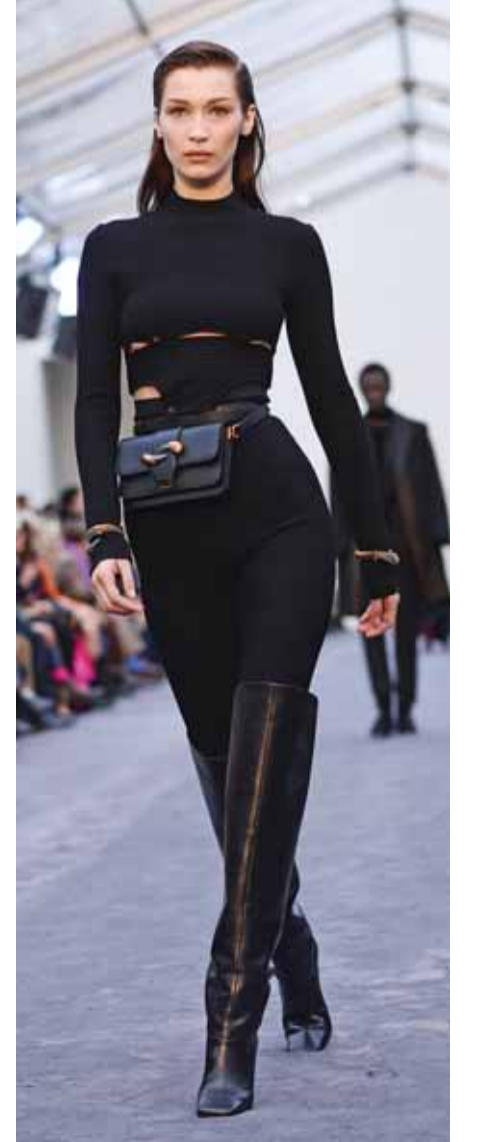
The following is a list of the best picture Oscar winners from the last 20 years, ahead of Sunday's 91st Academy Awards in Hollywood :-

- 2018 - "The Shape of Water"
- 2017 - "Moonlight"
- 2016 - "Spotlight"
- 2015 - "Birdman"
- 2014 - "12 Years A Slave"
- 2013 - "Argo"
- 2012 - "The Artist"
- 2011 - "The King's Speech"
- 2010 - "The Hurt Locker"
- 2009 - "Slumdog Millionaire"
- 2008 - "No Country for Old Men"
- 2007 - "The Departed"
- 2006 - "Crash"
- 2005 - "Million Dollar Baby"
- 2004 - "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King"
- 2003 - "Chicago"
- 2002 - "A Beautiful Mind"
- 2001 - "Gladiator"
- 2000 - "American Beauty"
- 1999 - "Shakespeare in Love"

Milan Fashion Week



Models present the creations during the Roberto Cavalli women's Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection fashion show, on February 22, 2019 in Milan. — AFP



Lifestyle | Music & Movies

FIVE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON OSCARS NIGHT

Oscars night is quickly approaching and all will be revealed. Will Alfonso Cuarón sweep the awards for his cinematic masterpiece "Roma"? Will another contender swipe the best picture Oscar from him? Can Glenn Close finally claim her first Academy Award? The ceremony will be without a host for the first time in three decades — a fact sure to create some surprising moments. Here are five things to watch for on Sunday when the stars gather for the 91st Oscars:

Can Netflix's 'Roma' make history?

Streaming giant Netflix could take a major step forward in its quest to be both a distribution king and a purveyor of quality original content if "Roma" becomes its first film to take home a best picture Oscar. "Roma" earned a whopping 10 nods, leading the proceedings in a tie with "The Favourite." The film earned nominations in several top categories including best director and best actress, also a new high for Netflix.

Amazon Studios already broke through in the best picture category in 2017 with a nomination for "Manchester by the Sea" — but did not grab the win. A best picture victory for "Roma" would also make history as it would be the first foreign-language film to do so. And it would be the crown jewel in a rich awards season for Alfonso Cuarón, whose black-and-white film pays homage to his mother, his nanny and his childhood in 1970s Mexico City.

Four of the 10 nominations for "Roma" are his: for best picture as a producer, best director, best original screenplay and best cinematography. He joins illustrious company with his achievement: Warren Beatty did the same, scoring four nominations in four different categories — twice — for "Heaven Can Wait" and "Reds." Joel and Ethan Coen did it for "No Country for Old Men."

At last, Glenn Close's turn?

Glenn Close is a veteran stage and screen actress and is revered by her peers. She is a winner of three Emmys, three Golden Globes and three Tony Awards. But Oscar



In this file photo taken on December 10, 2018, Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón arrives for the Los Angeles premiere of "Roma" at the Egyptian theatre in Hollywood, California.



Glenn Close attends the 12th Annual Women In Film Oscar Party at Spring Place on February 22, 2019 in Beverly Hills.— AFP photos



Spike Lee

has never smiled on her. This year, with her seventh nomination, could finally be her year. Close, 71, earned rave reviews for her portrayal of Joan Castleman, a woman who finds herself at a crossroads in her marriage to an author husband in "The Wife," opposite a formidable Jonathan Pryce. She has swept the major prizes so far this awards season, from a Golden Globe in January to a Screen Actors Guild prize to the Critics' Choice Award she shared with Lady Gaga. Oscarologists are near-unanimous in their prediction that Close will strike gold on Sunday. We'll see when the envelope is opened.

What about Spike Lee?

Spike Lee is still bitter about what is perceived as one of the most egregious Oscar snubs: the choice of "Driving Miss Daisy" for best picture in 1990, when his "Do the Right Thing" was not nominated. But this year, his "BlacKkKlansman" is up for six Oscars, and Lee himself was nominated three times: for best picture as a producer, best director and best adapted screenplay. Lee was given

a honorary Oscar a few years ago for lifetime achievement but has never taken home a competitive Academy Award. Many hope his tale of a black cop who infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan will break the unhappy streak.

Is a hostless Oscars a better Oscars?

For the first time in 30 years, the Oscars will go on without a host. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences initially offered the job to Kevin Hart, but backlash over a series of old tweets quickly ended that. So gala organizers are going without an emcee for the first time since 1989 — a disastrous year remembered for a musical duet between actor Rob Lowe and ... Snow White. Will the hostless gala mean a shorter gala, which many viewers and industry A-listers have asked for? Organizers have promised to try to keep the show at about three hours. We'll see.

A-list music performances

Lady Gaga, Queen with Adam Lambert, Bette Midler: some of music's biggest stars will be front and center on

Oscars night to perform Oscar-nominated songs, and otherwise entertain the A-listers. Gaga and Bradley Cooper will sing their power ballad "Shallow" from "A Star Is Born" live for the first time on television. Midler will do "The Place Where Lost Things Go" from "Mary Poppins Returns," and Oscar winner Jennifer Hudson will sing the theme song "I'll Fight" from the documentary "RBG" about Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

Also added to the schedule were Queen — "Bohemian Rhapsody," the story of the band's rise to fame, earned five nominations including for best picture and best actor (Rami Malek as the late Freddie Mercury). Kendrick Lamar and SZA had been due to perform their song "All the Stars" from "Black Panther," but Variety reported that they would not attend, citing a "logistics and timing" issue. — AFP



In this picture taken on February 20, 2019, US conductor Marin Alsop (top C), 62, conducts the Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra, the Diocesan Boys' School Orchestra and the Diocesan Girls' School Orchestra during an open rehearsal for their Hong Kong Arts Festival performance the following night in Hong Kong.— AFP

History-making conductor Marin Alsop wields baton for equality

The first woman to lead a major US orchestra, Marin Alsop believes that Western classical music — long seen as a stuffy, elitist club — can be "a great equalizer" between people of all backgrounds. "Every single human being can access classical music. If you think you can't, it's only because you have been told that by someone who didn't know anything," Alsop told AFP in an interview on the sidelines of the Hong Kong Arts Festival, where she was conducting the Sao Paulo Symphony Orchestra. The 62-year-old American is herself no stranger to such naysayers.

She was nine years old when she watched the celebrated American composer Leonard Bernstein conduct an orchestra and decided that she too would command the stage one day, only to be told by her violin teacher that "girls don't do that". For the young girl who had grown up watching her mother play the cello, it was her first brush with gender discrimination.

Born into a musical family — her father played the violin — Alsop took up her first instrument when she was just two years old, joining an orchestra at age seven. She credits her "entirely supportive" parents and her own "stubborn" streak for helping her persevere in her push to wield the baton. Her determination and talent eventually won the budding conductor the attention of Bernstein himself, who took her under his wing.

Making history

After years of touring with orchestras in the US and the UK, Alsop made history in 2007 when she became the first female music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (BSO). More accolades followed. In 2013, she became the first woman to conduct the Last Night of the Proms, a highlight of Britain's cultural calendar. Later this year, Alsop will add another first to her resume when she takes over as music director of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra.

"I am always shocked that there can still be firsts for women in the 21st century... I find that quite pathetic," she says. Nonetheless, she acknowledges that "the great thing about being the first... is that it provides you a platform and an opportunity to try to open doors for other people".

Despite Alsop's success, the classical music world has been slow to embrace and nurture the talent of female conductors. According to Britain's Royal Philharmonic Society, only 5.5 percent of the 371 conductors represented by British agents are female. Eager to see more women blaze trails of their own, Alsop founded the Taki Concordia Conducting Fellowship in 2002, offering guidance and mentoring to female conductors.

As the #MeToo movement sweeps the world of classical music, including hallowed institutions like the Metropolitan Opera and the BSO, Alsop is scathing about the abuses of power, calling them "the worst-kept secrets in classical music". "I hope that the younger generations (of men) are more educated, more sensitive or at least perhaps, a little more scared," she says.

'Find their voice'

A high-profile career leading three orchestras across three continents notwithstanding, Alsop hopes her ongoing efforts to widen access to the world of classical music will prove her strongest legacy. When she took over the BSO in 2007, she was astonished to discover that while African-Americans made up more than 60 percent of Baltimore's population, the orchestra featured only one African-American musician — a cellist.

The disparity prompted her to set up a program called OrchKids, providing free musical education, instruments, meals and mentoring to 30 African-American youngsters. A decade on, its reach has expanded to 1,300 children. Describing the first intake of students, who are now graduating from the program, Alsop says: "They have been able to find their voice. They have been able to express themselves. They have been able to become confident leaders". "When you suddenly find yourself playing the violin in front of an audience when you never expected to do that... you can start to see yourself doing so many things," she says. "They have been able to envision a world for themselves that's filled with possibility". — AFP

DEATH-DEFYING CLIMB LIFTS HONNOLD INTO OSCARS CONTENTION

Alex Honnold, a big wall climber who has conquered a series of intimidating rock faces on his own and almost without equipment, could tomorrow add the Oscars to his conquests for his central role in the documentary "Free Solo." Honnold, who was born in Sacramento, California, came to international attention with a series of solo ascents without ropes or other safety gear up legendary climbs.

As Honnold, who is famous for living in Yosemite National Park in a van, ticked off the famous routes, he became famous himself. In June 2017, escorted by a film crew of other expert climbers, Honnold attempted one of the most daunting routes, known as 'Freerider', which zigzags up a 2,750 feet (840-metre) cliff to one of the tallest parts of Yosemite's famed El Capitan.

The documentary of that climb, as scary as any horror film, has already won a British Bafta award and is nominated in Sunday's Oscars. It has, Honnold said, altered his life. "Nothing immediately changed in me," the climber told AFP. "The day I did the climb, it was just like a normal day. What changed is with the release of the film and the five months talking about it and seeing reactions to it and time spent talking about the climb, I think that has slowly changed me."

"It's not as if when you finish the climb suddenly you are a new man. I think that finishing the climb has maybe sated my hunger a little bit. I mean, I achieved this big dream of mine and there is nothing else I feel quite the same about." In the film, Honnold scales the rock face, finding finger and toe holds invisible to the camera, some, according to National Geographic which produced the film, just one eighth of an inch (3.1mm) wide. As he hangs hundreds of feet above the valley floor, death seems only a moment away.

"I think I'm afraid of dying, I mean like

everyone else," Honnold said. "Obviously, there are some climbing experiences that are scary and I just have to manage my fear, the same as everyone else. take some deep breaths and relax and try to perform anyway but I think the best approach is to just not be afraid."

'This is awesome'

Honnold's preparation meant he knew what to do from the start. "I was just executing, you know it's like auto-pilot, you just go and do the thing you've been working toward," he said. "Obviously a little nervous just because it's big and I've never done it...but mostly just moving ahead." "You know I was afraid of 'El Cap' for many years which is why it took me two years preparation just to do the climb. If I didn't feel fear I would've done it on the first day. If you don't feel fear you just go for it." As he neared the top, his mood changed. "The last 100 meters get easier as you finish so I'd sort of already started the celebration, not celebrating, but the last 50 meters are pretty easy so I was just like running up like 'Oh! I did it, this is awesome.'"

"Incredible satisfaction," he said. "I was on top sitting in the sun with no shirt on for like an hour and a half just being like 'what an amazing day' and we took pictures, all hung out and we were all hugging." Honnold takes pride in the awards the film is collecting. "Climbing is fundamentally more satisfying because it's an object in nature that you can go and see every year - it's always the same, it's unchanging, it's basically like a set level of challenge that you have to rise to." So what comes next? "I don't know, we'll see," he said. "I would go to Yosemite again in May and go climb outside again for a while." — AFP

Celebrate the 2019 Oscars with OSN

OSN, the region's leading entertainment network, will bring all things Oscars(r) live and direct from Hollywood to viewers across the Middle East for this year's 91st Academy Awards. Through an exclusive live broadcast, viewers can revel in the minute-by-minute action on 25 February - from 12.30am KSA with the pre-show, followed by 'On the Red Carpet at the Oscars' and the 91st Academy Awards ceremony itself from 4am-7am (KSA) on OSN Movies HD and OSN Ya Hala Cinema, with a repeat airing the same day on both channels at 7pm (KSA). Watch all the pre-event glitz and glamour with E! Entertainment's Live from the Red Carpet and Fashion Police from 2.30am-4am (KSA) on 25 February.

Feeding the region's love of quality films, a stellar line-up of Oscar nominated titles will be available on OSN Store to buy and keep in the lead up to the awards, including A Star Is Born, Bohemian Rhapsody and BlacKkKlansman to name but a few. Discover these titles and more on OSN Store, OSN on Demand, and OSN Play for anywhere, any time and any device viewing.

Giving customers even more chances to relive classic movie moments, OSN will also be launching a new pop-up channel, OSN Pop Up HD Oscars. From February 15 to 25,



the channel will showcase 70 of the finest Oscars awarded and acclaimed movies including Marvel Studios' Black Panther, which is nominated for seven Oscars including Best Picture - the first superhero movie nominated for the Academy's most highly coveted accolade. Find out which films and movie stars will be taking home the golden statuettes on 25 February, only on OSN.

Fun facts and figures about the Oscars

How much does an Oscar statue weigh? Which actor has received the most ever nominations? Who has the most Oscars ever? Here are some fun facts about the 91st Academy Awards, which will take place in Hollywood tomorrow:

Uncle Oscar?

Hollywood lore has it that the Academy Award was nicknamed Oscar after Academy librarian Margaret Herrick — who eventually became executive director — saw the trophy for the first time and thought it looked like her uncle Oscar. Hollywood legend Bette Davis allegedly claimed she had nicknamed the award Oscar as it reminded her of her first husband, musician Harmon Oscar Nelson Jr, but later withdrew that claim, according to IMDb. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences officially adopted the nickname in 1939.

Heavy prize

The Oscar statuette is solid bronze and plated in 24-karat gold. It stands 13.5 inches (34 centimeters) tall and weighs 8.5 pounds. It takes three months for Polish Tallix Fine Art Foundry in New York to manufacture a batch of 50 statuettes. More than 3,140 statuettes have been handed out since 1929. The trophy represents a knight holding a crusader's sword standing on a reel of film with five spokes that refer to the five original branches of the Academy — actors, directors, producers, technicians and writers.

Acting royalty

Meryl Streep holds the record for the most nominations in the acting categories, with 21. She and Jack Nicholson — the most nominated male actor with 12 nominations — each have two statuettes for lead acting and one for supporting roles. The movie industry figure with the most Oscars is Walt Disney, who won 22, plus four honorary statuettes. Katharine Hepburn won the most Oscars for a performer, with four. Daniel Day-Lewis is the only person to have three best actor Oscars.

Young and old winners

The youngest person to receive an Oscar was six-year-old Shirley Temple in 1935, although it was a non-competitive honorary award for children to honor her work from the year before. The youngest to win a competitive Oscar was Tatum O'Neal, who was 10 when she bagged best supporting actress for "Paper Moon" in 1974. The oldest winner of an acting award was Christopher Plummer, who was 82 when he won his first Oscar for best supporting actor in "Beginners" in 2012.

Unfortunate streak

Sound engineer Kevin O'Connell held the record for most Academy Award nominations without a win at 20. But the 21st time was the charm in 2017 when he finally won for best sound mixing for "Hacksaw Ridge." — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

Police slam Smollett, says he staged attack to boost career

An American TV actor was criminally charged for allegedly masterminding an elaborate "publicity stunt" that sought to exploit the "pain and anger of racism" with a staged assault on the streets of Chicago. It was the latest twist in a weeks-long saga that has seen 36-year-old Jussie Smollett, the gay, African-American actor who stars on Fox music industry drama "Empire," go from victim to suspect after he reported an assault late last month.

An incredulous Chicago police chief accused Smollett of first sending himself a fake threatening letter and then staging an attack to tap into Americans' anxieties over political and racial divisions, because he was allegedly "dissatisfied with his salary." In a sign of the national attention the case has drawn, President Donald Trump weighed in Thursday, taking issue with the fact Smollett claimed his assailants invoked the president's "Make America Great Again" slogan along with homophobic and racist slurs during the purported attack.

"Empire" actor Jussie Smollett took advantage of the pain and anger of racism to promote his career," Chicago Police Superintendent Eddie Johnson told an emotionally-charged news conference — during which he lashed out angrily at the actor for sully the city's image. "Smollett paid \$3,500 to stage this attack and drag Chicago's reputation through the mud in the process," he said. "This publicity stunt was a scar that Chicago didn't earn and certainly didn't deserve."

Smollett turned himself in early Thursday morning, was arrested and charged with a felony count of disor-



Empire actor Jussie Smollett leaves Cook County jail after posting bond on February 21, 2019 in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

derly conduct for filing a false police report, and was granted \$100,000 bond. He was freed from jail late in the afternoon, and said nothing to the throng of media. If convicted, he faces up to three years in prison. His legal team pushed back hard later Thursday, claiming the police press conference had been prejudicial and "the presumption of innocence, a bedrock in the search for justice, was trampled upon."

"Today we witnessed an organized law enforcement spectacle that has no place in the American legal system," attorney Jack Prior told AFP in a statement. "Mr Smollett is a young man of impeccable character and

integrity who fiercely and solemnly maintains his innocence and feels betrayed by a system that apparently wants to skip due process and proceed directly to sentencing." Smollett had claimed that two masked men beat him late at night in downtown Chicago, poured bleach on him and tied a rope around his neck — but police grew suspicious of his account after they failed to corroborate it.

Trump took aim at the actor for having tarnished his supporters, tweeting: "what about MAGA and the tens of millions of people you insulted with your racist and dangerous comments!?" Meanwhile, Fox Entertainment and 20th Century Fox Television, which produce "Empire" and had stood by the actor, said "we understand the seriousness of this matter" and "are considering our options."

Mountain of evidence

Authorities said the two men who staged the attack with Smollett were brothers Ola and Abel Osundairo, who have both previously worked on "Empire," and were acquaintances of the actor — while one provided him with drugs. The brothers have cooperated with police since their arrest late last week and have not been charged with a crime.

Smollett allegedly first concocted a false threatening letter he had sent to himself — which is under a separate FBI investigation — and when that did not get enough attention, paid the brothers to have the assault staged. Prosecutor Risa Lanier detailed an elaborate plot that

Smollett allegedly orchestrated with exacting detail — telling the brothers when and how to attack him, including pointing out a street camera he assumed would capture the event, but was in fact pointing in a different direction. The allegations were backed by a mountain of evidence, including a cashed check that Smollett wrote to pay for the stunt, authorities said.

Rush to judgment

Initial news of Smollett's claims led to widespread condemnation and shock, and an outpouring of support from celebrities and politicians alike, including Democratic 2020 presidential candidates Cory Booker and Kamala Harris who denounced "an attempted modern day lynching." Trump initially described the alleged attack as "horrible." Since then, Smollett's story has become a cautionary tale in an era where incomplete information is quickly spread via social media.

Opinion writers have complained about a rush to judgment, and politicians, celebrities and nonprofit groups have felt pressure to explain their initial reactions. The president of the LGBT advocacy group Human Rights Campaign said the Smollett news was "both devastating and frustrating." "I want to ask everyone feeling angry, hurt & disappointed to channel that into productive activism - because there are thousands targeted by hate violence each year who need our help," Chad Griffin tweeted. — AFP

R Kelly hit with fresh sexual abuse allegations

Two more women accused R. Kelly of sexually assaulting them as teens, the latest in a slew of lurid allegations against the R&B superstar. Latresa Scaff, 40, and Rochelle Washington, 39, told journalists in New York they met Kelly at a show's after-party in Baltimore in the 1990s, giving them alcohol and drugs before cor-



This booking photo obtained from the Chicago Police Department yesterday shows singer R Kelly. — AFP

nering them in his hotel room and demanding sex. They were unable to pinpoint the year of the concert but said it was either 1995 or 1996, adding Kelly's security picked them out of the arena's crowd.

At the after-party they were given cocaine, marijuana and alcohol and invited to Kelly's hotel room, according to Scaff, who said a man with a walkie-talkie told them: "R. Kelly is getting ready to enter the room. Pull up your dresses." The artist, now

52, then came in wearing a shirt and jeans. Washington refused his advances and hid in the bathroom, but Scaff gave him o** sex and then had intercourse with him, "even though I did not have the capacity to consent," she said. The pair, represented by high-powered feminist lawyer Gloria Allred, were scheduled to speak with the US Attorney for the Eastern District of New York later Thursday.

Scaff said she decided to speak out "because of all of the other victims," and encouraged others to come forward. Allred is representing a number of women who have made allegations against Kelly. Michael Avenatti — the lawyer representing porn star Stormy Daniels in her legal battle with US President Donald Trump — is also defending multiple clients with ties to the artist. Without providing further detail, Allred said some women she is representing fear video or audio recordings of their relations with Kelly may be circulating.

For decades the artist — real name Robert Sylvester Kelly — has faced lawsuits and accusations over child pornography, sex with minors, operating a sex cult and sexual battery. "You have nowhere to run and nowhere to hide," Allred said, referring to Kelly. "You have been able to get away with your predatory misconduct for far too long." — AFP



New York police officers and members of the press stand outside The Mark Hotel during Meghan, Duchess of Sussex's baby shower on February 20, 2019 in New York City. — AFP

UK backlash at Meghan's lavish US baby shower

Meghan Markle drew fresh scorn from British media this week after celebrating the imminent arrival of her first baby with what they described as an "extravagant" trip to New York in a private jet. The Duchess of Sussex, due to give birth in the spring, returned to Britain Thursday after enjoying a party with celebrity friends at what British papers referred to as "the most expensive hotel suite in the US".

The party, hosted at Manhattan's Mark Hotel by Serena Williams and attended by other high-profile figures including Amal Clooney, saw guests serenaded by a harpist and given expensive gifts, they reported. Although neither Markle nor British taxpayers footed the bill, The Times led the critically-toned cover-

age, headlining its article on Friday: "Meghan's extravagant New York baby shower provokes flood of indignation."

It said the visit had "prompted a debate about extravagance, style and the environmental impact of crossing the Atlantic in a private jet", including criticism from environmental lobby Friends of the Earth. The paper also trawled comments posted on the parenting website Mumsnet, quoting one person who was "quite disgusted by the way she is burning through money". The Times added: "To some British minds the mere concept of a baby shower — an American import — seems inappropriate."

In the right-wing Daily Mail, columnist Jan Moir asked what could Queen Elizabeth II make of the duchess's "lavish trip". She added: "can you be a self-identifying international humanitarian and have a £300,000-plus baby shower held for your already fabulously privileged unborn child?"

Meanwhile the Daily Telegraph — said to be the Queen's favored newspaper each morning — reported the "glamour" of the American gathering may have "surpassed" Markle's wedding last year to Prince Harry.

'Vilified and chased'

Markle, 37, has been dubbed "the difficult

duchess" in British media following several royal staff departures. The coverage led Hollywood superstar George Clooney to claim she was being "vilified and chased" in the same way as Harry's mother, the late princess Diana. Clooney, a close friend of the couple, told an Australian magazine last month there was a risk of "history repeating" itself with the feverish media attention. Markle had another high-profile defender this week: Beyonce.

The singer posted a tribute to the former actress on her website to mark Black History Month in the US, crediting Markle with bringing "many black traditions to her royal wedding". "She and Prince Harry have continued to push the race relations dialogue forward both near and far," she added. The royal couple are set to make a three-day trip to Morocco this weekend at the request of Britain's government — the first royal visit since Prince Charles and Camilla visited the kingdom in 2011. Queen Elizabeth II's first and last visit to the North African country was in 1980 and became known as the "tour from hell" because of a series of planning errors, according to British media. — AFP

Michael Jackson estate sues HBO over documentary

Michael Jackson's estate filed a \$100 million lawsuit against HBO over plans to air a documentary that alleges the singer sexually abused two young boys. The 53-page suit, filed in Los Angeles Superior Court, claims HBO was violating a "non-disparagement" agreement by airing "Leaving Neverland," which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival this year.

"Michael Jackson is innocent. Period," the suit says. "In 2005, Michael Jackson was subjected to a trial — where rules of evidence and law were applied before a neutral judge and jury and where both sides were heard — and he was exonerated by a sophisticated jury." "Ten years after his passing, there are still those out to profit from his enormous worldwide success and take advantage of his eccentricities," it adds.

The four-hour, two-part documentary that is set to air next month includes the testimonies of two men, Wade Robson and James Safechuck, who say the King of Pop sexually abused them when they were seven and 10. In a statement, HBO said it planned to broadcast the documentary as scheduled. "Despite the desperate lengths taken to undermine the film, our plans remain unchanged," the statement sent to AFP reads. "HBO will move forward with the airing of 'Leaving Neverland,' the two-part documentary on March 3rd and 4th." "This will allow everyone the opportunity to assess the film and the claims in it for themselves."

The lawsuit contends that HBO in 1992 aired a concert in Bucharest from Jackson's "Dangerous" world tour and at the time signed non-disparagement provisions that

prevent the streaming service from harming Jackson's reputation. "In violation of both basic norms of documentary journalism and the explicit terms of the agreement, HBO has disparaged Jackson's legacy by airing a one-sided hit piece against Jackson based exclusively on the false accounts of two proven, serial perjurers," the suit states.

It asks the court to compel HBO to take part in a non-confidential arbitration that could cost the company \$100 million if found liable. Jackson, who died on June 25, 2009 after being given an overdose of the anesthetic propofol, faced multiple allegations of child sex abuse during his lifetime. In addition to his 2005 acquittal the performer paid a \$15 million court settlement in 1994 over allegations involving another child. — AFP

CONSUMER PROTECTION DEPARTMENT

RECALL INFORMATION

Model Name: TOYOTA AVALON
Model Year: 2019
No. of Vehicles: 220 units

RECALL REASON

Inspect and reprogram the airbag sensor ECU

REMEDY

AISayer will contact the involved vehicle customers and to inform them to bring to our service centers as the necessary parts are available. You are also kindly requested to contact us at 1803803. All the repairs will be free of charge, both Parts and Labor.

CONTACT

MOHAMED NASER ALSAYER & SONS EST. CO.W.L.L.
HOTLINE: 1803803
WWW.TOYOTA.COM.KW
Please book an appointment to serve you better

This Recall is run pursuant to articles (42, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 47) of no. 27/2017 issuing the executive bylaws of law no. 39/2014 on Consumer Protection

135 مركز الاطوارى @mociq8 | www.moci.gov.kw

Classifieds

Sunday, February 24, 2019

Kuwait Times
 Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

STATE OF KUWAIT
 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
 METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
 Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Fair and Partly cloudy with light to moderate easterly wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 12 - 32 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

BY NIGHT: Cool with light to moderate south easterly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for fog forming.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 23/02/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	23 °C	15 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	14 °C			
ABDALY	21 °C	08 °C			
BUBYAN	** °C	** °C			
JAHRA	23 °C	13 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	19 °C	14 °C			
SALMIYAH	18 °C	16 °C			
AHMADI	19 °C	16 °C			
NUWASIB	20 °C	14 °C			
WAFRA	21 °C	12 °C			
SALMY	21 °C	11 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	02/24	Warm and Visibility will improve gradually and some high clouds will appear	23 °C	11 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 28 km/h
Monday	02/25	Warm	24 °C	10 °C	NW	12 - 30 km/h
Tuesday	02/26	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on	23 °C	09 °C	VRB-SE	10 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	02/27	Cloudy and rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	22 °C	15 °C	SE-NW	15 - 50 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:01
Sunrise	06:20
Zuhr	12:01
Asr	15:17
Sunset	17:43
Isha	19:00

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	22 °C
MIN. Temp.	08 °C
MAX. RH	100 %
MIN. RH	27 %
MAX. Wind	SE 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

URGENT REQUIRED

Nail technician
 (manicure and pedicure)
 (nail extension)

Hairdresser assistant
 for new branch salon
 located in Salmiya

Candidate should have:

- At least 2 years experienced
- Transferable visa (18 article)

Please call or whatsapp
94440878

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Firman (Christian), S/o Sebesthiraj, Passport No: H8366062, Civil ID No: 283092507206, Date of birth: 25.09.1983, (native district: Thanjavur), Residing at No: 19/33, Kela Veethi, Papanasam Post and Taluk, Thanjavur - 614205, has converted to Islam with the name of Fareedh.S. (C 5448) 24-2-2019

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

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

Automated enquiry
 about the Civil ID card is
1889988

EMERGENCY
112

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



DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 24/2/2019				Departure Flights on Sunday 24/2/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	JZR	113	Doha	13:30
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	JZR	129	Dubai	14:00
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	JZR	103	Bahrain	14:40
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
RBG	551	Alexandria	02:25	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00
RJA	648	Amman	02:55	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:10	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	JZR	131	Dubai	16:30
JZR	1736	Cairo	03:30	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	SAW	706	Damascus	17:00
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	675	Dubai	17:05
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	503	Beirut	17:15
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:45
UAE	873	Dubai	04:55	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	JZR	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	KAC	721	Alexandria	18:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	621	Doha	18:25
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:10	JZR	501	Lahore	18:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55
QTR	8511	Doha	06:40	JZR	253	Amman	19:15
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
BAW	157	London	07:05	JZR	723	Alexandria	19:20
KAC	204	Lahore	07:10	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	358	Kochi	07:35	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	RJA	641	Amman	20:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	SYR	342	Damascus	20:00
KAC	304	Mumbai	08:20	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:45	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:35
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	20:40
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:40	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:55
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	DLH	624	Dammam	21:30
JZR	702	Asyut	11:05	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	122	Dubai	11:10	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
JZR	116	Doha	11:10	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	KAC	303	Mumbai	22:30
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	383	Delhi	22:30
				KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
				UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
				JAI	573	Mumbai	23:00
				KAC	411	Bangkok	23:00
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:25

'Abused' sisters trapped in Hong Kong risk deportation

HONG KONG: Two Saudi sisters trapped in Hong Kong say chronic physical abuse by male family members prompted them to flee the kingdom, where they now fear they will be forcibly returned. The siblings are the latest example of Saudi women plotting their escape from the ultraconservative kingdom only to find themselves dodging officials and angry family members at every turn, as the country battles criticism of its human rights record. The young women, aged 20 and 18, found themselves marooned after Saudi consular officials allegedly intercepted them during a stopover at the city's airport and later revoked their passports.

The pair, who have adopted the aliases Reem and Rawan, described a deeply unhappy upbringing in a middle-class Riyadh household. They claim they were beaten by their father when they were young, and by their brothers when they got older, for small transgressions such as waking up late for prayer. "They started to beat me... my father didn't really stop them. He thinks that this is what makes them men," Reem told AFP.

Even their 10-year-old brother participated and began to police the way they dressed, they say, chiding them for removing their niqabs when dining out. "He was only a child but he learned this from his brothers and from his father and from all the men around him, that this is the good way to be a man and to deal with women," Reem said.

They decided to bolt for freedom during a family holiday overseas, when their passports would be kept in their parents' bag instead of a safe - and when they would not need permission from a male guardian to travel abroad. They started planning for the trip two years ago to coincide with Rawan's 18th birthday, so that she could apply for a visitor's visa to Australia on her own. The opportunity arrived last September, when the family travelled to Sri Lanka for vacation.

While their parents were sleeping, the sisters retrieved their passports and boarded a flight from Colombo to Hong Kong. But trouble awaited them at the other end. They claim they were obstructed by several unknown men at the city's airport, including one who tried to trick them into boarding a plane back to Riyadh. They said their onward flight booking to Melbourne had been cancelled and later learned the man was Saudi Arabia's consul general in Hong Kong.

Movements tracked

The sisters suspect their father tracked their movements using Absher, a controversial mobile app that operates as a portal to Saudi government services but also allows men to keep tabs on female relatives. Critics say the app enables abuse against women, with US lawmaker Ron Wyden urging Google and Apple to remove it from their smartphones. The sisters say their passport information was stored in the app and may

have been used by their parents to track down the flights they booked. They also believe their uncle may have helped mobilize consular officials through his government connections.

Fearing they were about to be "forcibly abducted", the sisters entered Hong Kong as visitors. The pair have lived in hiding in Hong Kong for nearly six months since and have changed locations 13 times for fear of their safety - hotels, hostels, private homes, and even a boat one night, they say. They also claim police attempted to take them to meet with male relatives and Saudi officials.

Hong Kong's security minister John Lee said Friday that "police have received two separate reports, one regarding missing person(s) and one regarding request for investigation". He declined to elaborate further. Immigration authorities said they would "not comment on individual cases". The sisters' concerns deepened after they learned from their lawyer that their passports were revoked in November, leaving them stateless. The Saudi consulate in Hong Kong did not respond to requests for comment.

But the sisters say they are fearful of being returned to Saudi Arabia and facing their family's wrath. "Either we will be killed because they want to clear (the) shame we brought as women who left by their own, or they will force us to marry... our cousins", said Reem. They say they have renounced Islam and fear the death penalty if they return home. Apostasy or blasphemy is punishable with jail or death sentences in some Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia.

Complete control

Such cases appear to be on the rise, with the sisters' story emerging a month after 18-year-old Saudi woman Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun drew global attention with her dramatic escape from an allegedly abusive family, gaining refugee status in Canada. Michael Vidler, a lawyer for the pair, said Hong Kong immigration authorities have indicated the pair would be "tolerated" in the city until Feb 28, after which they could be deported. They are now hoping to be granted asylum in a third country.

While their time in Hong Kong has been marked by anxiety and a poor diet - at one point subsisting on instant noodles and toast for a month - they looked calm when they met AFP, wearing hoodies, jeans and sneakers. "My hope for the future is to settle down, to have a normal life... when we were in Saudi Arabia, we were locked in the house every day," Reem told AFP. "We don't even meet our friends, we don't go out, we don't have any hobbies outside... So I just want to do everything that I can do in life," she said. Reem, who studied English literature in university, hopes to become a writer and counts George Orwell's dystopian novel 1984 among her favorite books. — AFP

Merkel, British Prime Minister Theresa May and Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar.

Not attending are French President Emmanuel Macron and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, along with the leaders of Lithuania and Latvia. EU sources added. Apart from Sisi, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri will attend from the 22-member Arab League, based in Cairo. The Tunisian and Iraqi presidents are also expected, while the Saudi press said King Salman would also travel to Sharm El-Sheikh.

A UN official warned that Europe's failure to bridge divisions on migration "risks blocking all the other discussions" at the summit. "How do you discuss an issue if you can't even mention it!" the official told AFP on condition of anonymity. He said EU countries like Hungary refuse to mention migration because they oppose asylum seekers and migrants, particularly from Muslim countries. The EU has struck aid-for-cooperation agreements with Turkey and Libya's UN-backed government in Tripoli, which has sharply cut the flow of migrants since a 2015 peak.

But the official said broader cooperation with the Arab League, which includes Libya, is limited without the EU being able to speak in one voice. Marc Pierini, a former EU ambassador to Tunisia and Libya, said the summit will struggle "to establish a dialogue between two sides who are confronted with their own challenges". The meeting comes as "the Arab countries are still feeling the effects of the revolutions started in 2011", Pierini told AFP. "Arab League unity is in trouble," said Pierini, now an analyst with the Carnegie Europe think tank.

An EU source said there will "be no deal in the desert" when asked if EU leaders would huddle together to explore ways to break the logjam over Britain's looming exit from the bloc on March 29. "This is a summit between the EU and the Arab states," the source told journalists on condition of anonymity. Brussels has stood united against May's requests to reopen the November divorce agreement in order to help it pass the British parliament.

However, the issue is likely to come up when Tusk holds a one-to-one meeting with May in Sharm El-Sheikh. An EU source said the first EU-Arab summit is all the more important as the United States disengages from the region while Russia and China make inroads, "not necessarily in our interests". Mogherini said Monday: "It has always looked strange to me that the European Union had summits with Latin America, with Africa, with Asia, and not with the Arab world that is our first neighbor." — AFP

between the Gulf state and China.

The two countries should boost partnerships in counterterrorism and law enforcement, and exchange experience on combating extremism, Han said in his meeting with Prince Mohammed, according to a report by the official Chinese news agency Xinhua. The Saudis said they "firmly supported" Beijing's efforts to keep the country secure, and opposed "interference by external forces in China's internal affairs". Xinhua added, paraphrasing remarks by the crown prince.

Riyadh has remained silent over China's treatment of Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in the far-western region of Xinjiang. Up to one million Uighurs and other minorities are being held in internment camps in Xinjiang as part of a draconian anti-terror and anti-separatist campaign, according to estimates cited by a UN panel. — AFP

Arab-EU summit to boost cooperation in troubled region

CAIRO: European and Arab leaders are to hold their first summit today, in what the top EU diplomat sees as a chance to boost cooperation across a troubled Mediterranean region. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi will host the two-day summit in Egypt's Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh to discuss topics like security, trade, development and migration. Wars and conflicts in places such as Syria and Libya are on the agenda at a summit guarded by the security forces who are fighting a bloody jihadist insurgency a short distance to the north.

But analysts voiced doubts over how much progress can be made, with Europe split over migration and Arab countries still grappling with the fallout from Arab Spring revolutions. European leaders first mentioned the summit in Austria in September amid efforts to agree ways to curb the illegal migration that has sharply divided the 28-nation bloc. But checking migration is just part of Europe's broader strategy to forge a new alliance with its southern neighbors.

EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini insists that the gathering in Egypt of more than 40 heads of state and government is about much more than migration. "We will have frank, open discussions, not only on migration, definitely not," Mogherini told journalists in Brussels on Monday. "We will have first of all discussions on our economic cooperation, on our common region," said the former Italian foreign minister who will travel to the desert resort. "That is a troubled region but also full of opportunities."

An Arab League official, Khaled Al-Habbas, told AFP that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would also be on the agenda in Sharm El-Sheikh. Attending will be Donald Tusk, president of the European Council of EU member countries, and Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the European Commission, the bloc's executive arm. A senior EU official told journalists in Brussels that 24 European heads of state and government have confirmed their attendance. These include German Chancellor Angela

Saudi crown prince meets...

Continued from Page 1

and e-commerce. China is Saudi Arabia's largest trading partner. "As the kingdom diversifies its non-oil economy, it needs a variety of other investors with technical expertise, including the Chinese," Otaibi said.

"China steadfastly supports Saudi Arabia pushing a diversification of its economy and societal reforms," Xi told Mohammed, according to state broadcaster CCTV, adding he supported the hard work the kingdom has undertaken to promote stability and safety at home. National security is a potential area of cooperation



HONG KONG: Saudi sisters Rawan (in yellow), 18, and Reem, 20, (both using adopted aliases) speak during an interview on Friday. — AFP

Trump and Kim lookalikes held...

Continued from Page 1

"They basically said stop doing the impersonation or we will kick you out of the country," Howard X told AFP after he was released from questioning and back at his hotel, where he believed plainclothes police were monitoring him. The police told the pair they could only travel around the city with an approved itinerary and travel guide.

Howard X, an Australian Hong Kong resident, insisted he was in Vietnam legally and will not leave unless he is forced to do so. The pair appeared with black-clad security guards at Hanoi's Metropole hotel and Opera House earlier in the day, where they were swarmed by press. In character, Trump lookalike White said they came with an intention to scale down North Korea's nuclear ambitions. "We're working toward peace. Through negotiations, with dialogue, we want to help North Korea of course," he said, wearing heavy bronzer and with freshly gelled hair.

Bootleg alcohol kills 98 in India...

Continued from Page 1

and breathlessness," doctor Ratul Bordoloi, joint director of Golanghat's health department, told AFP.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has ordered an inquiry into the deaths. State police said they had arrested one man for selling the liquor, and authorities said two excise department officials were suspended for failing to take adequate precautions over the sale of the alcohol. Assam health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told AFP that state authorities had collated "at least 80" deaths in the districts. "But apart from this some more people died outside the hospital," he added. "I also met the family members and relatives and ensured them that the perpetrators will not be spared," Sarma said in a Twitter comment.

Many of those that drank the liquor were tea plantation workers who had just received their weekly wages, according to another state government official. "I asked some of the patients why they consume liquor almost every day and they

Day into emergency rule, Bashir names...

Continued from Page 1

In a separate decree, he appointed Mohamed Tahir Ela, former governor of the agricultural state of Jazera, as prime minister.

But protest organizers and their supporters in the political opposition dismissed the reshuffles. They said the state of emergency showed that Bashir's rule was weakened and only its overthrow would now satisfy the protesters. "Imposing a state of emergency shows the fear within the regime," the Alliance for Freedom and Change said. "We will continue with our people to take to the streets across all towns and villages until our demand has been achieved."

The National Umma Party, whose leader Sadiq Al-Mahdi was Sudan's elected prime minister when Bashir seized power in an Islamist-backed coup in 1989, said the protests against his successor's iron-fisted rule would carry on until he quits. "Dissolving the government and imposing a state of emergency is nothing but a repetition of this regime's failures," it said. "Nothing will satisfy the people who are taking to the streets except the overthrow of this regime."

Analysts said the state of emergency was an act of desperation in the face of public anger. "The declaration of emergency powers only makes it less likely that the economy can be revived," said Eric Reeves, a senior fellow at Harvard University, who has tracked Sudan's politics and economy for two decades. "The regime has never understood economics...that's why there are in the mess they are."

Sudan has been hit by a chronic shortage of hard currency to pay for imports that has worsened since South Sudan became independent in 2011, taking with

Full-time Kim impersonator Howard X joked that his colleague might have to look past Pyongyang's nuclear intentions in order to meet eye-to-eye. "Hopefully he can overlook all my nuclear missiles and lift the sanctions," said Howard X, who also visited Singapore ahead of the leaders' meeting last year.

Before the police standoff, the men said they planned to visit a massage parlor, play a round of golf and maybe try some of Hanoi's culinary delights. But they may not be allowed to do so by authorities in Vietnam, a one-party communist state hoping to pull off next week's summit without any embarrassment as the world watches. Vietnam's hardline administration have little tolerance for spontaneous public gatherings of any sort, and Vietnamese security personnel were keeping a close eye on the impersonators during their afternoon walkabout.

Howard X also ran into to security issues last June ahead of the first Trump-Kim meeting in Singapore, when he was held at the airport and told to stay away from summit venues. He was eventually permitted into the city state. The pair say they are looking for a few more impersonators to complete their band of "tyrants", calling for any lookalikes of Russian leader Vladimir Putin, China's Xi Jinping or Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro to come forward. — AFP

said after a hard day's work in the plantations they drink to relieve stress and tiredness," Sarma said. Mrinal Saikia, a local lawmaker from the Bharatiya Janata Party - which is in control of the federal and Assam state governments - said alcohol, often laced with cattle feed and battery acid, is being supplied "in gallons" to tea plantation workers. "This is a big business in areas surrounding tea gardens where people set up illegal distilleries to make country liquor," he said.

Some media reports, citing anonymous sources, said that more than 100 people had died and the exact number was still being verified by authorities. Cheap, locally made liquor is common in parts of rural India and bootleggers often add methanol - a highly toxic form of alcohol sometimes used as an anti-freeze - to their product to increase its strength. If ingested in large quantities, methanol can cause blindness, liver damage and death.

Hundreds of mainly poor people die each year in the South Asian country from tainted liquor, which normally costs just a few US cents a bottle. Of the estimated five billion litres of alcohol drunk every year in India, around 40 percent is illegally produced, according to the International Spirits and Wine Association of India. Many Indian states have implemented or pushed for prohibition, which, according to critics, further increases the unsupervised manufacture and sale of alcohol. — Agencies

it the bulk of oil earnings. The resulting shortages in basic goods have fuelled spiralling inflation that has devastated the purchasing power and living standards of ordinary Sudanese from agricultural laborers to middle-class professionals. The immediate trigger for the demonstrations was a government decision last December to triple the price of bread.

But the demonstrations swiftly mushroomed as they fed into wider grievances and the Sudanese Professionals Association - an umbrella group of teachers, doctors and engineer - has taken the lead in using social media to organise daily protests. It was only afterwards that the political opposition joined in, forming an alliance with the SPA. "The imposing of emergency unfortunately suggests that things will get worse before they get better," said Murithi Mutiga of the International Crisis Group think-tank. "It concentrates powers in Bashir's hands and sets the stage for a confrontation with the protest movement, which may become more violent than it has been."

Human Rights Watch says at least 51 people have been killed, while Sudanese officials say 31 people have died in protest-related violence since the demonstrations began on Dec 19. Hundreds of protesters, opposition leaders, activists and journalists have been jailed in a crackdown led by the feared National Intelligence and Security Service. And the crackdown shows no sign of easing. Soon after he imposed the emergency, prominent newspaper editor Osman Mirghani was detained by security agents for comments he made in a television interview criticizing the move.

Bashir told Sudanese he understood the scale of the economic crisis facing the country. "The economic issue needs to be tackled by qualified people and for this I will form a government made of people of quality," he said. The protest alliance, which also includes the political wings of rebel groups in Sudan's three domestic war zones, has united around a platform that promises radical reforms, including an end to huge military spending on the conflicts. — AFP

Sports

George's last-second shot lifts Thunder over Jazz in second OTs

Clippers start fast, hold off Grizzlies for victory

OKLAHOMA: Paul George scored 45 points, including a floater with less than a second left in the second overtime, to lift the Oklahoma City Thunder to a 148-147 win over the visiting Utah Jazz on Friday night. The Jazz led by one when George grabbed a rebound off a missed shot by Utah's Joe Ingles with 10 seconds left. George kept the ball until he drove into the lane before releasing the high floater that went cleanly through the net. Russell Westbrook's NBA-record streak of 11 consecutive triple-doubles came to an end when he was called for his sixth foul on a charge with 1:09 remaining in the first extra session. Westbrook finished with 43 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists. He hit a season-high six 3-pointers. Donovan Mitchell led Utah with 38 points, going 14 of 35 from the field.

offseason trade to the Spurs. Marco Belinelli added 21 points on five 3-pointers for San Antonio. Pascal Siakam added 22 points and six assists for the Raptors, and Serge Ibaka contributed 13 points and 15 rebounds.

CLIPPERS 112, GRIZZLIES 106

Reserve forward Montrezl Harrell scored 19 of his 30 points in the first half, and Danilo Gallinari added 23 as visiting Los Angeles built a big early lead, then held on to beat Memphis. Lou Williams scored 18 points off the bench for the Clippers, who won for the fourth time in their past six games, with five of those contests on the road. Mike Conley scored 25 points and handed out 10 assists, and Joakim Noah added a season-high 22 points plus 11 rebounds for Memphis.

NUGGETS 114, MAVERICKS 104

Visiting Denver shook off some rust before drilling Dallas with a third-quarter barrage en route to a victory. The Nuggets trailed for much of the first half against the Mavericks, who played without Luka Doncic. The rookie sensation is day-to-day due to a sore right knee.

RAPTORS 120, SPURS 117

Kawhi Leonard had 25 points and scored the go-ahead dunk after a steal with 15.1 seconds remaining as host Toronto defeated his former team, San Antonio. Former Raptors guard DeMar DeRozan had 23 points and eight assists in his first game in Toronto since his



OKLAHOMA CITY: Donovan Mitchell #45 of the Utah Jazz shoots the ball against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Friday at Chesapeake Energy Arena in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. — AFP

NBA Results/Standings

Oklahoma City 148, Utah 147 (OT); Dallas 104, Denver 114; Atlanta 122, Detroit 125; New York 104, Minnesota 115; Memphis 106, LA Clippers 112; Charlotte 123, Washington 110; Indiana 126, New Orleans 111; Orlando 109, Chicago 110; Toronto 120, San Antonio 117.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
	W	L	PCT	GB		W	L	PCT	GB
Milwaukee	44	14	0.759	-	Golden State	42	16	0.724	-
Toronto	44	16	0.733	1	Denver	40	18	0.690	2
Indiana	39	20	0.661	5.5	Oklahoma City	38	20	0.655	4
Philadelphia	38	21	0.644	6.5	Portland	35	23	0.603	7
Boston	37	22	0.627	7.5	Houston	33	25	0.569	9
Brooklyn	30	30	0.500	15	Utah	32	26	0.552	10
Charlotte	28	30	0.483	16	San Antonio	33	27	0.550	10
Detroit	27	30	0.474	16.5	LA Clippers	33	27	0.550	10
Miami	26	31	0.456	17.5	Sacramento	30	28	0.517	12
Orlando	27	33	0.450	18	LA Lakers	29	29	0.500	13
Washington	24	35	0.407	20.5	Minnesota	28	30	0.483	14
Atlanta	19	40	0.322	25.5	Dallas	26	32	0.448	16
Chicago	15	44	0.254	29.5	New Orleans	26	34	0.433	17
Cleveland	13	46	0.220	31.5	Memphis	23	37	0.383	20
New York	11	48	0.186	33.5	Phoenix	11	49	0.183	32

Nikola Jokic posted a team-high 19 points along with 13 rebounds and eight assists for Denver, and Paul Millsap had 17 points and 13 rebounds. Dallas rookie Jalen Brunson, starting for Doncic, finished with a game-high and career-best 22 points.

BULLS 110, MAGIC 109

Lauri Markkanen hit two free throws with 1.5 seconds remaining to give Chicago a road victory that snapped Orlando's five-game winning streak. The Bulls were down by one when Markkanen was fouled on a 3-point attempt. After missing the first attempt, Markkanen sank the next two free throws to put the Bulls ahead, and the Magic could not get a shot off before the buzzer at the other end. Markkanen led

Chicago with 25 points and 11 rebounds, and Zach LaVine had 22 points and six assists. Evan Fournier had 22 points, and Nikola Vucevic added 19 points, 13 rebounds and seven assists for Orlando.

PISTONS 125, HAWKS 122

Thon Maker drilled a tiebreaking 3-pointer with 17.1 seconds remaining, and visiting Detroit held on to beat Atlanta. Maker took a pass from Reggie Jackson and calmly made the trey, his third of the night, giving him nine points for the game. Jackson had 32 points, five rebounds and eight assists as the Pistons won for the fifth time in six games. Atlanta, which has lost five of its past six, got 30 points and 10 assists from Trae Young. —Reuters

Crusaders trounce 'Canes in record victory run

TOKYO: The Canterbury Crusaders juggernaut stormed to a record 17th consecutive victory with a 38-22 demolition of the Wellington Hurricanes in their Super Rugby clash in Christchurch yesterday.

The defending champions scored six tries to three and held an impressive 24-0 lead at half-time in the largely one-sided encounter with the score distorted by two late Hurricanes tries when the result was beyond doubt. For most of the game the Crusaders feasted on stolen lineout ball. Matt Todd dominated the breakdown, and their All Blacks-laden Crusaders pack kept the Hurricanes eight under constant pressure.

Todd, the Crusaders skipper, said the dominant first half was the making of the game. "We came out with the attitude to attack and we scored some good tries which was pleasing. The second half got a bit messy," he said.

The Crusaders haven't been beaten since back-to-back losses away to the Hurricanes and Otago Highlanders a year ago and have overtaken the previous record of 16 wins set by the Crusaders of 2005-06.

They also extended their impressive home run to 21 matches without defeat in three years. Two of the Crusaders tries to Scott Barrett came when they departed from their renowned lineout drive and used a new tactic of peeling off to move play infield. "Obviously teams know we like to drive so we have to have variations off that and it's always nice when stuff you work on at training comes off on game day," Todd said.



TOKYO: Sunwolves' centre Ryoto Nakamura tries to break through the Waratahs' defence during the Super Rugby round 2 match between the Sunwolves and Waratahs at Prince Chichibu Memorial Stadium in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Hurricanes skipper Dane Coles described it as "a good, old-fashioned lesson in how to play Super Rugby. They've set the benchmark."

WARATAHS WIN IN TOKYO

The Hurricanes, champions in 2016 and semi-finalists for the past two years, received few chances, and those they did get were quickly nullified. When they chose a scrum instead of a kickable shot at goal midway through the second half they were pushed off their own ball.

The new lineout move for the Crusaders saw Barrett open the scoring in both halves. Richie Mo'unga also scored twice with his first resulting from delicate work

down the sideline by Manasa Mataele who managed to keep his outside foot off the ground long enough to get his pass away as he was being tackled over the touchline. From the restart, the Crusaders mounted an 80-metre counter attack which resulted in Jordan Taufua's try and Mo'unga scored his second after the Crusaders opted for a scrum rather than a close-range shot at goal on the stroke of half-time.

As the game loosened up in the second half the Hurricanes came back with two early tries to Ben Lam and Wes Goosen. The Crusaders responded with one to George Bridge before Lam and TJ Perenara added two more for the Hurricanes. —AFP

Ireland look to build momentum with big win over depleted Italy

ROME: Champions Ireland head to Rome today looking to build momentum in their stuttering Six Nations title defence with a big win over underdogs Italy who have been hit by the absence of captain Sergio Parisse.

Italy's task was already difficult before skipper Parisse suffered concussion while playing for his club Stade Francais last Saturday. For Italy coach Conor O'Shea, a former Ireland full-back, it now looks like mission impossible against his home country ranked second in the world behind New Zealand.

"He is talismanic for them," said Ireland coach Joe Schmidt of Parisse. "It will effect them no doubt because of the standing and respect he has." Italy have not won a Six Nations game in four years with defeats against Scotland (33-20) and Wales (26-15) this campaign bringing that tally up to 19 consecutive games.

Ireland-the 2018 Grand Slam winners-are fourth in the Six Nations table having beaten Scotland (22-13) in their last match after losing their opener to England (32-20). Both sides last met in Chicago in November, when Ireland ran out 54-7 winners.

A big win over the Italians would give Schmidt's side a boost before hosting France in Dublin on March 10, with their finale against Wales in Cardiff the following week. Despite the calibre of the opposition Schmidt has made just four changes-all in the pack-leaving the backs unchanged with first-choice half-back pair Conor Murray and Jonathan Sexton.

"I thought (Braam) Steyn was absolutely outstanding in that last game," said Schmidt of the South African-born flanker who moves into Parisse's position at number eight. "Their back-row power is going to challenge us physically," said Schmidt. "It does still make for a very competitive back row when you bring in (Maxime) Mbanda and (Jimmy) Tuivaiti. "The likes of (Michele) Campagnaro, (Edoardo) Padovani and (Angelo) Esposito, those guys will be a great challenge for us."

Hooker Leonardo Ghiraldini, capped 101 times, takes the Azzurri captain's armband for the 17th time. Ghiraldini, 34, is the only remaining member of the side that achieved Italy's last Six Nations success at home, against Ireland in March 2013.

It was Italy's only win against the Irish in 19 games in the championship since joining in 2000. Peter O'Mahony will captain Ireland with regular skipper Rory Best rested with Leinster's two-time Champions Cup-winning stalwart Sean Cronin taking his place at hooker. Although he has been capped 67 times by Ireland, 58 of Cronin's appearances have come off the bench-a record for any Ireland replacement. And Schmidt expects Cronin, making his 10th Test start, will be looking to oust Best. —AFP

McDonald outlasts del Potro to reach ATP semi-final

MIAMI: American Mackenzie McDonald disrupted Juan Martin del Potro's latest injury comeback Friday with a three-set victory over the top-seeded Argentinian in the ATP Delray Beach Open quarter-finals.

McDonald, ranked 84th in the world, outlasted the fourth-ranked del Potro 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5) to notch his first victory over a top-five player and reach his first ATP Tour semi-final. Del Potro, playing his first tournament since hobbling out of the Shanghai Masters with a broken right kneecap in October, took the court with his right knee more heavily bandaged than in his prior matches this week.

He was moving tentatively as he dropped the opening set, but still had plenty of pop on his serve and forehand as he managed to fend off two break points on the way to taking the second. It would take a third-set tiebreaker to settle things, McDonald gaining the win with an overhead smash on his third match point.

McDonald, 23, next faces Moldova's Radu Albot, who rallied from a set and a break down to beat fourth-seeded American Steve Johnson 1-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5). Del Potro was scheduled to continue his comeback bid at next week's tournament in Acapulco, but he said Friday night he would not be travelling to Mexico to try and defend his title there. He is still hoping to defend his Indian Wells Masters title in March. In other matches, US second seed John Isner blasted 24 aces in a 7-6 (7/2), 6-4 victory over eighth-seeded Adrian Panarino. —AFP

Johnson takes two-shot lead at WGC-Mexico

MEXICO CITY: Dustin Johnson fired his second straight bogey-free round on Friday, a four-under par 67 that gave him a two-stroke lead over Rory McIlroy and Matt Kuchar at the WGC-Mexico Championship.

Johnson's methodical approach at Club de Golf Chapultepec paid dividends as he overhauled first-round leader McIlroy on a day when 14-time major champion Tiger Woods moved into the top 10 with a five-under 66.

"I've just done a really good job with controlling my distance with my irons and giving myself a lot of looks at birdies," said Johnson, who had never before in his US PGA Tour career opened a tournament with two bogey-free rounds.

The 2017 WGC-Mexico champion said he enjoyed the challenge of adjusting to the altitude. "It makes you focus, you've got to think and you're doing a lot of calculations with the numbers, trying to figure out how far the ball is going to actually go," he said.

McIlroy, who opened Thursday with an eight-under par 63, picked up where he left off with three birdies in his first four holes. But he found the water for a bogey at the sixth and then made a double-bogey at the par-four

ninth, where he was 15 feet from the fringe with his second shot but needed four putts from there.

He signed for a one-under 71 for nine-under 133. He was joined by Kuchar, who opened with four straight birdies in a four-under 67. Spain's Sergio Garcia and England's Tommy Fleetwood were tied for fourth on 135, Garcia posting a 66 and Fleetwood a 65 that started with back-to-back eagles at the first and second-both par-fours.

Fleetwood tied for low round of the day with Phil Mickelson, who had opened his title defense with a horrendous 79, only to bounce back with a bogey-free 65.

Woods climbed the leaderboard with a five-under 66 that featured six birdies and an unlikely par at his finishing hole, the par-four ninth. In a fairway bunker off the tee, Woods produced a vintage recovery shot, cutting a nine-iron around a tree, the ball spinning back some 20 feet toward the hole.

It left him an 11-foot birdie putt that lipped out. "The ball was sitting down just enough where I didn't think I could clear the tree," said Woods, who first went for his eight-iron but decided it would come out too hot.

"I went back to the nine-iron. I realized 'I've really got to slice this thing,'" he said. "I opened up and gave it as much of a cut motion as I could and it worked out." Woods had made a scrambling start to his round, rolling in a nine-footer for his first birdie at the 12th. He birdied 14 and got up and down for birdie from a greenside bunker at 15. —AFP

Sports

Sri Lanka stun South Africa to seal historic series win

S Lanka made it four wins in a row against South Africa

PORT ELIZABETH: Sri Lankan captain Dimuth Karunaratne hailed his happy, united team after they completed an historic series triumph against South Africa at St George's Park in Port Elizabeth yesterday. Oshada Fernando and Kusal Mendis propelled Sri Lanka to an eight-wicket win on the third day of the second Test, playing exactly the sort of cricket that Karunaratne wanted.

"We told them, 'play your normal game, if you can hit over the fielder go for it,'" said Karunaratne after the unheralded Sri Lankans became the first team from Asia to win a Test series in South Africa. Fernando (75 not out) and Mendis (84 not out) attacked the South African bowlers from the start of play on Saturday, taking Sri Lanka from an overnight 60 for two to the victory target of 197 in just over two

hours of uninhibited stroke play.

"When you play like that, South Africa are on the back foot," said Karunaratne. Appointed only as an "interim" captain, Karunaratne said he had a simple message for his players when he took over at a time of apparent turmoil in Sri Lankan cricket.

"When I started, I said to my boys, 'whatever happens you have to keep smiling, keep enjoying. If you're not enjoying you don't get to a hundred percent.'" Remarkably, the Lankans consistently played positive cricket despite having been away from home for the better part of three months. They arrived after two

heavy Test defeats in Australia, which led to Dinesh Chandimal being fired as captain, coach Chandika Hathurusingha having his powers curtailed and major changes in personnel, some caused by injuries.

The tourists' attitude clearly flummoxed the South Africans, especially on Saturday morning when the uninhibited batting of Fernando, playing in his second Test, and man of the match Mendis turned what had been expected to be a tense struggle to a romp for the tourists, with South African captain Faf du Plessis having to change his fields and frequently rotate bowlers who were unable to break through or stop the flow of runs.

'MY BIGGEST LOW'

Karunaratne praised the contribution of his bowlers, notably the inexperienced Vishwa Fernando and Kasun Rajitha, who took 12 and nine wickets respectively over the two matches. "Our bowling line-up did a really good job, especially the youngsters," he said. Du Plessis described the series loss as "my biggest low as a player in the Proteas team".

He said he was particularly disappointed with South



PORT ELIZABETH: Sri Lanka's Kusal Mendis (R) is watched by South Africa's wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock as he plays a shot during the third day of the second Test cricket match between South Africa and Sri Lanka at St. George's Park Stadium in Port Elizabeth yesterday. — AFP

Africa's batting, which sank to new depths when they were bowled out for 138 in the second innings, despite Sri Lanka being without injured left-arm spinner Lasith Embuldeniya. Du Plessis said he was at a loss to explain how 31 wickets fell on the first two days. "When I was batting in both innings I felt it was a really good batting pitch," he said.

"Mentally we were a bit soft in giving wickets away pretty easily." Sri Lanka made it four wins in a row against South Africa after winning two matches at home last year. "They have been better than us home and away," admitted Du Plessis. "We were outplayed in their back yard but there's no excuse when Sri Lanka

come here." Kusal Perera, whose 153 not out took Sri Lanka to a dramatic, unexpected one-wicket win in the first Test in Durban, was named man of the series. Sri Lanka's series win was one of the biggest upsets in recent cricket history.

South Africa had won their previous seven series at home and had won 16 out of 19 home Tests, with only two defeats, before losing in Durban. Sri Lanka, by contrast, had lost six and drawn one of their previous seven Tests before arriving in South Africa. South Africa had won 19 of 21 previous home series against Asian opponents, with the only exceptions being when India and Pakistan shared one series each. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Final scoreboard on the third day of the second Test between South Africa and Sri Lanka at St George's Park in Port Elizabeth yesterday:

South Africa, first innings, 222	
Sri Lanka, first innings, 154	
South Africa, second innings, 128	
Sri Lanka, second innings (overnight 60-2)	
D. Karunaratne c De Kock b Olivier	19
L. Thirimanne c De Kock b Rabada	10
O. Fernando not out	75
K. Mendis not out	84
Extras: (b4, lb5)	9
Total: (2 wks, 45.4 overs)	197
Fall of wickets: 1-32 (Thirimanne), 2-34 (Karunaratne)	
Bowling: Steyn 8-0-38-0, Rabada 15-2-53-1, Olivier 12-2-46-1, Mulder 4-1-6-0, Maharaj 6-4-0-45-0.	
Match situation: Sri Lanka won by eight wickets	
Series: Sri Lanka won the two-match series 2-0	

CAF giants hope home advantage can bring luck

JOHANNESBURG: Misfiring CAF Confederation Cup top group seeds Etoile Sahel, Raja Casablanca and Zamalek will have home advantage today when seeking their first mini-league victories. Etoile have won the African version of the UEFA Europa League twice, Raja are the trophy-holders and Zamalek can boast of nine CAF titles.

But the north African trio have not made the expected impact since the four groups kicked off with Raja drawing twice and Etoile and Zamalek collecting just one point each. Raja play fellow Moroccan Renaissance Berkane in Group A on matchday 3, Etoile face in-form Enugu Rangers of Nigeria in Group B and Zamalek meet Petro Atletico of Angola in Group D.

Zesco United of Zambia are the exception among the four top seeds having won their Group C opener, but they then lost their first away match. AFP Sport previews the third series of matches as the 16 contenders for eight quarter-finals places begin a hectic schedule of playing on four consecutive Sundays.

Group A

Recently hired Raja coach Patrice Carteron from France is under pressure as his side have won just one their last five qualifying and group matches, and that was by a solitary goal. The impressive home and away from that took Raja to success in the competition last year has deserted them and their leading scorer in Africa, two-goal Badr Banoun, is a centre-back. Hassania Agadir, the third Moroccan club in the section, host AS Otoho Oyo of Congo Brazzaville needing maximum points to get back into contention for a top-two finish.

Group B

Enugu are the only unbeaten side left in the Confederation Cup with six victories and two draws as they prepare to tackle Etoile in their Mediterranean fortress of Sousse. Etoile are virtually unbeatable when the 30,000-seat Stade Olympique is packed so the matchday 1 loss to fellow Tunisians CS Sfaxien came as a shock. Enugu, hoping to become the first Nigerian winners of the 16-year-old competition, forced a matchday 2 draw at Sfaxien and will aim to take at least a point away from Sousse.

Group C

Zambian contenders Nkana and Zesco will want to continue a trend of home victories in this section when they host Asante Kotoko of Ghana and Al Hilal of Sudan respectively. Captained by striker Walter Bwalya, Nkana aim to extend a 58-match record of never losing at home in a CAF competition since their 1983 debut. Hilal have appointed Tunisian Nabil al Kouki coach for a third time having sacked his compatriot, Irad Zafouri, after a matchday 2 loss at Nkana this month.

Group D

Bottom-of-the-table Zamalek last won a CAF title 16 years ago and must secure maximum points against Petro in Alexandria to retain a realistic chance of reaching the knockout stage. The White Knights boast an impressive squad with several Egyptian stars, Tunisians Hamdi el Nagguez and Ferjani Sassi and Moroccans Khalid Boutaib and Hamid Ahaddad. —AFP

Cottrell, Hetmyer lead Windies to victory

BRIDGETOWN: Sheldon Cottrell marked his return to the West Indies team with a five-wicket haul as the home side snatched a series-levelling 26-run victory over England in the second one-day international of a five-match series at Kensington Oval in Barbados on Friday.

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard of the second one-day international of a five-match series between the West Indies and England at Kensington Oval in Barbados yesterday:

West Indies		England	
C. Gayle b Rashid	50	J. Root c Hope b Thomas	36
J. Campbell c Ali b Plunkett	23	E. Morgan c Hetmyer b Cottrell	70
S. Hope c Bairstow b Stokes	33	B. Stokes c Hope b Holder	79
D. Bravo run out	25	J. Buttler c Hetmyer b Holder	34
S. Hetmyer not out	104	M. Ali b Cottrell	12
J. Holder run out	3	T. Curran lbw b Holder	0
C. Brathwaite b Wood	13	A. Rashid c Hope b Cottrell	15
A. Nurse not out	13	L. Plunkett c Holder b Brathwaite	2
Extras: (lb9, nb3, w13)	25	M. Wood not out	1
Total: (50 overs, 6 wickets)	289	Extras: (lb3, w9)	12
Did not bat: D. Bishoo, S. Cottrell, O. Thomas		Total: (47.4 overs, all out)	263
Fall of wickets: 1-61 (Campbell), 2-98 (Gayle), 3-121 (Hope), 4-197 (Bravo), 5-207 (Holder), 6-237 (Brathwaite)		Fall of wickets: 1-1 (Bairstow), 2-10 (Roy), 3-60 (Root), 4-159 (Morgan), 5-228 (Stokes), 6-233 (Buttler), 7-233 (Curran), 8-260 (Rashid), 9-261 (Ali), 10-263 (Plunkett)	
Bowling: M. Wood 10-0-38-1 (2w), T. Curran 10-0-62-0 (1nb, 1w), M. Ali 7-0-51-0 (1w), L. Plunkett 7-0-39-1 (4w), B. Stokes 10-1-62-1 (2nb, 4w), A. Rashid 6-0-28-1 (1w).		Bowling: S. Cottrell 9-0-46-5 (3w), J. Holder 10-1-53-3 (2w), O. Thomas 5-0-32-1, A. Nurse 6-0-28-0, D. Bishoo 10-0-49-0 (1w), C. Gayle 2-0-15-0 (1w), C. Brathwaite 5-4-0-37-1 (2w).	
England		Result: West Indies won by 26 runs	
J. Roy b Cottrell	2	Series: 1-1	
J. Bairstow lbw b Cottrell	0		

Flames down Ducks, extend hot streak

CALGARY: Andrew Mangiapane scored the game-winning goal late in the third period, and TJ Brodie collected a goal and an assist as the host Calgary Flames won their fourth consecutive game, defeating the Anaheim Ducks 2-1 on Friday night. Goalie Mike Smith made 25 saves for the Flames, who strengthened their hold on the top spot in the Western Conference. Mangiapane broke the tie with 3:29 remaining in regulation. He tried to make a pass on a two-on-one rush only to see it blocked, but the puck came back to the speedy rookie, and he promptly buried a short-side offering for his third goal of the season, all in his past seven games. Brodie and Anaheim's Derek Grant scored in the second period. Ducks goalie Ryan Miller made 26 saves.

JETS 6, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3

Patrik Laine scored twice to snap a 15-game goalless drought as Winnipeg won in Las Vegas. Nikolaj Ehlers, Kyle Connor, Adam Lowry and Andrew Copp also scored for the Jets, who snapped a three-

game losing streak and reclaimed the lead in the NHL's Central Division, moving a point ahead of the Nashville Predators. Winnipeg goaltender Connor Hellebuyck made 29 saves. Pierre-Edouard Bellemare, Shea Theodore and Jonathan Marchessault scored for the Golden Knights, who are 3-9-1 in their past 13 games and have won just once in their past eight home games (1-6-1). Goalie Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 23 of 28 shots.

BLUE JACKETS 3, SENATORS 0

Sergei Bobrovsky made 22 saves to record his fourth shutout of the season as Columbus skated to a win over host Ottawa, hours after acquiring pending unrestricted free agent forward Matt Duchene from its opponent. Josh Anderson scored his seventh goal in 11 games for the Blue Jackets. Cam Atkinson netted his team-leading 33rd tally and Oliver Bjorkstrand also scored to help Columbus snap a two-game skid. Duchene had three shots on goal against his former team. Ottawa rookie forward Brady Tkachuk fell on Bobrovsky late in the second period to raise tensions between the teams. The two-time Vezina Trophy recipient barely was tested the rest of the way en route to his 28th career shutout. —Reuters

AVALANCHE 5, BLACKHAWKS 3

J.T. Compher had two goals and an



LAS VEGAS: Blake Wheeler #26 of the Winnipeg Jets tries to get a rebound after a save by Marc-Andre Fleury #29 of the Vegas Golden Knights as Nate Schmidt #88 of the Golden Knights defends in the first period of their game at T-Mobile Arena on Friday in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Jets defeated the Golden Knights 6-3. — AFP

assist, including a tiebreaking goal on a breakaway with 5:22 remaining in the third period as Colorado held on for a win at Chicago. Carl Soderberg also scored twice for the Avalanche, who won their third consecutive game. Gabriel Landeskog added a goal and an assist for

Colorado. The loss spoiled a historic night for Blackhawks forward Patrick Kane, who tallied at least one point for the 20th game in a row. Kane owns the two longest point streaks by a U.S.-born player in NHL history, including his 26-game streak during the 2015-16 season. —Reuters

Sports

League Cup final Sarri's last stand as City's quadruple hunt heats up

A win at Wembley would give Sarri a stay of execution

LONDON: While Manchester City are eyeing the first of a potential historic four-trophy haul as they prepare for today's League Cup final, reeling Maurizio Sarri is facing what could be his last match as Chelsea boss.

Beating the Premier League champions to win a trophy may seem like an harsh ultimatum for the Italian just eight months into his reign at Stamford Bridge. But the Chelsea hierarchy are notoriously trigger-happy and the Blues' rapid dip in form since beating City in the league in December has left Sarri close to joining a stellar cast of coaches to be cast aside.

The nadir came in a 6-0 humiliation at the hands of City just two weeks ago, the Blues' heaviest defeat in any competition since 1991 and one that saw them slip to sixth in the league. A FA Cup elimination to Manchester United followed, in which tellingly even the fans, who have stayed loyal to previous managers sacked by Roman Abramovich, turned on Sarri.

A thumping 5-1 aggregate victory over Malmo in the Europa League offered some respite before the club was hit with another body blow on Friday in the form of a year-long transfer ban by FIFA for irregularities in the signing of minors.

A win at Wembley this weekend would give the atmosphere around the club a much-needed lift and

hand Sarri a stay of execution. The former Napoli boss would also have a trophy to show for his first season in charge something lauded Premier League rivals Mauricio Pochettino of Tottenham and Liverpool's Jurgen Klopp have still not managed years into their respective reigns.

FAITH IN GUARDIOLA

Silverware also eluded City boss Pep Guardiola in his first year in England. Sarri has also won 28 of his first 43 matches as Chelsea boss, one more than the Catalan at the same stage of his City career.

However, the narrative around Guardiola was very different thanks to his huge success at Barcelona and Bayern Munich, while a win for Chelsea today would give Sarri his first ever trophy as a coach.

Guardiola showed why City were right to keep faith

with his project by delivering the League Cup and the Premier League with a record 100 points last season. "In the first season when it was difficult, I said we needed time and they supported me, the players knew who was the manager and who would be the manager, it was stable," said Guardiola on Friday.

"That's the best way to do something for a long time, not just a short period." City are reaping the rewards of

“ We needed time and they supported me ”



GELSENKIRCHEN: File photo shows Manchester City's German midfielder Leroy Sane is congratulated by teammates after scoring a goal during the UEFA Champions League round of 16 first leg football match between Schalke 04 and Manchester City on February 20, 2019 in Gelsenkirchen, Germany. —AFP

that longer term strategy now. The champions lead Liverpool on goal difference at the top of the Premier League, face modest opposition in Swansea in the quarter-finals of the FA Cup and beat Schalke 3-2 in Germany on Wednesday to close in on the last eight of the Champions League.

However, Guardiola believes the six-goal beating dished out to Chelsea just a fortnight ago will actually work against his side, with Sarri and his players keen to restore some pride. "In the moment, I was so happy but today, I wish we hadn't beaten them 6-0," added Guardiola. —AFP

Man Utd aim to dent Liverpool title dream

MANCHESTER: Manchester United fans are desperate to deny Liverpool Premier League glory this season, even if it means another title for their cross-town rivals Manchester City. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's in-form team have a chance to severely dent Liverpool's chances today when they host Jurgen Klopp's side in a fixture that has weighty historical importance to go with its significance in the title race.

The match is effectively Liverpool's game in hand, with City, level on points at the top of the table after playing a game extra, facing Chelsea in the League Cup final on the same day. But they face a rejuvenated United under interim boss Solskjaer, who has lifted them into the top four since he took over from the beleaguered Jose Mourinho, sacked in December following a 3-1 drubbing at Anfield.

In his spell of more than 26 years as manager at Old Trafford, Alex Ferguson argued more than once that a meeting with Liverpool, rather than City, was United's true derby. It is a feeling that still holds sway among the club's fans, even though City have risen to win the Premier League three times since 2012 and have become the dominant force in Manchester.

"I think you have got to look at the rivalry," said Rob Mager, a supporter for 30 years and the designer for the club fanzine "United We Stand". "United and Liverpool have been, historically, the two titans of English football. Over the years, Liverpool have been the more worthy rival than Manchester City and it's been a case of familiarity breeding contempt."

The antipathy between these two northwest cities, 56 kilometres (35 miles) apart, dates back at least to the economic rivalry inspired by the industrial revolu-



LONDON: File photo shows Manchester United's Norwegian caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer celebrates their victory with Manchester United's French midfielder Paul Pogba (L) on the pitch after the English FA Cup fifth round football match between Chelsea and Manchester United at Stamford Bridge in London on February 18, 2019. —AFP

tion starting in the 18th century.

On the pitch, the mutual dislike between United and Liverpool has grown since the early 1960s, with the clubs taking turns to rule the English game-racking up 38 league titles and eight European Cups between them.

United have not won the Premier League since 2013 and are realistically out of the running this season but would still love to prevent Liverpool from becoming English champions for the first time since 1990.

With United taking 25 points from a possible 27 since Solskjaer became their caretaker-manager, Klopp knows this is probably his side's most difficult fixture of the run-in and believes the home team will be a different proposition from the team that surren-

dered at Anfield.

"It's a big one and we know that it's a difficult one as well," he said, adding that United's attacking players were brimming with confidence. "They are in a really good moment, really good moment. They are physically strong, they defend well, they attack well." —AFP

dered at Anfield.

"It's a big one and we know that it's a difficult one as well," he said, adding that United's attacking players were brimming with confidence. "They are in a really good moment, really good moment. They are physically strong, they defend well, they attack well." —AFP

EPL Standings							
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man City	27	21	2	4	74	20	65
Liverpool	26	20	5	1	59	15	65
Tottenham	27	20	0	7	55	27	60
Man Utd	26	15	6	5	52	35	51
Arsenal	26	15	5	6	53	37	50
Chelsea	26	15	5	6	45	29	50
Watford	27	11	7	9	39	35	40
Wolverhampton	26	11	6	9	34	33	39
West Ham	27	10	6	11	35	40	36
Everton	27	9	6	12	36	39	33
Bournemouth	26	10	3	13	37	47	33
Leicester	26	9	5	12	31	34	32
Burnley	27	8	6	13	31	48	30
Crystal Palace	26	7	6	13	27	34	27
Brighton	26	7	6	13	28	39	27
Newcastle	26	6	7	13	22	34	25
Cardiff	27	7	4	16	25	52	25
Southampton	26	5	9	12	28	44	24
Fulham	27	4	5	18	26	61	17
Huddersfield	26	2	5	19	14	48	11

Emery hopes for change in luck as Arsenal seek stability

LONDON: Arsenal's bad luck with defensive injuries was summed up when the welcome return of Sokratis in the midweek Europa League victory against BATE Borisov came at the expense of another setback for Laurent Koscielny.

Manager Unai Emery hopes French defender Koscielny, who returned from a long-term achilles injury in December, will recover in time to face struggling Southampton at the Emirates Stadium today.

The Arsenal boss is desperate for his side to discover a degree of consistency, which has been missing since they visited St Mary's Stadium for the first meeting of the season between the two clubs in mid-December.

Manchester United, currently occupying fourth place in the Premier League, are just one point ahead of Emery's side and face high-flying Liverpool on Sunday, with sixth-placed Chelsea involved in the League Cup final against Manchester City, giving Arsenal a chance to clamor back into the top four.

But to do so, they must avoid a repeat of the display that allowed Southampton to claim a 3-2 victory that brought an end to Arsenal's 22-game unbeaten run, which had helped Emery establish himself at his new club.

Since then results have been anything but steady, while the manner of that defeat highlighted defensive flaws that have become more prominent as the Gunners attempt to keep pace with their rivals in the battle to finish in the Champions League places.

In the 14 games since then they have won just seven times in all competitions, while they have alternated between victory and defeat in their past nine outings. Frequent disruptions to the line-up, particularly in defence, have done nothing to help.

"We have to say first that we had a lot of injured players," said Sokratis. "We need to improve, we need to work harder but we have also to be lucky and not have a lot of injuries because when you do it is difficult for the team, for you and when you come back the difference is not the same when you change every week."

The lack of instinctive understanding among Emery's defenders has been apparent on too many occasions. The return of the Greece international strengthens the coach's options but the presence of Koscielny is also important to their aspirations, given Shkodran Mustafi's indifferent form.

Stephan Lichtsteiner, 35, has appeared vulnerable at right-back with Ainsley Maitland-Niles, absent through illness against BATE, offering more pace on that flank. While Emery seeks stability at the back, he has more options further forward, with Mesut Ozil returning for only his second start since December 26 in the Europa League last-32 tie on Thursday. The relationship between player and coach has come under scrutiny but Sokratis said the players were behind the former Germany international.

"All the team, all the players are behind him and we need a good Mesut to go forward because we know that he is very important for us," said the defender. "He was sick, he had some problems. Now he is good. He did well yesterday and I hope in the next games he will go forward like this." — AFP

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
ENGLISH LEAGUE CUP			
Chelsea FC v Manchester City			19:30
beIN SPORTS HD 2			
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
Chelsea FC v Brighton & Hove Albion			15:00
beIN SPORTS			
Arsenal FC v Southampton FC			17:05
beIN SPORTS HD 7			
Manchester United v Liverpool			17:05
beIN SPORTS HD 2			
SPANISH LEAGUE			
CD Leganes v Valencia C.F			14:00
beIN SPORTS			
Atletico de Madrid v Villarreal CF			18:15
beIN SPORTS			
Real Valladolid v Real Betis			20:30
beIN SPORTS			
Levante v Real Madrid CF			22:45
beIN SPORTS			
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE			
UC Sampdoria v Cagliari Calcio			14:30
beIN SPORTS HD 4			
AC Chievo Verona v Genoa CFC			17:00
beIN SPORTS			
US Sassuolo Calcio v Spal			17:00
beIN SPORTS			
Bologna FC v Juventus FC			17:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4			
Parma Calcio 1913 v SSC Napoli			20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6			
ACF Fiorentina v Internazionale Milano			22:30
beIN SPORTS			
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA			
Hannover 96 v Eintracht Frankfurt			17:30
beIN SPORTS HD 5			
BY Borussia Dortmund v Bayer 04 Leverkusen			20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 5			
FRENCH LEAGUE			
FC Nantes v FC Girondins de Bordeaux			17:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6			
Montpellier HSC v Stade Reims			17:00
beIN SPORTS HD 8			
Toulouse FC v Caen			17:00
beIN SPORTS			
Stade Rennais v Olympique Marseille			19:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6			
AS Monaco FC v Olympique Lyonnais			23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6			

25 George's last-second shot lifts Thunder over Jazz in second OTs



26 Sri Lanka stun South Africa to seal historic series win



27 League Cup final Sarri's last stand as City's quadruple hunt heats up



BURNLEY: Tottenham Hotspur's Belgian defender Jan Vertonghen (C) jumps for a header with Burnley's English defender James Tarkowski (R) during the English Premier League football match between Burnley and Tottenham Hotspur at Turf Moor in Burnley, north west England yesterday. — AFP

Burnley dents Spurs' title hopes

Newcastle plunge 10-man Huddersfield, Bournemouth and Wolves draw

BURNLEY: Harry Kane scored on his return from injury for Tottenham but his side fell to a surprise 2-1 defeat at Burnley, which severely dented their Premier League title hopes yesterday. Ashley Barnes' 83rd minute winner for Burnley, after Kane had cancelled out Chris Woods' opener, extended their unbeaten run to eight games and moved them up to 13th place in the league with one of their best results since returning to the top flight.

But for third-placed Spurs, who trail leaders Manchester City and Liverpool by five points, this may prove to be a loss that leaves them with too much ground to make up. At an unseasonably sun-splashed Turf Moor, Kane returned to the Spurs line-up for the first time since suffering an ankle injury against Manchester United on Jan. 13 with England manager Gareth Southgate watching from the stands.

But he will have left East Lancashire also impressed by Burnley central defensive pair of James Tarkowski and Ben Mee who kept the England captain and the Spurs attack well under control.

Spurs made a slow start to the lunchtime kick-off game and it was not until the 16th minute that they threatened when Kane worked some space for himself, on the edge of the penalty area, but his left-foot effort was comfortably wide of Tom Heaton's post.

Burnley were harrying and closing down well in midfield, with Ashley Westwood and Jack Cork particularly busy, and Spurs struggled to find their rhythm or any real openings for their captain. Barnes went close to an opener in the 33rd, Jeff Hendrick pulling the ball back and the Burnley striker's first time effort flashed just over the bar. The effort would surely have impressed the watching Austrian national team coach Franco Foda, given Barnes' eligibility for the country through his paternal grandmother.

Burnley's disciplined defending ensured the teams went in level at the break but four minutes after the resumption, Kane fired another warning, a dangerously dipping and swerving shot from 30 metres out bringing out the best in Heaton.

Burnley took the lead in the 57th minute with a glancing header by Wood, who rose ahead of Juan Foyth to angle in a Dwight McNeil corner. Spurs believed the corner should not have been awarded but they responded positively.

Eight minutes later Kane, who had looked a little rusty, ran on to a quick throw-in from Danny Rose, got behind Mee and slipped the ball past Heaton. Burnley were angered that Rose had taken the throw-in several metres ahead of the spot where the ball went out of play but their protests were in vain.

The Clarets, who have been in or around the relegation zone for most of the season, grabbed the winner though when substitute Johann Berg Gudmundsson found Barnes at the back post and the striker fired in his fourth goal in as many games. Members of the Spurs coaching staff furiously protested against the referee after the final whistle.

Meanwhile, Newcastle United's 2-0 win over 10-man Huddersfield Town yesterday eased their Premier League safety fears and sent the Terriers hurtling ever faster towards relegation to the Championship.

The top-flight's basement club looked lost again as soon as captain Tommy Smith was given a 20th-minute red card and second-half goals from Salomon Rondon and Ayoze Perez sent them spinning to a 13th defeat in their last 14 league matches.

A fourth straight league loss for Huddersfield's new manager Jan Siewert left them stranded six points behind Fulham and 14 adrift of 17th-placed Cardiff City as Newcastle, with a third straight home win under Rafa Benitez, moved up to 14th.

Miguel Almiron, making his first start for Newcastle after his club record 20 million-pound (\$26.1 million) move from Atlanta United, received a standing ovation at St James' Park when he came off after tormenting Huddersfield's defence for 80 minutes.

After chipping over Jonas Lossl and hitting the post, only for Rondon to strike the same upright moments later, the livewire Paraguayan was brought down by Smith's lunging, over-the-top challenge which earned him a straight red card.

Only their finishing—they hit the woodwork four times and were denied by brilliant saves from Lossl—let them down as Newcastle dominated.

A minute after the break, Rondon broke the deadlock with a low strike before laying on the 52nd-minute clincher from Spaniard Perez.

In another match, Josh King went from hero to villain as Bournemouth drew 1-1 with Wolves in a bizarre tale of three penalties at Dean Court.

Eddie Howe's team took the lead through King's 14th minute spot kick after the Bournemouth striker tumbled theatrically under pressure from Joao Moutinho.

Raul Jimenez equalised for Wolves with an 83rd minute effort from the spot following a dubious handball decision by referee Roger East.

King should have won it moments later when East gave Bournemouth another controversial penalty after Ryan Fraser appeared to be fouled outside the area.

But this time, King couldn't take advantage of East's generosity as he fired wide from the spot. — Agencies

Messi hits half century of hat-tricks to down Sevilla

SEVILLE: Lionel Messi scored a 50th career hat-trick to fire Barcelona to a 4-2 win at Sevilla yesterday after the champions had twice fallen behind, giving the Catalans a 10-point lead at the top of La Liga.

Sevilla, who have only won once in the league in 2019, took the lead midway through the first half through veteran winger Jesus Navas but were soon pegged back by an unstoppable volley from Messi.

The home side capitalised on sleepy defending from Barca to re-take the lead before halftime as

Gabriel Mercado pounced in the area.

Barca coach Ernesto Valverde made two attacking changes at the start of the second period by introducing Ousmane Dembele and Sergi Roberto and got the intended reaction when the France winger laid the ball off to Messi just inside the area and the Argentine lashed it into the top corner.

Messi, who has struggled for form in recent weeks due to a niggling injury, looked on a mission to grab the winner and after twice coming close he completed his treble to put Barca ahead in the 85th minute, reacting quickly to a poor Sevilla clearance to dink the ball over goalkeeper Tomas Vaclik. Luis Suarez made sure of the points by scoring deep in stoppage time, chipping Vaclik after being played through by a pass from Messi.

Barca lead the standings on 57 points after 25 games while second-placed Atletico Madrid have 47 but can reduce the gap back to seven when they host Villarreal today. Sevilla fell to fifth, slipping out of the Champions League places behind Getafe. — Reuters

Bencic upsets Kvitova to lift Dubai title

DUBAI: Switzerland's Belinda Bencic ended a four-year title drought with a 6-3 1-6 6-2 victory over Petra Kvitova in the final of the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships yesterday.

Victory gave Bencic, 21, her first win over second seed Kvitova, who had breezed past her in straight sets in the third round of the Australian Open last month. The win was also Bencic's fourth win over a top 10 player this week after getting past Aryna Sabalenka, Simona Halep and Elina Svitolina in the previous rounds.

Kvitova continued to struggle with her rhythm, as she had during the course of the tournament, hitting only 53 percent of first serves on target in the opening set and also produced seven double faults.

Bencic took the first set with a searing backhand volley that got the crowd on their feet, finally winning a set against the world number four in their fourth meeting. Kvitova, however, stepped up her game in the second to break Bencic three times and bagged the set with some



Belinda Bencic

powerful forehand returns and by coming up to the net.

But it was Bencic who won the mental battle in the third set by breaking Kvitova at 1-1 before winning another break point at 4-2 to serve for the match. Kvitova's return on match point went long, a decision that was reviewed, to give Bencic the win in an hour and 43 minutes. She is the second Swiss player, after Martina Hingis won the inaugural edition in 2001, to win the tournament. —Reuters