



NOTICE

Kuwait Times extends to our readers best wishes for the National and Liberation Days! The newspaper will not be published on February 26 and 27, 2019. Our next issue will hit the newsstands on Thursday, February 28, 2019. However, readers can stay updated on breaking news and events on our digital media channels including our website [www.kuwaittimes.net](http://www.kuwaittimes.net) and on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

# Amir hails Arab-Europe ties, warns of challenges

## EU, Arabs tackle raft of key issues at first summit

### Amir exchanges congratulations on national days

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received cables of congratulations on the 58th anniversary of the National Day and 28th anniversary of Liberation Day from HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. He also received similar cables from HH the Chief of the National Guards Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of the National Guards Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

They all expressed allegiance and loyalty to the dear homeland, wishing HH the Amir life-long well-being so he may pursue the leadership of goodness

Continued on Page 20



SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah heads Kuwait's delegation at the EU-Arab summit yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivered yesterday his speech to the first Arab League-European Union summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt. Speaking to the participants, including Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and President of the European Council Donald Tusk, HH the Amir said: "I am pleased at the outset to express my great happiness for this first historic meeting between Arab and European states in this beautiful city. I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to the brothers and friends, leaders of the Arab and European countries, for responding to the invitation of this meeting by participating in it, which reflects their keenness to develop Arab-European relations."

HH the Amir expressed gratitude towards Egypt for hosting the event, saying: "I must also thank my brother His Excellency President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, for inviting us and for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to us. Our region has gone through various historical phases, in which the interaction of civilization and others was clear, as the effects of the Arab region are visible on the structures of European civilization. Similarly, we see clearly the effects of European advancement and European civilization on Arab intellectual, educational and political institutions.

Continued on Page 20

## Bangladesh plane hijacker shot dead

CHITTAGONG: Bangladesh commandos stormed a passenger jet in the country's southeast yesterday and shot dead an armed man who allegedly tried to hijack the Dubai-bound flight, an army official said. The suspect, described by officials as a Bangladeshi man in his mid-20s, was shot as special forces rushed the Boeing 737-800 plane after it landed safely in Chittagong. The 134 passengers and 14 crew aboard the

Bangladesh Biman flight BG147 were all rescued unharmed, officials said.

But the suspected hijacker - identified by the name "Mahadi" and described as being 25 or 26 years old - was injured and died shortly after being arrested, said army spokesman Major General Motiur Rahman. "Our commando team asked the hijacker to surrender, but he rejected it by being aggressive, and was shot," Rahman told reporters. "Later on we learnt he had died... We found a pistol from him and nothing else."

The airport was sealed off by army, navy and elite police after landing to collect more passengers from Dhaka on its journey to Dubai. "Just ten minutes after the plane took off (from Dhaka) he fired twice," one passenger told reporters in Chittagong. Air Vice

Marshal Mofid, who goes by one name, said he kept the accused man busy talking on the phone while special forces units prepared for the dramatic raid. "He demanded to speak to our Prime Minister (Sheikh Hasina)," Mofid said. "He claimed he had a pistol, but we are not sure yet whether it is an actual gun or a fake."

An unnamed member of the crew said the man was carrying a bomb-like object. "(He) said, 'I'll hijack this plane... If you don't open the cockpit, I will blow up the plane,'" the crew member told Bangladeshi newspaper Prothom Alo. Other crew members said passengers were evacuated through four emergency gates of the plane. The hijacker also held a flight steward hostage.

Continued on Page 20



CHITTAGONG: Bangladeshi security personnel stand guard near a hijacked Dubai-bound Bangladesh Biman plane on the tarmac after an emergency landing at Shah Amanat International Airport yesterday. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Sri Lanka seizes 300 kg heroin

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's police seized nearly 300 kg of heroin worth \$17 million, the island's biggest haul of the narcotic, and arrested two people, spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said yesterday. Anti-narcotics agents and police Special Task Force commandos raided a mall car park in the capital Colombo Saturday evening and found the drugs hidden in two vans, Gunasekera said. "The heroin was packed in 272 plastic bags and ready for distribution," Gunasekera said. "We are now investigating how this consignment got into the country." — AFP

#### UAE oil firm signs \$4bn deal

ABU DHABI: State-owned UAE energy giant Abu Dhabi National Oil Co yesterday signed a \$4 billion deal with US-based investors BlackRock and KKR granting them a minority stake in its pipeline arm. The agreement gives the two investors a joint stake of 40 percent in ADNOC Oil Pipeline, a newly established firm that owns all of the 18 pipelines that carry Abu Dhabi crude oil and condensates, a statement said. ADNOC will keep the remaining 60 percent and also have sovereignty over the pipelines and management of operations, the company said. — AFP

#### Bid to sabotage Iran missiles foiled

TEHRAN: The Revolutionary Guards yesterday accused "enemies" of Iran of trying to sabotage the country's missiles so that they would "explode midair" but said the bid was foiled. "They tried as best as they could to sabotage a small part which we import so that our missiles would not reach their target and explode mid-air," Fars news agency reported, quoting the Guards' aerospace engineering Amir Ali Hajizadeh. "But they couldn't do a damn thing because we had seen this coming from the start and had reinforced this sector," he added, accusing Iran's "enemies" of sabotage without naming any specific country. — AFP

## Harry, Meghan meet schoolgirls in Morocco tour

ASNI, Morocco: Britain's Prince Harry and his wife Meghan yesterday met Moroccan schoolgirls at the foothills of the High Atlas mountains, during their last official foreign tour before becoming parents. Clutching British and Moroccan flags, the teenagers lined up to meet the royal couple during their visit to the town of Asni south of the tourist hub Marrakesh. The British royals' tour was set to focus on initiatives promoting girls' education, women's empowerment and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

A heavily pregnant Meghan, with henna on one hand, accepted flowers from one of the girls in Asni while she and Harry chatted outside to a group from the program Education For All Morocco. The organization runs free boarding houses to give girls aged 12 to 18 from the High Atlas region access to education, working with 185 teenagers in 2017. "Wow, that's impressive!" Meghan told a girl who has ambitions to study astronomy, an exchange filmed in a dorm room and posted on Twitter by Kensington Palace.

The couple also visited a classroom where pupils were practicing their English, according to the royals' social media account.

A quarter of Moroccans aged 15 to 24 are out of work and not in training or education, according to official data for

Continued on Page 20



ASNI, Morocco: Prince Harry and his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, greet children from the 'Education For All' boarding house yesterday in this town on the foothills of the High Atlas mountains. — AFP

## Qatar names main road after Amir



DOHA: Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani meets HH Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Representative of HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday. Sheikh Nasser conveyed HH the Amir's greetings to Sheikh Tamim, voicing much thanks and appreciation for naming a main road in Qatar after HH Sheikh Sabah. The Qatari Amir asked Sheikh Nasser to deliver greetings to HH the Amir, wishing him well and Kuwait more progress and prosperity. Also during the meeting, they discussed fraternal historical relations between both brotherly countries and their people. — KUNA (See Page 2)

## Thousands mourn 7 Syrian siblings killed in Canada fire

MONTREAL: Around 2,000 mourners attended the funeral on Saturday of seven children from a Syrian refugee family who died earlier this week in a house fire in Halifax, eastern Canada. Ahmad Barho and siblings Rola, Mohammed, Ola, Hala, Rana and Abdullah - whose ages ranged from four months to 15 years - all perished in the as-yet unexplained blaze at their home on Tuesday.

Their father, Ebrahim Barho, suffered serious burns and remains in a medically induced coma in hospital, according to Canadian media. Their mother, Kawthar Barho, was less seriously injured. She was present at the funeral. "I've attended many funerals but nothing like this, so please bear with me," said Sheikh Hamza, who spoke at the moving ceremony, struggling to overcome grief.

The Barho family arrived in Canada in

2017, and were among an estimated 40,000 refugees received by the country since 2015. The funeral, broadcast on several news channels, was carried out according to Muslim tradition. Due to the number of people attending, it took place not in a mosque but in a cavernous hall on the Halifax waterfront, with all 2,000 seats full and several mourners standing.

"We have all been affected by this tragedy," said Nova Scotia lieutenant governor Arthur LeBlanc. Member of Parliament Andy Fillmore said authorities were working to bring other members of the Barho family to Canada to support Kawthar Barho.

The tragedy provoked an outpouring of sympathy across Canada, with a fundraiser for the family bringing in nearly half a million Canadian dollars (\$380,000) in just a few days. — AFP



## Local



**SHARM EL-SHEIKH:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Iraqi President Barham Salih. — Amiri Diwan photo

## Amir meets Iraqi leader in Sharm El-Sheikh

**SHARM EL-SHEIKH:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Iraqi President Barham Salih in Egypt's Sharm El-Sheikh City yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations, ways of promoting and developing them at all levels, and the latest regional and international developments. The encounter was attended by His Highness the Amir's accompanying delegation.

His Highness the Amir and his accompanying delegation had arrived in Egypt's Sharm El-Sheikh City earlier yesterday to lead Kuwait's delegation partaking in an Arab-European summit. His Highness the Amir was welcomed by Egyptian Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Khaled Abdel-Ghaffar, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Egypt Mohammad Al-Thwaikh, Kuwait's

Permanent Representative at the Arab League Ahmad Al-Baker and embassy staff. His Highness the Amir's accompanying delegation comprises Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Finance Minister Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf, Amiri Diwan's Undersecretary and His Highness the Amir's Office Chief Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, Amiri Diwan's Advisor Mohammad Abdullah Abu Al-Hasan, Amiri Protocols Chief Sheikh Khaled Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Naser Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Head of Amiri Diwan's Media and Cultural Affairs Yousef Hamad Al-Roumi, Head of Amiri Diwan's Political and Economic Affairs Sheikh Fawaz Saud Naser Saud Al-Sabah and several other senior officials of Amiri Diwan and Foreign Ministry. — KUNA

## Amir's development plan takes shape: Minister

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's vision of broad development is progressing smoothly, Kuwait's Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan said yesterday. "There has been much progress on the part of all parties involved to steer the country towards a

prosperous path," the minister told the press amid a festive atmosphere as Kuwait marks its national celebrations. He took a moment to congratulate the Kuwaiti people and the country's leaders on this joyous occasion, saying the nation has seen meteoric development in its illustrious history. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti facilities spruce up for national festivals



**KUWAIT:** Kuwaiti state institutions, businesses and banks nationwide have been embellished with shining Kuwaiti flags and

photos of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. This reflects an eye-catching artifact marking the



country's national celebrations on the occasion of the National Day and Liberation Day. — KUNA



# Qatar inaugurates main road named after Kuwait's Amir



**DOHA:** His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah (left) and Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani inaugurate a main road named after His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in Doha, Qatar yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah listens to a presentation about the new road.



The new road named after His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

**DOHA:** Qatar inaugurated yesterday a main road named after His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; a venture viewed as essential to secure easy traffic between Doha's northern and southern sectors. Upon directions by the Qatari Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani inaugurated the project in a ceremony, attended by the Representative of His Highness the Amir, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The Qatari interior minister briefed His Highness Sheikh Nasser about significance of the project, launched in line with the Qatari Vision 2030 development strategy. The planned road stretches from Hamad International Airport to Um Lakhba intersection. Along with side roads, the whole venture envisages construction of 37 kilometers of routes.

Projected to finish by 2021, it will limit traffic congestion, often witnessed on the Doha highway (February 22 Street). It also envisions construction of a 1,200-meter-long causeway, a 2.6 km-long bridge and a tunnel. The plan, in part, aims at facilitating movement of athletes, due to partake in the world cup, scheduled in the country in 2022. Meanwhile, Qatari Minister of Transport Jassim Al-Sulaiti said inauguration of Sabah Al-Ahmad road is part of Doha's participation in Kuwait's celebrations of its national days.

Minister Sulaiti, in a statement after the

inauguration ceremony, said the main road would facilitate jam flow between southern and northern sectors of the Qatari capital. The main road is connected to 15 other key roads, serving many vital facilities throughout the city. Meanwhile, Abdullah Al-Subaiee, the Minister of Municipality and Environment, said naming the main road after His Highness the Amir "is the least that we may present to His Highness who has spared no effort to support the State of Qatar at the political, economic and humanitarian levels."

Qatar has delivered a "message of love and appreciation" to Kuwait through a new road christened after His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait's ambassador to Doha said. "For a major road to carry His Highness the Amir's name is a testament to his lofty status and profound contributions," Hafith Al-Ajmi said,

saying the Qatari initiative also typifies the inextricable bond shared by the Gulf neighbors. He pointed out that Qataris have turned out in droves to join their Kuwaiti brethren amid their national celebrations in a gesture of goodwill appreciated by all Kuwaitis.

Upon arriving at the venue, His Highness Sheikh Nasser was received by Qatari Minister of Transport and Communications Jassem Al-Sulaiti and President of the Public Works Authority Saad Al-Muhannadi. The ceremony started by showing a documentary about the project, later His Highness Sheikh Nasser and the Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Abdullah Bin Nasser Al-Thani, initiated the inauguration of the major road. The ceremony was concluded with a short operetta organized by a group of children for Kuwait. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Qatari and Kuwaiti students perform an operetta to mark Kuwait's national days at Abdulhussein Abdelredha's theater. — KUNA

## Qataris join Kuwaitis in marking national day celebrations

**KUWAIT:** Qatari and Kuwaiti students jointly performed an operetta to mark Kuwait's national days on Saturday evening. The Qataris' participation reflects sincere feelings, love and deep-rooted with Kuwait during its national festivals. The event, which was held at Abdulhussein Abdelredha's theater, included 28 Qatari students and 60 Kuwaitis as well as some young people from the two countries. Speaking on the sidelines of the operetta, Faisal Al-Tamimi, head of Qatar's music affairs center, said the operetta is a gift from the Qatari people that embodies love towards the Kuwaitis. It concentrated

on feelings of love between the two nations, and Kuwait's history in different fields, he added, noting that it is the second operetta in a row. Meanwhile, Bader Al-Dowaish, Kuwait's Assistant Secretary-General of National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters, said the festival confirms the depth of relations between the two countries and their nations. He expressed his delight at the Qatari Amir and people's initiative to share Kuwait's national day celebrations. The operetta is part of Qatar's festival on Kuwait that is held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village and Murouj area. — KUNA

## Kuwait Women Band offers musical soiree in Riyadh

**RIYADH:** The Kuwait Women Band offered a musical soiree at the embassies district in Riyadh on Saturday on the occasion of Kuwait's national days, with Kuwait Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attending. The soiree, sponsored by Kuwait Embassy, featured folklore songs including "Ya Allah Ana Talebak," "Tair Al-Saad," "Ohiboha," and "Ya Jameela," and dances such as

Al-Tanboursa, Al-Dazza, Al-Shaboura, Al-Sawahili and Al-Sameri. Dawood Hussain, a famous Kuwaiti actor who joined the event, offered sings such as "Ana Kuwaiti" and "Aash Suleiman," which drew much praise from the audience. Hayat Al-Ali, the chair of the band, said that the soiree attracted large audience from the Saudis and the Kuwaitis living in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. — KUNA



## Local



KUWAIT: Revelers celebrate Kuwait's national holidays at the Arabian Gulf Road yesterday. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

# Kuwait marks 58th National Day

KUWAIT: Kuwait is amidst national celebrations, with the 58th anniversary of ending the British protection and declaring independence being on June 19, 1961. Yet, the current National Day; February 25th, concurs with the 28th Anniversary of Liberation (February 26th) and 13th Anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's assumption of post (January 29th). The independence document was signed by the then Amir late Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, the 11th ruler of Kuwait. Kuwait celebrated the National Day once on June 19, 1962; however, the occasion was pushed back to February 25 the following year to coincide with the now defunct throne sitting celebration. In 1962, Kuwait took the first step towards formulating the constitution with the establishment of a founding committee tasked with writing the draft constitution. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem approved the document in November of the same year. Kuwait entered the legislative period through the first elections held on January 23, 1963.

Since independence, Kuwait took the path of a balanced national and foreign policies aimed at achieving welfare and development to the Kuwaiti people and also bolstering cooperation with neighbors in the region as well as friends around the world. While Kuwait continues to play a pivotal role regionally and internationally, the people of the country rely wholly on the guidelines and wise policies set by



His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Through his efforts on the national level, His Highness the Amir focused on envisioning plans that would lead to the overall development of Kuwait. On October 10, 2018 His Highness the Amir patronized the second Kuwait Achievers for Future Opportunities (KAFO) conference. KAFO is an initiative by Al-Diwan Al-Amiri in collaboration with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs. His Highness the Amir's economic development vision aims at transforming Kuwait into a regional and international center for finance and business. Several finalized projects became known thanks to His Highness the Amir including the Sabah Al-Ahmad Sea City, Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center (ASCC), Kuwait Motor City (KMC), the Jahra Medical City, the Kuwait International

Airport's Terminal 4 (T4), and Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital. On the foreign policy level, His Highness the Amir always focused on building bridges of understanding and peace amongst the nation of the world to achieve overall prosperity for everyone.

His Highness the Amir is also known for his humanitarian stance both on the national and international levels. On February 18, 2018, His Highness the Amir paid the debts of nationals and expatriates held in prison as part of the national celebrations. On February 19, His Highness the Amir also issued a decree to cover the financial expenses of orphans in Kuwait. Internationally, His Highness the Amir was honored by the UN as a global humanitarian leader and Kuwait was recognized as an international hub for humanitarian work as a result of his efforts. — KUNA



## Happy National and Liberation Days Kuwait

### Celebrate with unlimited VIVA-to-VIVA minutes

To subscribe for free

For Prepaid customers send 2526 to 510

For Postpaid customers send 2526 to 567

Unlimited  
VIVA ↔ VIVA  
minutes

Call 102  
viva.com.kw  
f t i s  
@vivatelecom

This offer is valid on 25 and 26 February 2019

VIVA





## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The sun sets behind silhouetted buildings in Sharq. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

# ‘All Zainers are Winners’ campaign welcomes Zain customers at 360 Mall

## Company hosted Q8 Pulse FM stars and offered prizes to listeners and crowds

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, welcomed its customers at a special event held on Friday, February 22, 2019 throughout three consecutive hours at 360 Mall to celebrate the company's latest promotional campaign 'All Zainers are Winners' and in celebration of Kuwait's national holidays.

Zain organized this special event to promote the recently launched 'All Zainers are Winners' campaign that aims at sharing the joys of Kuwait's national festivities during February of every year with all its customers. At this celebrated time of year, the company is always committed to launching unique promotional campaigns refreshed with the most wonderful offerings to celebrate this much cherished occasion with its customer base, considered the biggest in Kuwait.

The special event at 360 Mall featured the Range Rover Evoque 2019, which is one of five mega prizes that will go out to five lucky winners during the final draw at the end of the campaign. 'All Zainers are Winners' continues until February 28, 2019, and offers valuable instant prizes to all Zain prepaid and postpaid customers during the entire campaign period.



Q8 Pulse star Talal Al-Yaqout during the live show.

During the event, Zain hosted a special live episode that featured Q8 Pulse 88.8 FM stars Talal Al-Yaqout, Khalid Al-Ansari, Ahmad Ashkanani, and Osama Fouda, where many exciting competitions and activities centered around the campaign were organized for Q8 Pulse FM listeners and the attending crowds. Winners who participated in the event's activities were awarded with valuable prizes and smart devices while enjoying a wonderful national atmosphere. The event also witnessed a traditional band that played wonderful traditional Kuwaiti pieces as well as the tal-

ented Arabiska band that thrilled the audience with a unique music performance throughout the event.

'All Zainers are Winners' continues until the 28th of February, and offers valuable instant prizes to all prepaid and postpaid customers, including free minutes, free Internet GBs, free bonus credit, and many more. To be eligible for one of the instant prizes, prepaid customers can simply recharge their lines with KD 5 or more, while postpaid customers can simply pay their bills through one of Zain's digital channels (Zain's website, Zain app, or Zain Connect portal) with KD 5 or more. Customers will receive their gift instantly as soon as they pay/recharge.

All Zain prepaid and postpaid customers have a chance to win one of five Range Rover Evoque 2019 mega prizes during the final draw to be held at the end of the campaign. Every customer will receive one point for each KD 1 paid/recharged during the campaign period, and they can simply check their current accumulated points/chances balance by dialing \*2526#. The more points a customer has, the more chances they will have for winning one of the mega prizes.

Zain has long considered itself a key partner of the Kuwaiti society, especially in such national celebrations. The company launched this exciting campaign to show its commitment in sharing the joys of Kuwait as a leading national company, and will spare no efforts in being an integral part of the many occasions that are of interest to the local community. By launching this exciting limited time promotional campaign, Zain continues to reinforce its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best services and offers to meet customers' professional and personal telecommunications needs.

Zain always aspires to new levels of excellence in all services it offers to its customers. Through the launch of this new campaign, Zain affirms its continuous efforts in meeting customers' needs and aspirations, and deliver its promise to offering the best services and latest technologies. The company constantly looks at ways to improve the experience of its customers, including providing them with the latest solutions to better serve their needs through the biggest and most advanced network in Kuwait.



KUWAIT: From 'All Zainers Are Winners' event at 360 Mall.



One of the campaign's five Range Rover Evoque 2019 mega prizes.



One of the interactive activities with the audience.



## Local

# 6,739 jobs vacant in various state departments: Minister

## Many citizens rejected jobs they were offered

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said the total number of citizens registered with the Civil Service Commission's (CSC) employment system since 1999 is 278,403, of whom 42,743 withdrew to seek jobs elsewhere. Responding to a parliamentary inquiry by MP Adel Al-Damkhi, Aqeel explained that 91.5 percent of citizens registered with the system have been employed, while a further 11,628 nominees are waiting for employment. She added that 6,739 jobs are vacant in various ministries, namely the education and interior ministries, according to those ministries' assessment of their needs for the year 2019-2020. Aqeel also noted that only 3.6 percent of citizens registered with the CSC system had not been nominated for any jobs, as many of them rejected the jobs they had been offered.

### Renewable energy

In collaboration with relevant government bodies, the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) is currently working on executing a number of renewable energy projects to meet the instructions of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to

produce 15 percent of electricity from clean resources by 2030, said informed sources. The sources added that the Kabd project to turn waste into electricity is one of the leading projects to be executed in collaboration with the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects and Kuwait Municipality to produce 80 megawatts. The sources said the project would resolve the problems of 21 landfill sites and scientifically help get rid of the waste they contain. In addition, the sources said MEW will execute the Subbiya water reservoirs project and install photoelectric panels on them to generate 25-30 megawatts of electricity.



### Kuwait Hospital

Upon direct instructions from Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, the Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, UAE's health and community protection ministry renamed Al-Barahah Hospital in Dubai as Kuwait

Hospital. UAE Health Minister Abdul Rahman bin Mohammed Al-Owais said renaming the hospital is in appreciation of the historic role played by the hospital since it was established in 1966 by the late Dubai ruler Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al-Maktoum in the presence of the late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

**Over 91% registered citizens employed**

### 13 projects

The finance ministry approved financial requests by the education ministry to execute a number of construction projects in various educational areas, said informed sources, noting that the ministry approved 13 projects with a total cost of KD 36.5 million to be used in rehabilitating schools, build new ones and build 50 gyms in five educational areas.

### Supreme committee

Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) Deputy Chairman and CEO Hashem Hashem recently issued a

decision to reform KPC and its subsidiaries' supreme purchasing committee under the chairmanship of Saad Abdul Wahab Al-Saad. The committee will include Mazen Dawood Al-Sardi, Ali Abdullah Mohammed, Yousif Ahmed Ali, Adel Mohammed Al-Zamel, Abdul Rasoul Hussein Jaafar and a representative from the oil ministry. The decision will be effective on Feb 27 with the aim of giving a new push to the oil sector, said informed sources, adding that the committee is responsible for reviewing and approving various tenders prior to submitting them to the Central Agency for Public Tenders.

### Water balloon

An army officer from the ruling family chased another vehicle along Gulf Road and rammed it deliberately after one of the passengers threw a water balloon at his vehicle. Case papers indicate that both the 'sheikh' captain and the other vehicle's driver argued after water from the balloon spoiled the interior of the officer's vehicle. Things then developed into a chase, during which they both rammed each other's vehicles, until both vehicles broke down and stopped. A case was filed and both drivers were referred to relevant authorities pending further procedures.

## Fire guts 15 impounded cars at ministry garage

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A fire broke out in the early hours of yesterday in 15 vehicles impounded at a Ministry of Interior garage in Farwaniya. Firemen from Subhan and Farwaniya fire stations rushed to the scene and managed to contain the fire and prevented it from spreading to other vehicles. No casualties were reported, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFS) said in a statement. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress to determine the cause of the fire. Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry explained in a statement that the entire garage is insured and that owners of the destroyed vehicles will be compensated.



**138**  
Our Amir is our pride ...  
Our people are our wealth

**Celebrate dear Kuwait, the most beautiful country**

**Our hearts and souls rejoice with songs of your love.**

**Shine bright with lights of joy**

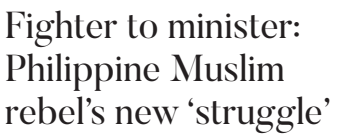
**And we thank God as our hearts revel in happiness.**

Poetry: Ahmad Alshargawi

2019 | the Permanent Committee for National Celebrations and Events

kuwaitfestival





## Page 9

Page 8



**SRINAGAR:** Indian troops and police have detained more than 160 separatist leaders and activists, mainly from the Islamist party Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI), over two successive nights of raids in disputed Kashmir and imposed new curbs on freedom of movement. The crackdown in towns and villages follows a suicide car bombing that killed 40 Indian paramilitary police in a military convoy on Feb. 14 claimed by another group, the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM).

“Since Jel has a wider network across Kashmir and they are mobilizing anti-India protests, their arrest could help in curbing such protests ahead of elections,” he told Reuters. The authorities have also been detain- ing JeM militants, sympathizers and relatives since the attack. Separatists called for a strike to protest against the detentions and the crackdown. In response, many shops, petrol stations, and businesses closed, with fewer people and vehicles on streets in sensitive areas, except for troop patrols.

vehicles. "The restrictions have been imposed as a precautionary measure to avoid any untoward incident," police said in a statement. There was also at least one military operation during the day. Troops cordoned off Turgam, a village in South Kashmir's Kulgam district, and in a subsequent gun battle with JeM militants, one police officer and one militant died, a police source said. At least two other militants were trapped inside the village, the source said.

The government of Jammu and Kashmir issued a statement saying that fuel supplies are critically low in the Kashmir Valley and rationing has been introduced. It said there is only enough gasoline for one day, diesel for four days and no liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). The government said it will seek to increase supplies to the region and that shortages are the result of road blockages after the suicide bomb attack.

**Roads deserted, many shops and businesses shut**

“At places, they have blocked the main roads with steel barricades and concertina wire,” he said. Separatist leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who chairs the region’s Hurriyat Conference, said arbitrary arrests and jailing of leaders, activists and young people for their political beliefs has happened across Kashmir for 30 years. “Intimidating activists and leadership will not deter them from their path, nor will it stop people from demanding the resolution of the Kashmir dispute through self-determination,” he said.

The suicide bomb attack has raised tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors that both claim Kashmir in full but rule it in part. India blames Pakistan for harboring militant groups operating in Kashmir, which Pakistan denies. After the attack, India dropped trade privileges for Pakistan and is preparing to send as many as 10,000 more troops to the contested area, according to a home ministry letter seen by Reuters.

Islamabad has warned it would respond with “full force” if attacked. India’s Supreme Court will hear a case next week seeking to drop a constitutional provision that bars non-residents from moving to the state of Jammu and Kashmir that encompasses the Muslim-majority region. If passed, it could further escalate tension there. —Reuters

**SEOUL:** For the sequel, set in Hanoi this week, US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will have to contend with harder questions. Here is a look at what was exactly agreed in Singapore last year and what has transpired since then.

The inaugural summit between the leaders of two countries that never signed a peace treaty after the 1950-53 Korean War was brief — from 9am to 2pm. In a short pronouncement, they pledged to seek a “lasting and stable peace regime”, with Kim committing “to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula”. There were no specific details, and disagreement over its interpretation has caused follow-up negotiations to stall. Even South Korea’s dovish President Moon Jae-in, who seized on last year’s Winter Olympics to broker talks between rivals who had been trading personal insults and threats of war, has since described the text as “somewhat vague”.

verified denuclearization” and has repeatedly referred to “the denuclearization of North Korea as agreed to by Chairman Kim”. But that is not what the words in the statement say, and throughout the process with Trump Pyongyang has never made a public commitment to give up its weapons, rather than denuclearizing the peninsula as a whole. Diplomats say Washington’s phrasing could be a negotiating ploy by the Trump administration, effectively daring Pyongyang to come out and deny it. At the same time, Trump said last week: “I’m in no rush. There’s no testing. As long as there’s not testing, I’m in no rush.”

The North has condemned US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's insistence on its nuclear disarmament as "gangster-like". It has long understood the denuclearization of "the peninsula" as taking in issues such as the US military presence in South Korea and Washington's nuclear umbrella over Seoul, and a lengthy commentary carried by the official KCNA news agency in December urged the US to "study geography". "When we talk about the Korean Peninsula, it includes the territory of our republic and also the entire region of (South Korea) where the United States has placed its invasive force," it said. Pyongyang says it has already taken substantive measures by stopping missile and nuclear testing and the time has come for the US to respond with moves of its own, such as lifting sanctions. And in his New

Stephen Biegun, the US Special Representative for North Korea, has stressed that Washington has no intention of easing its US or United Nations sanctions on Pyongyang. But, he has said, “we are prepared to explore (a) number of other things that could build trust”. Earlier this month he told a Stanford University audience: “I have this perfect outcome moment where the last nuclear weapon leaves North Korea, the sanctions are lifted, the flag goes up in the embassy and the treaty is signed in the same hour. “Now that’s an ideal, I know, and these things are going to move haltingly along different courses.”

In 2017, as missiles flew and North Korean ground shook to the blast of a nuclear test, they called each other “dotard” and “Rocket Man”. But the Singapore meeting began with a one-on-one meeting, with only their translators present. Trump has since hailed his “great chemistry” with Kim and says he has “gotten to know him & fully understand how capable he is”, dangling the prospect of the impoverished, sanctions-hit North becoming a “great Economic Powerhouse” under Kim. “He wrote me beautiful letters,” the US president told a rally in October. “And they’re great letters. We fell in love.” —AFP

**TAIPAI:** A Taiwanese games company whose latest offering contained a hidden comparison of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Winnie the Pooh apologized yesterday after gamers in China boycotted the product. Horror adventure game "Devotion" was unveiled by Red Candle Games earlier this month and had generated much buzz among gaming communities in Taiwan and China.

But in one scene, an ancient Taoist scribble pasted on a wall was found to contain the Chinese characters “Xi Jinping, Little Bear Winnie” — Winnie the Pooh’s Chinese name. AA Milne’s loveable but slow-witted bear with a weakness for honey has been used in past memes to poke fun at Xi, prompting Chinese censors to block all mentions of Winnie the Pooh on social media. Another scene featured a newspaper with headlines reading “Baozi was arrested for assaulting school children” and “Baozi was sentenced to over three years maximum death penalty.”

References to “baozi”, the popular Chinese bun-like snack, have also been taken down before in China for evoking the president’s nickname: “Steamed Bun Xi.” Taiwanese paper the Apple Daily said gamers in China had called for a boycott

of the game. Red Candle confirmed in a statement that “Devotion” has been removed from digital distribution platform Steam’s China region and that players who had paid for access will be refunded.

It added the controversial content had been written by one member of the development team without the others noticing until Thursday when players reported it. "This is not the position of Red Candle and this is not the intention of 'Devotion'.... We are deeply sorry for hurting everybody," said the statement posted on its Facebook page. But Taiwan's vice premier Chen Chi-mai on Sunday called for support for the game and "creative freedom."

"The game represents the creativity of many young people...I will play it when I have time," he told reporters. Red Candle said partnerships with its Chinese distributor as well as a Taiwanese investor that also operates in Shanghai have been terminated following the incident. A search for the game on China's Twitter-like Weibo did not yield any results. Taiwanese companies have previously bowed to boycott threats from China.

Last year, coffee chain 85C Bakery Cafe declared its “firm support for ‘One China’” after it disappeared from Chinese meal-ordering platforms after serving President Tsai Ing-wen while she was transiting in the United States. Ties with China have worsened since Tsai came to power in 2016, as she has refused to acknowledge that self-ruled democratic Taiwan is part of “one China.” —AFP



International

# As last IS collapses, exodus from strongholds overwhelm military

## Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have evacuated 5,000 men, women and children

OMAR OIL FIELD: US-backed Syrian forces warned yesterday they were struggling to cope with an outpouring of foreigners from the Islamic State group's imploding "caliphate", urging governments to take responsibility for their citizens. The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces have evacuated nearly 5,000 men, women and children from the jihadist redoubt since Wednesday, moving closer to retaking the last sliver of territory under IS control.

"The numbers of foreign fighters and their relatives that we are holding is increasing drastically," Kurdish foreign affairs official Abdel Karim Omar said. "Our current infrastructure can't handle the mass influx", he said. Syria's Kurds have repeatedly called on foreign countries to repatriate their citizens, but most have been reluctant to allow battle-hardened jihadists and their relatives back home due to security concerns.

At the height of its rule, IS imposed its brutal interpretation of Islamic law across territory straddling Syria and Iraq that was roughly the size of the United Kingdom. But more than four years after IS declared a cross-border "caliphate", the jihadists have lost all but a tiny patch of land in the village of Baghouz near the Iraqi border.

After years of fighting IS, Syria's Kurds say they hold hundreds of suspected IS fighters and their relatives. "As thousands of foreigners flee Daesh's crumbling caliphate, the burden which is already too heavy for us to handle is getting even heavier," SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali said on Twitter late Saturday, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

"This will remain as the biggest challenge awaiting us unless governments take action and fulfil their responsibilities for their citizens," he said. No evacuations were reported from the enclave on Saturday, but the two batches that left on Wednesday and Friday included Europeans, Iraqis and nationals of former Soviet countries, according to the SDF.

“

Infrastructure can't handle the mass influx

”

**Crammed prisons**

Around 46,000 people, including a large number of foreigners, have streamed out of IS's shrinking territory since early December, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor. While civilians are trucked north to Kurdish-run camps for the displaced, suspected jihadists are sent to SDF-controlled prisons. Omar said SDF "detention centres can't accommodate all the fighters" coming out of the last IS pocket.

The evacuation of men, women and children has put a strain on Kurdish-run camps for the displaced, especially the Al Hol camp, which now shelters more than 40,000 people. "There is a lot of pressure on us, especially in Al Hol, where in addition to the relatives of IS fighters you have a large displaced population," Omar said.

On Thursday, nearly 2,500 evacuees arrived at Al Hol, compounding already dire conditions inside the cramped settlement, the UN's humanitarian coordination office OCHA said. "Thousands more are expected in coming hours/days at Al-Hol camp, putting a further strain on basic services," it tweeted Friday. "This sudden influx presents huge challenges to the response-additional tents, non-food items, water and sanitation and health supplies are urgently needed." The International Rescue Committee on Friday said 69 people, mostly children, had died on the way to Al-Hol, or shortly after arriving in past weeks.

**Security concerns**

The battle for Baghouz is now the only live front in Syria's war, which has killed more than 360,000 people



Mostapha Bali, the spokesman for the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), carries a baby followed by a woman after fleeing the Islamic State (IS) group's last holdout of Baghouz, in Syria's northern Deir Ezzor province. —AFP

ple and displaced millions since 2011. The SDF say they are trying to evacuate remaining civilians through a corridor before pressing on with a battle to crush the jihadists unless holdout fighters surrender. Some 2,000 people are believed to remain inside Baghouz, including foreigners, according to the US-backed force.

Many European countries are now confronted with the dilemma of whether to bring back their citizens who travelled to join the group and prosecute them at

home, or bar them from entry over security concerns. On Friday, the family of Shamima Begum, 19, said it would challenge the British government's decision to revoke her citizenship. Begum, who travelled to Syria in 2015 aged just 15, faced being left stateless after Britain revoked her citizenship, and Bangladesh, where her parents are from, said it did not want her. On Thursday, the father of Hoda Muthana, 24, sued to bring her home after President Donald Trump's administration declared she was not a US citizen. —AFP

## French minister tackles daunting task of purging online hate

PARIS: Having initially welcomed the "yellow vest" movement as giving a voice to France's voiceless, Digital Affairs Minister Mounir Mahjoubi is now trying to purge social media of the racist bile and other hate speech spewed by often faceless users. The 34-year-old web entrepreneur was one of the first in President Emmanuel Macron's government to establish a rapport with the demonstrators at a time when most of the political class was running scared.

He has since been trying to take the heat out of French public debate in the street and on the internet as France battles an outpouring of anti-Semitism unseen since World War II. With swastikas being scrawled in areas around Paris — often discovered after yellow vest demonstrations — and a Jewish academic mobbed by hostile protesters in the street, Mahjoubi has found himself on the frontlines. He has called out Twitter especially for ignoring calls to work with French regulators on establishing filters for hate speech.

"I am very angry with them," the minister told AFP in an interview last week, reading aloud some of the endless stream of racist and homophobic messages he has received, especially since going public about his homosexuality last year. Mahjoubi has vowed heavy fines for online platforms that fail to remove hate speech in the 24 hours after it has been reported by users. He has also used his social media savvy and humble origins in a poor immigrant family — his father was a house painter and his mother a cleaner — to try and bridge the divide between Macron's little-loved government and disaffected voters.

**Capital ambitions**

But even as he tackles the enormous task of curbing incendiary hate speech, the self-made minister is eyeing his next challenge. In the interview, he made no secret of his ambition to become the French capital's first mayor of Arab origin. Macron's Republic on the Move party has yet to pick a candidate to try to unseat Socialist Mayor Anne Hidalgo in next year's elections. But Mahjoubi, who was elected to parliament in the city's multi-ethnic 19th district in 2017, has his pitch ready, even if he has yet to declare his candidacy.

"My parents came from Morocco with nothing in the 70s and their son became a minister, purely thanks to



PARIS: This combination of pictures shows the logos of the GAFAs, named after US multinational technology and internet-related services company Google, US online retail giant Amazon, US social media Facebook and US multinational technology company Apple, displayed on a tablet. —AFP

Paris," he said. "I want the city to do that for everybody." The self-described geek, who began working at 16 in the call centre of an internet service provider, has extensive experience working on internet safety. During Macron's election campaign he helped limit the damage caused by an intense hacking attack which was blamed on a Russian-affiliated group.

Mahjoubi was one of several high-achieving technocrats appointed to the new government, and in the follow-up parliamentary elections, he toppled Socialist Party leader Jean-Christophe Cambadélis, one of several heavyweights ousted by Macron's centrist insurgents. In the eyes of many voters, however, the newcomers turned out no better. Distrust of politicians hit a new low as the new ministers adopted the lofty language and big-spending ways of their predecessors — and the president himself let rip with a series of remarks seen as disparaging the poor. "Yes, it's true, we continued talking in a way which was sometimes unintelligible... and made people feel humiliated by this top-down language," admitted Mahjoubi, who studied at the prestigious Sorbonne and Sciences Po universities while launching an array of tech start-ups.

**Debate salesman**

Faced with the worst crisis of Macron's presidency the affable young minister remained glued to social media and attempted to foster dialogue. In one of his first forays into yellow vest territory, he popped up among the viewers of a Facebook Live broadcast to ask if the host Maxime Nicolle, a radical protest leader, would "agree to talk". —AFP

on March 29. May has face-to-face talks planned with European Council president Donald Tusk, Germany's Angela Merkel and Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar. After MPs rejected her withdrawal deal last month, May is seeking to amend its most controversial element, the so-called Irish backstop clause. This would keep Britain in a customs union with the EU after Brexit if and until another way — for example, a free trade deal — were found to keep the border with Ireland free-flowing. The EU has said it will not reopen the text, but is looking at what "guarantees" could be given to reassure MPs that the backstop would be temporary.

Gove said the government was still discussing various ways to address MPs' concerns with the EU. "It could be a time limit, it could be a unilateral exit mechanism," he said — citing two options Brussels has publicly rejected. He added: "And it could be another legally powerful protocol or addition to the treaty that makes it clear that we would not be bound in the backstop indefinitely against our will." May has promised to update parliament on her efforts on Tuesday and either put hold a new vote on the deal or allow MPs on Wednesday to debate their own ideas for the way forward. —AFP

## UK's May hoping for Brexit progress at Egypt summit

LONDON: Prime Minister Theresa May is making headway in efforts to amend the terms of Brexit and is hoping for further progress when she meets EU leaders in Egypt, a cabinet colleague said yesterday. But Environment Secretary Michael Gove downplayed the prospect of a breakthrough that could allow the House of Commons to vote again on the withdrawal agreement this week.

"I understand that progress is being made," he told BBC television. Asked whether a new vote by MPs was imminent, he said: "I don't know." May was headed Sunday to an EU-Arab League summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. It's an opportunity for her to talk to other EU leaders in order to try to make further progress," Gove said, as Brexit day looms

## Israel arrests top Muslim official after unrest


JERUSALEM: Israeli police said yesterday they arrested a top Palestinian Muslim official in Jerusalem after scuffles at a flashpoint holy site in the city in the past few days. The arrest drew condemnation from Jordan, the custodian of the Al-Aqsa mosque compound, in the disputed city. Israeli police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said Abdel Azeem Salhab had been arrested for violating an order preventing entry into a prohibited area of the holy site.

Salhab is the head of the council of the Waqf in Jerusalem, the religious authority that governs the site. Official Palestinian news agency WAFA reported that his deputy Najih Bakira was also arrested, but police had not confirmed it. The arrests follow the detention of 60 others overnight Thursday to Friday as police said


they were responding to calls for unrest at the holy site surrounding Friday prayers there. Some have since been released with an order not to visit the holy site. The site is the third-holiest in Islam and a focus of Palestinian aspirations for statehood.

It is also the location of Judaism's most holy spot — Jews refer to it as the Temple Mount — and a frequent scene of conflict between the two sides. Muslim worshippers' access to Al-Aqsa and the adjoining Dome of the Rock is controlled by Israeli security forces. A statement from Jordan's religious affairs minister, Abdul Nasser Abu al-Basal, said the arrests were "playing with fire" at the sensitive holy site.

There have been scuffles there in recent days after Israeli authorities padlocked a door, known as the Golden Gate or Gate of Mercy in Arabic, to disused offices. The offices were closed by an Israeli court order in 2003, police say, but video posted on social media showed Muslim officials praying there recently in defiance of the court ban. The religious site is located in east Jerusalem, occupied by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed in a move never recognized by the international community. —AFP



**عمليات الخفجي المشتركة**  
**AL-KHAFJI JOINT OPERATIONS**  
الشركة الكويتية لتفط الخليج  
KUWAIT GULF OIL COMPANY (K.S.C.)



**ارامكو للعمليات الخليج**  
**ARAMCO GULF OPERATIONS**

**TENDER ADVERTISEMENT**

Aramco Gulf Operations Company Limited ("AGOC") and Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (K.S.C) ("KGOC"), (Al-Khafji Joint Operations) invites bidders to participate for the **Tender No.: BT529IT18 - Maintenance & Support for Existing HP Hardware in KJO.**

Each intending bidder may purchase the tender documents upon payment of **Saudi Riyals Five Hundred (SR 500) or Kuwait Dinars Forty (KD 40) only** which is non refundable by visiting our Contracts Department at Al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia, or KGOC's Kuwait Office located in Al-Ahmadi, Tender & Contracts Section. The bidder may visit our KJO website [www.kjo.com.sa](http://www.kjo.com.sa) and follows the path; E-Services, Tendering, Contracts, Ongoing Tenders to review part of tender documents, before purchasing.

The Sales of Tender Documents will be effective from **February 27, 2019 until 12:00 noon, March 12, 2019.**

**Attending the Pre-Tender Meeting and Site Visit are Mandatory**

A Pre-Tender meeting will be held for interested bidders at **Information Technology Department (ITD), at Al-Khafji Joint Operations, Saudi Arabia, at 9:00 AM local time on March 12, 2019.** A site visit will be held soon after the pre-tender Meeting.

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION, YOU MAY CONTACT THE FOLLOWING NOS.

Tel No: +966(13)765 4483

E-Mail: [ctdtenders@kjo.com.sa](mailto:ctdtenders@kjo.com.sa)

Fax No: +966(13)765 5148

Website: [www.kjo.com.sa](http://www.kjo.com.sa)



## International

# Fighter to minister: Philippine Muslim rebel's new 'struggle'

## A very different challenge now awaits him: governing

**MANILA:** Murad Ebrahim's life as the Philippines' top Muslim rebel led him into fierce jungle combat and to meet with Osama bin Laden, but a very different challenge now awaits him: governing. Murad has been tapped to lead the majority-Catholic nation's brand new territory in the restive south where Muslims have won new powers and an influx of cash in a push for peace.

After decades as a rebel, Murad will need to become a bureaucrat and complete complex projects as chief minister of the body that will steer the new Bangsamoro region until elections in 2022. "We also see the difficult challenge we will be facing ahead. To us, the struggle is not yet over," the 70-year-old Murad said. "This is only another level of the struggle."

Once a feared commander, Murad is chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) which signed a landmark pact with the government in 2014 to end a separatist insurgency that killed some 150,000 people since the 1970s. That deal led to the creation of the Bangsamoro, which is based on the southern island of Mindanao and was overwhelmingly approved in a January vote. The MILF is the largest of several rebel groups fighting for independence or autonomy in Mindanao, the ancestral homeland of the nation's roughly six million-strong Muslim minority. Rebels and the government hope the new region, which is getting an influx of cash, will be able to bring sorely needed development to the violence-plagued area.

### Dropout to commander

The son of an Islamic preacher, Murad was orphaned early on as he lost his mother when he was

only one and his father at 13. He studied civil engineering at the Catholic-run Notre Dame University in southern Cotabato city, where he learned fluent English. But in his senior year, he dropped out to join an underground movement that he said defended Muslims targeted by Christian paramilitary groups and security forces under former dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

He joined the armed struggle first with the rebel group Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) but internal differences led him and Cairo-trained scholar Salamat Hashim to split and form the MILF. In the 1980s Murad said he was in Afghanistan to visit Filipino rebels who joined anti-Soviet forces but he denied fighting alongside them. It was there where he met future Al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden. "Osama bin Laden was very soft spoken. I did not think he would eventually be declared a world enemy because he was a very refined person," Murad said.

### 'Walking a tightrope'

Murad became MILF's military chief, known as a calm but sharp tactician. He led a difficult life in jungles and marshlands, with his two sons born at the height of the fighting. During his years as commander, Murad led battles not from afar but joined his men at the frontlines, said presidential peace adviser and former military chief Carlito Galvez.

"We did not see him committing any abuses," Galvez told AFP. "He fought not because of an urge to kill. He saw that fighting is not between people but between ideologies, to correct an injustice." After Salamat's death in 2003, Murad took over as leader and earned the respect of colleagues for building con-



**CAMP DARAPANAN:** This file photo taken on September 5, 2011 shows Murad Ebrahim (C), chairman of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), being escorted by his troops to a press conference inside their base at Camp Darapanan, Sultan Kudarat province, on the southern Philippine island of Mindanao. —AFP

sensus, observers said. "He is the best, if not the only real choice (for Bangsamoro chief minister)," former presidential peace adviser Teresita Deles said. "He has never been one to think power is all his."

Security experts say Murad and the MILF will be hard-pressed to govern for the first time while facing threats from pro-Islamic State groups in Mindanao. Murad will also have to deal with resentment from families of civilians and soldiers killed or affected by previous battles, according to Julkipli Wadi, a professor of

Islamic studies at the University of the Philippines. "Murad should extend a hand of reconciliation even to (non-Muslims) so he would be able to extract himself from the ghosts of the past," Wadi told AFP. "He is walking a tightrope where he has to juggle a lot of sensitive issues." But the guerrilla leader has lived through too many wars to give up. For Murad, his nine grandchildren are a reminder that there is no alternative to peace. "I never had a normal life. My dream is for them to experience and enjoy it," he said. —AFP

## India toxic alcohol deaths jump to 156: Police

**GUWAHATI:** At least 58 more workers have died in north-eastern India after drinking toxic liquor, police said yesterday, taking the death toll from the latest mass alcohol poisoning beyond 150. The deaths in Assam state came less than two weeks after tainted liquor killed around 100 people in the northern states of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. At least 200 others were still receiving treatment in hospitals across Assam. "A total of 85 people have died in Golaghat district due to consumption (of toxic alcohol)," Dhiren Hazarika, deputy commissioner of the worst affected region, told AFP. "Another 100 are undergoing treatment... The rush of new patients has (only) slowed down today afternoon," he added. Samir Sinha, Assam's principal health secretary, told AFP 71 deaths had been confirmed in neighboring Jorhat district by Sunday afternoon.

"131 people, including 13 critical patients, are undergoing treatment at hospitals in Jorhat," he said. "What is happening is also a kind of fear psychosis. Many locals, even if they took (illegal alcohol) four or five days back, are worried and reporting (for check-ups) at the local medical facilities," he added. Sinha said that additional teams of medical personnel and supplies had been rushed to the affected districts.

Police 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. Doctors said those rushed to hospital in critical condition were suffering from severe vomiting, extreme chest pain and breathlessness. "A total of ten people have been arrested. We have sent the samples of the liquor... to a forensic laboratory. The report is awaited," Mukesh Agarwala, additional director general of state police, told AFP yesterday. —AFP

## Three UN peacekeepers killed by bandits in Mali

**BAMAKO:** Three UN peacekeepers in Mali have been killed by suspected bandits while travelling on leave along the road from the capital Bamako to neighboring Guinea, sources said. Friday's attack was a robbery, a Malian security source told AFP, adding that the three victims were from Guinea, which contributes some 900 soldiers to the 15,000-strong UN stabilization mission in Mali (MINUSMA). At around 10:00 pm Friday, the three peacekeepers, "who were going on leave in a rental vehicle, were attacked by unidentified armed men on the road to Siby", 44 kilometers southwest of Bamako, MINUSMA said in a statement Saturday. "Three of them were killed and another wounded." A civilian who was driving the vehicle was also wounded, according to MINUSMA, which said it was "shocked by the cowardly assassination of the three Blue Helmets". According to an elected official of Siby, it was "a robbery that went wrong". "They were UN peacekeepers on leave who were going to Guinea. They were robbed by thugs who visibly panicked and shot" them, the official said on condition of anonymity, confirming the death toll. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres condemned the attack on the peacekeepers while the Security Council in a statement "called on the government of Mali to swiftly investigate this attack and bring the perpetrators to justice".

The UN mission was established in Mali after Islamist militias seized the north of the country in 2012. They were pushed back by French troops in 2013. A peace agreement signed in 2015 by the Bamako government and armed groups was aimed at restoring stability. But the accord has failed to stop violence by Islamist militants. Since their deployment in 2013, more than 190 peacekeepers have died in Mali, including nearly 120 killed by hostile action, making MINUSMA the UN's deadliest peacekeeping operation, accounting for more than half of blue helmets killed globally in the past five years. —AFP

## Okinawa 'votes against' US base move: Exit polls

**NAGO:** Voters on the Japanese island of Okinawa have rejected the relocation of a controversial US military base, according to exit polls from a non-binding referendum cited by local media yesterday. It was not immediately clear whether sufficient numbers of opponents had turned out to meet the threshold required for Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki to "respect" the result of the symbolic referendum.

For this to happen, one quarter of the eligible electorate — or around 290,000 people — had to vote for one of the three options: for or against relocation or a third choice of "neither." In any case, the vote is non-binding on the central government and turnout appeared to be hovering around 50 percent, raising questions about what effect the referendum will have. The central government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has vowed to press on with moving the base and the relocation is also backed by Washington.

The ballot asked residents whether they supported a plan to reclaim land at a remote coastal site for the relocation of the Futenma base from its current location in a heavily populated part of Okinawa. It was initially planned as a yes-no vote, but a "neither" option was added after several cities with close ties to the central government threat-

ened to boycott the vote. Polls opened early on Sunday morning, with about 1.15 million Okinawans eligible to vote.

Speaking after casting her ballot at a local school, voter Yuki Miyagaki said: "They are using a lot of tax money and manpower for this referendum, even though the result will not have any legal power. So we thought that we should take this opportunity and think very carefully about this issue." "We usually shout no to the new base construction. This is a good opportunity to tell the government directly with concrete numbers: 'No'. This is an important vote," 32-year-old Narumi Haine said.

"The referendum has underlined once again Okinawa's strong opposition to the relocation," Yoshinobu Yamamoto, professor of politics at the University of Niigata prefecture, told AFP. "The result could be a negotiating card for the governor, but it's unlikely to have an immediate impact," he added. "The dispute is far from its resolution." The relocation of Futenma to Nago, 50 kilometers away, was first agreed in 1996 as the US sought to calm local anger after US servicemen gang raped a local schoolgirl. But the plan has long been stalled in part over local opposition.

### 'Making a fool of Okinawa'

The base has stoked tension with local residents over problems ranging from noise and military accidents to crime involving base residents. Abe's government says the relocation will address those concerns, but many in Okinawa want the base relocated elsewhere in Japan. They argue that the region bears a disproportionate burden when it comes to host-



**NAHA:** A Japanese resident reads a newspaper report on the results of a referendum on the relocation of a US military base in Naha, Okinawa Prefecture. —AFP

ing US military troops in the country.

Okinawa accounts for less than one percent of Japan's total land area, but hosts more than half of the approximately 47,000 American military personnel stationed in Japan. Anti-base rallies have been staged daily in Okinawa since campaigning for the referendum began in mid-February. But the vote has not stopped reclamation work at Nago, with construction workers continuing to shovel dirt into the ocean offshore with bulldozers. "We hope the referendum will boost the momentum of our fight," demonstrator Masaru Shiroma told AFP on Friday, as more than 100 fellow activists tried to block trucks entering the construction site. "The government is

making a fool out of Okinawa."

Official results may not come until midnight. A opinion poll by the Asahi Shimbun newspaper this week found 80 percent of respondents want Abe's government to respect the results. But there has been little sign the administration will shift course if the vote goes against the move, with Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga saying there were no plans to halt the relocation regardless of the outcome. Japan's military alliance with the United States is seen as a key partnership, and Okinawa's location near Taiwan has long been viewed as having huge strategic importance for US forward positioning in Asia. —AFP

## Expectations surge ahead of new US, Taliban talks

**KABUL:** The US and the Taliban are to meet in Qatar for fresh talks today seeking an end to 17 years of grinding conflict in Afghanistan, with the stakes ratcheting higher as the spring fighting season approaches. Marathon talks held in Doha last month have stoked hopes of a breakthrough after the two sides walked away with a "draft framework" that included a Taliban commitment to prevent Afghanistan from once again becoming a safe haven for international terror groups.

It was the most substantial engagement by Washington with the militants since US forces ousted them from power in 2001. But there is still no accord on a timetable for a US withdrawal or a ceasefire — both major issues on which previous efforts have foundered. Washington's special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, who has spearheaded the months-long effort, is expected to face an expanded Taliban negotiating team headed by Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, the Taliban's former deputy minister of foreign affairs.

Neither side has stated how long they expect the meetings to last or the details of what will be discussed. Analysts say this round will likely see the Taliban push for the removal of its leaders from a UN travel blacklist, matched with pressure from the US for the militants to open a dialogue with the Afghan government.

"Both sides are going into this process with open minds and a sense of urgency as the weather gets warmer and fighting season draws closer," Graeme Smith, a consultant based with International Crisis Group said. The Taliban have steadfastly refused to negotiate with Kabul, whom they dismiss as

"puppets". They have also stated that, without a withdrawal timetable, further progress is "impossible".

US President Donald Trump's apparent eagerness to end America's longest war, the Afghan government's fear of being sidelined, and the coming of spring all weigh on the process. "Eyes are on the Taliban to see if they are capable of compromising," said analyst Michael Semple. "Can they come up with a sufficient compromise to agree to a formula for an intra-Afghan dialogue that absolutely involves the current Afghan government?" Khalilzad, he added, "has stirred up the peace process in a way that nobody over the previous two decades had".

### Pakistan's influence waning?

The gathering momentum has spurred fresh peace demonstrations and cautious hope in Afghanistan. But there is also growing unease, with fears the government is being pushed aside and that progress which many Afghans have paid for with their lives could yet be undone if the US rushes for the exits. According to fresh UN figures released Sunday, more civilians were killed in the Afghan war in 2018 than during any other year on record — with 3,804 people killed and another 7,189 wounded.

Women's groups and civil society organizations have warned that a speedy withdrawal or lenient deal with the Taliban could pave the way for a return of their repressive rule, or an even bloodier civil war. Many watched in astonishment earlier this month as Taliban militants shared meals and prayers with Afghan political leaders, including presidential contender Mohammad Atta Noor and former president Hamid Karzai, in Moscow. But not one representative from the current administration of President Ashraf Ghani was present at the informal talks, deepening the sense of anxiety.

Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are also playing a role in negotiations, as Russia and China watch closely, and many observers fear regional disputes could yet derail the process. Pakistan, which has long



**KANDAHAR:** In this photo taken on February 9, 2019, internally displaced Afghan men walk in Kandahar city, after fleeing conflict with the Taliban in the Deh Rawood district of Uruzgan province. —AFP

wielded influence over the militants and been seen as key to any peace push, has already suggested that soaring tensions with its nuclear arch-rival India could disrupt the talks. But Taliban expert Rahimullah Yusufzai said this time around Pakistan's stance may be more chest-thumping bravado than an actual threat. He said that with the US and the Taliban talking to each other directly, "I think Pakistan's role will not be that important now."

### 'Challenging' climate

The talks have been buttressed by heavy snowfall across Afghanistan, sharply reducing fighting and providing much-needed space for negotiations. But Yusufzai warned that another bloody fighting season will likely kick off once the snow melts, as the Taliban seeks to maintain its momentum on the battlefield to maximize pressure at the negotiating table. —AFP



## International

# Guaido ramps up pressure after deadly Venezuela border clashes

## Trump has said that Washington is not ruling out armed action

**URENA:** International pressure mounted against Venezuela's leader Nicolas Maduro yesterday, with Washington vowing to "take action" after opposition efforts to bring humanitarian aid into the country descended into bloody chaos. Self-declared interim president Juan Guaido called on the international community to consider "all measures to free" Venezuela after clashes at the border crossing left at least two people dead.

Guaido announced he would participate in today's Lima Group meeting of mostly Latin American countries in Bogota, and called on the international community to be prepared for "all possibilities" regarding Maduro. US Vice President Mike Pence will represent Washington at the meeting. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States "will take action" as he condemned violence perpetrated by Maduro's "thugs." President Donald Trump has said that Washington is not ruling out armed action.

Humanitarian aid, much of it from the United States, has become the centerpiece of the standoff between Maduro and Guaido, the 35-year-old leader of Venezuela's National Assembly who declared himself interim president one month ago. The country is gripped by a humanitarian crisis that has seen poverty soar during a prolonged recession and hyperinflation.

Maduro claims the aid is a smokescreen for a US invasion, and has ordered several crossings on Venezuela's borders with Colombia and Brazil closed. Two people, including a 14-year-old boy, were killed in clashes Saturday with Venezuelan security forces that left more than 300 people wounded at various border posts.

Guaido had set a Saturday deadline for delivering food and medical aid stockpiled in Colombia and Brazil. Hundreds of Venezuelans, many dressed in white, were frustrated in

their attempts to collect the aid at the Colombian border, where they were pinned back by Maduro's security forces. Trucks with aid were prevented from entering the country, and force was used to keep out Venezuelan nationals trying to cross in from Colombia carrying aid parcels. Colombia ordered aid trucks to return from the border after the violence. International aid is also being held on the Caribbean island of Curacao.

A ship with aid from Puerto Rico was forced to turn back after receiving a "direct threat of fire" from Venezuela's military, the governor of the US territory Ricardo Rossello said. He slammed the move as "unacceptable and outrageous." Canada, a Lima Group member, called on Maduro to allow "safe and unrestricted access" for the humanitarian aid, and said it was "deeply concerned" by the violence "allegedly perpetrated by the Maduro regime" aimed at blocking the entry of aid. These attacks are "simply unacceptable," read a statement Saturday signed by the ministers of foreign affairs and international development.

### Violent clashes

Since dawn, protesters in the border towns of Urena and San Antonio were kept at bay by the Venezuelan National Guard firing tear gas and rubber bullets. Gunshots could be heard in the streets of Urena during hours of rioting. Civil defense officials in Colombia said at least 285 people had been wounded in clashes at border bridge crossings.

But the most serious incident came hundreds of miles (kilometers) away, at the Santa Elena de Uairen crossing point on the southern border with Brazil where the killings took place. Another 31 people were wounded when Venezuelan troops opened fire on civilians hoping to collect aid across the border with Colombia, accord-



**URENA:** Locals look at a bus burnt on the eve during protests after President Nicolas Maduro's government ordered a temporary close-down of the border with Colombia, in the border city of Urena. —AFP

ing to rights group Foro Penal.

Maduro's supporters also halted and set ablaze two trucks loaded with aid driven through barricades on a border bridge, sending a pall of black smoke into the sky over the Santander crossing linking Cucuta and Urena. Two other trucks carrying aid sent by Brazil to Venezuela returned to the Brazilian city of Paracaima after Venezuelan troops barred them from crossing for several hours. Some Venezuelan National Guard troops however took advantage of the confusion to abandon

their posts and cross into Colombia. Guaido has offered amnesty to all security personnel switching sides.

Colombia's immigration service said at least 60 members of the armed forces had deserted the "Maduro dictatorship" by late Saturday. Guaido — recognized as interim leader by more than 50 countries — formally launched a long-planned distribution operation at a warehouse at the Tienditas border bridge in Cucuta joined by the presidents of Chile, Colombia and Paraguay. —AFP

## Pope compares child sex abuse to 'human sacrifice', vows action

**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis yesterday vowed to tackle every single case of sexual abuse by priests in the Roman Catholic Church, comparing pedophilia to "human sacrifice". But his public address to the Church's top bishops at the end of a landmark summit in the Vatican on tackling clerical assault of minors threatened to disappoint victims.

"If in the Church there should emerge even a single case of abuse - which already in itself represents an atrocity - that case will be faced with the utmost seriousness", Francis promised. "I am reminded of the cruel religious practice, once widespread in certain cultures, of sacrificing human beings - frequently children - in pagan rites", he added. The sexual abuse of minors was "a widespread phenomenon in all cultures and societies," Francis said, and he slammed those priests who prey on children as "tools of Satan".

The scandals have hit countries around the world, with lives devastated from Australia to Chile, Germany and the US. The Argentine had opened the four-day meeting by calling for "concrete measures" against child sex abuse and handing 114 senior bishops a roadmap to shape the debate on tackling pedophile priests. The 82-year-old had warned victims to lower their expectations, saying that much of the work on tackling abuse would be done post-summit.

But survivors watching his speech closely for signs of change within the centuries-old institution slammed his decision to spend a lot of time at the start of his speech pointing out that child sex abuse was not limited to the Church. Swiss victim Jean-Marie Furbinger said: "Honestly it's a pastoral 'blabla', saying it's the fault of the devil". "They are pulling the wool over our eyes, so that they don't have to directly address the Church's problems. We are not surprised, but we are disappointed," he said. —AFP

## Senegal votes with President Sall confident

**DAKAR:** Senegal went to the polls yesterday in an election that incumbent President Macky Sall is tipped to win after his main challengers were banned from running. His two biggest rivals in the first-round vote in the West African nation — popular former Dakar mayor Khalifa Sall and Karim Wade, the son of the previous president — were disqualified after corruption convictions in trials questioned by rights groups.

People queued in large numbers as the polling station opened at Fatick in the centre of the country, where Sall, 56, cast his ballot, as well as at Thies in the west, AFP reporters said. But the start of voting was delayed at Grand-Yoff, the stronghold of Khalifa Sall. "I want to get home as soon as possible, I'm frightened there will be violence on election day," said 25-year-old voter Fatoumata Sall. "I hope this election goes off peacefully and that tomorrow everyone will be going about their business — that will mean a peaceful vote," said accountant Lamine Diatta after he cast his ballot in Dakar.

President Sall, a former geologist who first took the presidency in 2012 after beating his former political mentor Wade, campaigned for a second term pitching his "Emerging Senegal" infrastructure project to boost economic growth. "Victory in the first round is indisputable," Sall told a recent Dakar campaign rally, seeking to emulate all three of his predecessors by landing a second term — Abdoulaye Wade needed just one round in 2007 to secure his second term.

Often held up as a model of stability in Africa,

Senegal has enjoyed strong growth. The Muslim-majority country has largely escaped the jihadist attacks that destabilized neighbors such as Mali. Sall made infrastructure a priority, including a new airport, motorways and a rail link. But basic services, healthcare and education often remain inadequate, sometimes triggering strikes and protests.

Sall faces competition from four lesser-known rivals who campaigned hard against his plans for a second phase of his project, which critics see as a waste of taxpayers' money and a potential debt burden. His rivals are former prime minister Idrissa Seck, Issa Sall of the Unity and Assembly Party (PUR), former justice and foreign minister Madicke Niang and tax inspector-turned MP Ousman Sonko.

The five-horse race leaves voters with a limited choice compared to 2012 when 14 candidates vied for the top post, and 2007 when 15 battled it out for the presidency. Preliminary results were expected soon after polling closes at 1800 GMT on Sunday, but will only become official a day or two later. Some 6.7 million in a population of around 16 million are registered to vote in a country which gained independence from France in 1960.

### 'Lack of independence'

A candidate must get more than 50 percent to prevent a second-round runoff. If no one wins more than half the ballots, a second vote is provisionally scheduled for March 24. The exact timing will be determined by how long it takes to officially proclaim the first-round results, and whether there is a challenge.

A new system approved by parliament last year despite opposition party challenges requires candidates to demonstrate they have the support of a minimum number of citizens and regions. Once the new regulations were applied, only seven candidates made the cut, two of whom were then disqualified. Both Khalifa Sall and Karim Wade have claimed their



**THIES:** A woman gets ready to cast her ballot for Senegal's presidential elections at a polling station. —AFP

criminal convictions were engineered to rule them out of the race.

Supporters of the convicted men staged demonstrations, while rights group Amnesty International spotlighted "unfair trials" in Senegal, and a "lack of independence" by the judiciary in Khalifa Sall's case. Senegal has known two peaceful power transfers in 2000 and 2012, and no coups. But election campaigns are often marred by charges of corruption, disinformation and sometimes violence.

Recent clashes between supporters of rival parties left two dead at Tambacounda, 420 kilometers east of the capital. Authorities also reinforced security and legislation, sometimes at the cost of freedom, according to rights groups. Officials said 8,000 police were on duty in urban areas alongside an undetermined number of civilian security staff. The interior ministry said some 5,000 observers — including 900 from abroad — were monitoring proceedings. Opposition rallies have recently been banned and pre-trial detention for people suspected of "terrorism" extended from 48 hours to 12 days. —AFP

# Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call:

**+965 248 35 616 / 617**

E MAIL :info@kuwaittimes.net  
ads@kuwaittimes.net  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

**SHARP**  
SJ-K325E-SS3

**278**  
Ltr

• 9.6 Cu.Ft  
• No Frost  
• Silver

**SHARP**  
SJ-58C-SL

**545**  
Ltr

• 19 Cu.Ft  
• No Frost  
• Silver

**SHARP**  
SJ-K75X-SL3

**75**  
Ltr

• Single Door  
• 2.6 Cubic feet  
• Silver Color

**best OFFERS**

**50%**

SAVE UP TO

**29**  
200  
39

**10**  
100  
10

**89**  
109

**20**  
200  
20

**119**  
149

**30**  
300  
30

**best** **يوسف**  
AL-YOUSIFI

Kuwait City (New St.) | Kuwait City (Panasonic Tower) | Sharq (Souq Sharq)  
Hawalli (Tunis St.) | Hawalli (Bin Khaldoun St.) | Al-Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak St.)  
Al-Salmiya (Boulevard Mall) | Al-Farwaniya (Behind the Police Station)  
Al-Shuwaikh (Al-Ghazali Bridge) | Al-Fahaheel (Opposite Public Parking)  
Al-Rai (4th Ring Rd) | Al-Jahra (Opposite Main Co-op) | Airport (Departures)  
Al-Eqila (89 Mail)

**1 809 809**  
**www.best.com.kw**

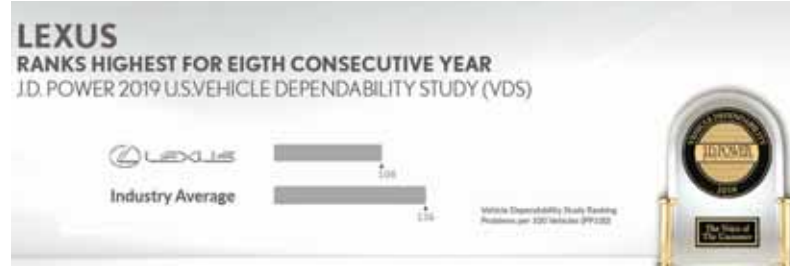
Best Alyousifi @BestAlYousifi BestAlYousifi alyousifiBEST







MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2019

**12** US Fed changes its attitude to boost economic activity**13** Lexus Kuwait rated best in service for 2018 in J.D. Power's 2019 study**14** GOFSCO stresses importance of HSE innovation and excellence at expo

# Huawei shrugs off threat of US ban

## Chinese firm breaks price ceiling with \$2,600 folding 5G smartphone

**BARCELONA:** Huawei's chairman yesterday shrugged of the risk that President Donald Trump could issue an executive order banning the Chinese telecom giant, saying the company could succeed without the US market. Guo Ping said such an order "is not necessary and should not be released" but if issued would have little impact on Huawei, which has become the leading supplier of the backbone equipment for wireless mobile networks worldwide.

"In 2018 Huawei had revenues of over \$100 billion. The share of US in this is really small. That means the US market can be ignored by us," he told a press conference in Barcelona on the eve of the Mobile World Congress trade fair.

Guo added that such a move would hurt some small telecoms operators in the United States that do use its equipment.

US officials suspect Shenzhen-based Huawei's products could be used by Beijing to spy on Western governments and have already severely restricted the company's presence in the United States.

Washington considers the matter urgent as countries around the world prepare to roll out fifth-generation or 5G networks that will bring near-instantaneous connectivity, vast data capacity and futuristic technologies such as self-driving cars.

The administration has been lobbying allies to block Huawei from building 5G networks and Trump is reportedly mulling an executive order to stop the Chinese firm from selling advanced equipment in the United States.

Huawei strenuously denied its equipment could be used for espionage. "We have never and we are not and we will never allow backdoors in our equipment and we will never allow anyone from any country to do that in our equipment," Guo said through an interpreter.

"Huawei needs to abide by Chinese laws and also by the laws outside China if we operate in those countries. Huawei will never, and dare not, and cannot violate any rules and regulations in the countries where we operate," he added. The United States did not represent the whole world and Huawei hoped

each country would make decisions based on its own interests, Guo said.

Network operators seeking to quickly deploy the new wireless networks are in a bind as Huawei's 5G equipment is seen as being considerably more advanced than that of its rivals such as Sweden's Ericsson or Finland's NOKIA. The company has 180,000 employees in 170 countries and counts 45 of the world's biggest wireless carriers as customers.

Huawei Technologies unveiled a \$2,600 folding smartphone yesterday which it said was primed for next generation 5G mobile connections, even as the United States campaigns to bar the Chinese company from such networks over security concerns.

Huawei, the world's second-largest smartphone vendor after Samsung, said it had taken the lead on developing phones for 5G - which promise superfast internet speeds for consumers and businesses - because it was also involved in developing the networks.

"This phone is not only for today for 5G but also for future 5G. On all the benchmarks you can see the performance, the speed is the fastest for 5G in the world," said Richard Yu, head of Huawei's consumer business group.

Speaking ahead of the mobile industry's biggest global event, which kicks off today in Barcelona, Yu said the Huawei Mate X will have two back-to-back screens which unfold to become an eight-inch tablet display.

Yu said the Mate X would be able to download a 1 gigabyte movie in three seconds but also be priced at 2,299 euros (\$2,607) when it goes on sale later this year, setting a new upper limit for consumer smartphones. Samsung Electronics Co Ltd last week unveiled its own folding smartphone, priced at nearly \$2,000, in a bid to top the technology of Apple Inc and Chinese rivals and reignite consumer interest amid slumping sales. Huawei, which is also the world's biggest producer of telecoms equipment, is under intense scrutiny in the West over US-led allegations of enabling Chinese state espionage, accusations which the company denies.

Huawei's chairman said yesterday recent

comments by US President Donald Trump that the US needed to get ahead in mobile communications through competition rather than seeking to block technology was "clear and correct".

### Foldable screens

Phone makers will focus on foldable screens and the introduction of blazing fast 5G wireless networks at the world's biggest mobile fair starting today in Spain as they try to reverse a decline in sales of smartphones. Huawei will also be in the spotlight at the four-day Mobile World Congress (MWC) in Barcelona as the Chinese telecom giant fights US efforts to persuade its allies not to use the company's technology to build their 5G networks due to concerns that its gear could facilitate Chinese spying.

The firm is the leading manufacturer of equipment for the fifth-generation cellular networks which operators are starting to install. The technology-known as 5G — will bring near-instantaneous connectivity for smartphones and devices from automobiles to robots.

"This year we are going to see real 5G ready launches happening in different countries and the focus will be on where, when, how and what are the consumer benefits going to be of 5G in 2019," said Ian Fogg, a mobile industry analyst at OpenSignal, which collects and analyses data from mobile networks.

Huawei and other firms are scheduled to carry out 5G smartphone demos at the fair even though the next generation wireless network will not be widely available for several more years.

Samsung, the world's biggest seller of smartphones, unveiled a handset that folds open to be a tablet on Wednesday in San Francisco, becoming the first major manufacturer to offer the long-awaited feature.

China's Xiaomi and several other firms are expected to follow Samsung's lead and present foldable devices of their own in Barcelona although it was not clear if they would be prototypes or commercially available devices such as Samsung's. — Agencies

## US, China sprint to seal deal ahead of Trump's deadline

**WASHINGTON:** US and Chinese negotiators met for over seven hours on Saturday to resolve their trade dispute and avoid an escalation of the tit-for-tat tariffs that have already disrupted global commerce, slowed the world economy and roiled financial markets.

The two sides will meet again morning as they race to seal an agreement before a March 1 deadline imposed by US President Donald Trump, who has threatened to dramatically hike tariffs on Chinese goods unless there is a deal.

Saturday marked the fifth straight day of the negotiations between the world's two biggest economies. Talks were extended through the weekend after both sides reported progress in narrowing their differences. The Chinese delegation is scheduled to leave for Beijing today, according to a person familiar with their itinerary. This is the fourth round of negotiations since Washington and Beijing agreed to a ceasefire in their trade war.

Trump, who has embraced an "America First" policy aimed at rebalancing global trade in favor of the United States, said on Friday there was "a very good chance" a deal would be struck, and that he was inclined to extend his March 1 tariff deadline and meet soon with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Extending the deadline would mean putting on hold a scheduled increase in tariffs to 25 percent from 10 percent on \$200 billion of Chinese imports into the United States.

Trump and US Treasury Secretary

Steven Mnuchin said US and Chinese officials had reached an agreement on currency issues, but did not give details. US officials have long argued that China's yuan is undervalued, giving it a trade advantage and partly offsetting US tariffs.

China has also committed to buy an additional 10 million metric tons of US soybeans.

Reuters reported exclusively on Wednesday that both sides were drafting memorandums of understanding (MOUs) on cyber theft, intellectual property rights, services, agriculture and non-tariff barriers to trade, including subsidies. On Friday, Trump said he did not like MOUs because they are short-term in nature, and he wanted a long-term deal.

An industry source briefed on the talks said both sides have narrowed their differences on intellectual property rights, market access and narrowing a nearly \$400 billion U.S. trade deficit with China. But bigger differences remain on changes to China's treatment of state-owned enterprises, subsidies, forced technology transfers and cyber theft.

There is no agreement on the enforcement mechanism, either. The United States wants a strong mechanism to ensure the Chinese reform commitments are followed through, while Beijing insists upon what it calls a "fair and objective" process. "Enforcement is a difficult puzzle," said the source, who requested anonymity to speak candidly about the talks. "You need objective arbitrators to make a decision." — Reuters



Business

# US Fed changes its attitude to boost economic activity

## Compromise likely to avoid a ‘No Deal Brexit’

**KUWAIT:** Last week, the US Federal Reserve cemented their dovish policy shift with the release of the FOMC's January meeting minutes. The Fed's updated policy rhetoric in January, surprised market participants through two signals. First, the Fed dropped their rate hike bias and second, indicated that they are now planning to maintain a larger than expected balance sheet.

The release last week's FOMC minutes provided further insight into the Fed's updated plans for their balance sheet. The minutes revealed that Fed officials wanted to announce "before too long" a "plan to stop reducing the Fed's asset holdings later this year." The Fed is now expected to formally announce updated balance sheet plans in March.

In terms of the Fed's rate hiking schedule, the minutes provided little further clarity for what is to be expected in 2019. There is broad support amongst officials however, to be "patient" when setting monetary policy in order to allow more time to assess developments in economic activity and financial conditions. With inflation cooling down and the policy rate close to "neutral", the Fed sees "few risks" in leaving policy unchanged in the near-term. The potential end of quantitative tightening and a slower rate hiking cycle show the Fed is reacting to market developments such as the fall in equities last December and an expected slowdown in global growth for 2019. The dovish stance is a sign that the Fed is flexible and will continue to support the US economy appropriately based on economic conditions.

Finally in the US, trade negotiations began with the Chinese on Thursday over the details of a set of agreements aimed at ending their trade war. Just one week remains before the March 1st US deadline expires and triggers higher tariffs from Washington. If the two sides fail to reach an agreement, US tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports are set to rise to 25 percent from 10 percent. President Trump gave markets some relief saying that the deadline could be extended if enough progress is made.

The US dollar index lost around 0.4 percent but held up relatively well against its major counterparts supported by equities which nudged higher this week. Year-to-date, the Dow Jones and S&P 500 have risen around 10 percent.

### Brexit

In Europe, the pound outperformed the euro trading on a stronger footing driven by building optimism that "No Deal" Brexit is likely to be avoided at the end of March. The latest development in the Brexit negotiations revealed that the UK and EU are working on a new kind of legal instrument that will give clarity over the temporary nature of the Irish backstop that was heavily opposed by the British Parliament. However, the new declaration is not expected to be released before the end of February and it

is still unclear if the amendments will satisfy the UK. There is also building optimism that the UK parliament could vote next week to force the government to request an Article 50 extension in an attempt to take the threat of "No Deal" Brexit off the table. The parliamentary vote on the 27th February is the next known key date for the pound performance and Brexit.

### Slowdown in Europe

Looking at the eurozone, the euro's slight gains were capped by growing concerns over continued economic weakness in the trade bloc. The latest eurozone manufacturing PMI dropped below the 50.0 level, and was particularly weak in Germany where it fell to 47.6 in February. The reading has heightened concerns that slowing global growth and trade tensions were weighing heavily on the European economy. In contrast, the service sector performed slightly better increasing 0.9 points to 52.4 in February. However, growth in the Eurozone has been at a four-year low of 0.2 percent in the past two quarters, and ECB policymakers see a risk of the region's economic performance remaining below par for the next several quarters.

In the minutes of the European Central Bank's January meeting, the bank downgraded its assessment of the economic outlook, saying the risks to growth were no longer "broadly balanced" but had "moved to the downside". This prompted the governing council to confirm that it will debate in its next meeting, whether to offer a fresh round of cheap loans to support the economy.

The minutes were consistent with the recent dovish ECB rhetoric as they displayed more concern over the weakening economic outlook. The ECB could also consider extending their forward rate guidance leaving rates on hold for a longer period of time. Officials were still cautiously optimistic however, saying there was no urgent need to act as the risk of an outright recession remains low and that the strength of the region's labor markets support growth by boosting domestic demand.

### Japan's exports decline

Japan's exports reported their biggest decline in over two years dropping 8.4 percent year-on-year in January, a vastly larger decline than the 5.5 percent expected. The data came as business sentiment sunk to a two-year low mainly driven by trade friction and fears of a global slowdown. Japan's exports to China, its biggest trading partner, fell by 17.4 percent year-on-year. It is clear that a major strain on Japan's economy is coming from overseas demand, with economic weakness in Europe and China negatively impacting Japan's export sector.

### Oil prices reach 2019 high

Oil prices reached their highs of the year last week,

Rates – 24 February, 2019							
Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month	
Currencies	Open	High	Low	Close	Minimum	Maximum	Forward
EUR	1.1286	1.1372	1.1273	1.1341	1.1074	1.1505	1.1430
GBP	1.2890	1.3108	1.2889	1.3052	1.2501	1.3246	1.3115
JPY	110.43	110.94	110.37	110.68	107.55	113.31	109.90
CHF	1.0050	1.0060	0.9979	1.0001	0.9802	1.0294	0.9920



supported by OPEC supply cuts and US sanctions on Venezuela and Iran. However the gains were capped due to slowing growth in the global economy and unresolved trade disputes between the US and China. International Brent crude futures on Friday, hit \$67.60 a barrel, up 53 cents from Thursday's close. Gold prices were in a similar scenario reaching this year's high Wednesday supported

by risk adverse attitudes due to trade and geopolitical uncertainties. Gold on Friday moved slightly lower from its Wednesday high to \$1,329.

### Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30345  
The USDKWD closed at 0.30345 on Thursday.

## WALL STREET WEEK AHEAD

## May be time for growth to run out of gas

**NEW YORK:** A return to fashion of growth stocks in 2019 helped lead the overall market out of a year-end shake-out, but another multi-year run of growth performing better than value may not be in the cards. The S&P 500 has rallied nearly 18 percent since its Dec. 24 low. During that time the Russell 1000 Growth index has fared even better with a gain of almost 20 percent while the Russell 1000 Value index has lagged with a gain of about 17 percent.

That marks a reversal from the fourth quarter, when value outperformed as stocks nearly tumbled into bear market territory, a trend some analysts feel will return as the market

grapples with several major headwinds such as Brexit and trade negotiations. Growth investors typically search for companies that have higher profit growth and margins, while value investors look for stocks that seem inexpensive.

Shortly after the S&P hit its most recent record on Sept. 20, thanks to the outperformance by growth, especially technology stocks, the spread between the Russell 1000 growth and value indexes had surpassed the levels hit during the end of the dot-com era. The fourth quarter selloff helped that narrow but it began to widen again shortly before the new year.

"The valuation imbalance we have seen between growth and value in the largecap space ... when we have seen that inflection point in the past there has been a very powerful long-term rally where value has outperformed growth and we think that is coming up," said Phil Orlando, chief equity market strategist, at Federated

Investors, in New York. In a recent note to clients, Morgan Stanley equity strategist Michael Wilson said that the stocks that got hit first and hardest during last year's "rolling bear market" would lead the recovery this year and rally the hardest. That prediction appears to be playing out as areas such as transportation, considered cyclical value, have been among the leaders to the upside this year.

Wilson anticipated the Federal Reserve will hold off raising interest rates further and that the global economy would bottom in the first half. He favors value over growth, with a focus on cyclical over defensive stocks. Value stocks also remain cheap relative to growth shares, with their widest forward price-to-earnings ratio spread in over a decade. And while investor worries about a recession, which helped fuel the fourth-quarter sell-off, have abated, a number of headwinds remain that could make value more attractive as market uncertainty rises. "There are

still a lot of headaches coming, whether it is Brexit, China - what is the (trade) package going to look like? - the legal stuff in Washington," said Steve DeSanctis, equity strategist at Jefferies in New York. The Russell 1000 Value forward PE also sits right at its long-term average of about 13.8 while the Growth index is nearly 20, well above its historic average of 17.5. One challenge, even though value is relatively cheap, is that financials have a heavy weighting in value indexes and a Fed pause will make it harder for those firms to grow profits. Even though, as of the last reconstitution of Russell indexes in June, the financial services sector saw the most significant decrease in index weight in the largecap 1000 value index, it still was 29.1 percent. In the Russell 2000 Smallcap Value financials command a weighting of 40.5 percent. "If value is going to work, it has to be financials," said Mark Stoeckle, CEO at Adams Funds in Baltimore in an interview with Reuters. — Reuters

## France's Societe Generale to cut 1,500 jobs: Report

**PARIS:** French banking group Societe Generale is planning to cut 1,500 positions in its BFI corporate and investment banking arm, Le Figaro newspaper reported on Saturday.

Citing internal bank documents, the paper said the bank was looking at two scenarios, both of which envisage 1,500 job cuts worldwide, with around 700 of them in France. The company said in a statement on Saturday it was still reviewing activities in its corporate and investor client business so it was not possible to comment on the impact on jobs. "We have an ongoing dialogue with our unions and will consult them on our projects and their impact as soon as the review is completed in the coming weeks," the bank said. French CGT union representative Philippe Fournil could not confirm the information, but said the bank's management had on Thursday indicated it was still reviewing activities within that business.

The review is part of a plan to reduce costs by 500 million euros (\$567 million), the bank said earlier this month on announcing its financial results.

Fournil said its management had pledged to get back to the union within "4 to 8 weeks" with more details. Societe Generale reported higher-than-expected profits in 2018 but said it would adjust its targets and those of its investment bank for next year anticipating financial headwinds ahead. — AFP

## EXCHANGE RATES

### AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

#### EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

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 Pound	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

CURRENCY	BUY Europe	SELL
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 0.001147	0.001337	
Norwegian Krone	0.031336	0.036536
Romanian Leu	0.065204	0.082054
Russian ruble	0.004656	0.004656
Slovakia	0.009095	0.019095
Swedish Krona	0.028560	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
Pakistan 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	0.00013	0.00013

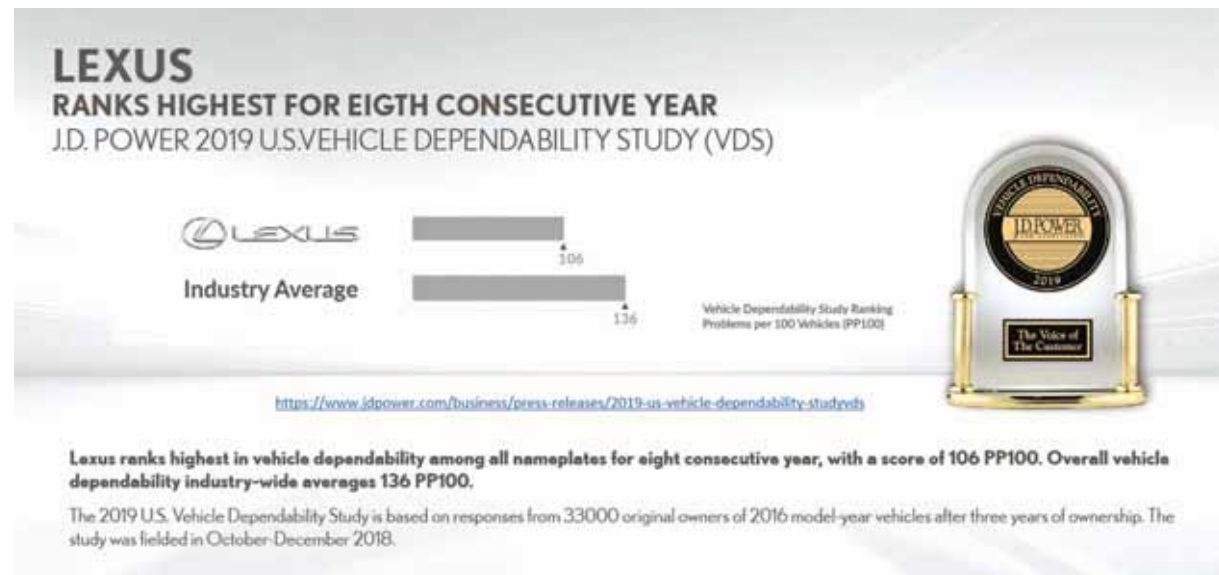
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.792591	0.809091
Egyptian Pound	0.017111	0.019711
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000211	0.000211
Jordanian Dinar	0.424898	0.433898
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022112	0.046112
Omani Riyal	0.784071	0.789751
Qatar 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

# Lexus Kuwait rated best in service for 2018 in J.D. Power's 2019 study

Lexus ranked highest in overall vehicle dependability among all brands



**KUWAIT:** Lexus is once again the highest-ranked automaker in J.D. Power's 2019 annual Vehicle Dependability Study (VDS), with owners experiencing an average of 106 problems per 100 vehicles. Lexus ranked highest in overall vehicle dependability among all brands with 106 reported problems per 100 vehicles. This is the eighth year in a row that Lexus has topped the VDS.

At the same time, Lexus was voted best Service in Kuwait which reflects the strong commitment by Al-Sayer Lexus to offer only the best service consistent with Lexus strategy to offer an amazing experience to their customers. Lexus is continuing to be brave, thoughtful and imaginative. At the heart of every Lexus design is "Takumi Craftsmanship" where craftsmen use their vast experience to achieve one single goal, perfection. As a result, all Lexus vehicles are created with masterful skill and attention to detail, utilizing state-of-the-art technologies to deliver an engineering masterpiece.

Lexus brand is continuing to evolve with an increased emphasis on technology, performance, art, fashion - to offer "experience amazing". It is successful in launching many first-time technologies including active safety, car manufacturing and on-board premium features.

The 2019 US Vehicle Dependability Study is based on responses from 33000 original owners of 2016 model-year vehicles after three years of ownership. The study that was fielded in October-December 2018, measures the number of problems experienced per 100 vehicles (PP100) during the past 12 months. A lower score reflects higher quality, and the study covers 177 specific problems grouped into eight major vehicle categories. The overall industry average improved to PP100 to 136 PP100 from 142 PP100 in 2018.

Mubarak Al-Sayer COO said that "it is no surprise that the Lexus team continued to strive to offer best possible

service in Kuwait. It is the one of our core strategies to ensure we offer a guest service that is consistent with the hospitality that Kuwait's is famous for. The Al-Sayer board will continue to support the necessary initiatives that will guarantee this high level of service to our customers".

Abdulla Alshuwaie, GM of CR, said in this occasion, "although we have a dedicated CR team that sole function to ensure we offer the best support to our customers, this award is a testimony of the strong commitment of the Lexus team towards offering only the best service to our customers. We thank our customers for their trust in us and their votes for Lexus, we continue to assure them of our dedication to ensure their ultimate satisfaction". He added "I am thrilled that our Service award came at the same time that Lexus VDS result came at the same time which is another testimony for the high quality of Lexus that also ensures an ever-amazing experience to Lexus owners.



## Buffett dreams of 'elephant-sized' acquisition

**WASHINGTON:** Billionaire investor Warren Buffett has yet to name a successor and at age 88 still dreams of making an "elephant-sized" acquisition, he said in his annual letter to shareholders. The letter to shareholders of Buffett's holding company, Berkshire Hathaway, is considered a must-read on Wall Street, distilling the views of the "Oracle of Omaha" on the state of the economy and the wisdom of investing in this or that investment product.

In the latest edition, Buffett says it is the prospect of an "elephant-sized acquisition" that causes his heart, and that of his longtime partner, 95-year-old Charlie Munger, "to beat faster."

"In the years ahead, we hope to move much of our excess liquidity into businesses that Berkshire will permanently own," he said. "The immediate prospects for that, however, are not good: Prices are sky-high for businesses possessing decent long-term prospects," he added. At the moment, Berkshire Hathaway has more than \$100 billion in liquid assets that would be rapidly available if an opportunity should present itself.

The investor remained silent on who might succeed him as Berkshire's CEO but he was unstinting in his praise of his two lieutenants, who since 2018 have taken the reins of essential day-to-day operations: Ajit Jain and Greg Abel. The decision to give them a more central role was "overdue," he said. One of the two men is expected to succeed Buffett. "Berkshire is now far better managed than when I alone was supervising operations," he said.

In terms of results, the year did not end well for Buffett. His bet on Kraft Heinz, maker of the famous ketchup and instant macaroni and cheese, erased nearly \$3 billion from Berkshire's bottom line, which nonetheless posted \$4 billion in earnings. Kraft Heinz - in which Berkshire has a 25 percent stake - announced a roughly \$15 billion write-down of its assets stemming from its failure to adapt to changing consumer tastes. Buffett also once again criticized an accounting rule that requires including unrealized gains or losses in the calculations of net quarterly results. With a stock portfolio valued at \$173 billion at the end of 2018, "wide swings in our quarterly GAAP earnings will inevitably continue."

GAAP stands for Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

"Indeed, in the fourth quarter, a period of high volatility in stock prices, we experienced several days with a 'profit' or 'loss' of more than \$4 billion," he wrote. — Reuters



In this file photo, Warren Buffett, Chairman and CEO of Berkshire Hathaway and Co-Chairman of Goldman Sachs 10,000 Small Businesses Program, attends a press conference in Detroit. — AFP

## Kraft Heinz facing painful downside of austerity approach

**NEW YORK:** The American food giant known for its iconic ketchup and hotdog brands is facing the downside of austerity as a strategy for boosting profits.

Kraft Heinz, born of the \$49 billion merger of Kraft Foods and Heinz in 2015, had a disastrous fourth quarter, posting a net loss of \$12.6 billion on Thursday, leading to a plunge of 27 percent in the share price on Friday.

A scathing article in the Wall Street Journal called that proof that the company's "experiment in radical cost-cutting has failed."

"The company's management has few good options," it said.

Controlled by the Swiss-Brazilian billionaire Jorge Paulo Lemann, via the investment firm 3G Capital, and American billionaire Warren Buffett, who holds 25 percent of the company's capital, Kraft Heinz has relied on its famed zero-based budgeting approach to cost-cutting.

### Justify any expense

Basically, that system requires every expense to be justified in each period,

pushing managers to drastically reduce spending. But that philosophy can lead to the elimination of investments needed to drive profit and sales growth, and it can be undermined by a market downturn. The food industry has for several months faced a rise in logistic costs and ingredients and materials.

Kraft's strategy worked for two years, allowing it to generate profit margins that were the envy of its rivals. But growth in sales stalled in the first quarter of 2017, and six consecutive quarters of poor performance led to an asset write-down of \$15.4 billion on two of its flagship brands, Kraft and the Oscar Mayer meat products.

JPMorgan analyst Kenneth Goldman warned that "the intense cost-saving efforts will, over the long run, sort of erode brands ... if the belt-tightening strategy goes too far." Kraft has built its reputation on products such as ready-to-eat macaroni and cheese, while Oscar Mayer is known for deli meats and hot dogs and Heinz for its ketchup and other condiments.

But consumer tastes have been changing, with rising concerns about health issues and a growing shift from processed foods to fresh produce. "All they have done is lower costs as competing companies like Danone and Nestle invest in products that are more in line with current public demand," said Gregory Volokhine at Meerschaert Capital Markets.

### New acquisitions

Many companies in the food industry have responded to the changing trends: McDonald's, the world leader in fast food, in 2016 stopped selling chicken treated with antibiotics, and now offers hamburg-

### Water worries

Nisar has said he took up Pakistan's water worries as a personal campaign after Syed Mehar Ali, commissioner of the country's Indus water treaty, testified in a court hearing last July about worsening water scarcity risks in the country. Ali told the court that the country's three western rivers - the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab - carry nearly 140 million acre feet (MAF) of water but the country has water storage capacity for less than 14 MAF.

Much of the water flowing down the river ends up in irrigation channels, but at least 29 MAF simply flows to sea, he said. Pakistan needs to store 25 MAF of water each year to help shore up water security, the commissioner said - and that would require a series of new large dams, he said.

But building them has proved difficult. An effort to construct a large-scale hydropower dam in Gilgit Baltistan, a Kashmir border region disputed with India, for instance, has had trouble attracting multinational funding. The proposed Diamer Basha also has proved controversial within the country, facing opposition from some environmental and farmer groups.

Development experts, as well, say charity won't be enough to build the volume of dams Pakistan needs. Sardar Riaz Ahmed Khan, a former development secretary in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, said donations can give citizens a sense of ownership in solving the water crisis, but "it's useless to say that dams will be built by contribution".

Muzammal Hussain, chairman of Pakista's Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), however, has said work on the Diamer Basha dam, which could store more than 9 MAF of water and generate clean electricity, will begin in May.

Initial work on a second, less controversial dam - the Mohmand, on the Swat River near Peshawar - started last month.

Pakistan's government has provided funding for acquisition of land for both projects.

Dozens of farmers from Sindh province marched to Karachi last October to protest construction of the Diamer Basha dam on the Indus River. A leading organi-



SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA : Boxes of Kraft Macaroni and Cheese are displayed on a grocery store shelf on Friday. — AFP

ers made with fresh beef. Volokhine said Kraft Heinz seems to have "applied recipes that worked for a time, but the problem was no longer in the expenses but in products that became obsolete," like Jell-O desserts.

To make up for its shortfall, Kraft Heinz rapidly deployed \$300 million last year to beef up brand marketing, recruit salespeople, improve its supply chain and modernize its recipes. "We were overly optimistic on delivering savings that did not materialize," CEO Bernardo Vieira Hees acknowl-

ed. But as he added in a call Thursday with analysts, "We still believe strongly that our model is working and has a lot of potential for the future."

The company is considering dropping failed brands, a step that would allow Hees to pave the way for a merger, which could achieve more savings and boost profits.

The company approached Unilever, which makes Lipton tea and Dove soap, in 2017 but withdrew its \$143 billion offer after news of its talks with the Anglo-Dutch giant became public. — AFP

zation of fishermen also has objected to the dam, saying it will hurt their business. Salman Shah, a former Pakistani finance minister, said in a televised interview that completing the Diamer Basha dam could take more than 12 years as the dam site is mountainous and falls in an earthquake risk zone, necessitating strong and extra stable construction.

But he believes that if the water storage dam can be built, international investors will come in to provide the infrastructure for power generation from the dam. "Energy generation is a good profit-earning source in Pakistan," he said in the October interview. — Reuters

## India lowers tax on new home sales ahead of election

**MUMBAI:** India yesterday announced a cut in the goods and services tax charged on sales of residential properties under construction, according to television news channels.

The Goods and Services Tax Council, comprising state and federal finance ministers, announced that the new rate will be 5 percent, down from the current 12 percent, on all housing projects which were not in the affordable housing category, the reports said.

The council also decided to lower the tax rate on affordable housing projects to 1 percent from 8 percent. The council also altered the definition of affordable housing and said any house built on an area of 60 square meters or less in the metro cities of India will now be categorized as affordable housing, according to the reports. For non-metro cities, the area would be 90 square meters and below, the news channels said. — Reuters



## Business

# GOFSCO stresses importance of HSE innovation and excellence at expo

Global conference and exhibition on health, safety and security held in Kuwait



**KUWAIT:** Gas & Oil Field Services Company (GOFSCO), one of the largest integrated service providers in Kuwait specializing in the upstream and downstream oil and gas sector, both onshore and offshore, hailed success to its recent sponsorship and participation at the 3rd Kuwait International Health, Safety, Security & Environment Conference & Exhibition (KHSE) which was held at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel & Spa, Kuwait from 18-20 February 2019.

The exhibition was held under the patronage of Dr Khaled Al-Fadhel, Minister of Oil & Minister of Electricity & Water, State of Kuwait, and is considered one of the world's most prominent events in the HSE arena. The event, which was under the theme of 'Transforming HSE culture for a resilient future', gathered influential oil and gas and HSE experts to share their wealth of knowledge and exchange ideas for a brighter more sustainable future for the energy sector. During the opening ceremony, Eng Hussam Ali Marafie - Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at GOFSCO participated in the Plenary Session - Leadership Panel which was under the theme of 'Leadership Role in Transforming HSE Culture'. Eng. Marafie highlighted his involvement from a managerial perspective and the approach adopted to ensure the sustainability of positive and proactive HSE culture within GOFSCO, while addressing several challenges which were dealt with to achieve HSE excellence across all practices.

Eng Hussam Ali Marafie - Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at GOFSCO said: "We are pleased with our participation in this renowned event as we share the objectives behind this platform. At GOFSCO, we pride ourselves in being among the upper echelons of the oil and gas services companies, in pioneering for a safer, cleaner and secure future. With HSE continuously being integrated into our business cultural norms, we are able to further enhance our methods of conducting business for our partners, employees, environment, and the society as a whole, while



maintaining our commitment to the HSE standards." GOFSCO's participation at the exhibition featured the Oilfield Solar Pump, which has been designed to help reduce the ecological environmental footprint effects by reducing CO2 emissions for a healthier environment. GOFSCO's booth also aimed at introducing the visitors to the QHSSECare system, which is currently being used by GOFSCO. The system is designed to share intensive training courses regarding the HSE standards and the required measures to be abided by the employees towards maintaining a healthy, safe and secure work environment.



## Race on to make urban agriculture viable, durable

**PARIS:** In a world faced with the conundrum of mountains of waste and obesity for some and dire shortages and malnutrition for others the future of food is a main dish on today's global menu.

A key ingredient is the trend in ever more imaginative forms towards urban agriculture, a multi-faceted recipe already being pored over by some 800 million people globally, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization. The trend takes many forms-from collective market gardens in even the most run-down of urban districts to connected vertical farms using indoor farming techniques to meet spiralling food demand in areas largely bereft of arable land.

The FAO wants to see the trend prosper and become durably and sustainably embedded within public policy. Yves Christol, of French cooperative In Vivo, has identified six models of the genre.

They include a key European variant, electronically managed without recourse to pesticide-or even soil or sunshine.

### Green beans means ... Iceland

"That has allowed Iceland to become a major producer of green beans," says Christol, thanks to geothermal heating. Asian countries are also in on the act, not least Singapore, with the high density population city state bent on ensuring high-tech food autonomy.

Japan and China have sought to give new life to sites which once hosted electronics factories even if the strategy appears costly. China has launched some urban farms even in areas where the soil has been polluted by heavy metals and would be too costly to clean up. The US model, as cities including New York and Chicago seek to become sustainably hunger-proof, includes hydroponic gardens-effectively eschewing soil and using mineral nutrients in a water solvent, although profitability can prove elusive. But scale is an issue and the concept will not be viable "so long as the price of the vegetables is not increased fourfold," to cover energy costs, says Christol.

### Strawberry containers for ever

The cost of transporting food is something which particularly exercises entrepreneurs such as Guillaume Fourdinier, a founder of French start-up Agricoool in Paris and Dubai.

His firm produces strawberries in Paris in shipping containers fitted out with LED lighting. Urban agriculture's raison d'être, he says, comprises fighting against "the ecological disaster of transport". "Today, with our containers, we are 120 times more productive per square metre than on open ground," says Fourdinier. "We produce in decentralised fashion and closer to customers," he adds of strawberries sold marginally cheaper than their organic equivalent. Paris has meanwhile come up with its own urban agriculture model, dubbed "Pariculteur," a series of town hall-mandated projects designed to cover as much of the capital as possible with greenery via a rise in urban farming.

An initial 10 hectares (25 acres) for the project is set to grow to 30 hectares by next year. Urban ecologist Swen Deral, who oversaw a pan-European urban agriculture project last year, says if the concept is to be financially viable in cities it has to go "beyond production". "Either they recycle, or else they create services linked to urban agriculture, educational activities, restaurants and the like," he explains. Researchers point to urban agriculture's additional benefit of fighting against the effects of climate change as its proponents seek to reinvent urban existence.

Francois Mancebo, researcher at France's Reims University, summed up the challenge in an article published by peer-review open access publisher MDPI and entitled "city gardening: managing durability and adapting to climate change thanks to urban agriculture." Mancebo says the concept must become an integral part of urban planning with local politicians underlining the need for active participation of city dwellers. — AFP

## Tech connection boosts NY vertical farmers

**KEARNY, US:** Workers at Bowery Farming's warehouse near New York have swapped out a farmer's hoe for a computer tablet that takes real-time readings of light and water conditions.

Launched in 2015, Bowery is part of the fast-growing vertical farming movement, which employs technology in a controlled, man-made setting to grow fresh vegetables indoors all year long.

Champions of the practice see vertical farming as a key tool to meet the world's food needs at a time when the population is rising and the climate is changing. The company's chief executive and co-founder, Irving Fain, said his company's Kearny, New Jersey site uses fewer resources than traditional farms and does not employ pesticides.

"I have been a big believer my entire life in technology as being able to solve not only hard problems, but also important problems," said Fain, who previously ran a company that provides data analysis for big companies on their loyalty programs. Bowery employs more programmers than agricultural scientists. The company says its use of algorithms enables it to be 100 times more productive per area compared with a traditional farm and to use 95 percent less water.

### Lower electricity costs

Vertical farming has long been practiced in Japan and some other places but it did not take off in the United States until recent technological leaps made it viable. A key component has been LED bulbs, which have enabled indoor farmers to drastically cut electricity costs.

## Twitter co-founder Evan Williams leaving board

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Twitter co-founder and one-time chief executive Evan Williams is stepping down from the board, leaving the one-to-many messaging service to focus on "other projects."

Williams will depart the Twitter board at the end of this month, according to a filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission on Friday. "It's been an incredible 13 years, and I'm proud of what Twitter has accomplished during my time with the company," Williams said in the filing.

"I will continue rooting for the team as I focus my

time on other projects." Williams throttled back his role in the San Francisco-based startup eight years ago, turning his attention to a new endeavor including creating popular online publishing platform Medium. Williams ceded his role as Twitter chief executive to Dick Costolo in 2010. Co-founder Jack Dorsey returned as Twitter chief in 2015, having held the position when the startup was nascent.

But Bowery is also making heavy use of robotics and artificial intelligence to keep prices under control.

The combination of these newer tools "is how we really rethink what agriculture will look like in the next century and beyond," Fain said. The company has also benefited from more than \$120 million in funding from tech titans including Google Ventures and Uber Chief Executive Dara Khosrowshahi.

The Silicon Valley connection has also boosted San Francisco-based Plenty, another prominent vertical farming company, which has garnered more than \$200 million from Amazon Chief Executive Jeff Bezos, Softbank and others. US-based Crop One and Emirates Flight Catering have launched a \$40 million joint venture to build a giant vertical farming facility in Dubai.

### Profitable?

The world's biggest vertical farm is in Newark, New Jersey and operated by AeroFarms.

The company, founded in 2004 and considered a pioneer in the sector, remains privately-held and does not disclose financial data. But the company says it is now profitable after a series of fumbles. David Chang, founder of the noodle restaurant brand Momofuku, is an investor.

AeroFarms exclusively uses company-made technology that has now made its way to China, the Middle East and Europe, said its co-founder Marc Oshima. In a warehouse that was once a steel mill with 40-foot (12-meter) ceilings, the company is growing kale and arugula leaves set in rows of 12 metal racks each. The roots are suspended in the air as they are intermittently irrigated while the leaves bask under LED lights. AeroFarms experiments regularly with lighting and nutrients with an eye towards finding the optimal recipe for each plant and



**NEW JERSEY:** AeroFarms co-founder and chief marketing officer Marc Oshima (R) checks baby kale grown in a vertical grow tower in Newark, New Jersey. AeroFarms, founded in 2004, is the largest vertical farm in the world. — AFP

developing the best algorithm. The company produces watercress that reminded a reporter of her grandmother's soup, kale as tender as spinach and arugula with a hint of spice.

Basil from Bowery Farming was tinged with the flavor of lemon.

But it can take a while for vertical farms to find solutions that are viable. "The big, big vertical farms are having a difficult time being profitable because they are so capital-intensive at the beginning," said Henry Gordon-Smith, founder of Agritecture, a consultancy. Large farms typically need seven or eight years before they are profitable, with smaller farms requiring perhaps half as long. But entrepreneurs in the business are confident in their prospects as more young people in cities express worry about climate change and pesticides. "Vertical farming is not THE solution to food security," said Gordon-Smith. "It is one out of

the possible solutions." Critics of vertical farming say it has a large carbon footprint due to heavy use of lighting and ventilation.

But defenders say that this negative impact is more than offset from the benefits of lower water use, the location near population centers and the non-use of pesticides. A bigger issue may be the limitations of the output itself, at least in terms of nutrition. "You can't feed the world with salad alone," said Princeton University plant researcher Paul Gauthier, who says vertical farmers will need to develop more protein-rich offerings.

Gauthier—who grew spicier peppers in his own lab by subtly increasing potassium levels—said vertical farming could supply fresh food to so-called food "deserts" where it is absent and could in the long-term meet growing food demand as the climate changes. — AFP



**Twitter co-founder and CEO Evan Williams**



## What's On

# LAPA holds Essa Al-Marzouq Concert at Shaheed Park



In celebration of the ongoing national anniversaries, LOYAC Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) recently organized a concert for artist, Essa Al-Marzouq at the Shaheed Park's amphitheatre. The concert was sponsored by Ooredoo. Wearing the same red jacket he used in his commercial ad for Ooredoo, Al-Marzouq sang a number of songs from his new album in addition to a number of patriotic songs that highly appealed to the audience. He finally presented the jacket to one of the audience.



Al-Sultan Brahim restaurant sponsored the public authority for disability's festivity held in celebration of the national anniversaries on February 20, 2019 at the social care houses complex. In this regard, the restaurant's operations manager, Abed Akkawi expressed Al-Sultan Brahim's pride in taking part in the festivity and stressed that it is always ready to take part in such activities.



The Kids World bilingual kindergarten recently celebrated the national and liberation days anniversaries at the defense ministry's camp. The ceremony was attended by kids and their parents and it included several competitions and recreational activities.

## Deliveroo serves up launch in Kuwait

Deliveroo yesterday announced its official launch in Kuwait, bringing its expertise in connecting people with the very best local restaurants to one of the world's most colorful gastronomic scenes. With its innovative, technology-driven service model, Deliveroo will enable the people of Kuwait to order amazing food whenever and wherever they want it, with delivery in around 30 minutes.

Deliveroo is launching in Kuwait with over 900 restaurants, including Five Guys, Zaatar W Zeit and Shake Shack, delivering a diverse mix of global chains and local favorites, to ensure people have options for every occasion. The company has seen global success and rapid expansion and is already available in markets across Europe, the Middle East and Asia. Kuwait is the company's 14th market, following its launch in Taiwan in October 2018. Europe's fastest growing startup, Deliveroo currently works with 80,000 restaurants and 60,000 riders around the world.

On the occasion, Will Shu, Founder and CEO of Deliveroo said: "Deliveroo is all about bringing people amazing food whenever and wherever they want it and I am delighted that we are now launching in Kuwait. Kuwait is a really exciting market with a vibrant local food scene, and we are excited to bring our expertise

and our innovation to ensure that people have access to the best price, selection and service with Deliveroo."

The company tapped young Kuwaiti talent, Seham Al Husaini to head its operations in the Kuwaiti market, taking on the role of General Manager of Deliveroo Kuwait. Al Husaini joins Deliveroo from her previous role as COO for Shipa Freight, an online platform by Agility, that specializes in the booking and tracking of shipments. She will use her expertise in operations to ensure locals in Kuwait are provided with the best food delivery experience.

"Launching Deliveroo in Kuwait is incredibly exciting. We have an amazing food culture here and we can't wait to bring the people of Kuwait their favorite food right to their doorstep as fast as possible. We also look forward to supporting our restaurant partners by ensuring they have the best global delivery partner," said Al Husaini.

The company's worldwide sales grew to \$358m (£277m) for the year 2017 by year-end, a jump of 116%. In 2017, Deliveroo also raised almost \$500m (£387m) in funding, with the company becoming one of just a handful of UK-domiciled "unicorns", which have a valuation of more than \$1bn (£770m); as Deliveroo has a valuation in excess of \$2bn. Al Husaini further added that Deliveroo has a global track record of helping restaurants to grow and innovate in the food sector, and this is something Deliveroo will now bring to Kuwait.

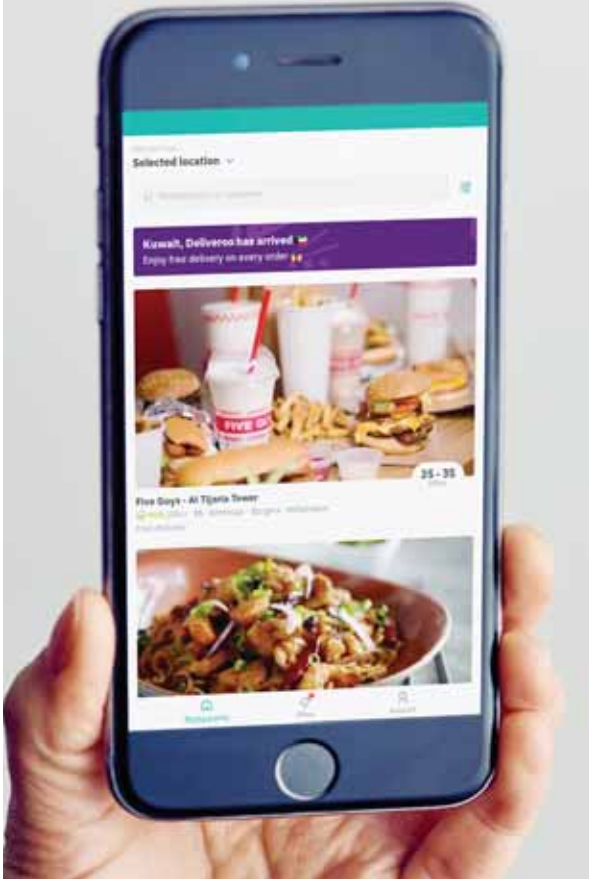
She further noted: "One of our main goals is to support local restaurants. Deliveroo will be a major boost

to restaurants across Kuwait, who will be able to reach new customers and grow their businesses through by delivery. Restaurants who partner with Deliveroo see their revenue increase by up to 30%, as we provide restaurants with valuable insights and world-class technology to help grow their own business."

Deliveroo will also bring a track record of expert operations to Kuwait. Deliveroo has invested heavily in developing world-leading technology and efficient operations, and its riders deliver food from the restaurant kitchen to the customer in around 30 mins. Deliveroo's algorithm 'Frank' matches riders with customers' orders and ensures a quick, reliable delivery.

Deliveroo also seeks to constantly innovate across its markets. Deliveroo will invest in tech innovation that supports its restaurant partners in Kuwait. For example, its Virtual Brands offering will enable restaurants to increase their selection for consumers, and Deliveroo's unique data insights will help restaurants to improve their performance and grow their businesses.

Deliveroo is an award-winning delivery service founded in 2013 by William Shu and Greg Orlowski. Deliveroo works with over 80,000 best-loved restaurants, as well as 60,000 riders to provide the best food delivery experience in the world. Deliveroo is headquartered in London, with 2,500 employees in offices around the globe. Deliveroo operates in over 500 towns and cities across 14 markets, including Australia, Belgium, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Ireland, Netherlands, Singapore, Spain, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and the United Kingdom.





# New Ebola case in eastern DR Congo, first in 23 days

**KINSHASA:** A new case of Ebola has been confirmed in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo in an area where authorities believed the epidemic had been brought under control after 23 days without any fresh infections.

In an update issued on Friday, the health ministry said the new case had been discovered in the conflict-racked Beni region. "It seems the patient was infected after being exposed to bodily fluids from a patient who had recovered from Ebola. A detailed investigation is under way along with virus sequencing to determine the epidemiological link," it said.

The announcement came just three days after the ministry had reported "major progress", saying the epidemic appeared to have been brought under control in the Beni area.

More than 500 people have died since the deadly haemorrhagic virus broke out last year in August in the North Kivu region which borders Uganda and Rwanda. Beni had been particularly hard hit, accounting for 118 of the fatalities. Despite halting the progress, the ministry had warned Beni was at risk from the neighboring areas of Katwa and Butembo, where scores of new cases



**JUBA:** Members of UNICEF medical staff carry a dummy patient during an infection, prevention and control training in Juba, South Sudan. The training exercises have been implemented while the threat of Ebola reaching the country remains high with around 460 people having been killed by the virus across the border in DRC. —AFP

have emerged this month.

Over the past 21 days, there have been 58 cases confirmed in Katwa and 16 in Butembo, the ministry said. So far, 536 people have died as a result of the Ebola epidemic, which broke out on August 1.

Under a program which began a week later, 82,583 people have been vaccinated against the disease, nearly two thirds of them

in Beni, Katwa and Butembo. An epidemic can only be declared over when the country has not recorded any new case of Ebola for 42 consecutive days.

International health experts have been helping out in eastern DR Congo but efforts to contain the disease have been hampered by violence in the region, where militia groups are rampant. — AFP

## NASA greenlights SpaceX crew capsule test to ISS

**WASHINGTON:** NASA on Friday gave SpaceX the green light to test a new crew capsule by first sending an unmanned craft with a life-sized mannequin to the International Space Station.

"We're go for launch, we're go for docking," said William Gerstenmaier, the associate administrator with NASA Human Exploration and Operations. A Falcon 9 rocket from the private US-based SpaceX is scheduled to lift off, weather permitting, on March 2 to take the Crew Dragon test capsule to the ISS.

NASA signed contracts in 2014 with SpaceX and Boeing for the companies to shuttle US astronauts to the ISS. This will be the first time the US space agency lets a private-sector company transport their astronauts.

NASA ended its space-shuttle program in 2011 and since then has relied on buying spots on Russian Soyuz rockets to send US astronauts to the orbiting ISS.

"This is an absolutely critical first step that we do as we move towards returning the crewed launch capability back here to the US," said Gerstenmaier, speaking at a press conference in Cape Canaveral, Florida. The March 2 flight will be identical to a flight that is set to take two astronauts to the ISS later in the year, possibly in July.

The Crew Dragon capsule has seven seats. It should dock with the ISS on March 3, then detach and return to Earth on March 8.

"I guarantee everything will not work exactly right, and that's cool, that's exactly what we want to do," said Gerstenmaier. "We want to maximize our learning so when... we're ready to go do a real crewed mission, and it'll be the right safety for our crews."

SpaceX has already made more than a dozen unmanned trips since 2012 carrying supplies to the ISS with the cargo version of the Dragon capsule. — AFP

# CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

## Dr Sahar Ghannam

Dermatology consultant, skin treatment and laser



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

**Friday is a holiday.**

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

Clinic Phones: 25610407/ 409/ 314 Fax: 25610465  
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.  
Ex Head of ENT department in Farwanya 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

qmc Kuwait

**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\_Urol

**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**  
www.exircenterkw.com

**EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER**  
Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

**WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES**

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



# Lifestyle

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2019



A reveler wearing a mask and a period costume takes part in the Venice Carnival yesterday in Venice. — AFP

## ‘Beauty boot camps’ key to Philippine pageant dominance



Aspiring beauty queen Monica Joelle Ortiz cooking lunch in her house in Manila — AFP photos

Rodgil Flores casts a stern taskmaster’s glance as grimacing young women in bikinis stride across one of the mirror-walled studios that is central to making the Philippines a beauty pageant juggernaut. In 17-centimetre (seven-inch) stiletto heels, the students sway their hips between long slow strides, a brutal drill that Flores requires them to repeat in order to make the act of sashaying second nature come pageant time. “For crown. For country”, is the slogan of the Kagandahang Flores (Flores Beauty) studio he set up in 1996, the first of a handful of Philippine beauty boot camps that have helped transform the nation’s pageant fortunes.

With the naming of Catriona Gray as Miss Universe 2018, the Philippines took home its fourth title in what is considered the summit of the beauty contest world. Both Gray and 2015 winner Pia Wurtzbach trained in the Philippines’ beauty studios before securing their wins. Success in the pageant world can open doors to commercial, film, and modeling work. “The rise of the camps turned the Philippines into a beauty pageant powerhouse.



Aspiring beauty queens looking at a mirror before the start of the “duck walk” practice.



Aspiring beauty queen Monica Joelle Ortiz at a gym in Manila.

What they did was to raise the level of pageant training,” Flores told AFP.

“Our evolution (into) a beauty pageant superpower compels every Filipina competing internationally to prolong this streak,” the 50-year-old added.

Manila’s beauty boot camps effectively create a production line of contenders for the Miss Universe crown. Their students come up from the country’s circuit of local beauty competitions and then hone their skills in a bid to reach the next level. Miss Philippines 2019 hopeful Melba Ann Macasaet, 25, took extended leave from her job as a government pharmacist to join Flores’ beauty studio.

It took her two weeks and several miscues to master his signature stride, called the “duck walk”. “I have been joining pageants since I was 15 years old. I believe that every pageant girl has dreams of being able to try and do this,” she said. It will be about another month before she knows if she has made the cut for the pageant, which organizers expect to be held in June.

### Patriotism and pageantry

The beauty boot camp runs six days a week and sessions often stretch on till midnight. Some 200 hopefuls a year take part in the training at Flores’ studio, which include gym workouts, make-up lessons, and duck walk drills. There are also formal classes where the students take part in mock pageant situations, learning to deliver concise responses to tricky questions on world peace and equality usually asked of contestants.

Training is free for Filipinas, who camp organizers usually recruit from provincial contests. Beauty industry benefactors pitch in to cover costs and many people donate their time to help shape what they hope are future champions. “We don’t earn anything, but we do this out of our passion for beauty pageants,” said Arnold Mercado, the manager and personality development coach of Aces & Queens, the other main Philippine pageant camp.

Mercado, 51, quit his job as an engineer for an oil company after 28 years to focus full time on pageant coaching. He counts Wurtzbach and Gray among those he mentored. “We’re so lucky here in the Philippines to be surrounded



An aspiring beauty queen putting on make-up before the start of the “duck walk” practice.

by teams of amazing people who will lift you up as you make all your preparations,” Gray told reporters on Wednesday. Before the Manila boot camps arose, the country’s Miss Universe and Miss World contestants were sent to train at similar camps in Venezuela and Colombia, which have also had consistent pageant successes.

This was a significant expense in a nation where 21 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day and getting visas can be tricky. Ric Galvez, overall coordinator of Missosology.org, a Philippines-based pageant resource website said the contests have a deeper cultural resonance for Filipinos. The events hark back to the annual pageants that have been held at village and town festivals for hundreds of years. Beauty queens are held up as though they are royalty in the Philippines and often take public stances on key social and welfare issues.

During the Miss Universe pageant Gray spoke in favor of medical marijuana, which some lawmakers feel has helped advance a bill to legalize cannabis-containing medicines in the Philippines. Galvez said: “Filipinos are looking up to their beauty queens for some sort of guidance on matters of national relevance.” — AFP



Aspiring beauty queens wearing stiletto heels as they wait for the start of the “duck walk” practice.





Auctioneer Ali Tuna (center) shows items to the audience at an auction house in Istanbul's Balat district.



An auctioneer shows items to the audience at an auction house in Istanbul's Balat district.

# Bargain auctions offer Istanbul consumers more bang for buck

Going, going, gone! resonate the enticing chants of auctioneers in the narrow streets of a trendy Istanbul neighborhood, fascinating onlookers who are surprised, not so much by the fast pace of the bidding, but by the prices in such economically troubled times. Auctions may have a reputation for being the staid preserve of the wealthy to joust politely for rare collectibles or master paintings that can go for millions of dollars. But this is not the case in Balat, a historic neighborhood on the shores of the Golden Horn estuary frequented by tourists and locals alike who enjoy the hipster cafes and historic churches.

Here, secondhand objects, from used furniture to toys, go for knockdown prices. Istanbul doesn't have a tradition of jumble sales, although there are secondhand shops. But, about five years ago, low-price auction houses began to spring up in Balat, giving residents another way to rid themselves of unwanted goods. And with shop prices rising as the Turkish lira has tumbled, losing nearly 30 percent of its value against the dollar last year, the auctions offer a welcome alternative. Auction houses now regularly pack in the crowds, and for many, it is their first time. "I came here for a walk with my son but when I heard the chant and saw the sign that it is free to join, we popped in out of curiosity to see what an auction looks like," said Murat, standing in front of the cashier, having won the bidding for a laser pen for his son at 10 lira (\$2, 1.7 euros). "I have never been to an auction before. I always thought it is for rich people. "I really like the ambiance here. It was quite fun and the prices are very reasonable. "I will definitely come again," he said.

## 'Dynamic ambiance'

The auction houses go all-out to create an experience that draws people in. Auctioneer Ali Tuna invites those who hesitate at the door to come in and take a seat. Cracking jokes to put people at ease, Tuna banters with the audience like a standup comedian. Wearing a black fedora style hat and a clip-on mic, he skillfully describes every item to the crowd, walking it around to give people a closer look, be it a simple pen, dagger or silver mirror.

"I must keep the ambiance dynamic," said Tuna. "I cannot let the energy die down." To some, "the guy with the hat" is half the reason for coming back. "You meet different people, some are coming to satisfy their appetite for antiques and some merely for five-penny items," said Tuna.

## Outbid

An entertaining atmosphere, almost like a show, is important to the business model. As the commission charged for selling bargain items is low, the houses need to auction a large volume of goods, so having a room packed with clients is critical. Some auction houses double as cafes, adding to the attractiveness of the atmosphere and provide organizers with another revenue source. "It's really fun here," said Hulya Sahin, a middle-aged woman. "I join the auctions as a social activity."



People sit at an auction house as an auctioneer shows items to the audience in Istanbul's Balat district.



Auctioneer Ali Tuna shows items to the audience at an auction house in Istanbul's Balat district.



A street vendor sells traditional Turkish bakery called "Simit".

increased tempo, holding up a blue Ford model car. "It was very competitive," remarked Nil Su, a university student, who paid 50 lira to get the model for her younger brother. "I could have bought it at a much lower price but for that man," she said, smiling, as she pointed to an older man sitting in the front row who kept raising the bid.

## 'Affordable prices'

Still, many believe the auctions offer a good deal, which isn't something to be sniffed at, given that Turkey has faced a sharp surge in its inflation rate, which hit a 15-year high in October at more than 25 percent. "With the current state of the economy, people's purchasing power has drastically dropped," said Yavuz, who both buys and sells items at the auctions. "Here they can find products at more affordable prices."

Ercan Altan, who has transformed his coffee house in Balat into an auction house, said that not all starting prices were as low as \$2. "There are some products you cannot start the bid from \$2, like this gramophone," he said. "We start, let's say with 1,500 lira (\$280) and sell it to the closest bid." Arda Gurler, who runs an online auction website for old documents and engravings, said the Balat auction houses were not for serious collectors-but acknowledged that wasn't the point. "It is like a spontaneous theatre over there. When you stay five minutes, you enjoy the ambiance." — AFP

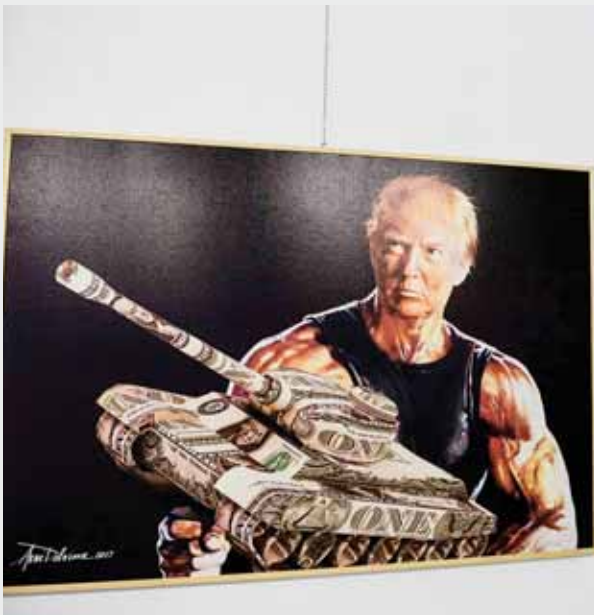


An auctioneer shows items to the audience at an auction house in Istanbul's Balat district.

## 'The Donald' is a muse for Trump-loving Albanian painter

Wielding a weapon made of dollar bills, tackling Barack Obama, challenging George Soros to an arm wrestle-Donald Trump is the hero of a Tirana art show by an Albanian painter who considers the US president an "idol". The 61-year-old artist, Avni Delvina, says the work is his response to international media's broadly negative reaction to the Republican president's unorthodox approach to politics. "It is the product of two years of work from my strong anger about the reactionary attack on Trump," Delvina told AFP, describing the former reality TV star and real estate tycoon as a "free spirit".

The art exhibit in Tirana, titled "The Donald", showcases nearly 50 Trump-inspired paintings, including one with First Lady Melania sitting in for Mona Lisa. When asked to explain his adulation of Trump, Delvina cites a George Orwell quote: "In a time of deceit telling the truth is a revolutionary act." Although the US president is routinely accused of flubbing the facts, the artist sees him as a brave warrior in a fight against "fake news"-a label Trump likes to use against critical media. There is a strong pro-US sentiment in much of Albania, where American flags are a common sight. After Trump's shock electoral victory in 2016, a town in central Albania renamed a boulevard in his honor. — AFP



Visitors look at paintings by Albanian artist Avni Delvina during the exhibition 'The Donald' in Tirana. — AFP photos



Albanian artist Avni Delvina poses for a photo in front of his paintings during the exhibition 'The Donald' in Tirana.





Regina King (second right) holds the award for Best Supporting Female and Barry Jenkins (third left) holds the awards for Best Director and Best Feature all for “If Beale Street Could Talk” in the press room during the 2019 Film Independent Spirit Awards, in Santa Monica, California. —AFP photos



Glenn Close accepts Best Female Lead for The Wife onstage during the 2019 Film Independent Spirit Awards.

# ‘If Beale Street Could Talk’ takes top prize at Film Independent Spirit Awards



Bo Burnham accepts Best First Screenplay for Eighth Grade onstage.



Joe Bini poses in the press room with the Best Editing award for the film You Were Never Really Here.



Morgan Neville poses in the press room with the Best Documentary award for the film Won't You Be My Neighbor?



Cast and crew of Suspiria accepts the Robert Altman Award onstage.

If Beale Street Could Talk” was crowned best picture on Saturday at the Film Independent Spirit Awards—as Oscar favorite “Roma” scooped best international film. Directed by Barry Jenkins, “If Beale Street Could Talk” took two other prizes: best director for Jenkins, and best supporting actress for Regina King. It follows the story of a young African-American woman (KiKi Layne) who seeks to clear her husband’s name before the birth of their son. Jenkins, whose film is nominated in three categories at Sunday’s Oscars, was frank in his acceptance speech.

“I’m not gonna lie, man. I didn’t want to win this damn award. With everything going on in the world, it just feels strange to be up here,” he said. “And so, I’m going to take this. But I want to take it by thanking all the women involved in If Beale Street Could Talk to make it the film that it was.” Meanwhile, Glenn Close continued her sweep of this awards season, winning best actress for her role in “The Wife.” The veteran actress is a favorite to take the same accolade at Sunday’s Oscars. “It’s very hard for me to accept the win-lose situation. I don’t think there’s any losers,” she told reporters on the red carpet in Santa Monica, California—which was actually blue—accompanied by her dog, Pip.

Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón’s “Roma” won in the only category in which it was nominated: international cinema. “I’m optimistic, we are reaching a moment in which greater diversity is happening in cinema, and I think this greater diversity is going to make very soon this category irrelevant,” he said.

He may be right: “Roma” is nominated for 10 Academy Awards, including best film—and it is a hot favorite to become the first non-English language film to win the top prize. Filmed in Spanish and Mixtec and based on Cuarón’s childhood, it tells the story of a young indigenous woman (Yalitza Aparicio) who is a domestic worker for a rich family in 1970s Mexico City. British actor Richard E. Grant won best supporting actor for



Director Nicole Holofcener (right) and Playwright Jeff Whitty pose in the press room with the award for Best Screenplay in “Can You Ever Forgive Me?”

“Can You Ever Forgive Me?”—but he doesn’t think he’ll win in the same category at the Oscars.

“It’s been carved in stone for the last month that a wonderful brilliant actor Mahershala Ali has got the award already,” he told reporters, referencing Ali’s nomination for “Green Book.” Best first feature went to Boots Riley and “Sorry to Bother You”—and the rapper and filmmaker took the chance to make a political point on the crisis in Venezuela. “The CIA is trying to have a coup in Venezuela ... we should all putting our voices out to stop the US from having regime change for oil in Venezuela,” he said upon receiving his statue. — AFP



Regina King accepts Best Supporting Female for If Beale Street Could Talk onstage.



Barry Jenkins poses in the press room with the Best Director and Best Feature awards for the film If Beale Street Could Talk.



Alfonso Cuaron accepts Best International Film for Roma onstage.

## 2019 Indie Spirit Awards Winners

- Best feature: “If Beale Street Could Talk”
- Best director: Barry Jenkins, “If Beale Street Could Talk”
- Best female lead: Glenn Close, “The Wife”
- Best male lead: Ethan Hawke, “First Reformed”
- Best supporting female: Regina King, “If Beale Street Could Talk”
- Best supporting male: Richard E. Grant, “Can You Ever Forgive Me?”
- Best screenplay: Nicole Holofcener and Jeff Whitty, “Can You Ever Forgive Me?”
- Best documentary feature: “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?”
- Best international film: “Roma”
- Best first feature: “Sorry to Bother You”
- Best first screenplay: “Bo Burnham, “Eighth Grade”
- Best editing: Joe Bini, “You Were Never Really Here”
- Best cinematography: Sayombhu Mukdeeprom, “Suspiria”
- John Cassavetes Award: “En el Septimo Dia”
- Robert Altman Award: “Suspiria”
- Producers Award: Shrihari Sathe
- Someone to Watch Award: Alex Moratto, “Socrates”
- Truer Than Fiction Award: Bing Liu, “Minding the Gap”
- Bonnie Award: Debra Granik.



Cast, crew and producers of Sorry to Bother You accept Best First Feature onstage.



# Tech companies scope out Africa surveillance sector

**RABAT:** At a security exhibition in Morocco tech companies pushed to convince African officials that their state-of-the-art surveillance tools are the key to stability and development. The ASEC Expo in Rabat, billed by organisers as the first of its kind on the continent, last week brought together firms from across the world looking to conquer new markets in a region marked by rapid urbanization and economic growth. And while Europe has slapped restrictions on an industry eyed with suspicion by many due to civil liberty concerns, African countries with lax legislation make tempting partners.

Chinese communications giant Huawei had a large presence at the event, hyping the success of networks already installed in the capitals of Kenya, Cameroon, Mali and the Ivory Coast. "When a crime has been committed, thanks to the cameras, we work magic," said Ghanian security minister Albert Kan-Dapaah in a promotional clip for the company. "My command center is the envy of many of my colleagues."

Huawei has already equipped more than 700 cities in 100 countries, including more than 25 in Africa, according to the state-run Xinhua news agency. But the firm is in the spotlight over concerns it could give Beijing a backdoor into sensitive communications and infrastructure, with the United States and Australia to ban its equipment from their future 5G networks. Just a dozen companies run the booming global video surveillance market, a \$30 billion industry as of 2017 which research firm Stratistics MRC has forecasted will have double digit growth over the next few years.

A representative of South Korea's Hanwha Group said the African market was "very strong... because there is a lot of opportunity for us to supply our products". "We had a lot of sales last year and this year," particularly in Egypt and South Africa, Yoonboom Choi said. The new high-tech command centres of

"safe cities" are capable of instantly detecting anything from everyday crimes and accidents to natural disasters and civil unrest - and to trigger quick responses. With big data and artificial intelligence, crowds are no longer anonymous. Facial recognition algorithms coupled with troves of readily available data online can pinpoint the identity of anyone who passes by a surveillance feed.

Vehicles can be identified by their number plates, and ultra-high tech software can even detect human emotions and predict behavior. "We can establish anyone's identity without knowing him - his first and last name, academic background... his family, what he prefers, where he travels," Huawei regional representative Chakib Achour said. These data sets are useful to police pursuing criminals and to companies looking for potential customers, advocates say.

But the risk of mass surveillance has sparked concerns among civil liberties advocates. Authoritarian regimes across Africa are frequently accused of violating rights to stamp out opposition. In its annual report for 2019 Human Rights Watch singled out Egypt for using counterterrorism measures and security concerns "as a guise to crush all forms of dissent". Fears over surveillance spurred the European Union in 2018 into enacting a strict new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Europe now has restrictions on "technology that could be developed in the Middle East or Africa", said Francois Levy, regional director of Brazilian software company Digifort.

Morocco, which organized the exhibition, says it needs a strong security policy to fight terrorism and has shown a strong interest in the far-reaching technologies. "Citizen security has always been the focal point" of Morocco's city planning and "underlies the great project of urban renewal that we continue to lead", said head of Rabat city council Mohamed Sadiki during a visit to the expo.



**ABIDJAN:** Ivorian police officers monitor surveillance cameras in the control room of Ivory Coast's Security Ministry on Feb 19, 2019. — AFP

Marrakesh is working on an app that would allow citizens and tourists alike to "place emergency calls" and send in tips, boasts regional security official Moulay El Hafid Zimirly in a Huawei-sponsored clip. In its commercial material, Huawei openly pushes the "example" set by China, "where all police stations have their own video surveillance unit". The company offers authorities the chance to tap into troves of images taken

in taxis, airports, and stadiums, as well as images taken by ordinary citizens with their mobile phones.

In its 2019 global report Human Rights Watch detailed how the Chinese government at home increasingly uses mass surveillance to "tighten control over society", including through the widespread collection of biometric details including DNA and voice samples. "All of these systems are being deployed

without effective privacy protections in law or in practice, and often people are unaware that their data is being gathered, or how it is used or stored," the report said. For Africa, adopting the technology on offer would open up a major pool of data - but also questions. By 2020 more than one out of every two people on the continent will have a smartphone, according to a 2018 study published by Deloitte. — AFP

## Erdogan criticizes Egypt executions

**ISTANBUL:** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sharply criticized his Egyptian counterpart Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi after the recent execution of nine people in Egypt, saying he refused to talk to "someone like him". "They killed nine young people recently. This is not something we can accept," Erdogan said Saturday in an interview with Turkish TV channels CNN-Turk and Kanal D, referring to the execution Wednesday of nine men sentenced for the murder of the Egyptian prosecu-

tor general in 2015.

"Of course, we are going to be told that it is a decision of the judiciary, but there, justice, elections, all that, are codswallop. There is an authoritarian system, even totalitarian," Erdogan added. "Now, I am answering those who wonder why Tayyip Erdogan does not speak to Sisi, because there are mediators who come here sometimes, but I will never talk to someone like him," he said.

Relations between Turkey and Egypt have been virtually non-existent since the Egyptian military, then led by Sisi, in 2013 ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, a close ally of Erdogan. Morsi's Islamist Muslim Brotherhood is outlawed in Egypt but members of the group have sought refuge in Turkey. Erdogan, who denounced Morsi's ouster, sometimes draws a parallel

with the failed coup against himself in 2016.

The Turkish president also called for the release of Muslim Brotherhood prisoners in Egypt. "First of all, he should release all those imprisoned with a general amnesty. As long as these people have not been released, we will not be able to talk with Sisi," he said. Erdogan also attacked Western countries which, according to him, "roll out the red carpet" for Sisi and turn a blind eye to the latest executions in Egypt. "Where are the Westerners? Have you heard their voices?" he said. "On the other hand, when it comes to people imprisoned in our country (Turkey), they scream bloody murder." Amnesty International condemned the executions of the men, who it said were convicted in trials marred by torture allegations.

Meanwhile, Egypt's foreign ministry yesterday condemned the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for criticizing trials that led to the execution of nine people last week. The OHCHR voiced concern on Friday that trials that led to the executions of 15 people in Egypt this month may have been unfair amid allegations that torture was used to obtain confessions.

"Egypt rejects any reference to allegations that confessions were extracted," the ministry said in a statement, adding that it "rejects any infringement upon the Egyptian judiciary." Since 2013, Egyptian courts have issued hundreds of death sentences. Only a small proportion have been carried out, though the rate of executions has risen since 2015, rights activists say. — Agencies

## Amir hails Arab-Europe ties, warns...

Continued from Page 1

We also have a shared space, a common sea and geographic interaction on the ground, all of which enhance our engagement and strengthen our cooperation."

The Amir affirmed that such facts "enable us to create mechanisms of coordination and partnerships through which we can support and develop our relations and expand their horizons to achieve the common interests of our countries in the economic, education, energy and investment levels". "We trust that the future of our cooperation is promising. The volume of trade exchange between our countries has exceeded \$326.5 billion. Today, we are witnessing progress and development in our cooperation towards higher levels. We are also confident that we are able to catch up with what has passed us in recent years with regards to achievements in terms of mutual cooperation and in all fields," he said.

"We are all aware of the magnitude of the threats and the challenges we face due to the difficult security, political and economic conditions, which requires of us to call upon you to work with us in order to confront them. We believe in the prominent and vital role played by the European Union on the international stage in dealing with many issues and challenges that are common to all of us. The most prominent of these issues are those pertaining to security and stability in the Middle East," the Amir said.

HH Sheikh Sabah commended "the outstanding role played by the European Union in facing many of the issues on the international scene", adding that "the European role in confronting the terrorism phenomenon is an exceptional one. We had the privilege of cooperating and engaging on this issue, as it is a common challenge and represents a direct threat to our joint security and stability". "In addition, the role played by the European Union at the humanitarian level is an advanced and pioneering role, whereby the generosity of European countries has always been outstanding in meeting the humanitarian needs of societies," he said.

"We have seen this in the rapid response to meet the appeals of the United Nations and its specialized agencies in the humanitarian field. We also had the honor to cooperate and participate with the European group in providing support to several countries in our region and others around the world facing humanitarian crisis and disasters. In this context, we must note that despite the progressive role of the European Community with regards to the Palestinian cause, we look forward to seeing greater engagement and initiatives with this

central issue and to make it a top priority for the international community. What we see today as hotbeds of tension in our region is due to this issue being overlooked and not achieving a just and comprehensive solution that the brotherly Palestinian people and the entire Arab people look forward to," Sheikh Sabah said.

At the conclusion of his speech, the Amir extended his gratitude to the Secretary-General of the League of Arab Ahmad Abul-Gheit and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini and their bureaus for their valuable efforts in preparing for this important meeting. He renewed his wishes of success to the first summit of Arab and European leaders.

Europeans view the summit, EU sources told AFP, as a way to protect their traditional diplomatic, economic and security interests while China and Russia move to fill a vacuum left by the United States. The summit in the southern Sinai desert is heavily guarded by Egyptian security forces who are fighting a bloody insurgency a short distance to the north. Climate change, migration, trade and investment were on yesterday's agenda, EU sources said. Conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Libya are to be discussed today. Arab League hosts said the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will also be raised.

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. Mogherini insists that the gathering in Egypt of around 40 heads of state and government is about much more than migration.

Tusk, met yesterday with Sisi to help set the agenda, EU sources said. A UN official warned that Europe's failure to bridge divisions on migration "risks blocking all the other discussions" at the summit. 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 Arabs are also grappling with divisions since the Arab Spring revolutions in the last decade. 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. Brussels has stood united against May's requests to reopen the November divorce agreement in order to help it pass the British parliament. — Agencies

## Harry, Meghan meet schoolgirls...

Continued from Page 1

2016, a figure which rises to 44 percent for girls and young women. Asni is close to the mountainous area where two Scandinavian women were murdered in December and some British media have raised fears over safety during the royal tour. But local diplomatic sources have dismissed concerns about security in Morocco, where on Thursday police dispersed protesting teachers with water cannon in the capital Rabat.

"Medical provisions" have been made for Meghan, who is due to give birth in the spring, according to official sources. The royal visit was described by Britain's

ambassador to Rabat, Thomas Reilly, as an "important opportunity to promote the strong relationship between the British and Moroccan people". London is aiming to replicate Rabat's trade deal with the European Union once Britain leaves the bloc, the diplomat added.

Bilateral trade is valued at £1.8 billion by the British government, although the economic partnership falls far short of that which Morocco has with Spain, Germany or France. Reilly, who posted a photograph online of the royal couple with a youth football team in Asni, was due to host a reception with the couple at his Rabat residence later yesterday. Today, the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, as they are formally known, will attend a horse riding program for young disabled people in Rabat. Harry and Meghan, who are being hosted by the Moroccan royal family, will also see a cooking demonstration and meet young entrepreneurs. — AFP

## Bangladesh plane hijacker...

Continued from Page 1

The operation took less than 10 minutes and the plane has been searched and declared worthy to fly again, Rahman said. The country's civil aviation chief, Nayeem Hasan, earlier said the suspect had claimed to have a bomb aboard the flight. "From the talks and dialogue we have with him, it seems he is psychologically deranged," Hasan said after the man was arrested.

Another army spokesman, Abdullah Ibne Zaid, said Chittagong's Shah Amanat International Airport was

"very much under control of the Bangladesh Army". "The army's special forces conducted the operation and the armed man has been neutralized," he said. Rahman said an investigation would be conducted into how the man "passed airport security details with a gun". "It will take some time," he said.

Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation of 165 million, has struggled to grapple with homegrown extremism in recent years, including the murder of atheist bloggers and progressive activists by Islamist outfits. In a deadly attack claimed by the Islamic State group in 2016, militants killed 22 people including 18 foreigners at an upmarket cafe in Dhaka popular with Westerners. That attack prompted a swift crackdown by Prime Minister Hasina, with hundreds of suspected militants and their sympathizers arrested or killed in raids across the country. — AFP

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah exchanged greetings with local officials on the advent of the 58th National Day and 28th Liberation Day. The Crown Prince received a cable from Speaker Ghanem and MPs, who congratulated HH Sheikh Nawaf and HH Sheikh Sabah on the national occasions. The cable wished the Kuwaiti leadership and people ever more progress and success. HH the Crown Prince sent a cable in return, thanking Ghanem and MPs on their sincere wishes.

Sheikh Nawaf also exchanged greetings with HH Sheikh Salem and Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. He also exchanged cables with Sheikh Meshaal, HH Sheikh Nasser, HH Sheikh Jaber, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as well as ministers, governors and diplomats, in addition to a number of citizens and expatriates. — KUNA

## Amir exchanges congratulations...

Continued from Page 1

and giving for the dear homeland and attain further development and prosperity for Kuwait. HH the Amir reciprocated with cables on these two dear occasions, admiring their kind sentiments and recalling the martyrs who had redeemed the dear homeland with great sacrifices. The Amir also received cables of congratulations from leaders of Arab and friendly states on the two occasions. He replied to these cables, hoping to maintain the good relations with these countries.

Meanwhile, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf



## Sports

# Giroux scores overtime winner as Flyers rally past Penguins at Stadium Series

## Leafs storm back from 3-0 deficit, stomp Canadiens

**PHILADELPHIA:** Claude Giroux scored at 1:59 of overtime Saturday to give the Philadelphia Flyers a 4-3 win over the visiting Pittsburgh Penguins in an NHL Stadium Series outdoor game before more than 69,000 fans at Lincoln Financial Field. Giroux got around Penguins defenseman Justin Schultz, who lost his stick, and his shot from the slot squirted through the pads of goaltender Matt Murray as the Flyers erased a two-goal deficit to end a two-game losing streak. Philadelphia's Jakub Voracek, who had a goal and two assists, scored on a screened shot off a faceoff with 19.7 seconds left in regulation to tie it 3-3. Sean Couturier and James van Riemsdyk also scored, and goaltender Brian Elliott made 40 saves for the Flyers. Sidney Crosby had a goal and an assist, and Schultz and Evgeni Malkin also scored for Pittsburgh, which lost its second straight. Murray stopped 33 Philadelphia shots.

### SABRES 5, CAPITALS 2

Sam Reinhart posted a hat trick, and Jason Pominville and Rasmus Dahlin each added one goal as Buffalo defeated visiting Washington in a matinee. Jack Eichel added two assists as Buffalo snapped a four-game losing streak. Goalie Carter Hutton finished with 31 saves for the Sabres in the win and even got his first assist this season. Washington's Alex Ovechkin scored his 44th goal of the season on a semi-breakaway early in the second period and has tallied goals in five consecutive games. Braden Holtby had 33 saves.

### BLUES 2, BRUINS 1 (SO)

Rookie Jordan Binnington made 31 saves and came up big in the shootout as St. Louis snapped visiting Boston's seven-game winning streak. Binnington improved to 6-0-0 as a starter at home, thanks to several key saves, and fellow rookie Sammy Blais scored the winner in the sixth round of the shootout for the Blues, who bounced back after their club-record 11-game winning streak ended with a 5-2 loss at Dallas on Thursday. Despite the Bruins' winning run coming to an end, they extended their overall point streak to 13 games (9-0-4). Tuukka Rask made 28 saves as his six-game winning streak ended.

### BLUE JACKETS 4, SHARKS 0

Sergei Bobrovsky made 26 saves to record his second straight shutout, and Matt Duchene scored in his home debut with his new team as Columbus blanked San Jose. Cam Atkinson collected a goal and an assist, and Boone Jenner and Pierre-Luc Dubois also tallied for the Blue Jackets, who opened a five-game homestand by winning for the seventh time in 10 contests. Martin Jones yielded four goals on 23 shots before being relieved by Aaron Dell (three saves) for the Sharks, whose six-game road winning

streak came to a halt as they fell to 8-2-1 in their last 11 contests overall. San Jose star defenseman Erik Karlsson exited the contest in the second period with an undisclosed injury.

### MAPLE LEAFS 6, CANADIENS 3

Zach Hyman knocked in a rebound at 18:10 of the third period for the go-ahead goal, and Toronto overcame a three-goal deficit to defeat visiting Montreal. Hyman scored after a rebound from Mitch Marner's shot. Andreas Johnsson scored his 17th goal of the season into an empty net at 19:02, and Hyman scored his 13th goal of the season at 19:37 with the net still empty. William Nylander tied the game with a third-period goal and added an assist for the Maple Leafs, who stopped a three-game losing streak. Andrew Shaw and Jeff Petry each had a goal and an assist, and Tomas Tatar added a goal for the Canadiens.

### AVALANCHE 5, PREDATORS 0

Philipp Grubauer made 38 saves, and Nathan MacKinnon scored two goals as Colorado recorded a shutout at Nashville. The Avalanche have won five of their last six games, including four in a row, following an eight-game losing streak. MacKinnon also recorded an assist in the game. Alexander Kerfoot matched MacKinnon's three-point effort with a goal and two assists of his own. Despite outshooting Colorado by a 38-21 margin, the Predators couldn't solve Grubauer. Pekka Rinne matched his season high with five goals allowed in net for the Predators.

### RANGERS 5, DEVILS 2

Chris Kreider scored a goal and had a nifty power-play assist as the New York Rangers scored three times in the first period and recorded a victory over the visiting New Jersey Devils. Kreider set up Ryan Strome's power-play tally with 11:06 remaining in the first period by getting to the right side of the net and making a no-look pass through the crease. Strome finished off the play by coming from the back of the net and lifting the puck into the vacated left side to make it 2-0. Rangers backup goaltender Alexandar Georgiev was barely tested until the third period and made 19 saves. Schneider made his third straight start for the Devils and allowed four goals on 33 shots.

### PANTHERS 6, KINGS 1

Aleksander Barkov continued his hot streak with a goal and an assist, and goalie Roberto Luongo reached a milestone as Florida sent Los Angeles to its seventh straight loss at Sunrise, Fla. The Panthers snapped a 1-1 tie with three straight second-period goals by Jonathan Huberdeau, Barkov and Keith Yandle. Florida also got goals from Vincent Trocheck, Jamie McGinn (in his 600th



**PHILADELPHIA:** Claude Giroux #28 of the Philadelphia Flyers takes a slap shot past Nick Bjugstad #27 of the Pittsburgh Penguins in the third period during the 2019 Coors Light NHL Stadium Series at Lincoln Financial Field on Saturday in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. — AFP

NHL game) and Ian McCoshen. Panthers goalie Roberto Luongo—who had been idle the past four games, including one during which he was on the bereavement list after a death in the family—made 18 saves. It was Luongo's career 484th win, which ties him with Ed Belfour for third place on the NHL's career list.

### HURRICANES 3, STARS 0

Lucas Wallmark and Justin Faulk scored goals early in the first and second periods, respectively, and goaltender Curtis McElhinney recorded the shutout as surging Carolina rolled past host Dallas. McElhinney started in goal for the Hurricanes for the 24th time this year and had to make only 24 saves to earn his second shutout of the season. Carolina is 5-1-0 in its past six games and 11-3-1 in its last 15 contests. Dallas has now been shut out six times this season.

### ISLANDERS 4, CANUCKS 0

Robin Lehner recorded his career-high fourth shutout,

when he stopped all 36 shots he faced as New York snapped a rare losing streak with a 4-0 win over host Vancouver. Casey Cizikas, Ryan Pulock, Anthony Beauvillier and Cal Clutterbuck scored a goal apiece for the Islanders, who salvaged the finale of a three-game swing through western Canada (1-1-1). The Canucks have lost three straight (0-2-1) and eight of 10 (2-6-2). Goalie Jacob Markstrom made 19 saves.

### OILERS 2, DUCKS 1

Edmonton earned a clutch win without superstar captain Connor McDavid, holding on for a home victory over Anaheim. Edmonton goalie Mikko Koskinen made 33 saves, including three during a late Anaheim power play, to backstop his squad to a second consecutive victory. Edmonton won two straight home games for the first time in more than two months. McDavid served the first half of a two-game suspension handed down for a check to the head of Islanders defenseman Nick Leddy in the Oilers' last game. — Reuters

## Barry John hails 'world's best fullback' Williams as Wales stun England

**CARDIFF:** Liam Williams was labelled the "world's best fullback" by rugby great Barry John after his starring role in Wales' dramatic 21-13 win over England. Victory, sealed by wing Josh Adams' try two minutes from time off a pinpoint cross-kick from replacement fly-half Dan Biggar, left Wales as the only team capable of a Grand Slam in this Six Nations after they recovered from a 10-3 half-time deficit to dash England's hopes of a clean sweep. The 27-year-old Williams, who plays alongside several England stars, including captain Owen Farrell, at Premiership Saracens was masterful in both attack and defence, where he neutered the threat of the Red Rose kicking game.

"The key man for me was Liam Williams, man-of-the-match in every sense," wrote Welsh hero John, one of rugby's greatest fly-halves, in his walesonline column. John played in the same successful Wales side of the late 1960s and early 1970s as the outstanding full-back JPR Williams (no relation to Liam). The pair were also key figures in the 1971 British and Irish Lions team that won a Test series in New Zealand.

JPR was renowned for rock-solid defence and fine counter-attack, qualities John said Liam Williams had shown in front of a capacity crowd at Cardiff's Principality Stadium on Saturday. "Time and again he was calm under the English high bombs, caught the ball cleanly and, invariably, made good yards too," John said. "His defence was flawless and he is without doubt the best 15 (fullback) in



**CARDIFF:** Wales' full-back Liam Williams (L) jumps for the ball with England's centre Henry Slade during the Six Nations international rugby union match between Wales and England at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff, south Wales, on Saturday. — AFP

the world today." "Whenever he has ball in hand his first intent is to run with it. When he does take players on everybody on the pitch, and indeed in the stands, is on red alert because they know something is about to happen."

John added: "Some players simply inspire those around them with their outrageous deeds and Liam is very much of that ilk for Wales. "Defensively he is incredible, offensively he is our most creative back-and that's saying something when you are chosen as last line of defence. But that's the impact he has upon this team." Leigh Halfpenny, a top-class goalkicker, might have been Wales' fullback against England if he had been fit. But the 30-year-old has not played a competitive match since being concussed following a late tackle from Samu Kerevi during Wales' win over Australia in Cardiff on November 10.

Phak travelling with her only child to the Indian capital as one of the Thailand shooting squad's managers.

"My father is a captain of a ship and my mother runs a business. They helped me pursue my sport full-time. My mother travels with me to all events and she wants me to do something more than just study."

Phon is all praise for Isaranuudom's "focus" at such a young age as she recalls his early trips to the Bangkok shooting academy from their home four hours away in Nakhon Ratchasima city. "He is very focused regarding his shooting career which is rare at such a young age. He just loves the sport and will achieve great heights," she told AFP. "It was not easy travelling from our hometown to the Bangkok shooting range where he trained during his holidays. But I am always there with him," she added. Isaranuudom is still searching for his first medal in a senior competition after representing Thailand at the Asian Games in Indonesia and the World Championships in South Korea.

The Delhi event is the teenager's fourth World Cup tournament after competing in junior events and he has more than 10 medals in international competitions. "I started as a air pistol shooter when I was nine years old. But realised that I wasn't too good at it, so switched to 25-meter rapid fire and got results in just two years," he said.

"I like rapid fire because it's fast, I don't like things slow. I shot in my first competition in 2015 in a Thailand event and got gold." The tournament in Delhi concludes on Thursday. —AFP



**Isaranuudom Phurihiranphat**

## Jaguares revel in the rain to batter Bulls

**BUENOS AIRES:** The Argentine Jaguares adapted much better than the South African Bulls to the wet conditions in Buenos Aires Saturday and finished 27-12 winners of a Super Rugby round 2 match.

Ahead from the 17th minute when centre Matias Orlando scored a breakaway try at the Estadio Jose Amalfitani, the hosts briefly surrendered the lead on the hour mark.

But the Bulls' 12-10 advantage lasted just four minutes before substitute flanker Rodrigo Bruni was credited with a pushover try. Buoyed by regaining the lead so quickly, the Argentines stretched their advantage to eight points via a penalty from fly-half Joaquin Diaz Bonilla. And any doubts about who would emerge victorious were dispelled with seven minutes remaining when winger Bautista Delguy scored a try which Bonilla converted. Scoring three tries and conceding none earned the Jaguares a bonus point and lifted them from the bottom of the table to seventh place in the overall standings.

It was the first success under new coach Gonzalo Quesada after a nine-point home defeat in round 1 by another South African side, the Golden Lions, last weekend. Quesada was appointed during the close season when former Argentina hooker Mario Ledesma was promoted to take charge of the national team, Los Pumas. "We adapted well to the wet conditions and deserved the victory," said Jaguares captain and centre Jeronimo de la Fuente, who succeeded Pablo Matera as leader for this season. "Lessons were learnt from our loss to the Lions last weekend and everyone played with passion, giving the Bulls no time to settle into a rhythm."

Defeat was a severe reality check for the visitors from Pretoria, who had thrashed South African rivals the Western Stormers by 37 points last weekend. The attacking flair and momentum they had on a sun-baked Pretoria pitch was nowhere to be seen on the sodden Buenos Aires field with rain falling throughout the match. "We were confident of following up our great start to the season with another win and cannot offer the slippery conditions as an excuse," said Bulls skipper and lock Lood de Jager. "Both sides were equally affected by the rain and the simple truth is that the Jaguares adapted much better than we did."

Bonilla, successor to France-based Nicolas Sanchez as the Jaguares' playmaker, contributed 12 points from two penalties and three conversions. Rival fly-half Handre Pollard slotted four penalties to retain his position as the leading points scorer in Super Rugby this season with 32.

Cornal Hendricks, debuting for the Bulls four years after being told he risked suffering cardiac arrest if he played again, was solid before being replaced in the second half. The Bulls other winger, Rosko Specman, a two-try star in the rout of the Stormers, cut a frustrated figure as he barely touched the ball. —AFP

## Thailand 14-yr-old shooting prodigy aims for WCup gold

**NEW DELHI:** Thailand's James Bond-loving ace sport shooter says he is unfazed by his older opponents as the high school prodigy sets his sights on World Cup gold in India this week. Isaranuudom Phurihiranphat is the youngest competitor at the tournament and the 14-year-old faces a strong field in the 25-metre rapid fire pistol event. "I know I am the youngest in these games. There is tough competition but I don't feel any pressure. I stay relaxed and calm when I shoot," he told AFP after practice at the New Delhi shooting range. "Of course I'll go for gold. I feel I can do it. My aim is to participate in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics," he added. Isaranuudom says his love of British spy films motivated him to become a full-time sporting shooter at the age of nine. "I liked guns since I was a small boy. I also watched a lot of James Bond movies," he said.

"My favourite is Johnny English," he added, referring to the slapstick British spy film franchise. But his parents have also motivated him all of the way, with his mother Phon



Sports

# Gordon scores 25, Harden-less Rockets stun Warriors 118-112

## Middleton, Antetokounmpo help Bucks outlast Wolves

**OAKLAND:** Eric Gordon led five players in double figures with 25 points Saturday night as the Houston Rockets, playing without star James Harden, used superior depth to stun the Golden State Warriors 118-112 in Oakland, Calif. The win was the Rockets' third in three meetings with the two-time defending champions this season after Golden State won a seven-game showdown last May in the Western Conference Finals. This victory was accomplished without Harden, who has scored 30 or more points in 32 consecutive games, the second-longest run in NBA history. The absence was just his fourth of the season. The Rockets had suffered defeats while he sat out two of his first three times.

### JAZZ 125, MAVERICKS 109

Joe Ingles capped an 18-point performance with four 3-pointers in the fourth quarter, helping Utah pull away from Dallas at Salt Lake City. In a game that paired two teams that had played the night before and traveled to Utah for Saturday's contest, the Jazz used a 29-14 edge in free throw points to win their third straight at home. After leading by as many as 15 points in the third quarter, the Jazz found themselves clinging to just an 86-83 lead early in the fourth quarter before Ingles got things headed in a positive direction.

### BUCKS 140, TIMBERWOLVES 128

Khris Middleton scored 28 points, and Giannis Antetokounmpo added 27 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists as Milwaukee won for the 16th time in its last 18 games, beating visiting Minnesota. The Bucks got off to a fast start en route to reaching 140 points for the fourth time this season. Antetokounmpo drove the lane for a dunk 14 seconds into the game and had 11 points in the opening 3:09. Milwaukee went on to its fourth consecutive victory and second in a row since the All-Star break.

### KINGS 119, THUNDER 116

Buddy Hield scored 34 points to help Sacramento hold off visiting Oklahoma City. The Kings led for much of the way but had to hold on late, thanks to a couple of big shots by Russell Westbrook down the stretch. A night after making a game-winner at the buzzer in double-overtime against Utah, the Thunder's Paul George couldn't come up with the big shot for the second straight game. George's potential game-tying shot at the buzzer over Willie Cauley-Stein hit off the front of the rim to give the Kings the victory and the season series, 3-1.

### BULLS 126, CELTICS 116

Zack LaVine scored 42 points, and Lauri Markkanen

added 35, both career highs, as Chicago defeated visiting Boston for its third consecutive victory. The Bulls, who had lost 11 of their previous 12 games at the United Center, improved to 7-23 at home this season. LaVine made two free throws with 17.6 seconds left to eclipse his previous best of 41 points, set earlier this season. LaVine only shot three free throws in the game. He was 17 of 29 from the field and 5 of 11 from 3-point range. He also had six rebounds and four assists.

### PELICANS 128, LAKERS 115

New Orleans got off to a hot start even without star center Anthony Davis and cruised to a victory against visiting Los Angeles. The Pelicans scored 42 points in the opening quarter, the most in any quarter this season, as Davis rested after playing Friday night at Indiana. Jrue Holiday had 27 points and seven assists for New Orleans, and Julius Randle scored 24 points. Brandon Ingram scored 29 points to lead the Lakers, and LeBron James had 27 points, 12 assists and four steals.

### PISTONS 119, HEAT 96

Ish Smith led a strong bench effort with a season-high 22 points and nine assists as Detroit pulled away at Miami. Fellow reserves Langston Galloway and Luke Kennard added 17 points apiece as the Pistons' bench scored 66 points. Blake Griffin had 20 points and six assists, Reggie Jackson added 13 points and Andre Drummond chipped in 12 points, 14 rebounds and four blocks to lead Detroit's starting unit.

### PACERS 119, WIZARDS 112

Thaddeus Young scored 22 points, Bojan Bogdanovic added 18 and visiting Indiana held off Washington. Domantas Sabonis had 13 points and 12 rebounds for the Pacers, who began the post All-Star break schedule by winning on back-to-back nights. Indiana, third in the Eastern Conference, has won eight of its last nine. Bradley Beal scored 35 points in 41 minutes for the Wizards, who have lost four straight and nine of 12. Thomas Bryant had 23 points and 12 rebounds for Washington, which finishes the season 1-3 against Indiana.

### CAVALIERS 112, GRIZZLIES 107

Cedi Osman scored five points in a span of 17 seconds late in the fourth quarter, and rookie Collin Sexton followed with a deep 3-pointer to lift host Cleveland over Memphis. Kevin Love scored a season-high 32 points and pulled down 12 rebounds to lead the Cavaliers. Love went 9 of 15 from the field and 6 of 9 from 3-point range, sparking a fourth-quarter run after



OAKLAND: Kenneth Faried #35 of the Houston Rockets shoots the ball against the Golden State Warriors on Saturday at ORACLE Arena in Oakland, California. — AFP

the Grizzlies had taken the lead. Sexton was steady, scoring 20 points, grabbing six rebounds, dishing out five assists and making two steals.

### NETS 117, HORNETS 115

D'Angelo Russell scored 40 points, including 12 straight down the stretch, and Brooklyn pulled out a victory over host Charlotte in a bizarre game. The Nets blew a 19-point second-half lead and eventually had to come back from an eight-point deficit in the final four minutes. Russell's 3-pointer with 39.8 seconds remaining gave the Nets the lead for good, and then no foul was called in a controversial ending when Charlotte's Kemba Walker appeared to draw contact from Caris LeVert on a 3-point attempt at the buzzer. The victory allowed the Nets to expand their lead over the Hornets to two games in the chase for the Eastern Conference's No. 6 playoff spot.

### HAWKS 120, SUNS 112

Atlanta guards Kent Bazemore and Trae Young both

scored 23 points in a win over visiting Phoenix, handing the Suns their 17th straight loss. Taurean Prince added 21 points and John Collins scored 19 for Atlanta, which used a 21-6 run in the fourth quarter to overtake Phoenix. The Suns led 103-95 with 5:46 remaining. Atlanta took the lead for good on a pair of free throws by Young with 2:56 left, and Prince extended the lead to five when he converted a three-point play with 2:09 remaining. Phoenix never got closer than three points.

### TRAIL BLAZERS 130, 76ERS 115

Jusuf Nurkic scored 24 points and grabbed 10 rebounds to lead visiting Portland past Philadelphia. Damian Lillard added 17 points, eight assists and six rebounds as the Trail Blazers won their third straight. Enes Kanter also had 16 points and eight rebounds as Portland won its second in a row away from home on a seven-game road trip. Ben Simmons led the Sixers with 29 points, 10 assists and seven rebounds while Tobias Harris added 20 points. — Reuters

## Shock Sri Lanka loss major jolt for South Africa

**PORT ELIZABETH:** South Africa's shock Test series defeat against Sri Lanka came as a major jolt to a team which had become accustomed to dominating Test matches at home. The unheralded Sri Lankans exposed flaws in both South Africa's top-order batting and their much-vaunted fast bowling attack in winning both Tests in a two-match series.

Coach Otis Gibson was asked after the second Test in Port Elizabeth whether South Africa's policy of playing on pace-friendly pitches had affected the form and confidence of the home team's batsmen, who struggled to totals of 235, 259, 222 and 128 against Sri Lanka.

"No," he said. "We've got runs on these pitches before. We just haven't batted well enough in this series." The reality, though, is that batting struggles have become a trend, with none of the current top six batsmen averaging above 40 since the start of 2018.

Successive series wins against India, Australia and Pakistan were achieved when moderate totals proved enough because of South Africa's bowling firepower. Some changes seem inevitable. Gibson's contract expires after the Cricket World Cup in July and he has refused to comment on the likelihood of staying in the job. The Sri Lanka series has also put the spotlight on some of South Africa's ageing players. Hashim Amla, a kingpin at number three for more than a decade during much of which he had a career average above 50, has not hit a century since 2017 and his average in 15 Tests since his last hundred is a modest 26.07.

He will be 36 when South Africa play their next Test series in India in September and there has been speculation that retirement is imminent. Captain Faf du Plessis, who together with Quinton de Kock was the only consistent batsman against Sri Lanka, is 34 and opening batsman Dean Elgar is 31.

Elgar scored only 169 runs in ten innings during the summer against Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Du Plessis, though, said changes were not inevitable. "You're talking about a top-order that is experienced. Talking about them to be replaced is a big call. They've done well for a very long time. One series doesn't make you a bad player."

Of the younger batsmen, Temba Bavuma, 28, has yet to justify his promotion to the key number four batting position while opener Aiden Markram has been unable to sustain the outstanding form that marked his debut season in 2017/18. Age is also catching up on the fast bowlers. Like Amla, Dale Steyn will be 36 when South Africa play their next Test. Although he made a successful return to the side after a lengthy struggle against injuries, he was ineffectual in Port Elizabeth, where he failed to take a wicket.

Vernon Philander is 33 and under increasing scrutiny for missing matches because of injury. While giving credit to Sri Lanka's bowlers, Gibson, Du Plessis and batting coach Dale Benkenstein noted that a lack of footage of relative newcomers such as Vishwa Fernando and Kasun Rajitha had hampered South Africa's preparation.—AFP

## Ball-tamperer Bancroft smacks unbeaten 138

**SYDNEY:** Cameron Bancroft made an emphatic statement to Australian selectors yesterday by carrying his bat in an unbeaten 138 on his red ball return after a ball-tampering ban, while downplaying any rift with David Warner.

The 26-year-old opener completed his nine-month suspension for cheating in late December and has since played Twenty20 cricket for the Perth Scorchers in the Big Bash League. But his outing for Western Australia against New South Wales in the Sheffield Shield in Sydney was his maiden first-class match since the infamous 'sandpapergate' in Cape Town almost a year ago that rocked the game.

Bancroft was a measure of concentration and discipline as he played the anchor role to be 73 not out overnight and completed his patient ton on Sunday, smashing eight fours and three sixes in his 358-ball innings as his team collapsed around him.

It helped steer Western Australia to 279 all out. With the Ashes series against England looming this year, it was a timely knock with Australia struggling over the summer to find a consistent Test opener. They tried Aaron Finch, Marcus Harris, and Joe Burns to varying

## Record-breaking Zazai helps Afghans register highest T20 total

**MUMBAI:** Hazratullah Zazai gave his hopes of a trip to the World Cup this year a huge boost with a sensational display of power-hitting against Ireland on Saturday to help Afghanistan to a record Twenty20 international total. The strongly-built opening batsman smashed an unbeaten 162 off 62 deliveries to power Afghanistan to 278-3 in the Indian city of Dehradun, surpassing the previous record of 263-3 set by Australia against Sri Lanka in Pune in 2016.

The 20-year-old's knock was the second highest individual innings in international Twenty20s behind Australia's limited-overs captain Aaron Finch, who scored 172 against Zimbabwe in Harare last year.

The left-handed batsman did, however, overtake Finch for the most sixes in an international innings by hammering 16 of them over the boundary to better the Australian's tally of 14 in a knock of 156 against England at Southampton in 2013.

Zazai also shared a format record partnership of 236 with fellow opener Usman Ghani, who hit a relatively modest tally of 73 runs from 48 balls.

degrees of success ahead of the return of regular opener Warner and former Test skipper Steve Smith.

The pair are eligible to play again in late March after their one-year bans for the same ball-tampering incident expire. In an explosive interview during the Boxing Day Test against India in December, Bancroft alleged it was Warner who asked him to alter the ball in South Africa.

Some pundits suggested he had thrown Warner "under the bus" and that their relationship was now untenable. But Bancroft insisted they spoke regularly and had been supporting each other. "Yeah, I've spoken to Dave... I think all of us, including Dave, have been really challenged through this period of time," he told broadcaster ABC on Saturday evening.

"I know that all three of us have really stuck by each other and looked after each other well. I guess moving forward there will be great lessons for all of us, including Dave. "That's something we've all shared with each other and something I've certainly shared with Dave when we've communicated throughout this entire journey." Despite being criticised for the timing of his Boxing Day interview, Bancroft—who will play for Durham in the English summer to further his Ashes chances—said he had no regrets. "There were some really powerful lessons I learned through my journey that I wanted others to connect and to share with," he said.

"If other people were triggered by that, I guess that's their battle to face. "But if I was able to touch people through some parts of my journey, and to help them I guess break through (in) their lives, that was my sole intention for that," Bancroft said. — AFP



Cameron Bancroft

Afghanistan's total unsurprisingly proved beyond the Irish, who succumbed by 84 runs to go 2-0 down in the three-match series.

Afghan spin sensation Rashid Khan compared Zazai to hard-hitting West Indian opener Chris Gayle in a tweet congratulating him on a "phenomenal performance". Zazai will get a further chance to lay out his World Cup credentials in the five-match ODI series against Ireland that follows the final Twenty20 clash.

He has already proved himself capable of remarkable scoring feats in the shortest format of the game.

Last October, while opening the batting for Kabul Zwanan against Balkh Legends in the Afghanistan Premier League Twenty20 tournament, Zazai completed the rare feat of hitting six sixes in an over. During his knock of 62 in that match, he also equalled the record for the fastest half-century in the T20 format when he reached the milestone off 12 balls, a mark he shares with India's Yuvraj Singh and Gayle.

Despite having those remarkable feats under his belt at such a young age, Zazai has yet to cement a place in the Afghan ODI side.

He played his only two 50-over matches against Ireland last August but was dropped for the Asian Cup later in 2018 and will need to carry his T20 form into the ODIs against Ireland to cement his place in the World Cup squad.

Afghanistan, who debuted at the 2015 World Cup, face defending champions Australia in Bristol on June 1 in their opening match of this year's 50-over international showpiece in England and Wales. — Reuters



Hazratullah Zazai



Sports

# Dzeko's 95th-minute winner rescues Roma against lowly Frosinone

## Torino beat ambitious Atalanta to move seventh

**ROME:** Edin Dzeko snatched a 95th-minute winner for a double on the night as Roma rescued a 3-2 come-from-behind win against lowly Frosinone on Saturday to keep in touch with the Champions League places.

The Romans were pushed hard by Frosinone, a team also from the Lazio region who are second from bottom of the league, with just three wins this season. Dzeko had equalised after a nightmare start for the visitors in windy conditions and also provided the assist for Lorenzo Pellegrini's 31st-minute goal.

Roma are fifth, one point behind AC Milan, who beat Empoli 3-0 on Friday to remain in the final Champions League berth. "I prefer a different way of getting to the three points," admitted coach Eusebio Di Francesco.

"We made a lot of errors and that almost cost us. The positive thing is we fought until the very end to win." Camillo Ciano had gotten Frosinone off to a dream start, intercepting a blundering Steven Nzonzi pass, with Roma goalkeeper Robin Olsen making a mess of the attempt to clear.

Bosnian star Dzeko got the equaliser on the half hour, sneaking up on napping defender Edoardo Goldaniga to finish off. A minute later the visitors were back in front as Dzeko set up Stephan El Shaaraway with Marco Sportiello tipping the first effort wide with Pellegrini on hand to pounce on the rebound.

Roma defender Kostas Manolas came off with an ankle injury, with Andrea Pinamonti throwing Frosinone a lifeline off a Ciano cross nine minutes from time. But as Frosinone looked set for a share of the points Dzeko bundled in the winner following good

work from Daniele De Rossi and an El Shaarawy assist. "We can't keep getting away with this type of performance," said Di Francesco. "I was impressed not just by Dzeko's goals, but the way he tried to pull the team forward and lead the way on the pitch."

Roma needed a win to hold off the chasing pack, with Lazio, Torino and Atalanta now six points adrift. Next week Roma play city rivals Lazio, and have their Champions League last 16, second leg clash with FC Porto on March 6.

### TORINO SPARK

Torino earlier joined the crowded race for European football with Armando Izzo and Iago Falque scoring either side of the break to beat ambitious Atalanta 2-0. Izzo slotted in three minutes before the interval with Falque blasting in the second just after the restart as Torino move seventh, equal on 38 points with Lazio and Atalanta. Walter Mazzarri's side extended their run of games without conceding a goal to five, a feat they last achieved 24 years ago.

Atalanta are losing pace after once looking contenders for Champions League football, suffering a second consecutive defeat following last weekend's 3-1 home loss to AC Milan. The side from Bergamo had been riding high after ousting champions Juventus from the Coppa Italia quarter-finals last month. "We were practically perfect in the second half," said Mazzarri. "The next three rounds are the real test of our maturity and then we'll see if this Toro really has become a great team." Fiorentina will look to join Lazio, Torino and Atalanta on 38 points when they take



**ROME:** File photo shows AS Roma Bosnian forward Edin Dzeko (C) kicks the ball during the Italian Serie A football match between Roma and Bologna at the Olympic stadium, in Rome, on February 18, 2019. —AFP

on third-placed Inter Milan in late game. Champions Juventus, who have a 13-point lead at the top, travel to struggling Bologna in search of a boost after their 2-0

Champions League last 16, first leg defeat at Atletico Madrid during the week. Napoli, in second, play at mid-table Parma. — AFP

## Struggling Leicester sack coach Claude

**LONDON:** Leicester announced the sacking of manager Claude Puel yesterday following the struggling Premier League side's sixth defeat in seven games. Saturday's 4-1 loss to Crystal Palace dropped the 2015/2016 champions to 12th, only eight points above the relegation places.

A statement released by the club said: "Leicester City Football Club has today (Sunday) parted company with Claude Puel, who leaves his position as first team manager with immediate effect." First team coaches Mike Stowell and Adam Sadler will assume caretaking responsibilities. "The club would like to thank Claude for his efforts in leading the team during his 16 months in the role and wish him well in his future career," the club added.

Puel's assistant manager Jacky Bonnevay has also been let go. The 57-year-old Puel is the fifth English topflight manager to be sacked this season, following Slavisa Jokanovic from Fulham, Mark Hughes (Southampton), Jose Mourinho (Manchester United) and David Wagner (Huddersfield).

The Foxes' miserable run includes a defeat to League Two side Newport in the FA Cup. Their dip in form followed a promising period over Christmas when they beat both Chelsea and Manchester City, their last home success on Boxing Day.

Their last win was on New Year's Day, with Jamie Vardy scoring the goal in a 1-0 victory at Everton. The Midlands side have endured a traumatic season with the death of owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha and four others in a helicopter crash outside the club's King Power stadium in October. Puel took over from Craig Shakespeare at Leicester in October 2017 after a year long spell in charge of



**LEICESTER:** File photo taken on January 12, 2019 Leicester City's French manager Claude Puel gestures during the English Premier League football match between Leicester City and Southampton at King Power Stadium in Leicester. Leicester announced the sacking of manager Claude Puel yesterday. — AFP

Southampton. The Frenchman steadied the ship and eventually led the side to a ninth-place finish in the Premier League. He was backed by the club's board last summer, spending money on the likes of James Maddison, Ricardo Pereira, Rachid Ghezzal and Caglar Soyuncu as he aimed to change Leicester's style of play.

However, the Frenchman's approach came under

fire from fans, especially his use of Jamie Vardy - with the former England striker also publicly questioning his manager's tactics and training regime.

Celtic manager and former Liverpool boss Brendan Rodgers is reported to be among the front-runners to replace Puel in the summer, with the club set to install an interim manager for the remaining 11 matches of the season. —AFP

## Dybala extends Juventus' lead

**MILAN:** Paulo Dybala sent Juventus 16 points clear at the top of Serie A yesterday with a second-half winner in a 1-0 victory at Bologna. After a spotty Juventus display that saw hosts Bologna on top for long periods, Dybala came off the bench to snatch the three points.

Defender Danilo deflected Blaise Matuidi's low 67th-minute cross straight to the Argentine international in front of a gaping goal, and he slotted past Lukasz Skorupski. Juventus moved further ahead of Napoli who play Parma later.

Bologna stay third-from-bottom on 18 points and three from safety, despite pushing Juve, much-changed from the side that lost 2-0 at Atletico Madrid midweek, all the way and almost equalising in the final minute when Matia Perin pushed Nicola Sansone's long-range drive onto the post.

SPAL picked a point at Sassuolo and moved five points ahead of Bologna thanks to Andrea Petagna's 68th-minute equaliser from the spot. Rock-bottom Chievo held Genoa to a goalless draw.

Sampdoria's veteran striker Fabio Quagliarella struck the winner from the spot in the second half against Cagliari to bag his 17th goal of the season. Ninth-place Sampdoria remain in touch with the European places. On Saturday, Edin Dzeko's 95th-minute winner completed Roma's fightback at lowly Frosinone as they won 3-2 to keep pace with fourth-placed AC Milan, easy 3-0 winners at home to Bologna's relegation rivals Empoli on Friday night.

Rejuvenated Dzeko has four goals in his last four league games after his brace at the Stadio Benito Stirpe, following a fallow few months up front for Eusebio Di Francesco's inconsistent side.

Dzeko's winner, which came after he had



**BOLOGNA:** Bologna's Brazilian Italian defender Danilo Larangeira (C) and Juventus' Uruguayan midfielder Rodrigo Bentancur (R) go for the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Bologna vs Juventus yesterday at the Renato-Dall'Ara stadium in Bologna. — AFP

equalised Camillo Ciano's comical fifth-minute opener for Frosinone, kept Roma one point behind Milan, who occupy the final Champions League place, ahead of next week's Rome derby against Lazio.

Lazio are six points behind Roma after their match with Udinese set for Monday night was postponed as it was considered too close to the first leg

of their Italian Cup semi-final against Milan. Simone Inzaghi's side are level on 38 points with Atalanta and Torino, who beat Atalanta 2-0 on Saturday with goals either side of half-time from Armando Izzo and Iago Falque. Fiorentina can join the trio with a win over third-placed Inter Milan in Florence in Sunday's late game. — AFP

Live	
Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
SPANISH LEAGUE	
Girona v Real Sociedad beIN SPORTS HD 3	23:00
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE	
SS Lazio v Udinese Calcio beIN SPORTS	22:30
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA	
RB Leipzig v TSG 1899 Hoffenheim beIN SPORTS HD 5	22:30

## Solskjaer impressed by in-form Pogba's new-found maturity

**MANCHESTER:** Manchester United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer says that Paul Pogba is channelling his extrovert personality in the right way after toning down his off-field behaviour, ahead of his side's huge match with title-chasing Liverpool yesterday.

Pogba has rediscovered his form since Solskjaer took charge at as United's interim manager in December following the sacking of Jose Mourinho. Having endured a difficult first half the season, the France star has scored nine goals and provided six assists in his last 12 club appearances as United have shot into fourth with Premier League eight wins in nine and reached the FA Cup quarter-finals after convincingly beating Chelsea earlier this month.

"He is a leader in training, he is a leader in the dressing room," Solskjaer said ahead of Sunday's clash at Old Trafford. "Players are allowed to be themselves. He spends a lot of energy being a leader on and off the pitch."

The midfielder has become as well-known for his colourful hairstyles and his social media posts as for his football skills during his time at Old Trafford. "If you want the nice car, different haircut, it is not a problem. I can't do anything about my grey hair, but it is not a problem that you have whatever haircut you want," said Solskjaer.

"It has never been a problem with Paul. I remember when he was 16, he wanted to feel good. If you feel good, you will play well." Pogba's social media use was a problem for Mourinho, who was reported to be unhappy that the midfielder broke United rules by filming an Instagram video in the training ground changing rooms to wish Jesse Lingard a happy birthday in December.

That was shortly before the 3-1 defeat at Liverpool that cost the former Chelsea and Real Madrid manager his job. Solskjaer believes it is important that players remain focused on their job, and do not have too many off-field distractions-making what seemed to be a passing reference to the appearance of Liverpool striker Daniel Sturridge at the Brit Awards at London's O2 Arena on Wednesday.

"Paul has always been a larger-than-life character. But you don't want to give anyone an excuse really, so of course, you don't go to the Brit awards this week," he said. "We know leading up to the other game against Liverpool there were stories about players not being focused."

"It is not about that. We know they are focused, we know they are doing their best but he does help himself by toning it down a bit ... Knowing him, he wants to win, he wants to be the best."

Solskjaer is also keen to ensure victory over Liverpool in the Premier League on Sunday, not least to silence the many fans in his native Norway who support Jurgen Klopp's team, who are separated from leaders Manchester City by goal difference.

"There are loads of Liverpool fans back home and it has been like: every year is going to be their year. Then it gets to October and it's: 'Ok, next year,'" he said. "But now they are in the race so for them it is going to be an exciting finish to the league now they are in it.—AFP



**21** Giroux scores overtime winner as Flyers rally past Penguins at Stadium Series



**22** Ball-tamperer Bancroft smacks unbeaten 138



**23** Dybala extends Juventus' lead



## Liverpool go top with draw

**Arsenal ease past Southampton to go fourth in league**



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's French midfielder Paul Pogba (R) challenges Liverpool's English midfielder James Milner (L) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Liverpool at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. — AFP

**MANCHESTER:** Liverpool took over at the top of the Premier League table despite being held to a 0-0 draw against Manchester United in a scrappy match yesterday. Juergen Klopp's side have now drawn three of their last four Premier League games and have 66 points from 27 games while second placed Manchester City, who play Chelsea in the League Cup final later, have 65 points from the same number of games.

Klopp looked frustrated and irritated throughout the game as his team struggled to find the attacking verve, which has been the basis of their success this season, against a United side that was forced to make all three changes in the first-half.

The Liverpool manager suggested his team had been affected by the stop-start nature of the first half. "We didn't do well to be honest. We take that. It is a point gained because we have one more than before but it doesn't feel like that," he said.

"These games are always opened up by one situation. The boys didn't feel okay. I could see it in their faces. It was strange. I was thinking 'what is going on here today'. They lost momentum and rhythm and couldn't really get it back." Liverpool's supporters struck a different tone, however, as they left the home of their old rivals chanting a reminder of their league position as they focus on the chance to win their first top flight title since 1990.

The point means that Liverpool, who have 11 games remaining, will be disappointed not to have taken advantage of an injury-ravaged United, who slip to fifth after Arsenal's win over Southampton.

Having lost holding midfielder Nemanja Matic to injury before the game, Spanish midfielder Ander Herrera went off in the 20th minute and a limping Juan Mata was replaced by Jesse Lingard five minutes later.

But Lingard did not even last until the break as he suffered what appeared to be a recurrence of his hamstring strain and limped off to be replaced by Alexis Sanchez.

Lingard had the best chance of the half when he was found in the box by Romelu Lukaku with a perfectly threaded pass but Liverpool keeper Alisson Becker was quickly out to foil the England attacker's attempt to round him. "Everything that could have gone wrong in the first half went wrong. We had four injuries - we had to keep Marcus Rashford on - it seemed like it was going to be a tough afternoon," said United caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. Amid those three United injuries,

Liverpool also lost their Brazilian forward Roberto Firmino to an ankle injury with Daniel Sturridge pressed into action. After such a messy first half, neither side were able to truly get into their stride in a disappointing game.

Without Firmino and with Mohamed Salah having a quiet game, Liverpool's only real opportunity came from a corner but Georginio Wijnaldum headed wide.

"A clean sheet is pleasing because it's not an easy place to come," said Liverpool's James Milner.

"We didn't get many chances as we would have liked and we're disappointed not to win the game.

Earlier, Arsenal cruised to victory over a disjointed Southampton thanks to two first-half goals from Alexandre Lacazette and Henrikh Mkhitaryan at the Emirates yesterday, taking them back into the top four in the Premier League. Arsenal took the lead in the sixth minute in bizarre circumstances, Lacazette neatly back-heeling in a pass from Mkhitaryan while the rest of the team were still appealing for a penalty after Lucas Torreira took a tumble in the box. The goal came seconds after Saints' Nathan Redmond was through on goal at the other end, only to fire his shot straight at goalkeeper Bernd Leno.

The home side doubled their advantage minutes later when Southampton keeper Angus Gunn, making only his second Premier League appearance, cleared the ball straight into the path of Arsenal's Alex Iwobi.

The Nigerian midfielder bolted forward and passed across the goal to the unmarked Mkhitaryan, who thumped his shot low into the corner.

Lacazette should arguably have had a hat-trick within the first half, but he was unable to take advantage of any of the numerous opportunities that came his way.

First he had a glancing header from a Granit Xhaka corner saved, then he blasted over the bar from within the six-yard box, and seconds later he spun away from his marker and shot straight into the outstretched leg of Gunn. Southampton, by contrast, looked a shadow of the team that won the reverse fixture at St Mary's in December, registering only three shots in the half to the Gunners' 11. They brought on Charlie Austin in the second half to see if he could maintain his record of scoring against Arsenal every time he has met them in the league, but the Saints were unable to break back into the game. The result moves Unai Emery's side up into fourth place in the standings on 53 points after Manchester United were held to a goalless draw by Liverpool at Old Trafford. — Reuters

## Maxwell helps Australia edge out India in 1st T20

**VISAKHAPATNAM:** Glenn Maxwell hit a crucial half-century as Australia edged out India by three wickets in a thrilling last-ball finish at the first Twenty20 international yesterday.

Pat Cummins hit a four and took two runs to complete a nervous 127-run chase after his fellow paceman Nathan Coulter-Nile restricted India to 126-7 in Visakhapatnam.

Maxwell, who made 56, put together 84 runs with D'Arcy Short for the third wicket to put Australia on course before Jasprit Bumrah hit back with three wickets. Bumrah got debutant Peter Handscomb caught behind for 13 and then bowled Coulter-Nile on the final ball of the 19th over to keep the game in balance.

Jhye Richardson and Cummins-both not out on seven each-then kept their cool in the final six balls against

Umesh Yadav to steer the Aussies home. But the day belonged to Coulter-Nile who returned figures of 3-26 in his four overs, receiving the man of the match award.

Indian batsman K.L. Rahul, who returned to the side after a suspension for sexist comments during a controversial TV chat show appearance with Hardik Pandya, hit 50 off 36 balls.

His 55-run second wicket stand with skipper Virat Kohli, who made 24, gave India a brisk start but the hosts lost momentum after losing three quick wickets. Adam Zampa got Kohli's prized scalp with his leg spin and Coulter-Nile claimed the wicket of Rahul to check India on a tricky pitch.

Veteran wicketkeeper-batsman Mahendra Singh Dhoni made an unbeaten 29. The second match is in Bangalore tomorrow. — AFP



VISAKHAPATNAM: India's Yuzvendra Chahal dives to attempt a catch on his own bowling as Australia's D'arcy Short jumps to avoid the ball during the first Twenty20 international cricket match between India and Australia yesterday. — AFP