

Friday Times

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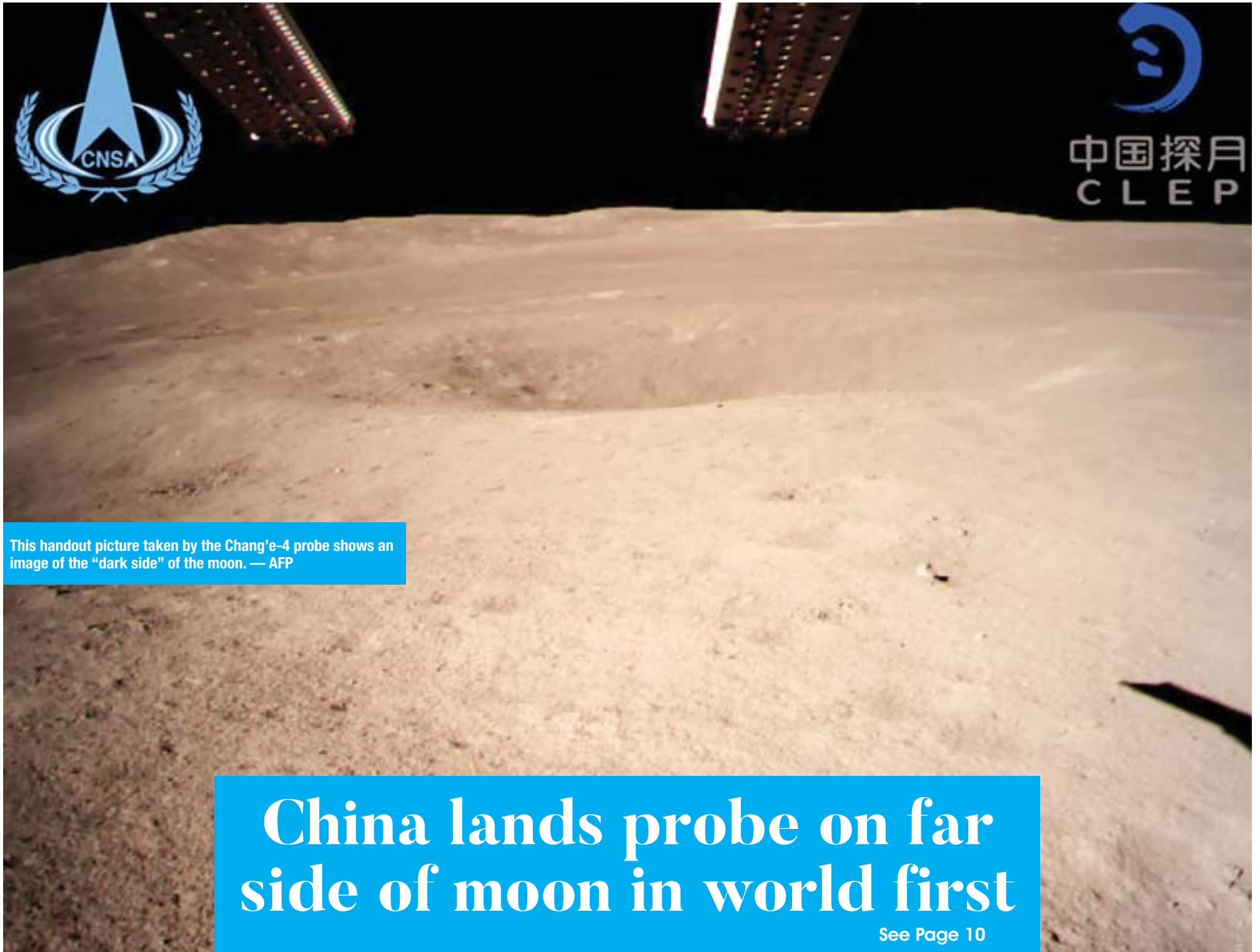
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This handout picture taken by the Chang'e-4 probe shows an image of the "dark side" of the moon. — AFP

China lands probe on far side of moon in world first

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The year of heritage



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) declared 2019 as the year of heritage in the Islamic world, as per a decision of the tenth Islamic conference of cultural ministers. I believe this is a good resolution and it's about time to consider the need to preserve heritage. There is no doubt that the Islamic world has an ancient culture that needs mutual efforts to ensure that terrorist and extremist groups will not lay a hand on our history without punishment and condemnation. This common approval by the gathering means that we will not allow anyone under any pretext to destroy our history.

ISESCO called on all its members to take the necessary measures to commemorate this important event. In a press statement, the organization prized the history of the Islamic world and its rich and diverse cultural heritage due to its interaction with many human cultures and through the creative works of intellectuals, scientists, writers, poets, artists, architects and traditional craftsmen.

I think a significant remark in the report clearly point-



This common approval by the gathering means that we will not allow anyone under any pretext to destroy our history.

ed out that we must support the heritage committee in the Islamic world to help its efforts to preserve cultural heritage while paying more attention to cultural and heritage plans and programs in order to ensure its diversity and the richness of its aesthetic and civilizational characteristics.

The official statement condemned the sabotage of historical and heritage landmarks in a number of Islamic countries due to terrorism, conflicts, civil wars and extremism. It also called for resolving this situation by following the guidelines of the Manama Process to activate Islamic cultural work to confront extremism, sectarianism and terrorism that was issued by the Islamic conference of ministers of culture in November.

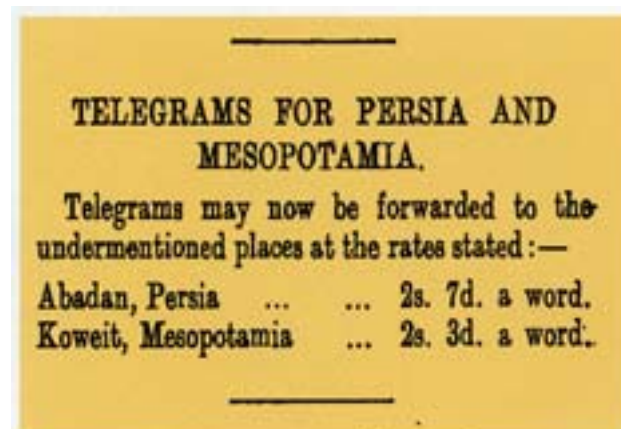
ISESCO urged its members to organize cultural weeks starting with Jerusalem to celebrate Jerusalem as the Capital of Islamic Culture for 2019 in the Arab region. I don't know how this will be implemented, but I think with mutual cooperation with other UN agencies, this can be possible and successful - but only if no one uses such events for purely political reasons.

I believe such calls, or any other effort related to culture, heritage and history, should not aim to make political gains for any group. Heritage is the legacy that nations leave behind for generations. It's about time that the Arab world agrees that its long silence allowed many hands to ruin our heritage and this will no longer be allowed - even with a small step in 2019.

Telegraph: Communication device used by Kuwaitis a century ago



Subscription to the telegraph service dated Sept 5, 1919 and valued at 10 rupees. — KUNA photos



London Times newspaper ad on prices of telegraphs to Kuwait in February 1917

The opening of the Indo-European Telegraph Company's office in Kuwait on December 4, 1916 allowed Kuwaitis back then to directly contact countries in the region as well as India and Great Britain. The opening of the office allowed the rulers of Kuwait to communicate with the Ottoman Empire and also helped in commerce and hajj correspondences.

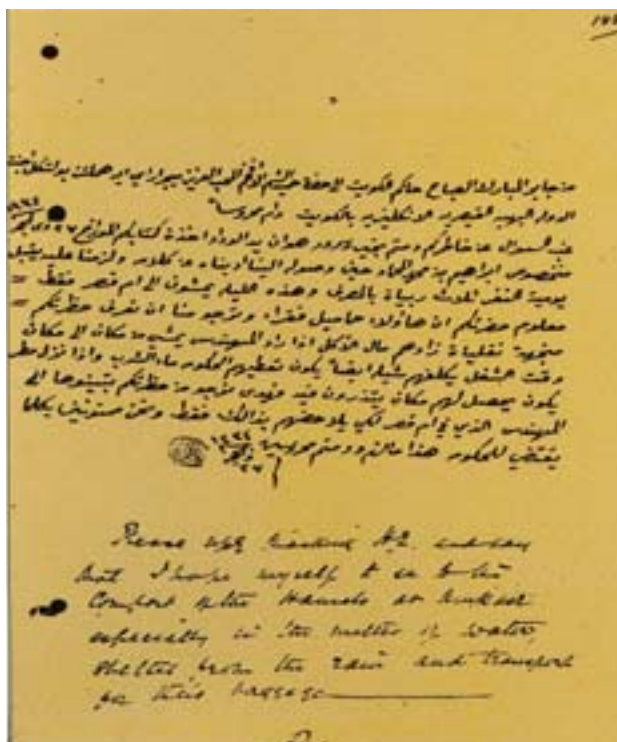
In his book "The Letter of Kuwait" published in January 2017, author and researcher Khaled Abdumughni said prior to the opening of the office, Kuwaitis used to travel to Al-Faw in southern Iraq to send their telegraphs. At the Ottoman archives, telegraphs sent by the then Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah to the Ottoman authorities are still preserved, said the researcher, adding that there were also correspondences from businessmen and traders in Kuwait.

Another process to send telegraphs prior to the opening of the office was through vessels belonging to the Indo-European Telegraph Company that used to dock at Kuwaiti seaports in 1901. People would submit letters to

the ships, which would then transport them to the company's telegraph office in Al-Faw.

In 1911, the company's Indian bureau sped up the process of completing infrastructure in Kuwait, Bahrain, Dubai, Boushehr and other areas, allowing for the opening of an office in Kuwait and elsewhere. Shuwaikh was initially chosen as the headquarters for the office, said Abdumughni, who indicated that the company then decided to include the office as part of the post office in Safat.

In December 1916, the office was opened in the era of Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak and it served as a quick and efficient way for Kuwaitis to communicate with the world, bringing prosperity and development to the country. — KUNA



Letter from Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah to Major Hamilton, the Political Agent in Kuwait, in 1916.



A telegraph sent by Mohammed Salem Al-Sadairawi in Bombay to Haj Hamad Al-Khaled in Kuwait.

Kuwait Times

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Charting the course ahead

By Nawara Fattahova

Geography is a very important science and is related to many essential issues of our daily life. The Kuwait Geographical Society (KGS) was established in 1973 and has been serving the community since then as a non-governmental and non-profit organization. KGS is a member of various international organizations including the International Geographical Union.

Kuwait Geographical Society updates maps, holds various events

KGS is one of the first NGOs set up in Kuwait, and it's a specialized scientific society. It has around 550 members in Kuwait in addition to some members from abroad. "The main reason for establishing KGS is the importance of geography, which is related to the entire community and various sciences. We use it in our daily activities including for traffic directions, qibla direction and others," KGS Chairman Abdulwahab Al-Rushoud told Kuwait Times.

One of the most important activities of the society is mapmaking. "As the country changes and new cities, areas, bridges and roads are developed, old maps need to be updated. So every year or two, we make new maps. We observe the changes happening and new images are taken by plane or satellite. We also have copies of old maps of Kuwait that were prepared by the Municipality," he said.

Printing the maps is a costly affair. "The printing of maps is expensive, as experts have to prepare them, and the material is expensive too. We are lucky that the information ministry prints them for us, as we are a nonprofit organization. This year we made three specialized scientific maps including geological and plant maps that are used by scientists. These were made by ArcGIS technology. Our latest maps are a Kuwait map in English and those of Europe and the Islamic world," Rushoud explained.

Events

KGS holds events in Kuwait and participates in some events abroad. "We hold two to three annual activities. The most important activity is the annual competition held in cooperation with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences. Students from the intermediate grade, high school and university can participate. Valuable prizes are given to the winners. Students can apply until the end of Feb 2019," stressed Rushoud.

Community service is part of its activities. "Every year during wintertime, we hold a gathering of members of KGS and fans of geography. Either we set up a camp or we gather at a farm or any other place. We have been holding this activity for over five years. This season we will hold it in the beginning of January," he noted.

"We also hold celebrations during seasonal occasions such as Ramadan. We give lectures in schools on various topics. For instance, we held a lecture recently on the principles of the geo-



KGS Chairman Abdulwahab Al-Rushoud

Local

graphic information system (GIS). Earlier, we trained students on drawing maps during a workshop at a school. KGS also participates in international events such as conferences in many countries," he said.

Photo exhibition

"We are now preparing a photo exhibition and competition which will focus on environmental photos from Kuwait. This exhibition will be held in collaboration with the Kuwait Science Club, the ministry of youth and KFAS at The Avenues mall for three days in March 2019," stated Rushoud.

Production

KGS makes scientific maps too. "We have produced 13 new maps from 2016 till now only on Kuwait. Not only local areas, streets and bridges have changed in Kuwait, but also in other countries. The Arab world is changing too - with South Sudan for instance. Also, Europe changed with the breakup of Yugoslavia and others. So we made a new world map, in addition to a specialized Kuwait map including the nature, geology of land and plants, and fishing spots and locations. This last one is very special, and attracted attention during the latest fair we participated in," Rushoud pointed out.

KGS products are sold at bookshops, at the KGS premises and also online for buyers outside Kuwait. "Currently, our products are available in Arab countries. We are now working on translating some of our publications to be distributed in Europe," he added.

Chairman's message

"We aim to change the opinion of people about geography. Today, they only teach children that geography is about capitals of countries and the currency of each country. In fact, geography is a wide science that includes many types of information and sciences that are essential for our life. We aim to make parents aware to encourage their children to study GIS, as this is the future of science. Ministries have now started applying GIS, and this has changed decision making and provides complete information," concluded Rushoud.



Geographic Information System (GIS) lab.

Tour of the KGS

KGS has an archive of the geographical letters that it publishes, as it evaluates scientific periodicals from all Arab countries. A GIS lab is available at the society, which is one of the best labs in Kuwait. Participants of courses that KGS holds use this lab. Events and some meetings are held at KGS' diwaniya too. A press club at KGS includes the list of the names of all members of the board, in addition to the pictures of all its chairmen since its establishment.



Map made by the Kuwait Geographical Society.



KGS' library. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KGS' diwaniya, where events and some meetings are held.

1st



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Local

Kuwait welcomes co-hosting some games of 2022 WCup

KFA chairman to meet FIFA chief to discuss this matter

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association has “welcomed” co-hosting some matches of the 2022 World Cup, due to be hosted by Qatar. The association’s deputy chairman Ahmad Al-Enezi said in a statement yesterday that the association will respond positively if the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) or the Qatar Football Association officially make such a request.

However, Enezi affirmed that the co-hosting of some of the matches by GCC countries other than Qatar has remained a proposal by FIFA till now. This will turn into a strong possibility if number of the participating teams rises to 48 instead of 32, he indicated. The Kuwaiti association will support its Qatari counterpart to ensure success of the World

Cup, he pledged, noting that Gulf and Arab states should help Qatar in accomplishing this task.

Chairman of the Kuwaiti Football Association Sheikh Ahmad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah will meet FIFA Chairman Gianni Infantino to discuss this matter. The meeting will take place on sidelines of the inaugural match of the Asia Cup due to be hosted by the UAE from Jan 5 to Feb 1.

Last month, Infantino said a majority of national football federations were in favor of expanding the tournament and a decision was expected ahead of the qualifying draw in March. Infantino, speaking at a sports conference on Wednesday, also said FIFA was seeing whether it would be possible for some

of Qatar’s Gulf neighbors to host some of the matches. He said last month that it would be “difficult” to stage an expanded tournament in Qatar alone.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt launched a diplomatic and trade boycott of Qatar in June 2017 that has complicated the prospect of sharing the tournament. The countries accuse Qatar of supporting terrorism, which it denies. FIFA voted in 2017 to increase the size of the tournament from 32 to 48 teams starting from 2026 but, since then, Infantino has been mulling the possibility of bringing the change forward to 2022.

“If you think it’s a good thing to have 48 teams in the World Cup, why not try four years before, that’s why we are analyzing whether it’s

possible to have 48 teams already in 2022,” Infantino said on Wednesday. “The World Cup will take place in Qatar with 32 teams. Obviously, if we can increase it to 48 teams and make the world happy we should try it.”

Qatar said it would not take a final decision on the tournament expansion until it has seen details of a feasibility study from FIFA. The study is expected to discuss aspects of scheduling, the number of required venues, training sites, and how many games per day would be played under an expanded format. Qatar, a tiny but wealthy Arab nation, has moved ahead with ambitious plan to scale up infrastructure ahead of the 2022 tournament that includes \$6-8 billion on eight stadiums and sporting facilities. —Agencies

Photo of the day



The dinosaur exhibit is seen at the Natural History Museum at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center. — KUNA

Cold, chances of dust, light rain at weekend

KUWAIT: In the coming days, the weather is expected to be relatively cold with chances of dust and scattered rain, the Kuwait Meteorological Center said yesterday. Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi, an official at the center, told KUNA that earlier yesterday, Kuwait witnessed cloudy weather because of increasing wind activity. Clouds will decrease with a chance of dust and scattered light rain, as the wind will shift coming from the northwest at speeds of 25 to 60 kilometers per hour (km/h). The temperature was 22 to 25 degrees Celsius while the state of the sea saw waves reaching a height of three to seven feet.

Yesterday evening was cold as northwesterly wind decreased in speed

to about 15 to 40 km/h while temperature dropped to 10 to 12 degrees Celsius, said the meteorologist, adding that the status of the sea waves were light to moderate at two to five feet in height. Today’s weather will witness light to moderate northwestern winds at 15 to 35 km/h during the day, while in the evening, they will be between three to 30 km/h. The temperature today will be 17 to 19 degrees Celsius during the day and seven to 10 degrees Celsius during the evening, said Qarawi, who noted that the sea in the morning will have light to moderate waves at two to four feet. The same light to moderate waves will continue in the evening at one to four feet in height.

He indicated that the temperature tomorrow morning will be 18 to 20 degrees Celsius and in the evening, it will be between 12 to 15 degrees Celsius. Tomorrow will see wind shifting from the northwest to the southeast during the day as clouds increase, with speeds reaching six to 28 km/h. In the evening, the speed will increase to reach between 15 and 40 km/h. The sea tomorrow will see light waves at a height of one to two feet, while the evening will see light to moderate waves at an increasing height of three to six feet. — KUNA

News in brief

Amir congratulates Brazil president

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated in a cable yesterday Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro on taking the oath of office and becoming president of his country. In the cable, the Amir wished the newly installed Brazilian leader wellness and more developed relations between Kuwait and Brazil. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. — KUNA

Ports shut over unstable weather

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) announced yesterday the suspension of navigation at the three main ports of Shuwaikh, Shuaiba and Doha due to unstable weather conditions. KPA said in a statement to KUNA that entry and exit operations of ships were halted at 8:00 am due to strong winds and rough seas. Kuwait is facing unstable weather conditions involving winds exceeding 60 km per hour and low visibility to below 1,000 meters. — KUNA

Iraq seeks closer ties with neighbors

BAGHDAD: Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-Hakim reaffirmed Wednesday his country’s commitment to building neighborly ties with the Arabian Gulf states. Speaking to reporters, he said closer ties with Iraq’s neighbors, particularly Arabian Gulf states, could serve as a cornerstone in solving regional problems. On the Iraq reconstruction summit hosted by Kuwait last February, Hakim said his ministry will lead an Iraqi interagency committee to oversee the implementation of the outcomes of the conference and reach out to investors from around the globe. — KUNA

MPs insist membership of Tabtabaei, Harbasha still valid

Lawmaker ridicules proposal to purchase debts of Kuwaitis

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Thirteen lawmakers yesterday stressed in a statement that the memberships of opposition Islamist MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbasha is still valid and legal despite a landmark ruling by the constitutional court last month. The new statement is likely to complicate the situation over the two lawmakers' membership ahead of a crucial debate on the issue next week. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem has said the Assembly will debate on Jan 8 the implications of the court verdict that ruled that article 16 of the Assembly's internal charter is unconstitutional.

The entire episode began in summer when the court of cassation jailed Tabtabaei and Harbasha for 42 months for storming the Assembly building during a protest in Nov 2011. The ruling was deemed as grounds for scrapping the membership of the two lawmakers for being convicted and jailed in a crime. But the Assembly voted in October to maintain their membership on the basis of article 16 of its internal charter. Hardly two months later, however, the constitutional court issued its verdict declaring article

16 as unconstitutional, stirring controversy in the house and among legal experts.

Yesterday's statement signed by 13 opposition members insisted that as the vote retaining the membership of Tabtabaei and Harbasha was taken by the Assembly before the court ruling, the verdict does not apply to the vote and accordingly the membership stays. The statement said that the signatories "insist that the membership of the two lawmakers is still valid and effective". They said the court cannot interfere in the actions of parliament based on the separation of authorities. They also urged members of the Assembly to defend all articles of the constitution, especially the immunity of MPs and their right to exercise their duties.

But pro-government MP Ahmad Al-Fadhli blasted the statement as "shameful" and "disgusting" for challenging the judiciary. He said the statement does not represent him and warned he will oppose the statement inside the Assembly. Fadhli said he will not allow the 13 lawmakers to continue challenging and undermining the judiciary. Any decision in the Assembly requires the support of around 33 MPs because the government ministers are expected



Waleed Al-Tabtabaei



Jamaan Al-Harbasha

to vote in favor of the court ruling.

In another development, Fadhli ridiculed a proposal urging the government to purchase bank debts of Kuwaiti citizens. He added experts are laughing at the proposal. Fadhli is a member of the legal and legislative committee which is scheduled to review if the proposal is legal. Nine lawmakers have submitted a let-

ter calling on the committee to quickly review the proposal. If approved, it will go to the financial and economic affairs committee to study the details and cost of the proposal. The initiative calls on the government to purchase all consumer and installment loans owed by Kuwaiti citizens to help them meet the rising cost of living.

MEW employees irked by longer working hours

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: A number of employees of the ministry of electricity and water plan to hold a sit-in on Sunday in protest over their new work timings from 7:30 am till 2:30 pm, which started at the beginning of January to replace the old timings of 8:00 am till 2:00 pm. Informed MEW sources stressed that the ministry fully respects Civil Service Commission regulations concerning working hours and timings in various government bodies.

Notably, the first workday following the new year holiday on Jan 2 witnessed very low employee attendance at the ministry, where only 50 percent of the total workforce showed up to work under the fingerprint system. However, the sources remarked that some of the absent employees had official leave of absence, while others might have faced some urgent circumstances.

Ballot photographer jailed

The court of cassation yesterday upheld an earlier verdict to

imprison a citizen for two years, but suspended the verdict for three years conditional on good conduct and KD 500 bail over charges of photographing his ballot card to send to a candidate in the fourth electoral constituency.

'Drug user' acquitted

The criminal court yesterday acquitted a citizen who had been accused of drug abuse on grounds that the arrest officer had found the citizen unconscious in the street and some drugs besides him. The court explained that article 52 of the penal proceedings law states "a policeman has the right to stop any individual and ask for identification if this is needed for investigations he is conducting". The court added that article 44 of the same law states that policemen have no right to arrest or search people on the street without prior warrants. The citizen's attorney Howra Al-Habib hailed the verdict and stressed that it is a triumph for citizens' liberties.

Minister makes surprise check

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Saad Al-Kharraz yesterday paid a sudden visit to the public authority for the disabled, during which he listened directly to citizens' remarks and complaints. Kharraz also reviewed the modern technology used in receiving and issuing various types of transactions and urged employees to make visits easier for all applicants without any exemptions.

in his feet and lower back. Investigations showed that the shooter - a 43-year-old bedoon - had been waiting outside the mall in an SUV to attack the victim and settle some old scores between them.

Live drills

The coastguard is scheduled to conduct live ammunition drills in the waters off Garouh and Um Al-Maradem islands in the areas between coordinates 048.37.5.E and 28.55.0.N and 048.30.2.E and 28.46.8.N. The drills will be held daily from Jan 6 to 10, 2019 from 8 am till 2 pm. Therefore, for public safety, all sea-goers, fishermen and sailors were requested to keep away from the abovementioned sites during the drills.

Inebriated man assaults waiter

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti was arrested for assaulting an Asian working in a cafe in Mangaf, said security sources, noting that the citizen was under the influence of intoxicants. The Asian was taken to Adan Hospital for treatment.

Writer arrested

Kuwaiti writer and former parliamentary election candidate Ayesha Al-Rasheed was arrested on abuse and slander charges made in five cases filed against her by the Amiri Diwan.

Truffles stolen

An Arab half lorry driver reported that unidentified thieves had stolen tens of imported truffle boxes from his truck parked outside his residence in Jleeb. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Cig smuggling foiled

Customs inspectors at Nuwaiseeb land border exit arrested a Saudi attempting to smuggle 1,500 cigarette packs into Saudi Arabia.

Beggars arrested

Nine beggars, including men, women and children, were arrested during an inspection campaign around Capital market-places, said security sources, adding that the suspects were referred to relevant authorities pending deportation.

Car broken into

A citizen reported that on leaving a mosque in Daiya, he found his vehicle's window was smashed and some cash, his civil ID card and credit cards were missing. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress. — Al-Rai/Al-Qabas/Al-Jarida

Police arrest Jahra gunman

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's relations and security media department said detectives arrested a suspect who shot and injured a stateless person in Jahra. The department's statement explained a 30-year-old bedoon was shot outside a Jahra shopping mall, where three bullets were fired at him, wounding him

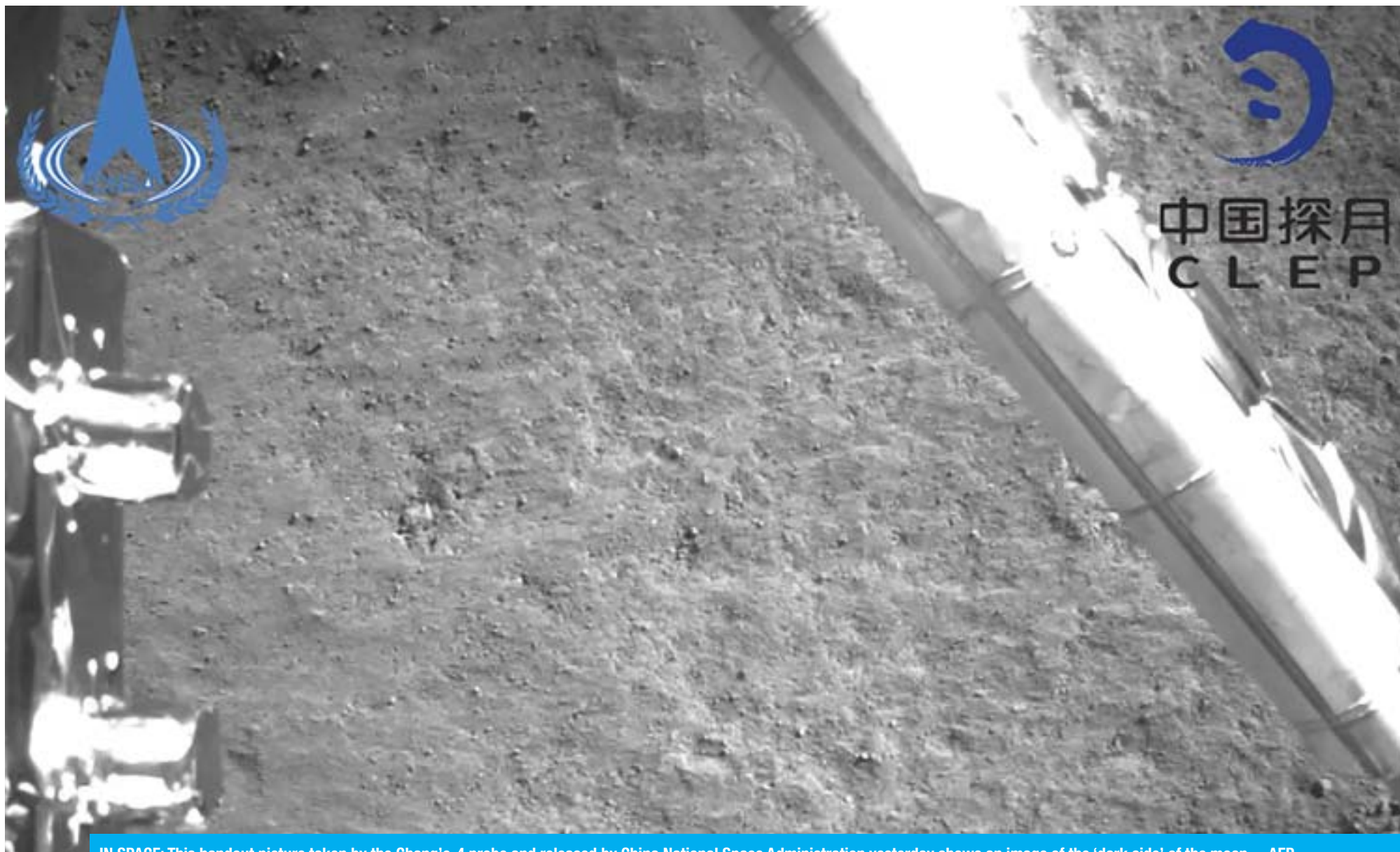


Fresh clashes in deadly India temple dispute

Tourists flee Thai islands as Tropical Storm Pabuk closes in

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IN SPACE: This handout picture taken by the Chang'e-4 probe and released by China National Space Administration yesterday shows an image of the 'dark side' of the moon.—AFP

China lands probe on 'dark side' of moon

Beijing hopes of having crewed space station by 2022

BEIJING: A Chinese lunar rover landed on the far side of the moon yesterday, in a global first that boosts Beijing's ambitions to become a space superpower. The Chang'e-4 probe touched down and sent a photo of the so-called "dark side" of the moon to the Queqiao satellite, which will relay communications to controllers on Earth, China's national space agency said on its website.

Beijing is pouring billions into its military-run space program, with hopes of having a crewed space station by 2022, and of eventually sending humans to the moon. The Chang'e-4 lunar probe mission—named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology—launched in December from the southwestern Xichang launch centre. It is the second Chinese probe to land on the moon, following the Yutu (Jade Rabbit) rover mission in 2013.

Unlike the near side of the moon that offers

many flat areas to touch down on, the far side is mountainous and rugged. The moon is "tidally locked" to Earth in its rotation so the same side is always facing Earth. Chang'e-4 is carrying six experiments from China and four from abroad, including low-frequency radio astronomical studies—aiming to take advantage of the lack of interference on the moon's far side.

The rover will also conduct mineral and radiation tests, the China National Space Administration has said. "It's a very good start," said Wu Weiren, chief designer of China's lunar exploration program, in an interview with state broadcaster CCTV. "We are now building China into an aerospace power."

Space dominance

Beijing is planning to send another lunar lander, Chang'e-5, later this year to collect samples and bring them back to Earth. It is among a slew

of ambitious Chinese targets, which include a reusable launcher by 2021, a super-powerful rocket capable of delivering payloads heavier than those NASA and private rocket firm SpaceX can handle, a moon base, a permanently crewed space station, and a Mars rover.

The People's Liberation Army "looks at space as a new strategic high ground," said Michael Raska, who studies security and defense issues at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. An increased presence in space will be vital for "anything for early warning, surveillance, reconnaissance, targeting... nearly every military mission out there is relying on some sort of space capability." But China's aerospace industry still has a long way to go, especially compared to that of the US, said Shen Dingli, a Shanghai-based international studies scholar. "Armstrong landed on the moon more than 50 years ago—Chinese people still have not

landed on the moon even today."

Extreme challenges

It was not until 1959 that the Soviet Union captured the first images of the moon's mysterious and heavily cratered "dark side". No lander or rover has ever previously touched the surface there, and it is no easy technological feat—China has been preparing for this moment for years. A major challenge for the mission was communicating with the robotic lander as there is no direct "line of sight" for signals to the far side of the moon.

As a solution, China in May blasted the Queqiao (Magpie Bridge) satellite into the moon's orbit, positioning it so that it can relay data and commands between the lander and Earth. In another extreme hurdle, during the lunar night—which lasts 14 Earth days—temperatures drop to as low as minus 173 degrees Celsius.—AFP

International

Prosecutor seeks death sentences as Khashoggi murder trial opens

UN calls for independent investigation into death

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's attorney general sought the death penalty for five of 11 defendants charged with the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi as their high-profile trial opened in Riyadh yesterday. All 11 accused were present with their lawyers at the opening hearing in the capital, according to a statement by the attorney general carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The attorney general said Saudi Arabia had twice submitted formal requests for evidence from Turkey—where Khashoggi was murdered inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate—but had received no response. The names of the defendants have not been officially released. Five top officials in Saudi Arabia—including royal court insider Saud al-Qahtani—were sacked over the Khashoggi murder, but there is no proof that they are among those charged.

Khashoggi, a contributor to the Washington Post, was murdered on October 2 in what Riyadh called a "rogue" operation. The 59-year-old Saudi insider-turned-critic was strangled and his body cut into pieces by a team of 15 Saudis sent to Istanbul for the killing, according to Turkish officials. There have been reports that his remains, which have never been found, were dissolved in acid.

Calls for 'credible' probe

The defense team yesterday requested a copy of the indictment sheet and a timeframe

within which to review the charges. The prosecutor agreed to both requests, SPA said. No date has been set for the next hearing. The Khashoggi murder shocked the world at a time when Saudi Arabia and its de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, were pushing an aggressive public relations campaign to rebrand the ultraconservative monarchy as a modern state. Among Prince Mohammed's strongest allies is US President Donald Trump, who now faces increased pressure to approve measures against Saudi Arabia. The US has sanctioned 17 Saudi citizens in connection with the Khashoggi murder. France and Canada have also sanctioned Saudi Arabian nationals. The US Central Intelligence Agency has reportedly concluded that Prince Mohammed very likely ordered Khashoggi's murder.

A bipartisan resolution approved by the US Senate last month also holds the crown prince responsible for the killing. But in November the Saudi attorney general ruled out any involvement by the young crown prince, whose reformist credentials abroad have been seriously tarnished by the murder. The Khashoggi affair has also given Turkey—allied with Saudi rivals Qatar and Iran—unusual leverage in regional power plays. Ankara has sought the extradition of the suspects in Saudi custody to stand trial in Turkey but its requests have been repeatedly rebuffed by Riyadh.

Rights groups and the United Nations have



MANAMA: In this file photo Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi attends a press conference in the Bahraini capital Manama. —AFP

called for an independent investigation into Khashoggi's death, with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres last month calling for a "credible" probe. "Given the possible involvement of Saudi authorities in Khashoggi's murder and the lack of independence of Saudi Arabia's criminal

justice system, the impartiality of any investigation and trial would be in question," Samah Hadid, a Middle East director at Amnesty International, said yesterday. "This is why a UN-led and independent investigation is needed into the murder of Khashoggi." —AFP

India rebuffs Trump 'Afghan library' swipe

NEW DELHI: India rejected US President Donald Trump's comments mocking Prime Minister Narendra Modi for funding a library in Afghanistan, saying yesterday that New Delhi has provided \$3 billion in development assistance to the war-torn country. The US president on Wednesday took a swipe at what he claimed were Modi's frequent comments on building the library: "You know what that is? That's like five hours of what we spend. 'And we're supposed to say, 'Oh, thank you for the library.' I don't know who's using it in Afghanistan," Trump said.

A statement provided by government sources in New Delhi said "India plays a significant role as a development partner," in Afghanistan, with projects aimed at achieving "a tangible improvement in the lives of its people". As the "largest donor in the region", New Delhi has helped with infrastructure projects, humanitarian assistance and economic de-

velopment, the statement said. Highlights include a 218-kilometre road, a dam providing irrigation to farmers and training programs for more than 3,500 Afghans in India.

New Delhi has also provided 1.1 million tons of wheat to Afghanistan as well as a 400-bed children's hospital built in 1972 and renovated after the fall of the Taliban in 2002. Ram Madhav, general secretary of Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), said on Twitter that India was "building lives" in Afghanistan.

"Trump should know that while he is decrying every other help in (Afghanistan), India has been building not only libraries, but roads, dams, schools and even parliament building", he said. Ahmed Patel, a lawmaker and a senior member of the opposition Congress party, tweeted that the "tenor and tone" of the US leader's remarks was "not in good taste & is completely unacceptable". —AFP

Police clash with Israeli far-right in West Bank

AMONA: Israeli far-right activists clashed with police yesterday as authorities moved in to clear away two mobile homes illegally set up in the occupied West Bank. Some 300 protesters threw metal bars, stones and oil at Israeli police, while officers responded with tear gas as the operation began around 5:00 am at the former wildcat settlement of Amona, police said.

The windswept site—on a hilltop near Ramallah—was cleared of protesters by around 9:00 am and workers with large flatbed trucks were preparing to take away the two mobile homes put there in recent weeks. Settlers packed furniture and supplies into a van and drove away, while mattresses, a refrigerator, chairs and other items remained scattered in the area. Police said 23 officers were lightly wounded, while seven arrests had been made.

Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said they were enforcing a court order declaring the structures there illegal. After the confrontation, groups of young far-right activists, some with their faces

covered, could be seen gathered in the nearby Israeli settlement of Ofra. "When the policemen arrived, they tried to break in (to the mobile homes) but failed, so they started firing tear gas inside," said Oren Amitai.

"People were coughing and coughing non-stop," said the 43-year-old, who used to be a resident of the Amona wildcat settlement. The clash comes nearly two years after Amona was demolished by Israeli authorities following a supreme court ruling that found it to be built illegally on private Palestinian land. The demolition at the site where around 40 families lived was highly controversial among Israelis and similarly led to clashes.

Israel later began work on the first new government-sanctioned Jewish settlement since 1991—called Amichai—as a new home for those who had lived in Amona. Far-right activists advocate Israel annexing much of the West Bank and oppose a Palestinian state. Key members of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition also oppose a Palestinian state.

Settlements are seen as illegal under international law and a major stumbling block to peace as they are built on land the Palestinians want as part of their future state. Settlement construction however also plays an important role in Israeli right-wing politics and Netanyahu frequently expresses his support for settlers. Israeli general elections are scheduled for April 9. —AFP

International

Deaths highlight children's plight in migrant surge to US

Migrants fall prey to misleading travel information

NENTON, Guatemala: The death of two Guatemalan children in the United States within weeks of each other has highlighted why there are so many children among Central American migrants heading north: smugglers tell them families have a better chance of being allowed in by US border guards, witnesses told AFP. Agustin Gomez was one such migrant who decided to risk the trip.

Gomez's relatives in his western, mainly indigenous municipality of Nenton near the Mexican border said he had heard rumors that bringing along his eight-year-old son Felipe might ease his way. Felipe died in a New Mexico hospital on Christmas Day, only a week after they were both detained by Texas border guards after crossing the border illegally. US authorities investigating the case say Felipe died after presenting with flu symptoms.

Just two weeks earlier, Guatemala had been rocked by the death of seven-year-old indigenous girl Jakelin Caal, admitted to hospital suffering from dehydration. She made the journey alongside her 29-year-old father Nery from the Mayan town of Raxruha in northern Guatemala. Though the surge of Guatemalan migrants to the US-Mexico border is caused largely by the country's dire poverty and violence, Guatemalan migration activist Roxana Palma, told AFP there are messages circulating on social media that carrying children gives a greater "guarantee" of establishing themselves in the United States.

Keeping kids from gangs' clutches

There seems little doubt that the main spur

for the migrants is abject poverty at home. But taking children with them is also a way for their parents to prevent them being recruited by gangs, migration experts told AFP.

Smugglers-nicknamed "Coyotes"—blatantly lie about immigration procedures in the United States and do little for migrants beyond holding out the prospect of a better life, said Palma.

"Unfortunately, they are the ones who misinform people about how to get to the United States 'safely,'" she said. According to another expert, "there was special treatment for parents who came with children" to the United States under the previous US administration of President Barack Obama, but that ended with Donald Trump's arrival at the White House. "The smugglers continue to say that you can enter with children; that's no longer valid," said the expert, who requested anonymity in order to speak freely about the subject.

Social media messages

"We are also seeing how networks of coyotes recruit, how they make people pay and then deceive them," said Danilo Rivera, coordinator of the Central American Institute of Development and Social Studies (INCEDES). Rivera said they were aware of cases in the indigenous western Guatemala where networks use local radio to make announcements of false offers of visas and travel to the United States "immediately and safely."

Guatemalan authorities "aren't doing a lot" to thwart this false and misleading travel information, nor does it do enough to root out the causes of emigration, said Rivera. According to



GUATEMALA: A couple of children carry sacks along a dirt path in Yalambojoch, home village of eight-year-old migrant Felipe Gomez, who died in a medical center in Alamogordo, New Mexico.—AFP

studies by the International Migration Organization (OIM), the majority of Guatemalan migrants sent back by Mexico and the United States come from western Guatemala, the country's poorest region. Pascual Domingo's father and two brothers, who previously set out from little Felipe Gomez's home village of Yalambojoch, managed to get to the United States and now send money to the family back home.

"All those who go there, it is because they

have no money, because they can't find any work," said Pascual. In this department of Huehuetenango, nearly 74 percent of the population live below the poverty line, government statistics show. Maria Lucas, 40, is happy to show her concrete house, built from the money sent home by her son, Juan, who has been living in the United States for the past three years. "My child left because of poverty. We are in need, that's why he had to leave," said Maria.—AFP

Turkey, Iraq to boost anti-terror cooperation

ANKARA: Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said Ankara and Baghdad would deepen cooperation against terrorism after tensions last month over Turkish air strikes against Kurdish militants in Iraq. "We know the importance of working together to be successful in our fight against terror. God willing, in the future we will deepen our cooperation in this area," Erdogan told a press conference in Ankara with his Iraqi counterpart Barham Saleh.

Erdogan said there were threats to both countries from "terrorist organizations" such as the Islamic State group, Kurdish militants and the group blamed for a failed coup in 2016. "Iraq wants real cooperation and strategic partnership with Turkey," Saleh said, which would "serve not just the two countries but the whole region". The talks come after the

Turkish ambassador to Baghdad was summoned last month to protest against "repeated" Turkish air strikes on Iraqi territory.

Baghdad at the time denounced the strikes as a "violation of its sovereignty" after Ankara hit Kurdish militant positions in the northern Sinjar and Mount Karajak regions. Turkish warplanes have often bombed hideouts of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged an insurgency against Turkey since 1984 and is blacklisted as a terror group by Ankara and its Western allies.

The Turkish defence ministry earlier yesterday said warplanes had struck PKK targets in the Zap, Metina, Avasin-Basyan and Gara regions on Wednesday. Erdogan has threatened to expand Turkey's fight against the PKK to Iraq and launch an operation against the group in Sinjar.—AFP

Rights activist, UK detainee plan Tehran jail hunger strike

LONDON: Prominent Iranian human rights activist Narges Mohammadi and British-Iranian detainee Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe announced yesterday plans to go on hunger strike in Tehran's Evin Prison to protest against the denial of medical treatment. "We are urging for an immediate action to be taken," they said in a joint letter. Initially arrested in 2015, Mohammadi was sentenced to 10 years in prison for "forming and managing an illegal group", among other charges. Zaghari-Ratcliffe was arrested in 2016 and is serving a five-year jail sentence for alleged sedition.

"Nazanin is currently having medical treatment blocked for lumps in her breasts, for neurological care over her neck pains and numbness in her arms

and legs, and seeing an outside psychiatrist has been banned," her husband Richard Ratcliffe told AFP. "These are all being personally blocked by the head of Evin clinic, Mr Khani, despite having been approved by the prison doctor." Mohammadi was the spokeswoman for the now-outlawed Defenders of Human Rights Centre, which was co-founded by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi.

"We are severely disturbed and concerned by this prevention of specialist care approved by the prison doctor and strongly protest against it," Mohammadi and Zaghari-Ratcliffe said, according to the joint letter, originally published on Ebadi's website. "In protest to this illegal, inhuman and unlawful behaviour, and to express our concerns for our health and survival at this denial of specialist treatment, despite taking daily medicines, we will go on hunger strike from January 14 to 16. "We are urging for an immediate action to be taken. "We announce that in the event of the authorities failure to address these concerns and them further endangering our health, we will take further actions. "The authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran are to be held responsible for the potential consequences."—AFP

Death toll jumps to 38 in Russian gas blast

MOSCOW: The number of dead from a New Year's Eve gas explosion in a Russian apartment block jumped to 38 yesterday as rescuers recovered more bodies from the rubble of the partially collapsed building.

Russian news agencies quoted the emergencies ministry as saying a 38th body had been recovered, leaving only three people unaccounted for. Rescuers have been braving temperatures as low as minus 27 degrees Celsius to search through mangled concrete and metal at the site in the Ural mountains city of Magnitogorsk.

Six people including two children have been rescued at the site, but no survivors have been found since Tuesday when a 10-month-old boy was retrieved in what officials described as a "New Year's miracle". The explosion tore through the 10-storey building in the industrial city nearly 1,700 kilometers east of Moscow in the early hours of Monday.

The Soviet-era block was home to about 1,100 people and the explosion destroyed 35 apartments, leaving dozens homeless. The emergencies ministry said work was continuing at the site on Thursday, with nearly 900 people involved in rescue and recovery efforts. A bridge had been built to reach higher areas and one of the building's walls was taken down as it was threatening to collapse on rescue workers.

Financial help for victims

Yesterday, residents of other parts of the building were to be allowed to enter their apartments, in half-hour stretches, to recover some belongings, the ministry said. All the survivors were in a stable condition, said the office of Chelyabinsk regional governor Boris Dubrovsky, who visited several of them in hospital yesterday. The health ministry also



MOSCOW: This handout photograph shows rescuers taking part in a search operation three days after a gas explosion rocked a residential building in Russia's Urals city of Magnitogorsk.—AFP

said that Vanya, the baby boy rescued on Tuesday, was recovering in hospital. His condition was "stable, with some improvement", Russian news agencies quoted the ministry as saying.

The boy was found in his cradle after rescuers heard him crying from under the rubble. He was brought to his mother, who had survived the blast, and then flown to Moscow for treatment. Dubrovsky's office said the governor had approved new financial assistance to the victims, including payments of one million rubles to the families of those killed and 400,000 rubles for those injured.

Families who lost their apartments would receive payments of up 500,000 rubles, as well as being provided with new homes. Financial assistance was also to be provided to help pay for fu-

nerals, the first six of which were to be held on Friday, the governor's office said. The explosion, which officials have said was likely caused by a gas leak, happened as most of the building's residents were asleep. Witnesses described a "wave of fire" and said the blast was strong enough to shatter windows in nearby buildings.

Investigators have launched a probe, but have said there is no reason to suspect foul play. Gas explosions are relatively common in Russia, where much of the infrastructure dates back to the Soviet era and safety requirements are often ignored. Located in the mineral-rich southern Urals, Magnitogorsk, with a population of more than 400,000, is home to one of Russia's largest steel producers.—AFP

10 dead as boat capsizes in India

NEW DELHI: A boat packed with picnickers capsized in a river in eastern India, killing 10 revelers including eight children, officials said yesterday. The mechanized fishing boat toppled on Wednesday while it was anchored near Hukitola, an island in the Mahanadi river popular with tourists, after some of the occupants tried to disembark at the same time. "So far nine bodies have been recovered while the body of a six-year-old girl is yet to be retrieved," said Dasarathi Satpathy, the magistrate of Kendrapara district in Odisha state.

Rescuers managed to save 45 other passengers, Satpathy told AFP. The Hindu newspaper said the boat was meant to carry a maximum of 20 people but was packed with some 55 passengers, most of them women and children. State Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik announced compensation of 400,000 rupees each to the families of the deceased and free medical treatment for the injured.

Boat accidents are common in India, with most of them blamed on overcrowding and poor maintenance. Last May, some 19 people were killed when a boat capsized in Godavari river in Andhra Pradesh state.—AFP

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International

Macron's spin doctor to leave Elysee as yellow-vest protests simmer

Leader of France's 'yellow vests' arrested

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron's head of media relations said yesterday he would quit, a sign that a grueling reform drive and a spate of political scandal and street protests are starting to wear down his inner circle a year and a half into his mandate. Sylvain Fort, who shaped Macron's campaign messaging during his presidential campaign and penned some of the young leader's most memorable speeches, will leave the Elysee palace for "personal reasons", government ministers said.

"After two years and a half of relentless work serving the candidate and later our president, I wish to pursue other professional and personal projects, and above all dedicate more time to my family," Fort told French news agency AFP.

His resignation follows the departure of Macron's political adviser late last year to lead the ruling party's European parliament election campaign. Rumors are swirling in French media of other close advisers who may head out the door.

Privately, aides say the pace of reforms, Macron's own hyperactivity, his frequent foreign trips and a relentless news cycle are taking their toll on even the most committed of his loyalists. Fort, an opera buff and literature graduate from the elite ENS school, preferred the more reclusive role of chief speechwriter after Macron's election victory in May 2017. Macron persuaded Fort to return to a front-line media relations role last summer after the violent conduct of Macron's former bodyguard and the Elysee's attempted cover-up of the matter sent his popu-

larity into a nosedive and raised questions about decision-making inside the president's office.

Surrounded by a small coterie of close aides dubbed the "Macron boys", the 41-year-old pushed through a series of reforms to liberalize the economy and cut taxes in his first 15 months in office. But popular perceptions of an arrogant president whose monarchical style leaves him detached from the daily realities of most French people triggered street unrest in late 2018. The

so-called "yellow vest" protests forced tax concessions and cast doubt over Macron's ability to see through his reform agenda.

He wants to adopt stricter rules for unemployment benefits, merge varying pension plans into a single system, and

create a leaner public sector - all prickly subjects that could give a new lease of life to the "yellow vests". In his New Year message, Macron, whose popularity rating is at a record low, was unrepentant as he promised to press on. "In recent years, we've engaged in a blatant denial of reality," he said. "We can't work less, earn more, cut taxes and increase spending."

Drouet's arrest

One of the leaders of the "yellow vest" anti-government demonstrations was detained by police in Paris late Wednesday for organizing an unauthorized protest, signaling a harder line by the authorities against the movement. Eric Drouet—who already faces a trial for carrying a weapon at a previous protest—was held while

“It's called respecting the rule of law”



BAGNOLET: In this file photo French President Emmanuel Macron's communication advisor, Sylvain Fort, walks in Bagnolet. — AFP

heading for the Champs-Élysées, which has been the scene of violent clashes over the last month. "It's called respecting the rule of law," Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire said on Thursday as he defended the arrest which drew criticism from some leftist opponents of the government.

"It's normal that when you break the laws of the republic, you face the consequences," he added. A few dozen demonstrators had gathered outside a McDonald's restaurant near France's famous Arc de Triomphe war monument and had been waiting for Drouet to arrive early Wednesday evening. Drouet, a truck driver who appears

on television as a spokesman for the "yellow vests", had called for the demonstration in a video posted on his Facebook page.

The "yellow vest" demonstrations—so-called after the high-visibility jackets they wear—began in rural France in November over fuel taxes and ballooned into a wider revolt against President Emmanuel Macron's policies and governing style. The protesters, who have repeatedly flouted laws that require them to declare their demonstrations in advance, have regularly clashed with police in Paris and other big cities. —Agencies

Far-right 'street patrol' in German town after migrant violence

BERLIN: A German far-right group has launched a vigilante street patrol in a Bavarian town where four Afghan and Iranian asylum seekers allegedly attacked passers-by last weekend, local authorities said yesterday. The mayor of Amberg, Michael Cerny, said he was "shocked" after the extremist NPD party posted photos online of four people wearing red protective vests to create "safe spaces", including outside a refugee centre.

"I can understand the insecurity seen in some of the reactions of some Ambergers, but the hatred and the threats of violence from all over the country go way too far," Cerny told the local daily Mittelbayerische Zeitung. Police said they were investigating the reports, which also said a group calling itself "Kraut/pol" had accused town authorities in an email of failing to protect the citi-

zens of Amberg. Local police had last Saturday detained four men from Afghanistan and Iran, aged 17 to 19, who had allegedly drunkenly attacked passers-by at random.

Twelve people aged 16 to 42 were beaten and suffered mostly minor injuries, and a 17-year-old was treated for head wounds in hospital. The case revived a simmering debate over immigration, integration and crime that has flared since the mass influx of over one million asylum seekers since 2015. Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, who hails from Bavaria and has been harshly critical of Merkel's liberal stance on immigration, quickly chimed in and called for speedy expulsions of immigrants who break the law.

The newspaper said the suspects included an Afghan man with an ongoing asylum request and three rejected asylum seekers—an Iranian who has no passport, an Afghan who is underage, and another Afghan with an ongoing appeal against his deportation order. A spokeswoman for Merkel on Wednesday condemned the assaults in Amberg as well as a xenophobic attack by a 50-year-old unemployed German man who steered his car into groups of immigrants on New Year's Eve. One of those attacks, in the city of Bottrop, left eight people injured, including a four-year-old Afghan boy and a 10-year-old Syrian girl. —AFP

One dead in Sydney stabbing

SYDNEY: A "beloved member" of the Church of Scientology died of a stab wound to the neck and another man was injured yesterday after a knife attack at the organization's Asia-Pacific headquarters in Sydney. Police said the teenage suspect, now in custody, was asked to leave the premises but instead brandished a knife and fatally stabbed the 24-year-old victim, believed to be Taiwanese.

The suspect "also caused some lacerations to an older gentleman" who was escorting him from the sprawling facility in the leafy north of the city, said Chief Inspector Simon Jones. Jones said the initial altercation between the men appeared to have been related to a "domestic incident that occurred yesterday", without elaborating. After the attack, the unnamed 16-year-old was approached by police and asked to drop the knife, before being arrested.

The victims were rushed to hospital where the 24-year-old man died after serious bleeding. The older man is said to be in a stable condition with a minor injury and has been released from hospital. The Church of Scientology lamented the "very unfortunate matter" and in a statement to public broadcaster ABC said the deceased victim had been a "beloved member of our Church". The suspect remains in custody and is assisting with enquiries, police said.

The incident occurred at what the organization describes as its Asia-Pacific spiritual headquarters. The centre, dubbed the "Ideal Advanced Organization for Australasia", was opened in 2016 by David Miscavige, the leader of the Church of Scientology. It is the group's largest facility outside the United States. According to Scientology.org the 145,000-square-foot building features 60 spiritual "auditing" rooms. —AFP

Trump warns US government shutdown could last a 'long time'

Trump to hold out 'as long as it takes' to secure money

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump met top Democratic lawmakers on Wednesday, but they failed to hammer out an agreement that would end a partial government shutdown over his demand for billions of dollars to build a border wall with Mexico. One day before Democrats take over the House of Representatives, Trump showed no signs of backing away from his insistence that Congress cough up \$5.6 billion for his "beautiful" southern wall.

Trump met behind closed doors at the White House with Nancy Pelosi, the Democrat who will take over as speaker of the House yesterday, and Chuck Schumer, the Senate minority leader, but there were no indications any progress had been made in resolving the impasse. "We asked the president to support the bills that we support that will open up government," Schumer said. "I asked him directly, I said 'Mr. President give me one good reason why you should continue your shutdown.'

"He could not give a good answer," Schumer said. Republican Kevin McCarthy, who will be minority leader in the next House, said Democratic and Republican leaders of Congress would return to the White House on Friday for more talks. "This doesn't need to go on very much longer," McCarthy said. But Trump said he was prepared to hold out "as long as it takes" to secure the money he is seeking for the border wall. "This is national security we're talking

about," he said at a cabinet meeting ahead of the meeting with Pelosi, Schumer and top Republicans. "It's too important a subject to walk away from. "I think the people of this country think I am right," Trump said, adding that it "could be a long time" before the government reopens. Trump's meeting with Pelosi and Schumer was his first since an acrimonious Oval Office meeting with the pair on December 11.

Democrats say the border wall, one of Trump's key campaign promises, is a distraction from more complicated immigration problems and a tool for Trump to whip up support among his conservative base. The standoff resulted in hundreds of thousands of federal employees being furloughed over the Christmas and New Year holidays—and for the foreseeable future until a deal is reached.

Romney hits out at Trump

Amid the stalemate over the wall, Trump shelved his annual Christmas vacation in Florida, choosing to remain in Washington and fire off a stream of angry—and often misleading—tweets. "Much of the Wall has already been renovated or built," he asserted, along with the dubious claim that Mexico would pay for the wall through the new trade deal between the two countries. White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders accused Democrats of refusing to compromise. "President Trump made a serious, good

faith offer to Democrats to open the government, address the crisis at our border and protect all Americans," Sanders said. Pelosi is proposing a plan that would fund most government agencies through September 30 with the exception of the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees border security and would only receive funding through February 8. Sanders described that approach as a "non-starter because it does not fund our homeland security or keep American families safe from human trafficking, drugs and crime."

Republicans lost 40 seats and their majority in the House in the November midterm elections but they retained control of the Senate by a slim margin. Sixty votes, however, are needed to advance legislation in the Senate, requiring Democratic support. Democratic Senator Chris Coons of Delaware welcomed the face-to-face meeting between Trump and Democratic leaders and told CNN he hoped it would lead to an end to what he called a "senseless" shutdown.

Republican Mitch McConnell, the Senate majority leader, has said he will only schedule a vote on a deal that has the support of both the House and Trump. Adding to the uncertainty in Washington, an incoming senator, former Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney, lashed out at Trump on Tuesday in an opinion piece in *The Washington Post*. "Trump's words and actions have caused dis-



WASHINGTON: In this file photo US President Donald Trump talks to the press as leaves the White House by the South lawn and boards Marine One en route to Council Bluffs, Iowa, for a 'Make America Great Again' rally in Washington DC. — AFP

may around the world," wrote Romney, who was elected to the Senate in November from his home state of Utah.

"I do not intend to comment on every tweet or fault," Romney said. "But I will speak out against significant statements or actions that are divisive, racist, sexist, anti-immigrant, dishonest or destructive to democratic institutions." Trump expressed surprise over the comments said he hoped the Republican senator would prove to be a "team player." In an interview with CNN, Romney said he would vote to provide funding for a border wall. —AFP

US, Colombia aim to restore Venezuela's 'democratic heritage'



CARTAGENA: This handout picture shows Colombian President Ivan Duque, right, and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo shaking hands before a meeting at the Illustrious Guest House in Cartagena, Colombia. — AFP

CARTAGENA: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Colombian President Ivan Duque discussed Wednesday how to help restore democratic rule to crisis-wracked Venezuela and reject its "dictatorship." Pompeo followed up a trip to Brazil to meet with new far right President Jair Bolsonaro with a visit to Colombia for talks on the migrant exodus from neighboring Venezuela, and its regime led by President Nicolas Maduro.

"Our conversations today covered how we can collaborate with regional and international partners to help those fleeing and help Venezuelans recover their democratic heritage," Pompeo said from the Caribbean city of Cartagena. He described Colombia as "a natural leader on regional efforts to support democracy and the rule of law in Venezuela," its neighbor.

Right-wing Duque, who succeeded Juan Manuel Santos in August, said that "all the

countries that share the value of democracy should unite to reject the Venezuelan dictatorship and do everything necessary to restore democracy and constitutional order." Pompeo praised Colombia for its support of the one million Venezuelans that have crossed the border and "fled the crisis caused by the Maduro regime's authoritarian misrule."

According to the United Nations, 2.3 million Venezuelans have escaped poverty and economic meltdown since 2015 as those who remain face shortages of basic necessities such as food and medicine, as well as failing public services, including water, electricity and transport. —AFP

US clergy abuse survivors demand inclusion in Vatican reforms

CHICAGO: Patricia Gallagher Marchant was first abused by a priest who befriended her family when she was seven or eight years old. More than five decades later, the 61-year-old stood Wednesday in front of a throng of news cameras outside the downtown Chicago headquarters of the Catholic archdiocese in this sprawling American city, and demanded the church listen to survivors.

"They've counted on our silence," Marchant said. "The horror of what happened to each of us needs to be out and spoken." Marchant was joined by leaders of two survivors' advocacy groups who sent an open letter to Pope Francis asking to be a part of a historic gathering that the Catholic leader called for in February at the Vatican, to discuss the ongoing crisis roiling the church. At issue was the very credibility of the pope's conference, they claimed, and whether survivors would have faith in its outcome.

"What we want is for this summit to be able to be taken seriously and to result in real, meaningful reform," said Zach Hiner, executive direc-

tor of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP).

A troubled history

The demands came just as US bishops gathered at a Chicago-area seminary for a prayer summit in advance of the Vatican meeting. The US Conference of Catholic Bishops was tight-lipped about the gathering, saying only that it would consist of seven days of silent prayer and reflection. Two of the attendees were targeted by the activists in downtown Chicago for their key roles in the upcoming Vatican event: Cardinal Blase Cupich, the leader of the Chicago archdiocese, and US bishops leader Cardinal Daniel DiNardo.

Both were blamed for alleged cover-ups of clergy abuse under their watch. "We're asking the pope to do something very simple: put individuals to lead your summit that have not covered up for child sex crimes," said Peter Isely, a self-identified survivor and spokesman for the group Ending Clergy Abuse (ECA). "Then, survivors and the rest of the world might have a glimmer of hope."

Survivors' advocates have long accused church officials of slow-walking abuse investigations and failing to disclose all allegations. Marchant said her abuser was allowed to remain a priest for almost two decades after she first reported him. "The church has a history of minimizing and denying the undeniable pain and horror of being sexually abused by a priest," said Marchant, who is now a therapist helping other clergy abuse survivors. —AFP

International

Fresh clashes in deadly India temple dispute

One dead, 15 injured after women enter temple

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Clashes broke out in southern India for a second day yesterday as Hindu hardliners went on the rampage, seeking to enforce a general shutdown in protest at two women entering one of the country's holiest temples. A day after violence among rival groups and with police left one man dead and 15 people injured, authorities said that 266 protesters had been arrested across the state of Kerala.

Anger erupted among Hindu traditionalists on Wednesday after news that the two women in their 40s, escorted by police and dressed in black, wrong-footed devotees to sneak into the Sabarimala temple via a side entrance before dawn to pray. This was the first time that any woman of menstruating age—deemed as those aged between 10 and 50—had set foot in the gold-plated temple, located on a hilltop in a tiger reserve, since India's Supreme Court overturned a ban in September.

Thousands of Hindu devotees, many of them female, had previously succeeded in preventing women from accessing the site in the weeks following the landmark ruling, with some hardliners throwing stones at police and assaulting female journalists. On Tuesday, tens of thousands of women, in a local government-backed initiative, had braved harassment to form a huge human chain called the "Women's Wall" across Kerala to back the demand for access to the temple.

Kerala police told AFP that the man who died on Wednesday was part of a demonstration organized by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Kerala's chief minister said later that the man, Chandran Unnithan,

died from a heart attack after being taken injured to hospital, but a later post mortem report said he died from injuries sustained to the head.

Police on Wednesday had used tear gas and water cannon, including in the state capital Thiruvananthapuram, as protesters set fire to tyres and blocked roads. Yesterday, police clashed with protesters pressuring shop owners to comply with a call by the Sabarimala temple hierarchy for a dawn-till-dusk "hartal" shutdown. Most shops remained shut in the state, while bus services came to a standstill.

Four people were stabbed, media reports said, with stone-throwing protesters smashing the windows of 99 buses and causing an estimated 33.5 million rupees (\$480,000) worth of damage. In the coastal city of Kozhikode police used tear gas to disperse protesters. Twenty offices of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which governs Kerala in a left-wing alliance, were attacked, said Kodyeri Balakrishnan, state party secretary. Journalists were assaulted in the city of Palakkad during a march organized by the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a hardline Hindu group and ideological mentor of Modi's party.

Battle zone

Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan accused the BJP and the RSS of trying to turn Sabarimala into a "battle zone", saying that more than 100 people including 38 police officers had been injured. Vijayan also slammed the head priest of the Sabarimala temple for carrying out a "purification ritual" after the two women en-



KOCHI: Indian supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) march during a protest rally over two women entering the Sabarimala Ayyapa temple, in Kochi. — AFP

tered the site, saying he should quit if he is not prepared to accept the Supreme Court verdict. The restriction on women at the temple, atop a 3,000-foot (915-metre) hill that takes hours to climb, reflects a belief—not exclusive to Hinduism—that menstruating women are impure.

September's verdict was the latest progressive ruling from India's top court, with judges

also overturning bans on gay sex and adultery last year. The Supreme Court is to start hearing a legal challenge on its ruling to allow women into the temple from January 22. Women are still barred from a handful of Hindu temples in India. The entry of women at Sabarimala was taboo for generations and formalized by the Kerala High Court in 1991.—AFP

Top India court slams govt over trapped miners

NEW DELHI: India's Supreme Court yesterday slammed authorities for their failure to rescue 15 workers trapped for 21 days in a flooded coal mine in the country's remote northeast. The so-called "rat-hole" miners have been missing since December 13 when water gushed into the narrow pit from a nearby river in the state of Meghalaya. The incident has been making headlines amid increasingly desperate efforts to save the group.

Multiple teams from the National Disaster Response Force, Coal India and the Indian Navy have been trying to reach the miners but in vain. In response to a petition demanding that rescue efforts be stepped up, the top court said the government should ask the army to join rescue attempts, and asked why it had not yet done so. "We're not satisfied with the rescue operations... We pray to God that all are alive. Whether they are alive or dead, they need to be taken out," the court said in its remarks.

Engineers with heavy-duty machines and divers were trying again yesterday to pump out water from the 115-metre deep tunnel. A police spokesman said the water level had receded briefly



KSAN, India: In this file photo Indian Navy divers are lowered into a mine with a pulley during rescue operations to help 15 miners trapped by flooding in an illegal coal mine in Ksan village in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district. — AFP

on Wednesday but rose again, hampering the rescue work. "To tackle this problem the fire service is using one more pump to boost the discharge," local police superintendent Sylvester Nongtnger said in a text message shared with reporters. Most mines in mineral-rich Meghalaya are barely more than rudimentary holes—some less than four feet in height—dug into the sides of the Jaintia Hills. A federal environment court banned rat-hole mining in 2014 after local communities complained it was polluting water sources and putting the lives of miners at risk. But the practice continues with thousands of impoverished migrants risking their lives as rat-hole miners. —AFP

Thousands displaced as Myanmar army, Rakhine rebels clash

YANGON: Weeks of fighting between ethnic Rakhine rebels and Myanmar's military has driven thousands of civilians from their homes, the UN said, as conflict intensifies in a state already ravaged by violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority. The army led a crackdown against the Rohingya in western Rakhine state in 2017, justifying the violence as necessary to flush out militants from the stateless minority. Those operations prompted a mass exodus of Rohingya to Bangladesh.

But that conflict largely overshadowed the army's simmering fight with the Arakan Army (AA), who want greater autonomy for Rakhine's Buddhist population in one of Myanmar's poorest states. The UN's humanitarian agency on January 1 said it was "concerned" by the recent surge in violence which has displaced around 2,500 people "who are sheltering in monasteries and other communal spaces". The rebels accuse the military, known in Myanmar as the Tatmadaw, of deploying heavy artillery against villagers.

"People are trapped by the fighting," a spokesman for the Arakan Army Khine Thukha said, accusing the army of commandeering churches, schools and monasteries. There have

been a flurry of murky, unclaimed attacks and murders in the past two weeks in northern Rakhine, which remains deeply fractured along ethnic and religious lines. A policeman was murdered in an ambush by unknown assailants near the Bangladesh border, while two ethnic Rakhine were found with their throats slit, prompting the army to launch localized "clearance operations".

This week a remote-controlled mine attack hit a convoy carrying the western territory's chief minister, who escaped unharmed. Rakhine state was notably sidelined in an unexpected unilateral ceasefire announced by the military in December that only covered conflicts in the northeast of the country. The AA said the army was using the truce elsewhere to focus efforts on Rakhine, a theory Min Zaw Oo from the Myanmar Institute for Peace and Security dismissed as "not very plausible".

No troop redeployments had yet taken place, he said, adding that the aim of the military offensive was to prevent the militants gaining a foothold in Rakhine. "The Tatmadaw's strategy is very similar to other parts of the country," he said. "When they see militant bases, they put them under siege and bombard them with heavy artillery." —AFP

China's population shrinks despite two-child policy

Experts warn of 'demographic crisis' as economic vitality weakens

BEIJING: China's population shrank last year for the first time in 70 years, experts said, warning of a "demographic crisis" that puts pressure on the country's slowing economy. The world's most populous nation of some 1.4 billion for decades limited most families to one child in an attempt to keep population growth sustainable. But since 2016 it has allowed couples to have two children in response to concerns about an ageing society and shrinking workforce.

The number of live births nationwide in 2018 fell by 2.5 million year-on-year, contrary to a predicted increase of 790,000 births, according to analysis by US-based academic Yi Fuxian. Yi, a researcher at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, is a long-term critic of the one-child policy and his work has previously gained traction among the country's leadership. Enforced through fines but notorious for cases of forced abortions and sterilization, the one-child policy caused birth rates to plummet after it was introduced in 1979.

However childbirths have not increased as much as forecast since the two-child policy came into force and there has been rising speculation the government will further ease restrictions. Last year marked a "historic turning point for the Chinese population", said Yi, who studied publicly available data on births in towns and villages across China. This downward trend may be irreversible, he cautioned, due to factors such as a decrease in the number of women of child-bearing age and the reluctance of couples to have children due to rising education, health and housing costs.

Yi's calculations show that the number of

deaths in 2018 was about 11.58 million and the total population shrank by 1.27 million. "The Chinese population has started to decrease for the first time since the founding of New China in 1949, the ageing problem has accelerated, and economic vitality has weakened," he said. Yi's findings, due to appear in an upcoming research paper co-authored with Peking University economist Su Jian, were pieced together from National Health Commission figures.

The experts also used other official statistics including school enrolment figures, household registration data and government censuses to reach their conclusions. China's National Bureau of Statistics is expected to release official nationwide birth figures for 2018 later this month. In the meantime, data released by some local authorities indicate a significant drop in births last year.

In Qingdao, a city in eastern Shandong province—one of China's most populous regions—births between January and November decreased by 21 percent to just over 81,000 compared to the previous year. Ren Zeping, chief economist at property developer Evergrande Group, wrote in a research note that China is walking into a "demographic crisis" as the easing of the one-child policy has failed to boost the country's fertility rate.

Ageing crisis

Tracking China's demographic changes is difficult as the figures published by the health commission and statistics bureau do not always match, said He Yafu, an independent demographer based in southern Guangdong province.

omment projects. Those displaced are rarely consulted or compensated, activists say. Last week, in a rare move, the newly elected government in Chhattisgarh said it would give back land taken from indigenous farmers for a steel plant more than a decade ago, but never used. "An Adivasi's right over land is so tenuous - it can be taken away at any time by the government or an upper-caste person," said Rinchin, whose books are also translated into regional languages. The story also highlights the role of caste and gender in land rights issues, she said.

"Women do so much of the work, but have so little say," Rinchin told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Women make up nearly half the agricultural labor in India, yet own less than 2 percent of its farmland, according to the think tank National Council of Applied Economic Research. About 660 disputes over land have forced millions of people from their farms across India, according to the research organization Land Conflict Watch.

Regional-language movies and children's books are focusing on such issues that big-budget Bollywood films and mass paperbacks generally ignore. In "Year of the Weeds", also published last year, Sarma tells the story of the Dongria Kondh tribe in Odisha state, which managed to stop London-listed Vedanta Resources from mining bauxite in the sacred Niyangiri hills. Residents of 12 villages, whose opinion the state sought for a court order in 2013, unanimously voted against allowing mining. "It was a rare positive story, and I decided to write it for teenagers, because I still have hope that the younger generation will engage with these issues and grow up to be kinder, gentler, more humane citizens," said Sarma. — Reuters



QINGDAO: This file picture shows people walking past a bridge adorned with rainbow-colored arches in Qingdao in China's eastern Shandong. — AFP

But he said Yi's estimate of the drop in children born in 2018 is likely to be correct. The number of women of childbearing age is expected to fall by more than 39 percent over the next decade and China's two-child policy isn't enough to shore up dwindling birth rates. He added.

Yi said he was skeptical of the National Bureau of Statistics figures, accusing the organization of "inflating the number of births" to account for families who may not have registered their second, third or fourth child. Local

authorities seeking more funds from the central government have also "over-reported" school enrolment figures and hospital live births, he said.

Yi added that the statistics bureau may have also under-reported the number of deaths. In 2016, Yi was invited to speak at the Boao Forum in southwest China, an annual gathering of influential figures including politicians and businesspeople—the same year Beijing announced an end to its one-child rule. — AFP

Indian writers tell tales of land rights for kids

MUMBAI: Deadly disputes over land and indigenous rights are not obvious themes for children's books, but Indian writers are using real-life conflicts to help the next generation understand their impact on communities across the country. "I Will Save My Land" by Rinchin is about the impact of coal mining on a village, while Siddhartha Sarma's "Year of the Weeds" novel for young adults is based on a successful fight to save indigenous land from a mining company.

"When people are displaced from their land, children are also affected, but perhaps no one explains it to them," said Rinchin, who goes by one name, and published her book last year. In Rinchin's picture book, a little girl named Mati asks her father and grandmother for her own piece of land in the field where they work. She tends to her plot until she hears that they will lose their land to a coal mine.

It is a common occurrence, said Rinchin, in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh, where coal mining has forced tens of thousands of farmers off their land, many of whom are Adivasis, or indigenous people. While indigenous people have customary rights over ancestral land and forests, the state can acquire the land for infrastructure and devel-

Opposition boycotts swearing-in of new Bangladesh MPs

DHAKA: Opposition MPs yesterday boycotted the swearing-in of the new Bangladesh parliament after a controversial election that was dogged by allegations of intimidation and fraud. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was declared the landslide winner after Sunday's poll, marking a third term in office for the leader accused of increasing authoritarianism and overseeing a crackdown on the opposition.

Hasina and 290 other MPs—mainly from the ruling Awami League and its allies—took the oath yesterday, with Hasina elected parliament leader, the first step to her being named prime minister of the South Asian nation. But seven opposition MPs boycotted the ceremony, calling for a re-run of the elections—something Hasina has ruled out. Parliament spokesman Kamal Hossain said that if the MPs do not take an oath within 90 days new elections will be held in their constituencies.

Opposition leaders and candidates from Sunday's election, which ended with at least 17 dead in voting-related unrest, met in Dhaka and were expected to submit an official request to the election commission for the results to be cancelled. The main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its allies say that there was widespread voter intimidation and rigging of the results. —AFP

International

Tourists flee Thai islands as Tropical Storm Pabuk closes in

Authorities prepare shelters to wait out the storm

KHAO LAK: Tens of thousands of tourists have fled some of Thailand's most popular islands and resort areas as Tropical Storm Pabuk closes in and threatens to batter the southern part of the kingdom with heavy rains, winds and seven-meter waves. The islands of Koh Phangan and Koh Tao, packed with holiday-makers during the peak Christmas and New Year season, have emptied out since Wednesday as tourists squeeze onto ferries bound for the southern Thai mainland, with swimming banned and boats set to suspend services.

Pabuk, Thailand's first tropical storm in the area outside of the monsoon season for around 30 years, is poised to hit the two islands as well as neighboring Koh Samui on Friday afternoon, before cutting into the mainland. Packing winds of 104 kilometers per hour, Pabuk is unlikely to intensify into a full-blown typhoon, according to forecasters. "But we expect waves as high as five or seven meters near the eye of the storm," Phuwieng Prakamaintara, head of the Thai Meteorological Department, told reporters.

No official evacuation order has been given but tourists are leaving in droves, with those unable to book flights preparing to see out the storm on eerily deserted islands. "I think the islands are almost empty... between 30,000 to

50,000 have left since the New Year's Eve countdown parties," Krikrai Songthanee, Koh Phangan district chief, said.

The acting mayor of Koh Tao, one of Southeast Asia's finest diving spots, said boats to Chumphon on the mainland were crammed with tourists, but several thousand guests were still on the island likely to brave the storm. "It's difficult to predict the severity of the storm so people should comply with authorities' recommendations."

Danger flags

On Koh Samui, a Russian man drowned on Wednesday after his family ignored warnings not to go into the sea. "A family of three went swimming but the strong current caught a 56-year-old man who drowned," Police Captain Boonnam Srinarat of Samui Police told AFP. "Island officials announced the warning and put up the red 'danger' flags... but maybe the family did not think the situation was that serious." Bangkok Airways, which has a virtual monopoly on the air route to the island, cancelled all flights in and out of Samui on Friday.

Authorities prepared shelters for tourists who decided to wait out the storm or who could not secure seats on ferries for the mainland before services are suspended late yesterday. Pabuk,

“The islands are almost empty”



PATTANI: Fishing boats are seen docked at a port as tropical storm Pabuk approaches the southern province of Pattani, Thailand. —Reuters

which means a giant catfish in Lao, is also expected to dump heavy rain across the south, including tourist hotspots in the Andaman Sea such as Krabi and Phuket. The Similan National Park, home to pristine beaches and bays, has been closed until Saturday as a precaution as the storm bites hard into business during the peak season.

"I was supposed to stay on a boat and dive all day tomorrow (Friday)," Annick Fleury, a 29-year-old tourist from Geneva told AFP in Khao Lak near Phuket, one of hundreds cutting short-or re-rout-

ing—their diving holidays in the Andaman area. "If I can go to Krabi, I'll try to get there tonight. Otherwise I'll have to book myself into a nice hotel and just wait for the storm to pass."

The southernmost provinces of Pattani, Narathiwat and Yala near the Malaysia border are also bracing for flooding. Thailand's economy is heavily reliant on tourism. The kingdom is expected to welcome a record 40 million people this year, many bound for its southern beaches and resorts.—AFP

Quake jolts Japan's Kumamoto

TOKYO: An earthquake with a preliminary magnitude of 5.0 hit southern Japan yesterday but no tsunami warning was issued, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) said, and there were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. The quake, which struck at 6:10 pm, was centered in Kumamoto prefecture on the southern island of Kyushu, at a depth of 10 km, JMA said. Public broadcaster NHK reported that nuclear power facilities in the region were operating as normal. Earthquakes are common in Japan, one of the world's most seismically active areas. Japan accounts for about 20 percent of the world's earthquakes of magnitude 6 or greater.—Reuters

North Korean diplomat in Italy 'seeking asylum'

SEOUL: North Korea's top diplomat in Italy has sought asylum and gone into hiding, Seoul lawmakers told reporters after a closed-door meeting with South Korean intelligence officials yesterday. It would mark the latest high-profile defection by a senior North Korean envoy since the deputy ambassador in London abandoned his post in 2016. "Acting ambassador Jo Song Gil's term was ending in late November last year and he escaped the diplomatic compound in early November" with his wife, lawmaker Kim Min-ki told reporters.

Jo, 48, has been acting ambassador in Rome since October 2017 after Italy expelled the then ambassador Mun Jong Nam in protest at a North Korean nuclear test a month earlier in violation of UN resolutions. Italy is an important diplomatic mission for Pyongyang, as it handles relations with the Rome-headquartered UN Food and Agriculture Organization and North

Korea suffers from chronic food shortages.

Another member of the South Korean parliament, Lee Eun-jae, told reporters that the National Intelligence Service (NIS) had confirmed the envoy had sought asylum, but did not appear to know his whereabouts. A source close to the Italian foreign ministry told AFP on Thursday the country had "no knowledge" of any asylum request from Jo. The source said the ministry had simply received a request for the "replacement" of the diplomat, but did not know Jo's whereabouts, adding that the replacement had arrived in Rome. The NIS briefing to lawmakers came after South Korea's JoongAng Ilbo daily reported that Jo had sought asylum in an unidentified Western country with his family.

"He sought asylum early last month," the JoongAng quoted a diplomatic source in Seoul as saying. Italian authorities were "agonizing" over what to do, the official was cited as saying, but added that they were "protecting him in a safe place".

Privileged family

Jo is "known to be a son or son-in-law of one of the highest-level officials in the North's regime", the JoongAng cited an unnamed North Korea expert as saying. Most North Korean diplomats serving

overseas are normally required to leave several family members—typically children—behind in Pyongyang to prevent their defection while working abroad.

Jo however came to Rome in May 2015 with his wife and children, suggesting he may be from a privileged family, the JoongAng said, adding the reason for his defection bid was still unclear. Relations between the nuclear-armed North and South Korea improved markedly last year after the tensions of 2017, with the two countries' leaders meeting three times.—AFP


Jo's defection, if confirmed, would not impact inter-Korean ties, said Koh Yuhwan, professor of North Korean studies at Dongguk University in Seoul, "unless Pyongyang thinks the escape was arranged by South Korean authorities". The former deputy ambassador to London who defected in 2016, Thae Yong Ho, said at the time that he had switched sides partly to give his three children a better future after being ordered to return to the North.

Pyongyang denounced him in vitriolic terms, calling him "human scum", but did not demand his repatriation. The Kim dynasty has ruled the impoverished North for three generations with little tolerance for dissent, and the regime stands accused of widespread human rights abuses.—AFP

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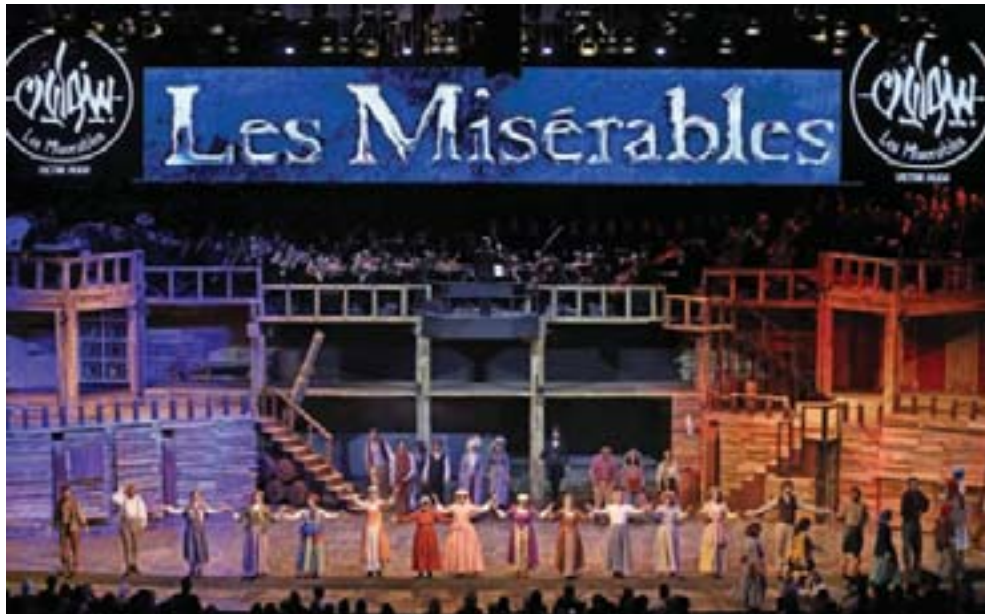
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Peruvian co-driver Lucas Barrón, 25, smiles at a mechanics workshop in Lima where his car is being prepared to take part in the upcoming Rally Dakar in January 2019. — AFP

Down Syndrome competitor to make Dakar Rally history

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A scene from the musical production *Les Misérables*, performed by Iranian artists at the Espinas Hotel in the capital Tehran. — AFP photos



A scene from the musical production *Les Misérables*, performed by Iranian artists at the Espinas Hotel in the capital Tehran.

Broadway hits Iran with unique take on *‘Les Misérables’*

Iranian theatre director Hossein Parsaee calls Victor Hugo's classic a "masterpiece without borders" but his groundbreaking production of "Les Misérables" that has hit the stage in Tehran has a few unique twists. For a start, none of the actresses are allowed to reveal their own hair, and in case their wigs look too natural, the poster advertising the show carries a bright red notice underscoring that their locks are fake.

Nor do the actors and actresses touch hands, or have any other physical contact throughout the musical. This is, after all, the capital of the Islamic republic, even if the blockbuster show in the luxurious Espinas Hotel feels a world away from the usual stereotypes about Iran. The concessions to the government's view of Islamic rules are often subtle. There is, for instance, always at least one other voice accompanying an actress when

she sings—since female solos are taboo—although spotting the second voice can be tricky.

All the other staples of a big-budget musical are here: a live orchestra, billowing dry ice and dazzling light displays. With a cast, crew and orchestra of over 450, the production has played to sold-out 2,500-strong crowds for six nights a week since it debuted in November.

'It was all perfect'

It was a mainly young, well-heeled crowd when AFP visited recently, and they could barely control their excitement at a rare chance to attend a musical in their home city. "It was so much more than I expected," gushed Maryam Taheri, a 45-year-old housewife, after the show. "The acting, the music, the lighting—

it was all perfect." Foreign-made TV, film and cartoon versions of "Les Misérables"—a French 19th-century epic on sociopolitical tumult, crime and punishment—have been frequently shown in Iran, where the book has also been translated.

The classic work even has the stamp of approval from supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has described Victor Hugo's book as "a miracle among novels... a book of kindness, affection and love." The new production is being hailed as the most spectacular play yet staged in Iran, and arrives at a topical moment with the ongoing "yellow vest" protests in France. "After 200 years you see it happening again in France," contends businessman Mehdi Hooshyar. "This is good, it shows whenever their society stagnates, something like this happens to move it forward," he said. "The revolution is still alive."



Theatre-goers gather at the Espinas Hotel in the Iranian capital Tehran, before watching the musical production *Les Misérables*, performed in Persian by local artists.



A scene from the musical production *Les Misérables*, performed by Iranian artists at the Espinas Hotel in the capital Tehran.

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Theatre-goers take a selfie at the Espinas Hotel in the Iranian capital Tehran, before watching the musical production *Les Miserables*.



A scene from the musical production *Les Miserables*.



A scene from the musical production *Les Miserables*.

'No Miserables allowed in'

The lavishness of the production has brought its share of criticism, however.

The play has come at a volatile moment in Iran, when anger at economic inequality and corruption dominates political debate. Tickets, priced between 500,000 and 1.85 million rials (roughly \$5 to \$20, 4.4 euros to 17.5 euros), are beyond the means of most Iranians. "No Miserables allowed in," said a conservative daily, Javan.

Director Parsaee said connecting with Tehran's elite was part of the point. "This story is relevant to all times, and all places, and that includes today's Tehran. It's about the class divide, the social breakdown and the poverty that exists today," he told AFP. "It's a reminder to the audience that other classes exist and we need to see them and know about them. It's a serious warning."

'No taboos broken'

Much of the show seems to run against Iranian taboos, not least the mixed dancing and drinking in brothels and inns. But Parsaee, who used to head the performing arts department at

the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, knows the red lines well. "The review board saw the play in its entirety before we were allowed to begin our run," he said. "They found it completely compatible with the rules and regulations. No taboos were broken."

The director's love for musicals started around a decade ago when he saw "Oliver Twist", based on the Charles Dickens classic, in London. "I was depressed for days, thinking why can't we do this? I vowed to myself that I would one day make a musical in Iran." He did precisely that, bringing "Oliver Twist" to the stage in Tehran last year. And now he has established a production company to train a new generation of musical directors. "I've opened the door on musicals in Iran, and now, like a relay race, others must advance it to a point that there won't be any difference between Iran and Broadway." — AFP

Zuma's plan to record album angers S Africa opposition

Former South African president Jacob Zuma's plan to record an album of apartheid-era struggle songs sparked off a political row yesterday as opposition politicians slammed the project as a taxpayer-funded waste of money. Zuma, ousted from power last year amid multiple fraud scandals, is famed for his rich baritone singing voice and regularly bursts into song at ruling ANC party rallies and public events.

He plans to record the album in front of a live audience in April and to release it later in the year, with his trademark song "Awuleth' Umshini Wami" ("Bring Me My Machine Gun") set to be on the playlist. The song is one of many tunes that played a central role in the decades-long struggle against white-minority rule and which are still sung at protests in South Africa today.

"These songs remind us of where we came from and how our country was forged," said Thembinkosi Ngcobo, head of recreation and culture at the Ethekwini local municipality, which will fund the album. "The worst thing that we could do would be to forget our past," Ngcobo told AFP. "We chased president Zuma for three months and, when he heard about our plan, he was more excited than us about it." Ngcobo said Zuma would not be paid or receive any profits from the album, and was giving his time for free to "preserve and disseminate of our liberation heritage".

Public funds

Ethekwini municipality, which includes the coastal city of Durban, is in Zuma's home province of KwaZulu Natal—a hotbed of the corruption scandals that beset his rule as president and finally led to his ousting. "The album itself is not an issue at all—except that it will be funded by public money and we have no idea how much," local opposition councillor Nicole Graham, from the Democratic Alliance party, told AFP. "This is about factional battles within the ANC party, with his supporters attempting to give him a continued platform after his fall.

"The DA will fight this matter tooth and nail in the interests of all who prioritize service delivery over politics." Zuma, 76, came to power in 2009 and was ousted by ANC lawmakers early last year after a fierce battle for control of the party. The former president, who is thought to have little personal wealth, is battling to quash criminal charges against him over a \$2.5-billion corruption case linked to a 1990s arms deal. He also faces allegations of fostering widespread corruption while in power. Ngcobo said Zuma's singing was a key part of his political image. "It was one reason for his popularity. It projects him as an informal, friendly and accessible person," he said. — AFP



In this file photo South Africa's President Jacob Zuma gestures during celebrations for his 75th birthday in Kliptown, Soweto. — AFP

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'Aquaman' stays afloat atop N American box office

“Aquaman” displayed a powerful kick in North American theaters over the weekend, taking in an estimated \$52.1 million to help close a record year for the movie sector, final figures showed Wednesday. With hunky and heavily tattooed Jason Momoa in the lead role, the Warner Bros film has grossed nearly \$750 million globally. It earned \$52.1 million in its second weekend. Disney’s “Mary Poppins Returns” gained altitude in its second weekend, taking in \$28.4 million for the Friday-through-Sunday period.

The follow-up to the 1964 movie stars Emily Blunt as the stern but kind-hearted nanny, backed by the amiable Lin-Manuel Miranda of “Hamilton” fame. In third was Paramount’s “Bumblebee,” a prequel to the “Transformers” movies, starring Hailee Steinfeld and John Cena, at \$20.9 million. The Washington Post credits the film with rising above earlier editions in the franchise to show “humor, emotion and a surprising amount of heart.”

Fourth place went to Sony’s “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse,” at \$18.8 million. The film has drawn rave reviews—with a 97 score on the Rotten Tomatoes website—and has netted a Golden Globe nomination as best animated picture. In fifth was “The Mule” from Warner Bros, at \$12.2 million. Clint Eastwood directs and takes the lead role—his last acting part, he has said—as a destitute 90-year-old who turns to transporting cocaine for a drug cartel. Rounding out the weekend’s top 10 were:

- “Vice” (\$7.8 million)
- “Holmes & Watson” (\$7.4 million)
- “Second Act” (\$7.4 million)
- “Ralph Breaks the Internet” (\$6.7 million)
- “Dr. Seuss’s The Grinch” (\$4.1 million)
- “Mary Queen of Scots” (\$2.7 million)—AFP



In this file photo US actor Jason Momoa arrives for the world premiere of ‘Aquaman’ at the TCL Chinese theatre in Hollywood. — AFP

Florence museum demands Germany return artwork stolen by Nazis



A handout picture shows the Florence Uffizi Galleries director Eike Schmidt posing past a copy of the ‘Vase of Flowers’ by Dutch painter Jan van Huysum, stolen from the Wehrmacht’s Pitti Palace during World War II, in Florence. — AFP

The Uffizi Gallery in Florence on Tuesday appealed to Berlin for help in retrieving a stolen 18th century Dutch painting from a German family. “An appeal to Germany for 2019: We wish that the famous ‘Vase of Flowers’ by Dutch painter Jan van Huysum that was stolen by Nazi soldiers be returned to the Uffizi Gallery,” the museum’s German director Eike Schmidt said. According to Schmidt, the oil painting is “currently held by a German family who, after all this time, has still not returned it to the museum despite many requests by the Italian state.”

Before it was stolen during World War II, the still-life, which measures 47x35 cm (18x14 inches), was part of a collection owned by another well-known Florence museum, the Palazzo Pitti. After being shipped to Germany the work’s whereabouts remained unknown until 1991, after Germany was reunified, Schmidt said. Van Huysum was a well-known specialist of still-life paintings, and until this one is returned, “the wounds of the Second World War and Nazi terror will not be healed,” the museum director claimed.

Schmidt, who is also an art historian, urged Germany “to abolish the statute of limitations for works stolen during the conflict and ensure they can be returned to their rightful owners.” In the meantime, a black and white copy of “Flower Vase” was hung Tuesday at the Uffizi Gallery, with the word “stolen” in English, German and Italian on it. A brief explanation tells visitors that the work was stolen by Nazi soldiers in 1944 and is now in a German private collection. — AFP

Daryl Dragon of pop duo Captain and Tennille dies at 76

Singer and pianist Daryl Dragon, best known as “The Captain” of 1970s soft rock duo Captain and Tennille, has died at the age of 76, his publicist said on Wednesday. Dragon died of kidney failure in Prescott, Arizona, on Wednesday, publicist Harlan Boll said in a statement. Captain and Tennille were best known for their Grammy-winning 1974 hit song “Love Will Keep Us Together,” as well as the hits “Muskrat Love” in 1976, and “Do That to Me One More Time” in 1980. They also hosted their own television variety series from 1976 to 1977.

Toni Tennille, who married Dragon in 1975, was with him when he died. “He was a brilliant musician with many friends who loved him greatly. I was at my most creative in my life, when I was with him,” Tennille said in a statement. The couple divorced in 2014 but remained friends. Tennille said in a 2010 blog post that Dragon was suffering from an unspecified neurological condition that gave him hand tremors, seriously affecting his ability to play keyboards.

Dragon said in 2017 that his problems were a result of medication and that he was better. Dragon was a classically trained pianist but preferred to play blues and boogie music instead of Bach and Beethoven. He played with Fats Domino and B.B. King and was also a backup keyboard player for the Beach Boys in the mid-1960s and early 1970s.

It was with the Beach Boys that Dragon got his stage name, thanks to his habit of wearing a ship captain’s hat while performing. He met Tennille when they both toured for the Beach Boys, and they began performing together. They signed a record deal in 1974, releasing “Love Will Keep Us Together,” which held onto the No. 1 spot on the charts for eight weeks in the summer of 1975. Captain and Tennille also toured England, Australia and Japan.

In 1976, they sang at the White House during the bicentennial

celebrations of the American Revolution. Wednesday’s obituary notice said that at Dragon’s request there would be no services, and suggested donations to organizations conducting research into neurological conditions. — Reuters



In this file photo ‘Captain’ Daryl Dragon and his wife Toni Tennille of the music duo The Captain and Tennille, pose at the Video Software Dealers Association’s annual home video convention at the Bellagio July 27, 2005 in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP



Jacques Barron (left) and his son and co-driver Lucas Barron, 25, pose at a mechanics workshop in Lima. — AFP photos



Jacques Barron (right) smiles next to his son and co-driver Lucas Barron, 25, at a mechanics workshop in Lima.

Down Syndrome competitor to make Dakar Rally history

Lucas Barron will make history on Sunday when he lines up on the Dakar 2019 starting line in Peru, becoming the first person with Down Syndrome to take part in the gruelling race. The 25-year-old, who will be co-pilot for his father Jacques, will tackle the world's most demanding rally: a 5,000 kilometer (3,000 mile), 10-day marathon, 70 percent of which will be raced over sand. "Our aim is to finish the race and achieve our goal," a beaming Barron told AFP. "This race is brilliant for me. It will be easy because we know the route."

Barron, who has been training for a year and a half alongside his father, will ride on one of 500 vehicles taking part in the race. He will compete in the UTV category for off-road four-wheel drive buggies, a class that was added for the first time in 2017. Born in Lima, Barron has always been a keen sportsman despite his disability, taking part in swimming, football, cycling, surfing and water-skiing. He says he's "ready and able to overcome the desert dunes." A fan of both rock and hip hop music, Barron says he will provide important mechanical assistance to his father. "I'm going to help him look at the engine, the road and the tyres," said Barron.

He is familiar with the Peruvian terrain that will host the entirety of the Dakar rally this year after Argentina, Chile, Paraguay and Bolivia declined the opportunity due to austerity measures. In September, he was co-pilot alongside his father in the Desafio Inca race that acted as preparation for the main event and took on the dunes of Ica, in the south of Peru. The "Barron x 2" team finished seventh.

No fear

While Down Syndrome can cause lifelong intellectual disability and development delays, those with the condition can still lead fulfilling lives. Jacques Barron, a 55-year-old engineer, told AFP that Dakar organizers had no problem with his son taking part. The requirements were the same as for any other competitor: passing all the medical exams and supplying the necessary documentation. "Lucas already has the International Automobile Federation license to participate in the Dakar," Barron told AFP. He said his son is afraid of nothing and knows what to do if there is a problem.

"He knows how to look at the temperature of the belt, the oil and tyre pressure," said Barron, who has competed in the Dakar five times. "Lucas's eyes will be the cars' eyes to avoid crashing into another car or any object. "People with Down Syndrome can develop certain abilities: Lucas can play any sport." The Dakar will be run from January 6-17, starting in Peru's capital Lima and traversing the southern regions of Ica, Arequipa, Moquegua and down to Tacna on the border with Chile.

The longest, and toughest stage will cover 370 kilometers from Arequipa to Tacna on January 10. The Barron team's main aim is simply to finish the race. Lucas Barron has the support of one of his idols, five-time motorbike winner Cyril Despres of France, a friend of his father's. "Despres wrote to me on Facebook congratulating me," he said, adding that the Frenchman gave him a signed shirt in 2017 — a treasured possession. — AFP



Jacques Barron (right) and his son and co-driver Lucas Barron, 25, pose under their UTV (Utility Task Vehicle) at a mechanics workshop.



Jacques Barron (left) and his son and co-driver Lucas Barron check their UTV (Utility Task Vehicle) at a mechanics workshop in Lima where it is being prepared to take part in the upcoming Rally Dakar.



Peruvian co-driver Lucas Barron poses for a picture at a mechanics workshop.

Chewing the fat with Pakistan's BBQ masters



A Pakistani cook fries kebabs as customers gather around at the Tory Kebab House in Namak Mandi in Peshawar.—AFP photos

The sweet aroma of mutton smoke drifts through a maze of crumbling alleyways, a barbecue tang that for decades has lured meat-eaters from across Pakistan to the frontier city of Peshawar. The ancient city, capital of northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, has retained its reputation for some of Pakistan's tastiest cuisine despite bearing the brunt of the country's bloody war with militancy. University student Mohammad Fahad had long heard tales of Peshawar's famed mutton. "Earlier we heard of Peshawar being a dangerous place," he told AFP—but security has improved in recent years, and he finally made the hours-long journey from the eastern city of Lahore to see if it could live up to the hype.

"We are here just to see what the secret to this barbecue is," he says, excitedly awaiting his aromatic portion in Namak Mandi—"Salt Market"—located in the heart of Peshawar. The hearty cuisine comes from generations-old recipes emanating from the nearby Pashtun tribal lands along the border with Afghanistan. It is feted for its simplicity compared with the intricate curries and spicy dishes from Pakistan's eastern plains and southern coast.

"Its popularity is owed to the fact that it is mainly meat-based and that always goes down well across the country," says Pakistani cookbook author Sumayya Usmani. The famed Nisar Charsi (hashish smoker) Tikka—named after its owner's renowned habit-in Namak Mandi chalks up its decades of success to using very little in the way of spices. For its barbecue offerings, tikkas—cuts of meat—are generously salted and sandwiched on skewers between cubes of fat for tenderness and taste, and slow-cooked over a wood fire. Its other famed dish, karahi—or curry stew—is made with slices of mutton pan-cooked in heaped chunks of white fat carved from the sheep's rump, along with sparing amounts of green chilli and tomatoes. Both plates are served with stacks of oven-fresh naan and bowls of fresh yogurt. "It is the best food in the entire world," gushes



A Pakistani man cooks grilled meat at the Charsi (Hashish) Tikka restaurant in Namak Mandi in Peshawar.

co-owner Nasir Khan, adding that the restaurant sources some of the best meat in the country and serves customers from across Pakistan daily along with local regulars. By Khan's calculations, the restaurant goes through hundreds of kilograms of meat a day—or about two dozen sheep—with hundreds if not thousands served.

Hash and meat

The clientele at Nisar's Charsi and other Salt Market eateries usually arrive in large groups, with experienced customers ordering food by the kilo and guiding cleaver-wielding butchers to their preferred cuts, which are then cooked immediately. Peshawar's improved security has given business a boost, Khan said. "We had a lot of troubles and pains," he admitted, remembering friends lost



Skewers of lamb hang at a Charsi (Hashish) Tikka restaurant in Namak Mandi in Peshawar.

during the years of devastating bombings and suicide attacks. But some customers said they had been loyal to Peshawar's cuisine even during the bloodshed. "I've been coming here for more than 20 years now," said Hammad Ali, 35, who travelled to Peshawar with eight other colleagues from Pakistan's capital Islamabad for a gluttonous lunch. "This taste is unique, that's why we have come all this way."

Orders generally take close to an hour to prepare, with customers quaffing tea and occasionally smoking hash ahead of the meal. "They smoke it openly here," explained Nisar Charsi's head chef Mukam Pathan. "When someone smokes one joint of hash, they eat around two kilos of meat." For those looking for a little less lamb, the city's renowned chapli kebab offers an alternative. The kebab is typically made of minced beef and a mix of spices kneaded into pat-

ties and deep fried on a simmering iron skillet. Rokhan Ullah—owner of Tory Kebab House—said the dish is most popular on cold, winter days that see ravenous customers flocking to its four branches across the city, overwhelming staff and making orders hard to fill.

“They eat it with passion... because one enjoys hot food when the weather is cold,” explained Ullah, who plans to expand in major cities across Pakistan. Customer Muhib Ullah has been eating kebabs three to four days a week for the last decade. “This is the tastiest and most famous food in Peshawar,” he declared.

Hours-long meals

For regular barbecue eater Omar Aamir Aziz, it is not just the heaping portions of meat that attract foodies to Peshawari cuisine, but the culture that has built up around the meal. Other cities in Pakistan and abroad have more in the way of entertainment and nightlife options. But in deeply conservative Peshawar, eating out is the primary leisure activity.

Meals tend to last for hours after the meat has been consumed as conversation continues over steaming cups of green tea. “That’s what we have and that’s our specialty,” says Aziz. “We’ve been doing this for two, three, four hundred years.”—AFP



Pakistani customers eat grilled meat at the Charsi (Hashish) Tikka restaurant in Namak Mandi in Peshawar.



Pakistani butcher Nisar Charsi prepares meat in his restaurant in Namak Mandi in Peshawar.



A Pakistani man (center) serves customers a plate of kebabs at the Tory Kebab House in Namak Mandi in Peshawar.



A Pakistani cook prepares meat to be grilled at the Charsi (Hashish) Tikka restaurant in Namak Mandi in Peshawar.



A Pakistani man cooks grilled meat at the Charsi (Hashish) Tikka restaurant in Namak Mandi in Peshawar.

Beyonce helps Paris Louvre attract record visitor numbers

The world’s most popular museum, the Paris Louvre, received over 10 million visitors in 2018, a record which it partly attributed yesterday to a Beyonce video shot against the backdrop of the Mona Lisa and other famous works. Some 10.2 million people visited the museum last year, a 25 percent increase over 2017, which its president Jean-Luc Martinez also linked to a stunning tourism recovery in Paris after a slump caused by a spate of terror attacks. But Martinez also gave some of the credit to pop power couple Beyonce and Jay Z, who shot the video for their hit “Apešhit” in the galleries of the former royal palace.

The wildly popular clip, which has been viewed 147 million times on YouTube, went on to form the basis of a tour designed by the Louvre that takes in the 17 paintings and sculptures featured in the video. “The Beyonce clip and the opening of the Louvre museum in Abu Dhabi had people around the world talking about the Louvre. And one of the consequences is this spectacular rebound in the visitor numbers in 2018,” Martinez told France Info radio. A 60-million-euro revamp of its reception areas and ticketing system also helped the venerable museum, one of Paris’s best-known landmarks which was founded after the French Revolution, manage the influx. The overhaul was chiefly funded by an agreement between France and the oil-rich United Arab

Emirates, where the Louvre opened an outpost in Abu Dhabi to great fanfare in November 2017.

Chinese surge

In 2017, the Louvre just edged the National Museum of China to remain the most-visited museum in the world with 8.1 million visitors compared to 8 million for the Beijing gallery and 7.3 million for the Metropolitan museum in New York. While the French remain the biggest patrons of the Louvre, which also home to the Venus de Milo, foreigners accounted for three-quarters of the intake. Nearly a million Chinese swept through the Louvre’s doors in 2018, making them the second biggest foreign visitor group after Americans, who numbered nearly 1.5 million. “It’s a huge leap,” Martinez told AFP, noting that five years ago the Chinese were not in the top five of foreign visitors.

The record numbers cap a dramatic turnaround for the Louvre, which like other Paris landmarks had suffered the fallout of several major terror attacks that severely dented visitor numbers. The Louvre itself was targeted in one attack in February 2017, when an Egyptian man armed with machetes lunged at soldiers on patrol outside the facility. No visitors were hurt in the incident, which saw police shoot the attacker, seriously injuring him.—AFP





Tenderize and tackle tough short ribs in a sous vide bath

Beef short ribs are a prime example of how the precise control of time and temperature afforded by sous vide cooking can affect a piece of meat. Short ribs are a tougher cut, with a good amount of collagen and intramuscular fat so they are traditionally braised to a fall-apart texture. But with sous vide, you can achieve short ribs that have a texture similar to a medium-rare steak or you can deliver a more traditional flaky, braised texture or land almost anywhere in between.

For this recipe, we were looking for a fall-apart tender, pot roast-style texture, so we decided on a higher-temperature water bath (160 F) while keeping the cooking time under 24 hours. This cooking time and temperature combination allowed us to break down this tough cut's intramuscular collagen, tenderizing the meat while keeping it moist and preserving a rosy interior from edge to edge.

To make things even easier, we frontloaded the work. We quickly seared the short ribs, and then we built a sauce with traditional pot roast ingredients: mirepoix, tomato paste, red wine, beef broth, and herbs. We bagged up the beef and sauce together for their sous vide bath.

Afterward, we strained the sauce and briefly reduced it on the stovetop, we poured it over the tender short ribs and finished the dish with a sprinkling of fresh parsley. Easy pot roast, no pot or roasting required. Make sure that the ribs are at least 4 inches long and 1 inch thick. Be sure to double-bag the ribs to protect against seam failure.

SHORT RIB POT ROAST

Ingredients

Servings: 4

Sous vide time: 20-24 hours (Active time: 1 hour)

3 1/2 pounds boneless beef short ribs, trimmed

Salt and pepper

2 tablespoons vegetable oil

1 large onion, chopped

2 celery ribs, chopped

1 carrot, peeled and chopped

1 tablespoon tomato paste

1 garlic clove, minced

1 cup beef broth

8 sprigs fresh thyme

2 bay leaves

2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

Preparation

Using sous vide circulator, bring water to 160 F in 7-quart container. Pat ribs dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in Dutch oven over medium-high heat until just smoking. Brown half of ribs on all sides, 8 to 12 minutes; transfer to plate. Repeat with remaining 1 table-

spoon oil and ribs.

Add onion, celery, carrot, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper to fat left in pot and cook over medium heat until softened and lightly browned, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in tomato paste and garlic and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Scrap up any browned bits, and cook until reduced by half, 2 to 4 minutes. Stir in broth and simmer for 2 minutes. Transfer mixture to blender and process until smooth, about 1 minute.

Divide ribs, sauce, thyme sprigs, and bay leaves between two 1-gallon zipper-lock freezer bags and toss to coat. Arrange ribs in single layer and seal bags, pressing out as much air as possible. Place each bag in second 1-gallon zipper-lock freezer bag and seal bags. Gently lower bags into prepared water bath until ribs are fully submerged, and then clip top corner of each bag to side of water bath container, allowing remaining air bubbles to rise to top of bag. Reopen 1 corner of each zipper, release remaining air bubbles, and reseal bags. Cover and cook for at least 20 hours or up to 24 hours.

Using tongs, transfer ribs to serving dish. Tent with aluminum foil and let rest while finishing sauce. Strain cooking liquid through fine-mesh strainer into medium saucepan, pressing on solids to extract as much liquid as possible; discard solids. Bring to simmer over medium heat and cook until reduced to 2 cups, 4 to 6 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Spoon sauce over ribs, sprinkle with parsley, and serve.



Old stale bread transforms into croutons that top this soup

Don't throw out stale bread. Seriously, don't. Baguettes, sliced sandwich bread and even loaves of crusty white bread can be recycled into homemade croutons. Use a chef's knife to cut the bread into cubes (1/2-inch to 3/4-inch cubes are ideal). Toss the cubes with olive oil and some salt, and then spread them out on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake them in a 350 F oven, stirring once or twice so they brown evenly, until crisp and golden brown, about 15 minutes. Once cool, the croutons can be stored in an airtight container for a week or so. Use them in soups or salads. Follow this recipe with your kids.

GINGERY CARROT SOUP

Ingredients

Servings 1-2 (Makes 2 cups)
 Prep Time: 10 minutes
 Cook Time: 30 minutes
 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
 8 ounces carrots, peeled and cut into 1-inch pieces
 1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and chopped

1/4 teaspoon salt
 1 1/3 cups chicken or vegetable broth
 1/3 cup milk
 Gather Cooking Equipment:
 Large saucepan with lid
 Wooden spoon
 Oven mitts
 Ladle
 Blender
 Dish towel
 1 or 2 bowls or mugs

Preparation

In large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat for 1 minute (oil should be hot but not smoking). Add carrots, ginger, and salt and cook, stirring occasionally with wooden spoon, until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Stir in broth, increase heat to high, and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover, and simmer until carrots are very soft, about 15 minutes. Turn off heat and slide saucepan to cool burner.

Use oven mitts to remove lid and let cool for 5 minutes.

Use ladle to carefully transfer carrots and liquid into blender jar (liquid will be hot; ask an adult for help). Add milk. Place lid on top of blender and hold lid firmly in place with folded dish towel. Process until smooth, about 1 minute. Pour soup into bowls or mugs and serve.

Ginger Prep:

Use side of small spoon to scrape skin from one end of large piece of ginger. Peel away skin from about 1 inch of ginger. Use a chef's knife to cut off peeled portion of ginger. Chop peeled ginger into small pieces.

Nutrition information per serving: 142 calories; 72 calories from fat; 8 g fat (1 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 4 mg cholesterol; 435 mg sodium; 15 g carbohydrate; 3 g fiber; 7 g sugar; 4 g protein.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, BOLLYWOOD: EXPLORING CINEMATIC MUMBAI



Mumbai's 'Welcome to Fabulous Bollywood' sign

Often called mayanagari (city of dreams), Mumbai is synonymous with Bollywood, India's largest film industry and one of the biggest movie machines on earth. As the entertainment hub of the country, it's no surprise that the city is home to hundreds of Bollywood actors, directors, film-makers and wannabes, and the city also appears in the storylines of dozens of critically-acclaimed movies, from local hits such as the Academy-Award nominated *Salaam Bombay!*, 2013 romance *The Lunchbox* and crime drama *Chandni Bar* to international releases such as *The Hundred Foot Journey*, *Slumdog Millionaire* and *Million Dollar Arm*.

If you're interested in the art of film-making and understanding how, over the last century, Bollywood has influenced and shaped Indian popular culture, take time to explore the many

movie links in this cinematic city, from Bollywood studios and shooting locations to vintage cinema halls and striking wall art inspired by the stars. Here's a quick guide on how to turn your trip to Mumbai into a blockbuster.

Get behind the scenes in Bollywood

After opening its exclusive doors only to actors for decades, Film City Studio in Mumbai has now partnered with the state tourism department to offer visitors a chance to step into their favorite Bollywood movies, or at least the sets where they were filmed.

One of India's largest film studios, Film City offers weekend bus tours to both indoor and outdoor shooting sets for such hit movies such as Shah Rukh Khan's *Happy New Year* and *Josh*, to name just a few. Visitors can get lucky with



Mumbai's iconic landmarks set the scene for many local and international hit films



Juhu Beach is a prime location for Bollywood song and dance numbers

snapping photographs of celebrities too, as stars regularly visit the canteen on the premises.

For a more detailed look at the industry, tour companies such as Viator, Mumbai Film City Tours and Thrillophilia offer group tours giving insight into different aspects of Indian film-making, including its history and growth, the technical processes of editing and dubbing, and iconic movie locations. As in Los Angeles, you can also take a tour of the lavish, or sometimes humble, homes where some of India's top cinema stars live or were born. Khaki Tours and the Mumbai Darshan Tour (run by Maharashtra Tourism) are reliable options.

Hit the Mumbai theatre trail

Mumbai historians take pride in the fact that the very first Indian movie, Raja Harishchandra, filmed in 1913 by Dadasaheb Phalke using cameras, lights and projectors shipped over from Europe and America, has its origins in the city. In the heyday of Indian cinema that followed the end of WWII, Sandhurst Road - today occupied by the railway lines of the Harbour local line - stretched from Girgaum Chowpatty to Dongri, lined with the grandest movie theatres of its time: the Olympia, the Coronation, the New Alhambra, the Majestic.

Most of these have vanished, or now stand as forlorn shells, lost in time, owing to the onslaught of multiplex culture. However, a handful can still be visited, screening mostly obscure regional movies, in a setting of decaying art-deco grandeur. Cinephiles should seek out the Alfred Theatre near Kamathipura, or the nostalgically dilapidated Nishant Talkies, New Roshan Talkies and Moti Talkies, dating from the transition away from silent films, dotted between Grant Road and Sandhurst Road.

To catch newly launched Bollywood movies in a classic theatre setting, head to the graceful, art deco Regal Cinema on Colaba Causeway, the rocketship-shaped Eros at Churchgate, or the Metro INOX Cinema (originally built and run by MGM, the Hollywood Studio), still sitting pretty at Marine Lines. Having completed the movie theatre trail, tourists can head to the recently reopened Royal Opera House near Girgaum Chowpatty, an architectural marvel from 1912. As well as hosting the opera talent of its day, the place is also credited with being the making of the Kapoor Khandaan family, the first proper Bollywood dynasty, who grew up watching stage shows and musicals at the opera house in the dying days of the Raj.



Bollywood stars attend the 18th Mumbai Film Festival at the recently reopened Royal Opera House

Lifestyle | Travel

Locations, locations, locations

Unless you have an encyclopedic knowledge of Bollywood films, it may help to hire a guide, or at least a taxi and driver, to explore the most prominent landmarks in the city that have doubled up as movie locations. Start with the Gateway of India and the iconic Taj Mahal Palace hotel - settings for many a Bollywood dance routine - or head to the Colaba and Bora Bazaar markets that featured prominently in Aamir Khan's *Talaash* and Tom Cruise's *Mission Impossible 4: Ghost Protocol* respectively.

Film-makers have long been drawn to the scenic promenade of Marine Drive, where parts of the motorcycle action thriller *Dhoom*, 2003 comedy-drama *Munna Bhai MBBS*, and coming-of-age film *Wake Up Sid* were filmed. There's something undeniably cinematic about the crowds of young Mumbaikers gathering on the edge of the urban sprawl to soak up the fresh breezes and calming sunrises and sunsets. Come in the wee hours of morning, when the city wakes up. Next, head on to Bandra, the swanky northern suburb whose boutiques, bars and restaurants cater to many movie stars and icons of the industry. Stroll around Bandstand, Carter Road, Chapel Road, Pali-Hill and the Worli Sea Link and you may spot a star or two in the flesh.

Alternatively, wander through the surrounding backroads and narrow by-lanes, where you'll stumble across larger-than-life murals depicting classic Bollywood movies, such as the 1960 historical drama masterpiece *Mughal-E-Azam* and superstars such as Amitabh Bachchan, Rajesh Khanna, and Dadasaheb Phalke, the father of Indian cinema.

Off-Beat Bollywood Locations

Not all movie locations are glamorous. A number of agencies run trips to the vast slum area of Dharavi, where parts of *Slumdog Millionaire* were shot. This doesn't have to be an intrusive experience, however. On the best trips, guides from the community will introduce you to local people and explain not just the area's significance to Bollywood, but also how its fame has helped residents transform their lives. In the process, you'll be providing work and income for Dharavi residents.

Another interesting spot is the Mahalakshmi Dhobi Ghat, where thousands of washermen make their daily living pummeling



The Art Deco frontage of Mumbai's historic Regal Cinema

the laundry of city residents in concrete washtubs in the open air. Bollywood paid tribute to their energetic trade in the namesake movie *Dhobi Ghat*. Any list of popular movie locations in Mumbai would be incomplete without a mention of its beaches: Juhu, Girgaum Chowpatty, and Aksa beaches. An untold number of films have set their stars on the sand, with Juhu the beach of choice for cast-of-hundreds song-and-dance numbers. See it in its prime in

the 1971 Rajesh Khanna and Amitabh Bachchan flick *Anand*.

There's one more cinematic experience we shouldn't overlook. Film-makers periodically drop by Apollo Bunder and the cheap backpacker guesthouses of Colaba when they need extras for crowd scenes, offering a modest daily payment in exchange for a fascinating glimpse at how Bollywood works from in front of the camera. - (www.lonelyplanet.com)



Numerous Bollywood dance performances have been filmed to a backdrop of the iconic Taj Mahal Palace hotel

Comic

Word Search

Photography

Find and circle all of the Photography terms that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of a type of camera.

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

- | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| APERTURE | ENLARGEMENT | OVEREXPOSURE | SATURATION |
| BALANCE | ENLARGER | PANNING | SHUTTER |
| BELLOWS | FILTER | PANORAMA | SLIDE |
| BLOWUP | FIXING BATH | PARALLAX | STOP BATH |
| CAMERA | FLASH | PHOTOFINISHER | TELEPHOTO LENS |
| CLOSE UP | FOCAL LENGTH | POSITIVE | TINT |
| COLOR | FRAME | PRINT | TOPE |
| CONTRAST | HOT SHOE | PROCESSING | TRIPOD |
| CROPPING | LIGHT METER | RANGEFINDER | UNDEREXPOSURE |
| DARKROOM | LIGHTING | RETOUCHING | VIEWFINDER |
| DEVELOPER | NEGATIVE | SAFELIGHT | ZOOM LENS |

Yesterday's Solution

Phonetic Alphabet

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

- | | | | |
|---------|--------|--------|---------|
| ALPHA | HOTEL | OSCAR | UNIFORM |
| BRAVO | INDIA | PAPA | VICTOR |
| CHARLIE | JULIET | QUEBEC | WHISKEY |
| DELTA | KILO | ROMEO | X-RAY |
| ECHO | LIMA | SIERRA | YANKEE |
| FOXTROT | MIKE | TANGO | ZULU |
| GOLF | | | |

The hidden word is: NOVEMBER

Crossword 2101



ACROSS

- A color varying around light grayish brown.
- (architecture) A triangular bracket of brick or stone (usually of slight extent).
- A former communist country in eastern Europe and northern Asia.
- The chief solid component of mammalian urine.
- A republic in southeastern Europe on the southern part of the Balkan peninsula.
- Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
- Devoid of brightness or appeal.
- A narcotic that is considered a hard drug.
- British dominion over India (1757-1947).
- Selected as the best.
- (physics and chemistry) The smallest component of an element having the chemical properties of the element.
- (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
- A member of one of the four divisions of the prehistoric Greeks.
- A metric unit of length equal to 100 meters.
- A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
- Dragonflies and damselflies.
- Type genus of the Ranidae.
- A branch of the Tai languages.
- Large dark brown North American arboreal carnivorous mammal.
- The capital and largest city of Mongolia.
- 100 satangs equal 1 baht.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- The site of an archeological exploration.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- A member of a rural Finnish people living in eastern Russia.
- An East Indian sailor.
- Be in contradiction with.
- God of fire.
- Any of several plants of the genus *Camassia*.
- The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
- Straggling shrub with narrow leaves and conspicuous red flowers in dense globular racemes.
- (Greek mythology) The winged goddess of the dawn in ancient mythology.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- How long something has existed.
- A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- Negation of a word or group of words.
- Edible tuber of any of several yams.
- Neuralgia along the sciatic nerve.
- Hormone released by the hypothalamus that controls the release of thyroid-stimulating hormone from the anterior pituitary.

DOWN

- Joined together into a whole.
- An artificial language intended for international use as an auxiliary language.
- A unit of magnetic flux equal to 100,000,000 maxwells.
- A penicillinase-resistant form of penicillin (trade name Nafcil) used (usually in the form of its sodium salt) to treat infections caused by penicillin-resistant strains of staphylococci.
- System of measurement based on centimeters and grams and seconds.
- Predatory black-and-white toothed whale with large dorsal fin.
- A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
- A broom made of twigs tied together on a long handle.
- Electronic warfare undertaken to insure effective friendly use of the electromagnetic spectrum in spite of the enemy's use of electronic warfare.
- A unit of length of thread or yarn.
- Being or moving higher in position or greater in some value.
- A dress worn primarily by Hindu women.
- A fraudulent business scheme.
- A Hindu prince or king in India.
- A reptile genus of Iguanidae.
- (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
- A feudal lord or baron in Scotland.
- An island republic on Nauru Island.
- The act of scanning.
- (informal) Uncomplimentary terms for a policeman.
- Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
- Any of a group of Indic languages spoken in Kashmir and eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan.
- Any disease of the throat or fauces marked by spasmodic attacks of intense suffocative pain.
- (South African) A camp defended by a circular formation of wagons.
- A Bantu language spoken by the Chaga people in northern Tanzania.
- A member of the Mongolian people of central Asia who invaded Russia in the 13th century.
- Jordan's port.
- A republic in southwestern Africa on the south Atlantic coast (formerly called South West Africa).
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- Fertility goddess in ancient Greek mythology.
- Characteristic of the classical artistic and literary traditions.
- An anti-inflammatory drug that does not contain steroids.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- A member of a Caddo people formerly living in north central Texas.
- The Oceanic language spoken by the Maori people in New Zealand.
- Mentally or physically infirm with age.
- A recurring sleep state during which rapid eye movements do not occur and dreaming does not occur.
- Being precisely fitting and right.
- Having the slant of a bevel.
- Little known Kamarupan languages.
- Profane or obscene expression usually of surprise or anger.
- Syndrome resulting from a serious acute (sometimes fatal) infection associated with the presence of staphylococcus.
- A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



01:50 Patriots Day
04:10 Taj Mahal
05:50 Lost & Found
07:30 Pitch Black
09:20 Patriots Day
11:35 Railroad Tigers
13:45 Thor: The Dark World
15:40 Reign Of Fire
17:25 The Patriot
20:10 The Unseen
22:00 Corbin Nash
23:40 Code Of Honor



00:50 Wolves And Warriors
01:45 North Woods Law
02:40 Expedition Mungo
03:35 Earthquake: Panda Rescue
04:25 Wolves And Warriors
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Wild Mexico
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
07:36 Dark Days In Monkey City
08:00 Dark Days In Monkey City
08:25 The Lion Queen
09:15 Animal Cops Houston
10:10 Wolves And Warriors
11:05 North Woods Law
12:00 Wild Mexico
12:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
13:50 Earthquake: Panda Rescue
14:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
15:40 Scaled
16:35 Expedition Mungo
17:30 The Lion Queen
18:25 Animal Cops Houston
19:20 Growing Up...
20:15 Saving A Species: Gorillas
On The Brink With...
21:10 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
22:05 Wild Costa Rica
23:00 Expedition Mungo
23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees



00:05 Luther
01:05 Our Girl
02:00 Holby City
02:55 EastEnders
03:25 EastEnders
03:55 EastEnders
04:25 Dickensian
05:15 Dickensian
06:00 EastEnders
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Holby City
07:55 Holby City
08:50 Holby City
09:45 Death In Paradise
10:40 Father Brown
11:30 Agatha Raisin
12:15 EastEnders
12:45 EastEnders
13:15 Holby City
14:10 Death In Paradise
15:05 Father Brown
15:55 Friday Night Dinner
18:25 The Coroner
19:15 The Coroner
20:05 Line Of Duty
21:00 Luther
22:00 Unforgotten
22:45 Unforgotten
23:35 Friday Night Dinner



00:00 Who Killed Tupac?
01:00 Secrets Of The Morgue
01:55 Homicide: Hours To Kill
02:55 Homicide: Hours To Kill
03:50 The Murder Of Laci Peterson
05:05 The Murder Of Laci Peterson
06:15 Crimes That Shook Britain
07:00 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
08:00 It Takes A Killer
08:20 Live PD: Police Patrol
08:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
09:05 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence

09:50 Homicide Hunter
10:35 The Menendez Murders: Erik Tells All
11:30 The Menendez Murders: Erik Tells All
12:25 Live PD: Police Patrol
12:55 Live PD: Police Patrol
13:20 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
14:15 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
15:10 Cults And Extreme Belief
16:05 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Secrets Of The Morgue
18:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
19:00 Marcia Clark Investigates
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
22:30 Live PD: Police Patrol
23:00 It Takes A Killer
23:30 It Takes A Killer



00:00 Chappelle's Show
00:25 Broad City
00:50 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:20 Impractical Jokers
01:45 Chappelle's Show
02:10 Inside Amy Schumer
02:35 Broad City
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Broad City
03:50 Broad City
04:15 Lip Sync Battle
04:40 Lip Sync Battle
05:05 Catch A Contractor
05:30 Catch A Contractor
05:55 Friendszone
06:20 Friendszone
06:50 Snack Off
07:15 Snack Off
07:40 Impractical Jokers: Critiquing Q 4
08:05 Impractical Jokers Yr 10 Special: Humiliation
08:30 Lip Sync Battle
08:55 Lip Sync Battle
09:20 I Used To Be Fat
10:10 Kroll Show
10:35 Kroll Show
11:00 Kroll Show
11:25 Key And Peele
13:30 Friends
20:05 Friends
20:35 Corporate
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Amy Schumer-Mark Normand: Don't Be Yourself
22:25 Roast Battle UK
22:50 Tosh.0
23:15 Tosh.0
23:40 Patrice O'Neal: The Elephant In The Room



00:30 Xploration Outer Space
01:20 Animal Airport
02:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
03:00 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
03:50 How It's Made
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Xploration Outer Space
05:55 Xploration Outer Space
06:20 Cliptastic
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
07:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
08:40 How It's Made
09:30 Cliptastic
10:20 Animal Airport
11:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Xploration Outer Space
14:30 How It's Made
15:20 Cliptastic: Episode 5
15:45 Cliptastic
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
16:35 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 Animal Airport
17:50 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
18:40 Breaking Magic
19:30 The Next Great Magician
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
20:45 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Is-

land
22:00 How It's Made
22:25 How It's Made
22:50 Xtreme Waterparks
23:15 Xtreme Waterparks
23:40 The Next Great Magician



00:50 What Lies Beneath
01:45 Dead North
05:25 Bride Killa
06:20 A Crime To Remember
07:10 I Almost Got Away With It
08:00 California Investigator
08:25 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
09:15 Disappeared
10:10 Married With Secrets
11:05 Swamp Murders
12:00 Blood Relatives
12:55 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Diabolical: Deadly Love
15:40 A Crime To Remember
16:35 The Perfect Murder
17:30 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
18:25 Nightmare Next Door
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Diabolical: Deadly Love
21:10 A Crime To Remember
22:05 Swamp Murders
23:00 Murder By Numbers
23:55 American Monster



00:10 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Alex & Co.
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20 Hank Zipzer
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:25 Jessie
07:50 Jessie
08:15 Bunk'd
08:40 Stuck In The Middle
09:05 Raven's Home
09:30 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
09:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:20 Bunk'd
10:45 K.C. Undercover
11:10 K.C. Undercover
11:35 A.N.T. Farm
12:00 That's So Raven
12:25 That's So Raven
12:50 Raven's Home
13:15 Raven's Home
14:55 Raven's Home
15:20 Raven's Home
15:45 K.C. Undercover
16:10 K.C. Undercover
16:35 K.C. Undercover
17:00 That's So Raven
17:25 That's So Raven
17:50 Tangled: The Series
18:15 Tangled: The Series
18:40 Tangled: The Series
19:05 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
19:30 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
19:55 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
20:20 Descendants Wicked World
20:25 Hotel Transylvania: The Se-

ries
20:50 Liv And Maddie
21:15 Liv And Maddie
21:40 Liv And Maddie
22:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
22:10 A.N.T. Farm
22:35 A.N.T. Farm
23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
23:50 Lolirock



00:00 PJ Masks
00:25 PJ Masks
00:50 The Hive
01:00 Zou
01:15 Zou
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:55 Henry Hugglemonster
02:20 The Hive
02:30 The Hive
02:40 Zou
03:25 The Hive
03:35 The Hive
03:45 Henry Hugglemonster
04:00 Henry Hugglemonster
04:15 Henry Hugglemonster
04:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
04:35 The Hive
04:45 PJ Masks
06:00 Disney Muppet Babies
06:20 Puppy Dog Pals
06:35 PJ Masks
06:55 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
07:10 Mickey And The Roadster Racers

07:29 Vampirina
07:45 Vampirina
08:00 PJ Masks: Pet Special
09:00 Puppy Dog Pals
09:20 Puppy Dog Pals
09:40 Puppy Dog Pals
10:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
10:20 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
10:40 Fancy Nancy
11:00 Vampirina
11:20 Vampirina
11:40 Vampirina
12:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse: Road Rally
13:00 The Lion Guard
13:30 The Lion Guard
14:00 Disney Muppet Babies
14:20 Disney Muppet Babies
14:40 Disney Muppet Babies
15:00 PJ Masks: Luna Girl Special
16:00 Claude
16:30 Puppy Dog Pals
16:45 Puppy Dog Pals
17:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
17:15 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
17:30 Vampirina
17:45 Vampirina
18:00 PJ Masks
18:15 PJ Masks
18:30 The Lion Guard
19:00 Sofia The First
19:25 Disney Junior Music Nursery Rhymes
19:30 Elena Of Avalor
20:00 Puppy Dog Pals
20:15 Puppy Dog Pals
20:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
20:45 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
21:01 Vampirina
21:20 Fancy Nancy
21:40 PJ Masks
21:55 PJ Masks
22:15 The Lion Guard
22:45 Sofia The First
23:10 Minnie's Bow-Toons
23:15 Zou
23:30 Henry Hugglemonster



00:15 Ultimate Survival
01:05 Abandoned Engineering
01:50 How Do They Do It?

02:15 How Do They Do It?
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Fast N' Loud
04:05 Fast N' Loud
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:15 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Property Wars
06:00 Storage Hunters UK
06:20 Property Wars
06:45 Ultimate Survival
07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Alaskan Bush People
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:10 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Fast N' Loud
12:20 Fast N' Loud
13:05 Storage Hunters UK
13:30 Property Wars
13:55 Alaskan Bush People
14:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
15:30 Master Of Arms
16:15 House Of Cars
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Fast N' Loud
20:15 Fast N' Loud
21:00 Sticker Shock
21:50 Wheeler Dealers
22:40 Race Night At Bowman Gray
23:30 Deadliest Catch



00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Boyster
01:00 Boyster
01:25 Counterfeit Cat
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
02:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Boyster
03:20 Boyster
03:45 Dude That's My Ghost
04:10 Dude That's My Ghost
04:35 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Guardians Of The Galaxy
05:29 Marvel's Avengers Assemble
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:29 Big Hero 6 The Series
07:00 Milo Murphy's Law
07:29 Lab Rats
08:00 Supa Strikas
08:29 Supa Strikas
09:00 Milo Murphy's Law
11:00 Furiki Wheels
13:00 Lab Rats
13:29 Lab Rats
14:00 Phineas And Ferb
14:29 Phineas And Ferb
15:00 Big Hero 6 The Series
15:29 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
16:00 Big City Greens
16:29 Lab Rats
17:00 Milo Murphy's Law
17:29 Supa Strikas
18:00 Disney 11
18:29 Disney 11
19:00 Pair Of Kings
19:29 Mech-X4
19:29 Marvel's Spider-Man
20:29 Space Chickens In Space
21:00 Big City Greens
21:29 Star Wars Resistance
22:00 Furiki Wheels
22:29 Milo Murphy's Law
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja



00:00 Botched
01:00 Botched
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 WAGs Atlanta
05:00 WAGs Atlanta
06:00 WAGs Atlanta
07:00 WAGs Atlanta
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Botched
09:50 Botched

10:45 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched
21:00 Botched
22:00 Ashlee+evan
23:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



00:10 The Chase
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 What Would Your Kid Do?
04:20 Wedding Day Winners
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 Cash Trapped
07:10 The Chase
08:05 What Would Your Kid Do?
09:00 Wedding Day Winners
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
10:55 Cash Trapped
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Cash Trapped
15:10 The Chase
16:00 Change Your Tune
16:55 The Jonathan Ross Show
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 Change Your Tune
21:55 The Jonathan Ross Show
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 Heroes Of War
01:00 Weapons At War
02:00 Modern Marvels
03:00 Cities Of The Underworld
03:50 UFO Hunters
04:40 Ancient Aliens
05:30 The Universe
06:20 Heroes Of War
07:10 Weapons At War
08:00 Modern Marvels
09:00 Cities Of The Underworld
10:00 UFO Hunters
11:00 Ancient Aliens
12:00 The Universe
13:00 Heroes Of War
14:00 Modern Marvels
15:00 Cities Of The Underworld
16:00 UFO Hunters
17:00 Ancient Aliens
18:00 The Universe
19:00 Modern Marvels
20:00 Cities Of The Underworld
21:00 UFO Hunters
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Clash Of The Gods



00:20 Alone
01:05 The Lost Evidence
01:50 The Lost Evidence
02:35 The Curse Of Oak Island
03:25 Swamp People
04:15 The Lost Evidence
05:05 The Lost Evidence
06:00 The Lost Evidence
06:45 The Lost Evidence
07:30 Swamp People
08:15 Swamp People
10:30 Swamp People
11:15 Alone
12:00 Alone
12:45 Alone
13:30 Alone
14:15 Alone
15:00 The Curse Of Oak Island
18:45 The Lost Evidence
19:30 The Lost Evidence
20:15 Detroit Steel
21:00 Ice Road Truckers
21:50 Swamp People
22:40 Swamp People
23:30 Swamp People

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

This is a great day for letting your mind drift back in time. Memories of days gone by will bring a smile to your face and warm your heart. With time you have not only gained knowledge, but you have gained wisdom. There is no better teacher than life itself. You have had your ups and downs but overall you are a survivor. You have conquered the challenges and today finds you proud of all you have accomplished. It is at times like this your self confidence is boosted and you are truly proud of your position in life. Your positive attitude and strong will to be successful have always been a driving force in your life. Reach for the stars, Aries. If anyone can reach them, you can.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Emotionally you may be tempted to take the wrong route. What is easy is not always right. Your values and morals may be at odds with opportunity. Use caution, and put much thought into the decisions you make. You could find yourself being too generous or making bad decisions. Do not overspend or squander your resources. Be careful today to not let your kind heart put you in a bad position.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may feel as if you are encountering negativity and not everyone is supportive when it comes to very sensitive issues you are dealing with in your life. These issues are very personal, and you may just be sharing with the wrong people. You will find someone close to you who will serve as a confidant who is extremely understanding and supportive of all that makes you unique. Gemini, now is a great time to think outside of the box and follow that new path or project that is calling your name. You may reap great reward from trying something new.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

If there was a needle in the haystack you would be the one who could find it today. Today you will be able to pay closer attention to detail than usual. You are paying close attention to detail and able to get to the root of any problem that presents itself. A new sense of self awareness is upon you. You are finding yourself more health conscious than in the past and ready to make some healthy changes to your diet and lifestyle. This is a time of great changes in your world.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Have a strong desire for a change of surroundings. You wish to broaden your horizons. This is a time you feel as though you occupy a tiny little spot on this Earth and wish to see and experience all the world has to offer. You need more out of life. You may find your desires to broaden your horizons are met with opposition from someone dear to you. This may be a time to consider a get away for yourself and with yourself, only. You seem very sensitive when it comes to the needs of others. The only thing missing is someone who makes you feel as if you are understood.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may be faced with a career opportunity that goes against what you value. You have always prided yourself for clearly seeing things in life in black and white. There is no room for a grey area. If an opportunity that presents itself to you seems to good to be true, it probably is. Be sure you are able to lay your head down at night and sleep peacefully. You know right from wrong and this is a time for you to make the right choice. Actions have consequences and these consequences will have a lasting effect on your world. Do what satisfies your soul.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You have a great desire for change. Your career or something concerning your profession seem to be preventing it. You have a deep desire for self-growth and change now. It seems if you continue on the same career path this will be a huge interference for you. You may find that your sensitivity is stifled by your job requirements. Too much work and no play is never a good thing. Find your balance.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may find yourself extremely creative today. This is a great way to express your emotions and feelings as well as having new experiences. You may feel drawn to take chances, take a new and different approach to problem solving or just change your routine all together. You are more willing at this time to take financial risk. Hopefully this will lead you towards the stock market rather than the casino. Either direction you may choose you are in the mood to do a bit of gambling. Good luck with this, Scorpio. May the risks you take be profitable.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may feel a need for seclusion today. Family is where you will find your comfort. Career decisions should be left for another time as you are just not feeling it. A great evening for game night or to spend just curled up watching movies with those you love. Grab a pizza and hide from the world. You need to relax and rid your mind of stress.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Let your hair down and take a drive. A horseback ride would be even better. Turn the music up loud and throw your cares out of the window. Find an escape and route to peace. Enjoy this day and all it brings. Spoil yourself. You may find you are more materialistic than usual. A shopping trip is in order to satisfy this need. Head to the mall and go for it! You work hard and deserve to be free from want.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You tend to be a procrastinator. Contrary to conventional wisdom, that can be a good thing. Haste not only makes the proverbial waste; it can also make for lack of attention to detail, resulting in sloppy work. Delaying a verbal or written response may mean avoiding hurt feelings that can last a lifetime. To get the results you want, don't avoid action; just proceed carefully.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are being noticed in the workplace. It may become very obvious to your superiors at work that you are talented beyond the title you hold. You may find that you are in line for a promotion or you will be assigned a special project due to your leadership abilities. Everyone has their eye on you. From your personal life to your career, you are beginning to outshine those around you. You may find your analytical skills are in top shape and you are not only able to solve every problem you come across but may be finding satisfaction in spending your spare time solving puzzles or playing word games. You are in the mood to exercise your mind.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antigua	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina Faso	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Niger	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
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CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

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Email: fshahmed@beautyandbeyond.com.kw

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Department: Heart & Vascular Center

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- ◆ Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
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Ultima Thule shaped like 'snowman': NASA

WASHINGTON: Four billion miles from the sun floats Ultima Thule, an icy celestial body that NASA scientists announced Wednesday is aptly shaped like a giant snowman. The first detailed images beamed back from the US agency's New Horizons mission allowed scientists to confidently determine the body was formed when two spheres, or "lobes," slowly gravitated towards each other until they stuck together—a major scientific discovery.

The New Horizons spacecraft on Tuesday flew past Ultima Thule, which was discovered via telescope in 2014 and is the farthest and potentially oldest cosmic body ever observed by a spacecraft.

Before that flyby, the only image scientists had was a blurry one showing Ultima Thule's oblong shape, resembling something like a bowling pin or a peanut. "That image is so

2018... Meet Ultima Thule!" said lead investigator Alan Stern, doing little to hide his joy as he revealed a new sharper image of the cosmic body, taken at a distance as close as 17,000 miles (about 27,000 kilometers) with a resolution of 140 meters per pixel. "That bowling pin is gone—it's a snowman if anything at all," Stern said during a NASA briefing. "What this spacecraft and this team accomplished is unprecedented."

Ultima Thule's surface reflects light about as much as "garden variety dirt," he said, as the sun's rays are 1,600 times fainter there than on Earth. The body is roughly 19 miles long and completes its own rotation in about 15 hours. NASA dubbed the larger lobe Ultima, and the other, which is about three times smaller, Thule.

"This is the first object that we can clearly tell was born this way" Stern said, instead of

evolving as a sort of "bi-lobe." "This really puts the nail on the coffin now. We know that this is how these kinds of objects in many cases form."

Some 4.5 billion years ago a cloud of frozen pebbles began to join forces, gradually forming two bodies—Ultima and Thule. Slowing turning, they eventually touched at each other at what mission geology manager Jeff Moore called an "extremely slow speed"—maybe just one to a few miles per hour. If such a meeting occurred between two cars in a parking lot, he said, no driver would bother writing it up. The lobes, according to Moore, are really just "resting on each other." "New Horizons is like a time machine, taking us back to the birth of the solar system," Moore said. "We are seeing a physical representation of the beginning of planetary formation, frozen in time." — AFP



This handout image released by NASA taken by the Long-Range Reconnaissance Imager (LORRI) is the most detailed of Ultima Thule returned so far by the New Horizons spacecraft. — AFP

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Cloudy to partly cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery over northern areas with a chance for

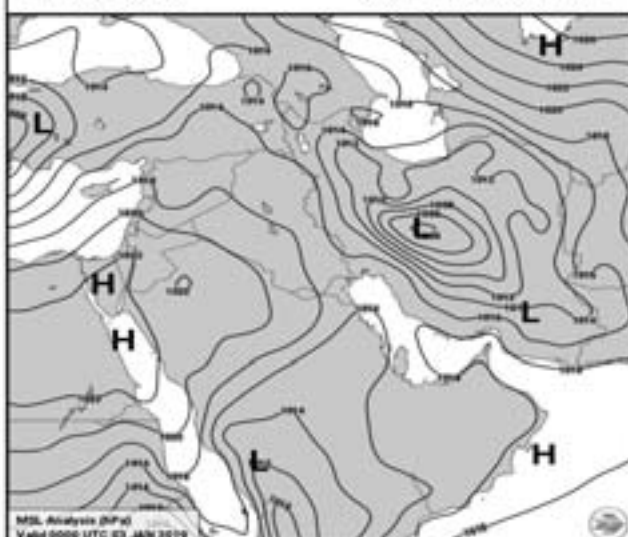
BY NIGHT: Cool with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 40 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING

No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	24 °C	20 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	24 °C	19 °C
ABDALY	25 °C	19 °C
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C
JAHRA	25 °C	18 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	23 °C	18 °C
SALMIYAH	22 °C	18 °C
AHMADI	23 °C	19 °C
NUWAISIB	24 °C	19 °C
WAFRA	25 °C	17 °C
SALMY	24 °C	16 °C

SFC. CHART 03/01/2019 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	01/04	Sunny	19 °C	10 °C	NW	12 - 35 km/h
Saturday	01/05	Partly cloudy	20 °C	09 °C	NW-SE	08 - 28 km/h
Sunday	01/06	Partly cloudy to cloudy	25 °C	12 °C	SE-NW	20 - 45 km/h
Monday	01/07	Partly cloudy to cloudy	19 °C	10 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES

Fajr	05:18
Sunrise	06:43
Zuhr	11:52
Asr	14:43
Sunset	17:02
Isha	18:24

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	13 °C
MAX. RH	96 %
MIN. RH	71 %
MAX. Wind	SE 43 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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

Clinics

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

Business

FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 2019

38 Brexit poses risk, but German economy poised for growth



40 Airbus finalizes \$11bn in sales of A220-300 jets



41 Brexit doubts drag down UK business confidence: Survey



HONG KONG: A man uses his mobile phone outside an Apple store in Hong Kong yesterday. Hong Kong stocks fell again yesterday, extending the previous day's losses as technology firms were hit by Apple's decision to slash its revenue forecast for the December quarter. —AFP

Apple bombshell rocks financial markets

'Flash crash' jolts currencies after Apple cuts sales forecast

LONDON: Apple's rare warning on revenue rocked financial markets yesterday, as investors sought safety in bonds and less risky assets amid renewed concerns about slowing global economic and corporate growth.

Asian and European shares fell sharply, led by a sell-off in technology stocks, and US equity futures pointed to a weaker open on Wall Street after Apple cut its revenue forecast, its first downgrade in nearly 12 years, blaming weaker iPhone sales in China.

Apple Inc on Wednesday took the rare step of cutting its quarterly sales forecast, with Chief Executive Tim Cook blaming slowing iPhone sales in China, whose economy has been dragged down by uncertainty around US-China trade relations.

The news, which comes as a spotlight grows on Beijing's attempts to revive stalling growth, sent Apple shares tumbling in after-hours trade, hammered Asian suppliers and triggered a broader selloff in global markets. The news also jolted currency markets and German government bond yields held close to their

lowest in over two years. "For the moment, investors have reacted by going into non-risky assets," said Philippe Waechter, chief economist at Ostrum Asset Management, in Paris.

"No one wants to take any risk because none of the uncertainties we are facing have been lifted, whether it's Brexit, this trade war, or growth. Investors are putting their heads in the sand and waiting."

Apples shares tumbled in after-hours trade and those listed in Frankfurt were down 8.6 percent in early European deals. The news sparked a 'flash crash' in holiday-thinned currency markets as growing concerns about the health of the global economy, particularly in China, sent investors scurrying into the safe-haven of the Japanese yen, which was poised for its biggest daily rise in 20 months.

Apple's warning came after data earlier this week showed a deceleration in factory activity in China and the eurozone, indicating the ongoing trade dispute between the United States and China was taking a toll on global manufacturing.

Major European bourses were firmly in negative territory by midmorning - Frankfurt's DAX, with its exposure to Chinese trade and tech-heavy constituents, was the biggest faller and down as much as 1.2 percent, while Paris' CAC40 dropped 1.1 percent and London eased 0.4 percent.

Chipmakers who supply parts to Apple were the worst hit, sending technology stocks to their lowest since February 2017.

US stock futures pointed to another rough start on Wall Street, with Nasdaq E-minis down 2.7 percent and S&P 500 E-minis off 1.6 percent. Overnight, shares in China and Hong Kong saw-sawed between gains and losses as investors braced for Beijing to roll out fresh support measures for the cooling Chinese economy.

"Chinese authorities have got the luxury of having control not just of the fiscal parts of the government tool case, but also the monetary parts ... and I suspect the Chinese authorities will use that," said Jim McCafferty, head of equity re-

search, Asia ex-Japan, at Nomura.

China's central bank said late on Wednesday it was adjusting policy to benefit more small firms that are having trouble obtaining financing, in its latest move to ease strains on the private sector, a key job creator. While more fiscal and monetary policy support had been expected in coming months on top of modest measures last year, some analysts wonder if more forceful stimulus will be needed to stabilize the world's second-largest economy.

'Flash crash'

Currency markets saw a wild spike in volatility in early Asian trade, with the yen moving sharply higher against the US dollar, breaking key technical levels and triggering stop-loss sales of US and Australian dollars. The dollar was last 1 percent weaker against the yen at 107.77, having earlier fallen as low as 104.96, its lowest level since March 2018. The Australian dollar at one point hit levels against the Japanese yen not seen since 2011. —Reuters

Business

US private payrolls surge in December; jobless claims up

Data points to sustained strength in labor market despite market volatility

WASHINGTON: US private payrolls increased by the most in nearly two years in December, suggesting sustained strength in the labor market despite ongoing financial market volatility.

While other data yesterday showed the number of Americans filing applications for unemployment benefits increased more than expected last week, the underlying trend in claims remained low. Claims data tends to be volatile around year-end holidays.

Labor market data is being closely watched for signs of whether tightening financial conditions could be impacting on companies' hiring decisions. A sharp stock market sell-off has stoked fears about the economy's health.

The ADP National Employment Report showed private payrolls rose by 271,000 jobs last month after a downwardly revised 157,000 increase in November. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast private payrolls advancing 178,000 last month following a previously reported 179,000 increase in November.

The ADP report, which is jointly developed

with Moody's Analytics, was published ahead of the government's more comprehensive employment report for December scheduled for release on Friday. The ADP report has a spotty record predicting the private-payrolls component of the government's employment report and last month's jump probably exaggerates the strength of the labor market. "The December ADP data have been especially unreliable because of the challenge of adjusting for 'purging' effects," said Jim O'Sullivan, chief US economist at High Frequency Economics in White Plains, New York.

"December is typically when employers drop from their listings all individuals who have left their firms permanently," he said. "Such workers are dropped from the government data when they are no longer being paid, but some employers keep former employees on their lists for ADP until year-end tax documents have been filed."

According to a Reuters survey of economists, nonfarm payrolls likely increased by 177,000 jobs last month after rising 155,000 in

November. The unemployment rate is forecast steady near a 49-year low of 3.7 percent, not too far from the Federal Reserve's forecast of 3.5 percent by the end of 2019.

With the labor market viewed at being at or beyond full employment, the pace of job growth is slowing as employers struggle to find workers. Some of the moderation in employment gains has been attributed to the stock market rout. The Fed raised interest rates last month for the fourth time in 2018, but forecast fewer rate hikes this year and signaled its tightening cycle is nearing an end in the face of financial market volatility and slowing global growth.

US financial markets were little moved by the data. In a separate report yesterday, the Labor Department said initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 10,000 to a seasonally adjusted 231,000 for the week ended Dec. 29. Data for the prior week was revised higher to show 5,000 more applications received than previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast claims increasing to

220,000 in the latest week.

The Labor Department said claims for California and Virginia were estimated last week. Unadjusted claims for both of those states declined last week. A Labor department official said there was no indication of an increase in filings last week from federal workers furloughed because of a partial shutdown of the government that is now in its second week.

Data on claims filed by federal employees is released with a one-week lag. The shutdown, which started on Dec. 22, was triggered by President Donald Trump's demand for \$5 billion in border wall funding.

Some 800,000 employees from the Departments of Homeland Security, Transportation, Commerce and others have been furloughed or are working without pay. Claims data tends to be noisy around year-end holidays. The four-week moving average of initial claims, considered a better measure of labor market trends as it irons out week-to-week volatility, slipped 500 to 218,750 last week. —Reuters

Turkish inflation falls to 20.3% in December

ANKARA: Turkish inflation dropped for the second month in a row, to an annual rate of 20.3 percent after hitting a 15-year high in October, official statistics showed yesterday.

Thousands of Turks protested in Istanbul last month against crippling inflation as the economy struggled following a currency crisis in August. The government launched an "all-out fight against inflation" as the lira fell by more than 28 percent in value against the dollar in 2018.

In October, consumer prices were 25.24 percent higher than in the same month a year earlier, the highest level since 2003. That figure eased to 21.62 percent in November and the level in December was below a Bloomberg forecast of 20.5 percent though still far above the central bank target of five percent. On a monthly basis, consumer prices eased in December by 0.4 percent, the Turkish statistics office (TUIK) said.

But compared with a year earlier, furnishing and household goods were 31.36 percent more expensive, while food and non-alcoholic drinks were up by 25.11 percent, TUIK data showed.

The lira stood at 5.44 against the US dollar after the figures were released, gaining nearly 2.8 percent in value on the day. In early January 2018, it took around 3.75 lira to buy one dollar.

Turkish Finance Minister Berat Albayrak has said the fight against inflation will continue through the first three months of 2019, and include cuts on a special consumption tax and value added tax. —AFP

Brexit poses risk, but German economy poised for further growth

BERLIN: Britain's impending departure from the European Union poses a big risk, but domestic demand is still fueling growth in the German economy, Europe's largest, Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said in an interview published yesterday.

Altmaier said Brexit, global trade conflicts and changes in automotive industry approvals had slowed economic growth in the second half of 2018, but Germany's gross domestic product still looked set to enter its tenth year of expansion in 2019. "The order books of industry and the trades are full," Altmaier told the Passauer Neue Presse newspaper. "The chances are good that economic growth will continue for a tenth consecutive year," the longest period of continuous growth since the 1960s.

The German government last month cut its economic growth forecast for 2018 to around 1.5 to 1.6 percent from 1.8 percent. The German economy has shifted into a lower gear as Brexit and trade conflicts sparked by US President Donald Trump's "America First" policies cause business uncertainty.

German exporters are also struggling with a more general slowdown of foreign demand as the global economy cools. Altmaier cautioned that the prospects for continued economic expansion hinged on the ability of German industry to adapt to promising new areas such as electric mobility, sustainable energy production and artificial intelligence.

He said both Brexit and a shortage of skilled labor posed risks to the economy, and many companies had not invested enough in expanding production. He called for quick parliamentary approval of a new immigration law aimed at filling those gaps. Making it easier to attract skilled workers to Germany could boost economic growth by several tenths of a percentage point, he said, noting that Germany had some 57,000 unfilled trainee positions.

"The growth effects are difficult to quantify, but I expect that a functioning influx of migrants to the labor market could add multiple tenths of a percentage point of additional growth in Germany," Altmaier told the paper. —Reuters



FRANKFURTAM MAIN: In this file photo German artist Ottmar Hori's sculpture depicting the euro logo is pictured in front of the former headquarter of the European Central Bank (ECB) in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. — AFP

Business

Norway's electric cars zip to new record: Almost a third of all sales

Diesel, petrol, hybrids lose market share in Norway

OSLO: Almost a third of new cars sold in Norway last year were pure electric, a new world record as the country strives to end sales of fossil-fueled vehicles by 2025.

In a bid to cut carbon emissions and air pollution, Norway exempts battery-driven cars from most taxes and offers benefits such as free parking and charging points to hasten a shift from diesel and petrol engines. The independent Norwegian Road Federation (NRF) said on Wednesday that electric cars rose to 31.2 percent of all sales last year, from 20.8 percent in 2017 and just 5.5 percent in 2013, while sales of petrol and diesel cars plunged.

"It was a small step closer to the 2025 goal," by which time Norway's parliament wants all new cars to be emissions-free, Oeyvind Solberg Thorsen, head of the NRF, told a conference.

Still, he cautioned that there was a long way to go since two-thirds of almost 148,000 cars

sold in 2018 in Norway were powered by fossil fuel or were hybrids, which have both battery power and an internal combustion engine. The sales figures consolidate Norway's global lead in electric car sales per capita, part of an attempt by Western Europe's biggest producer of oil and gas to transform to a greener economy.

The International Energy Agency (IEA), using a slightly different yardstick for electric vehicles that includes hybrids that can be plugged in, showed Norway's share of such cars at 39 percent in 2017, far ahead of second-placed Iceland on 12 percent and Sweden on six percent.

By contrast, such electric cars had a 2.2 percent share in China in 2017 and 1.2 percent in the United States, IEA data show. Erik Andresen, head of Norway's car importers' federation, said the boom for electric cars was denting Norway's tax revenues, raising questions about future reforms to raise cash from

the 5.3 million population.

Overall, new car sales in Norway fell 6.8 percent in 2018 to 147,929 vehicles, breaking a rising trend in recent years, NRF data showed.

Nissan's upgraded Leaf electric car was the top-selling car in Norway last year, while other top-selling cars overall ranged from small BMWs and Volkswagens to full-size sedans and electric sport utility vehicles by Tesla.

Sales of pure electric cars surged 40 percent to 46,092 in 2018 while sales of diesel models fell 28 percent, petrol cars were down 17 percent and hybrids that cannot be plugged in fell 20 percent.

The Institute of Transport Economics (ITE), a consultancy, doubted that the 2025 goal for emissions-free new cars could be reached. "Strictly speaking I don't think it's possible, primarily because too many people don't have a private parking space and won't want to buy a

plug-in car if they can't establish a charging point at home," ITE economist Lasse Fridstrom said.

"We may be able to get to a 75 percent (market share), provided that the tax breaks are maintained," he added. The Norwegian Electric Vehicle Association (NEVA), a lobby group, predicted a 100 percent market share was feasible.

"We know that charging access is a real barrier ... and there's also a risk that not enough cars become available," NEVA head Christina Bu said, adding that some customers must wait for a year or more before their electric vehicle is delivered.

South Korea's Hyundai Motor Group predicted on Wednesday another year of tepid car sales growth in 2019 on the back of a slow 2018, saying trade protectionism adds uncertainty and major markets such as the United States and China remained sluggish. —Reuters

Bristol-Myers to buy Celgene for \$74bn

LONDON: Bristol-Myers Squibb Co said yesterday it would buy Celgene Corp for about \$74 billion in a cash-and-stock deal, creating a powerhouse that will have several blockbuster cancer drugs.

The combined company will have nine products with more than \$1 billion in annual sales and significant potential for growth in oncology, immunology and inflammation and cardiovascular disease.

Celgene shareholders will receive one Bristol-Myers Squibb share and \$50 in cash for each share held, or \$102.43 per share, a premium of 53.7 percent to Celgene's Wednesday close.

Celgene shareholders will also receive one tradeable contingent value right for each share held, which will entitle them to payments for future regulatory milestones.

Bristol-Myers shares fell 13 percent at \$45.20, while Celgene shares rose 30.5 percent at \$87 in premarket trading. The cash



portion will be funded through a combination of cash on hand and debt financing. Bristol-Myers Squibb has obtained fully

committed debt financing from Morgan Stanley Senior Funding Inc and MUFG Bank Ltd. —Reuters

Aussie dollar tanks to 10-year low against dollar

SYDNEY: The Australian dollar briefly hit a 10-year low against the greenback yesterday, as twitchy investors ditched more volatile assets and traders saw evidence of a computer-aided "flash crash."

The Australian currency sank to below 68 US cents in morning trading—the lowest level

since 2009 — before recovering slightly. Analysts pointed to growing concern about the Chinese economy, after worse-than-expected Chinese manufacturing data.

That concern sent mineral prices lower and with them the resource-sensitive Australian dollar.

"Aluminium and copper were both off by more than two percent" said analysts at NAB Markets Research, which also saw the hand of algorithms-automated computer trades as the reason for the severity of the fall. At one point the Aussie dollar was off four percent against its US counterpart.

"The fact that over half the move down... has since been retraced is testimony to today's moves being first and foremost a 'liquidity event'," said NAB.

But the wild swing will do little to ease concerns that import and export dependent Australia could be in for rougher times ahead.

The weaker Australian dollar makes imports more expensive. "We are not as yet prepared to suggest that AUD/USD is now establishing a lower (e.g. 0.65-0.70) trading range," said NAB, while warning that a weaker Aussie dollar could continue. —AFP

UK retail sales drop as Brexit-fuelled inflation bites

LONDON: British retail sales fell more than expected in September, official data showed yesterday, against a backdrop of rising prices largely caused by a Brexit-hit pound. "September's retail sales saw a monthly decline of 0.8 percent, reversing August's growth," said Kate Davies, senior statistician at the Office for National Statistics. "However, there is a continuation of the underlying trend of steady growth in sales volumes following a weak start to the year, and a background of generally rising prices," she added.

Analysts' consensus forecast had been for a 0.1-percent drop in retail sales in September following an increase of 0.9 percent in August. British inflation has picked up sharply in recent months as a Brexit-hit pound raised import costs. That, in turn, has increased the likelihood of the Bank of England raising interest rates next month, according to analysts. "Five-year high inflation combined with slow wage growth has consumers feeling the pinch," said UFX.com analyst Dennis de Jong.

"With Brexit top of the agenda for the foreseeable future, Britain's high streets may well be relying on a Christmas rush to kick start the sector," he said. —AFP

Business

Airbus finalizes \$11bn in sales of A220-300 jets

US carrier JetBlue and startup Moxy to buy aircraft

PARIS: European aircraft manufacturer Airbus said yesterday it had finalized the sale of 120 A220-300 single-aisle jets worth \$11 billion (9.7 billion euros). Sixty of the aircraft would go to low-cost US carrier JetBlue and another 60 to a start-up codenamed Moxy that is to begin operations in 2021, Airbus said.

Airbus acquired in 2017 the A220-300 aircraft line, which Canadian firm Bombardier developed as its CSeries, and which represents a new generation designed for airlines seeking 100-150 seat planes.

Bombardier had struggled to win customers even though the planes offered fuel-savings similar to a new class of larger aircraft sold by Airbus and US rival Boeing. "JetBlue has proven there is no contradiction between economic efficiency and a

high quality product," said Airbus Chief Commercial Officer Christian Scherer in a statement.

"Their endorsement of the A220 proves this aircraft meets those two criteria better than any alternative in its segment," he added. Moxy is an airline venture led by David Neeleman, founder of JetBlue and Azul Brazilian Airlines and who is now the controlling investor in TAP Air Portugal.

The aircraft are to be assembled in a new Airbus factory in the US state of Alabama, with work to begin later this month. The A220's seating capacity falls between that of traditional commuter planes and Airbus' A320 family, which can seat from 180 to 240 people and which has become an airline workhorse on medium-range routes. —AFP



A file photo shows the new Airbus A220-300 parked on the tarmac at the Airbus delivery center, in Colomiers southwestern France. —AFP

How to handle the US-China trade talks

NEW YORK: As US and Chinese delegations prepare for upcoming trade talks in Beijing, the two countries' disputes over tariffs and trade are rattling markets, businesses, governments, consumers and workers across the globe. All of this corrosive uncertainty was entirely predictable - and explains why Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping failed to reach an agreement when they met at the G20 summit in Buenos Aires in November.

Elaborate negotiations take tenacity, expertise and planning. They also take time. There are certainly real challenges in the US-China relationship. And virtually all progress Washington makes with its Chinese counterparts has come from an intense series of talks. At one point in the negotiations to allow US beef access into Chinese markets, for example, the battle was down to experts debating a final letter - whether or not to include the letter "s" at the end of the word cow to determine traceability requirements for American cattle. But this approach works. From these agreements and countless other negotiations, clear lessons emerge. Here are some of them:

PLAN: Negotiations like these require intense preparation. They require input from experts on the region and the issues - and forethought on which of a wide array of options your side would like to resolve, knowing that most will be cast aside and the focus will ultimately center on a handful of true priorities. During a 2014 visit between Presidents Barack Obama and Xi, this planning resulted in agreements on everything from climate to trade to visa validity and more.

KNOW WHERE YOU'LL GO - AND WHERE YOU WON'T: Chinese negotiators come to these discussions immensely well-prepped, with clear knowledge of where they might give and where

they won't. Their American counterparts typically do as well. To not do so is to lose before you walk through the door. By drawing firm lines on freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, freedom of the press and more, the United States has long made clear where defined boundaries exist. It's when and where the give exists elsewhere that it gets more interesting.

FIND LEVERAGE: When Chinese economic espionage spiked in 2015, Washington threatened sanctions ahead of a US summit with Xi. Rather than face those sanctions and the prospect of a challenging state visit, China sent a special envoy from the Communist Party's central committee ahead of that visit as it scrambled to undo the damage done.

Like Trump's tariffs or not, they have provided the US president with leverage. Whether or not that leverage will yield enduring outcomes depends on what he does with it.

USE THAT LEVERAGE: Those cyber negotiations yielded a US-China accord that not only still stands, but reduced cyber incursions dramatically in the years that followed. It was the fear of these sanctions and an underwhelming state visit plus intense negotiations that drove the US success. Some of those same fears exist now.

DETAILS MATTER: This is where experts on the National Security Council and agencies like the State Department matter most. From human rights and civil society concerns on through market access and intellectual property, negotiators can exploit vagaries to deny or delay for months and even years if they don't want to comply without specific terms and dates.

It took pushing up against too many non-specific promises by Chinese officials claiming "we'll soon be dining on American beef" for that beef access to finally happen, and even longer to secure approval to sell US biotech. A World Trade Organization decision and countless pushes finally got US credit cards accepted into Chinese markets last year.

PUSH BOUNDARIES, BUT TAKE YES FOR AN ANSWER: When it's clear, after extensive back and forth, that you can make progress and there's no more yield, bank the win.

Negotiations to encourage China to join the Paris climate accords took months of envoys flying back and forth before Beijing finally set real emissions targets - and stuck to them. While it wasn't everything the US side sought, China's agreement was a stunning development that led other countries to announce emissions reductions and join the agreement as well.

Trump's approach counters a number of these lessons. He appears to engage in little substantive pre-negotiation planning beyond the stagecraft and has repeatedly squandered his "final say" leverage by trying to solve longstanding crises without the necessary preparation, details or experts on hand to help seal the deal.

That discordant approach is how the Trump administration ended up with a series of purported wins from China that are mainly reshaped promises. It's why the president bargained for another shot at a Qualcomm-NXP merger that was dead for months and even the companies involved don't want to revive. And it results in announcements made, clarified, backtracked and more.

The US-China relationship faces real problems. But it takes knowing the issues and the potential outcomes, and the substantive engagement of policy experts, for US negotiators to get real yield. Instead, Americans have been left with a myriad of unanswered questions on issues like auto tariffs and what will happen when the 90-day "truce deadline" expires in March.

Trump was encouraged by his call with Xi in recent days, tweeting that "big progress" is being made. Xi's message was more tempered, saying both sides had been working hard to reach consensus and that he hoped they "will meet each other halfway."

The financial world, the global markets and US political allies - not to mention the American public - crave both progress and certainty. In Buenos Aires, Washington and Beijing set a 90-day window to resolve the tariff issue. But much like when the clock began ticking, without a plan going into these negotiations, there won't be real outcomes emerging from them. The United States can - and should - do better. —Reuters

December's stock market fall a 'glitch': Trump

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Wednesday played down the stock market's drop at the end of 2018, calling it a "glitch" and saying the market will again go up once various trade deals are settled. Trump, who has repeatedly posted messages on Twitter extolling stock market gains, said the Federal Reserve should help keep markets stable.

"We had a little glitch in the stock market last month," he told reporters at a Cabinet meeting, adding that it had risen since he was elected at the end of 2016. "And it's going to go up once we settle trade issues, and once a couple of other things happen."

"We need a little help from the Fed ... but we're going to be good. The trade deals are kicking in," he added later. Trump in the final months of 2018 repeatedly attacked the Fed, blaming market volatility on the central bank's steady and gradual interest-rate increases and calling it the "only problem" for the US economy.

The Fed has a dual mandate to promote maximum employment and stable prices. US stocks in 2018 had their worst year in a decade, heavily driven by steep price drops in the last quarter. On Wednesday, the first trading day of 2019, stocks stumbled on investor fears over a global economic slowdown. Fears were fueled by reports that factory activity weakened across much of Europe and Asia in December due to the US-China trade war. —Reuters

Business

Brexit doubts drag down UK business confidence: Survey

Labor shortages, stagnating growth and price pressures

LONDON: British firms are facing labor shortages, stagnating growth and price pressures heightened by Brexit, according to the largest private sector survey of business sentiment published yesterday.

The percentage of firms reporting an increase in domestic sales and orders in the country's key services sector weakened to the lowest level in two years at the end of 2018, according to the British Chambers of Commerce's (BCC) quarterly survey of 6,000 firms. "Domestic activity in the dominant services sector weakened for the second successive quarter, with consumer-facing firms particularly downbeat amid subdued household spending levels and tightening cashflow," said Suren Thiru, Head of Economics at the BCC.

Businesses, particularly in the manufacturing sector, also reported an increase in price pressures, partly blamed on the weakening of the pound amid Brexit uncertainty.

"The marked increase in cost pressures for businesses in the quarter suggests that inflation will be higher over the near term, with the continued weakness in sterling maintaining the upward trend on the cost of imported raw materials," added Thiru. Four-fifths of manufacturers reported difficulties in recruiting staff—the

joint highest level since the survey began in 1989. Britain is currently enjoying record levels of employment, but the business lobby group warned that reduced immigration following Brexit could leave businesses with serious labour shortages.

"Brexit is hoovering up all of government's attention and resources, but it's far from the only cause of uncertainty," said Adam Marshall, Director General of the BCC.

"Given the magnitude of the recruitment difficulties faced by firms clear across the UK, business concerns about the government's recent blueprint for future immigration rules must be taken seriously—and companies must be able to access skills at all levels without heavy costs or bureaucracy."

The government is looking to cut immigration from the EU by 80 percent after Brexit.

The BCC chief urged the government to provide clarity to companies, warning they were "understandably holding back on spending and making big decisions about their futures".

"The government's absolute priority now must be to provide clarity on conditions in the near term and avoid a messy and disorderly Brexit," he said. "Business communities won't forgive politicians who allow this to happen, by default or otherwise." —AFP



LONDON: The Houses of Parliament, comprising the House of Lords and the House of Commons, are pictured on the bank of the River Thames in central London on Wednesday. —AFP

A first class gaffe: Cathay to honor cheap ticket error

HONG KONG: Scores of savvy travellers will be sipping heavily discounted champagne in first class recliners on Cathay Pacific flights this year after the airline agreed to honor tickets that were mistakenly sold at a fraction of their value.

Airline and travel blogs went into overdrive on New Year's Eve after eagle-eyed shoppers noticed the carrier was offering first and business class tickets on its website from Vietnam to the United States and Canada for as little as \$670.

That represented a staggering discount. A first class round trip would usually cost around \$16,000 and a business class flight \$4-6,000. It took two days for Cathay to publicly acknowledge the error with the airline on Wednesday saying it would indeed honor the cheap fares.

"We made a mistake but we look forward to welcoming you on board with your ticket issued," the airline said on Twitter, calling the mistake a "VERY good surprise 'special' on New Year's Day".

A spokesperson for Cathay declined to say how many tickets were sold at the discounted price.

Wang Guanran, a travel blogger who writes under the alias "Dominicus" on hktravelblog.com, said he was working in the early hours of New Year's Day when he spotted websites alerting people to the cheap flights around 5:00 am Hong Kong time.

In two hours he managed to snap up five first class round trips from Vietnam to New York for \$840 each and a business class flight for \$699. After that the searches on Cathay's website stopped working.

"I was very lucky," he told AFP. "Most people in Hong Kong were sleeping after celebrating, they totally missed it." Most of those awake when the glitch hit would have been in Europe and North America, he said.

"Until then it wasn't looking like a good new year, I'd been working and was missing my family." Estimating the flights will earn him some 400,000 air miles, he said he had a hunch Cathay would honor the prices.

"I was betting on the fact they really need the good publicity right now."

Losses and data breach

Cathay had a tough year in 2018. It continued to struggle with the rise of cheaper mainland Chinese rivals, losing \$33 million in the first six months of the year. Then in October it admitted to a massive data breach, five months after hackers made off with the data of 9.4 million customers, including some passport numbers and credit card details.

Regis Cheung, who bought three round tickets from Vietnam to New York and one to Vancouver for around \$800 each, welcomed Cathay's move. —AFP

Fear sends equity and commodity prices tumbling in 2018: Kemp

LONDON: Fear became the dominant sentiment in 2018, especially in the second half of the year, as growing pessimism about the future gripped policymakers, business leaders, investors and journalists. Those best able to articulate, amplify and exploit concerns about the economy, migration, security and the impact of technology proved the most influential. Fear can be a powerful motivating force but it is not a particularly creative one. "Fear is the mind-killer, fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration," Frank Herbert wrote in his 1965 novel "Dune".

Risk-taking and willingness to invest under conditions of uncertainty are critical to sustaining output, growing the economy and raising real incomes. "If human nature felt no temptation to take a chance, no satisfaction (profit apart) in constructing a factory, a railway, a mine or a farm, there might not be much investment merely as a result of cold calculation," John Maynard Keynes wrote in 1936's "General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money".

As fear drives the global economy towards a

slowdown or outright recession, politicians, business leaders, investors, journalists and voters will have to find reasons to become more optimistic if the threatened slump is to be averted, or at least not prolonged.

China rising

The rising influence of China and its shifting balance of power with the United States was one particular area of concern in 2018. By the end of the year, the two countries were embroiled in a wide-ranging conflict covering trade, intellectual property, foreign investment, technology transfer and espionage, as well as an accelerating arms race.

Strategic competition intensified globally, from the Pacific and Indian Oceans to Africa, Latin America, Central Asia and Europe, as well as in multilateral institutions including the IMF, World Bank, APEC and WTO. The two superpowers appeared to be heading towards a new cold war in which the globalized economy of the 1990s and 2000s would be sundered into separate and competing economic, diplomatic and military blocs.

A proliferation of tariffs and non-tariff barriers intended to protect national and economic security was born from worries about the impact of international trade on domestic manufacturing industries and employment. Policymakers as well as academics stipulated that trade should be fair as well as free, with optimism about the benefits of globalization countered by renewed calls to strengthen the nation-state. —Reuters

Sports

Clinical Canucks cut up Senators in OT at home

OTTAWA: Elias Pettersson scored three goals, including the overtime winner, as the visiting Vancouver Canucks edged the Ottawa Senators 4-3 on Wednesday night. Pettersson completed his first career hat trick at 1:38 of the extra session as he converted a pass from Brock Boeser. A 20-year-old Swedish rookie, Pettersson now has 11 multi-point games. The Canucks posted their ninth win in 13 games (9-3-1), while the struggling Senators suffered their sixth straight loss (0-5-1). Sven Baertschi recorded a goal and an assist, while Alex Edler collected three assists and Boeser provided a pair.

SHARKS 5, AVALANCHE 4

Evander Kane and Joonas Donskoi scored goals 2:03 apart in the second period to open up a tight game, and visiting San Jose beat Colorado in Denver. Brent Burns and Joe Pavelski, named to the All-Star Game earlier in the day, had a goal and three assists each to help San Jose win for the third time in four games. Lukas Radil also scored, and Martin Jones recorded 31 saves for the Sharks. Tyson Jost scored twice while Tyson Barrie and Matt Calvert added goals for Colorado, which has lost six straight (0-4-2) and four in a row at home (0-2-2).

FLAMES 5, RED WINGS 3

Johnny Gaudreau collected his fourth four-point game of the season, and second in two games, with a goal and three assists as Calgary edged host Detroit. Gaudreau scored the go-ahead goal in the third period and Michael Frolik added an empty-net tally. Elias Lindholm had a goal and two assists, while Sean Monahan con-

tributed a goal and an assist. TJ Brodie also scored for Calgary and Mike Smith made 29 saves. Detroit's Darren Helm scored in his return after missing the previous 21 games with a shoulder injury. Jacob De La Rose and Andreas Athanasiou also scored for the Wings, while Jimmy Howard stopped 30 shots. The Wings have lost six straight.

PENGUINS 7, RANGERS 2

Zach Aston-Reese, Jake Guentzel and Kris Letang scored within a span of less than six minutes in the second period for Pittsburgh, who continued surging with a win over host New York. Dominik Simon, Evgeni Malkin, Tanner Pearson and Sidney Crosby also scored for the Penguins, who have won seven straight to move into second place in the Metropolitan Division, a point ahead of the Columbus Blue Jackets and a point behind the Washington Capitals. Matt Murray earned his sixth victory of the Penguins' winning streak by recording 28 saves. Ryan Strome and Pavel Buchnevich scored for the Rangers, who had a two-game winning streak snapped.

STARS 5, DEVILS 4

Miro Heiskanen scored two goals, including the game-winner 6:27 into the third period, and Tyler Seguin added two goals as Dallas survived a wild final four minutes to beat visiting New Jersey. Dallas goaltender Ben Bishop turned away 30 of 34 shots, including five in the furious final four minutes to earn the victory. Mackenzie Blackwood stopped 35 shots for the Devils, who had their three-game winning streak snapped.



OTTAWA: Bobby Ryan #9 of the Ottawa Senators battles for position against Tyler Motte #64 of the Vancouver Canucks in the third period at Canadian Tire Centre. — AFP

OILERS 3, COYOTES 1

Connor McDavid had two goals and an assist as Edmonton snapped a six-game losing streak against host Arizona in Glendale, Ariz. Leon Draisaitl added a goal and an assist for the Oilers and goaltender Mikko Koskinen made 29

saves. McDavid clinched the victory with an empty-net goal with 44 seconds remaining. Brad Richardson scored for the Coyotes, who lost their second in a row after winning three of their previous four. Goalie Adin Hill stopped 21 of 23 shots. — Reuters

Clever Boys aim to outsmart South African rivals

JOHANNESBURG: It took Bidvest Wits FC 96 years to become South African champions for the first time, and now they are on course to win a second title just two seasons later. The Johannesburg outfit lead Orlando Pirates by three points as the second half of the season begins this weekend, but have no African commitments unlike three title rivals. South African clubs have consistently struggled to excel simultaneously in local and international competitions and this could give Wits a crucial edge. Known as the Clever Boys, the club play in a university campus with the 5,000-seat ground bordered by a planetarium and the Johannesburg-Pretoria highway. AFP Sport highlights five issues in the richest national football league in Africa, with clubs contesting 30 million rand (about \$2.1m/1.8m euros) in prize money.

TITLE RACE

After many predictable title chases, the scene is set for an exciting second half of the season with Wits, Pirates and defending champions Mamelodi Sundowns looking strongest. Wits are built around a strong rearguard that includes national squad regulars in goalkeeper Darren Keet and defenders Thulani Hlatshwayo, Buhle Mkhwanazi and Sifiso Hlanti. Pirates and Sundowns have to play six CAF Champions League group matches each by mid-March, including time-consuming trips to west

and north Africa, and that could count against them.

POLOKWANE RISE

The surprise side among the championship challengers is Polokwane City from the capital of the northern province, who lie fourth, seven points behind Wits. They are a club without big-name players who attract modest crowds and usually battle against relegation. They finished 12th last season. But a pre-season change of coaches, with Slovak Jozef Vukusic taking, over has dramatically improved a team built around 36-year-old playmaker Jabu Maluleke.

MARITZBURG FALL

Maritzburg United were the revelations of last season, finishing fourth in the Premiership and reaching the South African FA Cup final under 37-year-old coach Fadlu Davids. But halfway through this season Untied are bottom of the table with only one victory, five goals and 11 points from 14 matches and Davids has been sacked. Turkish-born replacement Muhsin Ertugral knows all about relegation battles having failed to save Ajax Cape Town from the drop last season.

COACHING SHAKE-UP

Ertugral was part of a coaching shake-up during the mid-season break affecting Maritzburg, seventh-place Bloemfontein Celtic and bottom-half Golden Arrows. Arrows fired Clinton Larsen after only three wins in 15 matches and hired former South Africa captain and defender Steve Komphela from Celtic. The loss of Komphela deepened the problems of Celtic, who have yet to find a replacement amid financial turmoil with the owner admitting he cannot afford to bankroll the club. — AFP

Texans seek to focus on pressuring Colts' Luck

HOUSTON: Taking into consideration all the Houston Texans accomplished while becoming just the second NFL team to win its division following an 0-3 start, their seemingly tenuous status as favorites on Saturday in the first wild-card game of the postseason offers a reflection of their opponent. The Indianapolis Colts (10-6), who will face the Texans (11-5) at NRG Stadium, are a familiar foe whose strengths have overcome their weaknesses.

Indianapolis' Andrew Luck fully reclaimed his standing as one of the preeminent quarterback in the NFL by finishing fifth in passing yards (4,593) and second in passing touchdowns (39) while making 16 starts for the first time since the 2014 campaign, the last season in which he guided Indianapolis to the playoffs. Luck sat out the entire 2017 season due to a shoulder injury.

Protected by an offensive line that allowed the fewest sacks (18) in the NFL, Luck performed brilliantly as the Colts recovered from a 1-5 start to win nine of their last 10 games. In that stretch, he completed 69.5 percent of his attempts while tossing 23 touchdowns against seven interceptions and passing for 2,801 yards.

In two matchups against the AFC South champion Texans this season, Luck passed for 863 yards and six touchdowns with one interception. He was sacked six times as the teams split the meetings. "I mean, (Luck) does a good job," said Texans defensive end JJ Watt, who recorded 16 sacks this season. "Obviously, (their) offensive line does a good job. I think as the years went on, especially, they've done a great job getting the ball out of his hands quick.

He makes quick reads, he's a smart guy, he knows where he's going with the ball, tries not to put himself in too much danger. He does a great job, and like I said, those guys up front for him do a good job." The Texans must generate enough pressure on Luck as to prevent him from having an opportunity to pick apart their 28th-ranked pass defense. — Reuters

Sports

Serena sweeps Hopman Cup, Grand Slam record bid looms

PERTH: Serena Williams completed a clean sweep of her singles matches at the mixed teams Hopman Cup in Perth yesterday as she prepares for her bid to make Grand Slam history at the Australian Open. The winner of 23 Slam singles titles, Williams was made to work a little harder than expected by young Brit Katie Boulter in the United States' final group tie, but prevailed in straight sets to make it three victories from as many outings. However, the 37-year-old's perfect singles record this week wasn't enough to keep the USA in contention at what is expected to be the last Hopman Cup, where she has twice been a winner.

Williams and Frances Tiafoe were already eliminated after losing their opening two ties. Watched by her daughter Alexis Olympia, Williams' 6-1, 7-6 (7/2) win over the 97th-ranked Boulter followed victories over former top 10 player Belinda Bencic and Greece's Maria Sakkari earlier in the week. Currently ranked 16th, Williams needs just one more Grand Slam singles title to equal the record of Australian Margaret Court, but hasn't won a major since the Australian Open in 2017.

She gave birth to her daughter in late 2017 and was beaten in the Wimbledon and US Open finals last year. It was at the latter that she had a

major meltdown during her loss to Naomi Osaka. With the Australian Open in Melbourne less than two weeks away, Williams dropped just one set in her singles matches, although at different times she seemed to be troubled by a right shoulder problem and had both ankles strapped.

Her form was patchy across the three matches, but Williams said the round robin format of the event was ideal preparation for Melbourne. "It was definitely good to play three singles matches here, not to mention the mixed," she said after her singles match. Williams cruised through the first set against Boulter, but found a more competitive opponent in the second. Not for the first time this week, the frustration of the American grew as Boulter was able to match her for winners, with the Brit claiming an early break in the second game.

Williams immediately broke back, but then enjoyed a slice of good fortune when her forehand dropped over the net on a Boulter break point in the fourth game. The set remained on serve until the tie-break, which Williams dominated. In the men's singles, the struggling Tiafoe led 5-3 in the first set, but won just one more game in losing 7-6 (7/4), 6-0 to Cameron Norrie. The Brits claimed the tie with victory in the mixed doubles. —AFP



PERTH: Serena Williams of the US serves against Katie Boulter of Britain during their ninth session women's singles match on day six of the Hopman Cup tennis tournament. —AFP

Nishikori back to best in win over Dimitrov

BRISBANE: Kei Nishikori showed he was back to his best form as he downed Bulgaria's Grigor Dimitrov 7-5, 7-5 to reach the semi-finals of the Brisbane International yesterday. Nishikori proved too consistent for the Bulgarian in a high-quality match, securing crucial breaks at 5-5 in both sets. Afterwards, the 29-year-old said his goal was to get back into the top five after seeing his ranking plummet to 39 in April last year due to persistent injuries.

"I'm trying to go top five, that's my next goal," Nishikori said. "The last couple of months of last year I was playing great tennis and I think I'm doing that now, this week." The match was a replay of the 2017 final, won by Dimitrov in three sets. But Nishikori turned the tables this year by returning the Bulgarian's serve superbly throughout, putting Dimitrov under pressure at key moments and showing fight to come back from 1-4 down in the second set. "I was expecting to go to a third set — he started playing better and I was down 4-1," Nishikori said. "But I think the last couple of games I played very solid and I'm very happy."

He will now play Frenchman Jeremy

Chardy for a place in Sunday's final and will go into the match as a firm favorite following Chardy's three-set struggle over qualifier Yasutaka Uchiyama. Uchiyama, 26, had only won one match on the main ATP Tour before this week and pulled off a massive upset when he beat third seed Kyle Edmund in the second round. Chardy was not as sharp as he was during his win over Nick Kyrgios on Wednesday and was forced to battle for over two hours before beating Uchiyama 6-4, 3-6, 7-6 (7/4).

Jo-Wilfried Tsonga took advantage of Rafael Nadal's withdrawal with a straight sets win over Japanese lucky loser Taro Daniel. The Frenchman underwent knee surgery in April 2018 and missed seven months of tennis, slipping to a world ranking of 239 at the year's end. He was due to face Nadal in the second round but when the Spaniard withdrew with a thigh strain, Daniel came in as a replacement. Tsonga saw off the Japanese challenge to win 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 and record his first back-to-back victories since last February.

"It was, of course, one of my goals to be able to play two matches in a row," he said. "Now the new goal is going to be to win three matches in a row and be able to stay healthy. "That's the most important for me. Of course, I'm really happy for the win, but also really happy to be able to play the next match, too." He will play rising Australian star Alex de Minaur in the quarter-finals. —AFP

Osaka says US Open win has given her new belief

BRISBANE: Japanese star Naomi Osaka said her US Open victory in September had given her the self-belief to be able to come from behind and win tight matches. Osaka was speaking after recovering from losing the first set of her Brisbane International quarter-final to Latvia's Anastasija Sevastova yesterday. The world number five overhauled Sevastova to win 3-6, 6-0, 6-4 and reach the semi-finals of the season-opening tournament.

"I feel like right now I'm really confident in myself, and I feel like the off-season training that I've been doing is really paying off," she said. "And I'm not sure if I would have had the same feeling six months ago. Six months ago I hadn't won the US Open." Osaka's stunning victory over Serena Williams at New York's Flushing Meadows in September sent her profile into the stratosphere, although her breakthrough win was partially overshadowed by Williams' furious tirade against the umpire.

Osaka dropped her opening service game in Brisbane on Thursday, and that was enough to surrender the first set to Sevastova. But Osaka came storming back to win the second with the loss of just five points. Osaka then broke Sevastova's serve to start the deciding set and was able to hold the advantage, sealing victory with her 11th ace of the match. The 21-year-old has enormous power but said she was tested by Sevastova, who favors angles and deception over brute force, and who defeated her twice last year.

"I just really wanted to play this match knowing that I would have long rallies and knowing that she would be hitting tricky shots," Osaka said. "So for me, this match was really important because I think that I can handle power players pretty well, but for me it is always harder to hit against people like her, because I don't really know what's coming next. "So I think that this match was a good confidence booster."

Osaka will now play either Lesia Tsurenko or Anett Kontaveit in the semi-finals and with the shock loss of defending champion Elina Svitolina on Wednesday, she is now the firm favorite for the title. "My main goal is to show consistency and I'm really happy with this tournament so far," she said. "I (made) the semis or higher in my last four tournaments, so I think that's something that I'm going to keep trying to do." —AFP

Celtics' Hayward explodes for 35 while Thunder beat Lakers

BOSTON: Boston's Gordon Hayward scored a season-high 35 points, and Terry Rozier got the start for an injured Kyrie Irving and scored 16 points on Wednesday to lead the Celtics to a 115-102 home win over the Minnesota Timberwolves. Irving sustained a right eye injury in a loss to San Antonio on New Year's Eve, and his status remains day-to-day. Minnesota also was short-handed without Jeff Teague, Derrick Rose and Robert Covington dressing, all due to ankle injuries.

Hayward connected on 14 of 18 shots from the floor and went 4 of 7 from 3-point range, including a 27-footer from the top of the key with 4:37 left that put the Celtics up 106-92. He had gone scoreless on 0-of-6 shooting Monday in Boston's loss to the Spurs. Andrew Wiggins led the Timberwolves with a season-high 31 points. Karl-Anthony Towns finished 28 points, 12 rebounds and seven assists.

THUNDER 107, LAKERS 100

Paul George scored 37 points, including 20 in the second half, to lead visiting Oklahoma City over Los Angeles. Russell Westbrook finished with 14 points, 16 rebounds and 10 assists for his NBA-leading 11th triple-double, but he shot 3-for-20 from the floor. Westbrook, who shot 38.6 percent in December, missed his first seven field-goal attempts. The Lakers were playing their fourth game without LeBron James, who leads the team in scoring, rebounding and assists. James sustained a groin injury in a Christmas night game against the Golden State Warriors. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope topped Los Angeles with 25 points.

76ERS 132, SUNS 127

Joel Embiid scored 42 points and grabbed 18 rebounds to lead visiting Philadelphia past Phoenix. Ben Simmons scored a season-high 29 points and JJ Redick contributed 27 for the Sixers, who won their second straight on consecutive nights after dispatching the Los Angeles Clippers on Tuesday. Embiid also became the first player to post at least 30 points and 14 rebounds in any half since Carlos Boozer on March

26, 2007, doing so before halftime. He reached the 40-point mark for the fifth time in his career. Devin Booker led the struggling Suns with 37 points.

PISTONS 101, GRIZZLIES 94

Luke Kennard ignited a late-game run with back-to-back 3-pointers, sending Detroit to victory over host Memphis in a game in which Mike Conley went scoreless in a start for the first time since December 2015. Blake Griffin had a team-high 26 points, including five in the critical 13-0 burst, as the Pistons beat the Grizzlies for just the fourth time in their past 18 meetings. Conley shot 0-for-8 and did not score in 28 minutes for the Grizzlies, who at 18-19 fell below .500 for the first time since opening 0-1. His last scoreless start had been at home against Oklahoma City on Dec. 8, 2015, a game in which he went 0-for-7.

MAVERICKS 122, HORNETS 84

Luka Doncic and Dennis Smith Jr led a balanced attack with 18 points apiece, and Dallas posted a rare road win by defeating Charlotte. The Mavericks took control of the game early and led by as many as 25 in the first half and 47 in the second half, with the reserves playing the entire fourth quarter. The Mavs came into the game 2-16 on the road this season. They had lost eight of their previous 10 overall. The Hornets continued on their see-saw in which they have never been more than two games over .500 or worse than two games under .500 all season.

NETS 126, PELICANS 121

D'Angelo Russell collected 22 points and 13 assists as Brooklyn held on to beat New Orleans. Russell returned from getting a rest in Saturday in the Nets' 14-point loss at Milwaukee, and he posted his third double-double of the season. He made 9 of 21 field-goal attempts as the Nets bounced back from a pair of double-digit road losses and won for the 10th time in 13 games. New Orleans' Anthony Davis returned from being a last-minute scratch due to illness Monday and totaled 34 points and a career-high 26 rebounds.



BOSTON: Gordon Hayward #20 of the Boston Celtics shoots the ball against the Minnesota Timberwolves on January 02, 2019 at the TD Garden. — AFP

HEAT 117, CAVALIERS 92

Josh Richardson scored a game-high 24 points and Dion Waiters played his first game in more than a year as Miami won its fourth straight road game. On a night of comebacks, Waiters, a shooting guard who had not played since Dec. 22, 2017, made perhaps the biggest splash. He made the first shot he attempted — a 3-pointer in the second quarter — and finished with seven points in 11 minutes. Cavs starting forward Tristan Thompson also returned after not playing since Dec. 10 due to a foot injury. He finished with a team-high 14 points in 23 minutes.

WIZARDS 114, HAWKS 98

Bradley Beal scored 24 points while Jeff Green added 22 as Washington pulled away late and defeated visiting Atlanta. Thomas Bryant (16 points, 15 rebounds) and Tomas Satoransky (14

points, 11 rebounds) both had double-doubles. The Wizards have won two straight games since learning that guard John Wall will miss the remainder of the season due to left heel surgery. Alex Len, a 7-foot-1 center who played his college ball at nearby Maryland, came off the bench to post a double-double of 24 points and 11 rebounds to lead the Hawks.

MAGIC 112, BULLS 84

Nikola Vucevic totaled 22 points and 12 rebounds in three quarters of play as visiting Orlando pounded Chicago. Orlando's Aaron Gordon added 18 points, nine assists and seven rebounds. Terrence Ross scored 15 off the bench for the Magic, who have won three of their past four following a four-game losing streak. Zach LaVine had 16 points, and Lauri Markkanen added 14 points and six rebounds for Chicago, which has lost three of its past four. — Reuters

F1 pays tribute to Schumacher on his 50th birthday

MARANELLO: Ferrari issued an emotional message yesterday to mark the 50th birthday of Michael Schumacher, who has not been seen in public since he suffered head injuries in a skiing accident five years ago. The German, who won a record seven Formula One drivers' championships and 91 Grands Prix, collected five consecutive titles with the Italian team from 2000 to 2004. Ferrari also won six constructors' titles while Schumacher was with them.

"Our champ turns 50 today. We're all with you Michael #KeepFighting," Scuderia Ferrari

tweeted. The official Formula 1 account tweeted: "We join the whole of the #F1 family in sending Michael @Schumacher our very best wishes on his 50th birthday #KeepFighting-Michael #Michael50." The Ferrari Museum at Maranello in northern Italy is dedicating a special exhibition to Schumacher as a celebration of the team's most successful driver. F1 team Mercedes have hailed Schumacher as one of the "founding fathers" for their recent success.

Schumacher came out of retirement in 2010 for a three-season spell with Mercedes before he was eventually replaced by Lewis Hamilton. Hamilton last year celebrated his fifth world championship, and his fourth racing for the Silver Arrows. "Michael is one of the founding fathers of the success we have had in the last five years," said Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff. "There is no other driver like him and his vast experience contributed tremendously in the development of our team."

Hamilton is now the closest driver to matching Schumacher's records. The Briton is two championships and 18 race victories shy of the German's hauls. "Michael has had a tremendous impact on Formula One," added Wolff. "Not only did he set an incredible record — a record that is yet to be beaten — but he also shaped and changed the sport forever." Schumacher's medical condition has been held a closely guarded secret since he fell and hit his head while skiing on the French Alps in December, 2013.

His family issued a statement on Facebook ahead of his birthday and have launched an app to celebrate his successes in the sport. "You can be sure that he is in the very best of hands and that we are doing everything humanly possible to help him," they said. Schumacher's daughter Gina also published a short message to her Instagram page, writing: "Happy Birthday to the best dad", accompanied with three pictures. — AFP



JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA, SPAIN: In this file photo taken on October 12, 2006 seven-time world Formula One champion Michael Schumacher ponders during a training session at the Jerez racetrack. — AFP

Pujara century puts India in control of Sydney Test

India go in search of a crucial 2-1 lead in four-Test series

SYDNEY: Irrepressible Cheteshwar Pujara stroked his third century of the summer yesterday to put India in a commanding position in the decisive fourth and final Test as they strive for an historic series win in Australia. At stumps on day one, they were 303 for four with the rock-like number three not out 130 and Hanuma Vihari on 39. Mayank Agarwal made 77, with Josh Hazlewood the best of the bowlers with 2-51.

After toiling on a hot Sydney day, Australia were rewarded with the wickets of KL Rahul, Agarwal, Virat Kohli and Ajinkya Rahane, but despite a five-pronged attack the key scalp of Pujara remained elusive. The visitors lead the series 2-1 after winning the opening clash in Adelaide and the third one in Melbourne. Australia claimed victory in Perth. If India, the world's top-ranked nation, win or draw in Sydney they will clinch a first-ever series in Australia since they began touring Down Under in 1947-48.

"We are very happy, although we would have liked to be only three down. That said 300 for four on the first day, choosing to bat, I think we are in a great position," said Agarwal, who paid tribute to Pujara. "It's great to watch him bat from the other end, the way he grinds the bowlers. He understands his strengths and he sticks with that. He's very tight with his defence and just waits for the bad ball to come."

Marnus Labuschagne, who in a surprise throw of the dice was picked by Australia to be their number three, said his team must learn from Pujara. "He was very classy. I think it's something I personally can take a lot from. He has just batted a lot of time and that's what we're going to need to do," he said. Labuschagne added that

Australia were confident they could get early breakthroughs on Friday and "hopefully get them out for under 400". Kohli again won the toss and Australia got an early breakthrough with Hazlewood tempting Rahul into a defensive shot that took an outside edge and carried to Shaun Marsh at slip, and he was gone for nine. But that only brought the stoic Pujara to the crease and like he has done all series, the 68-Test veteran dug in and blunted the new ball. He survived a review decision for caught behind on 12, but otherwise gave a masterclass.

In another innings of patience and concentration, he slowly picked off runs to bring up his 18th Test century from 199 balls, with 13 boundaries. The methodical 30-year-old has been by far the best batsman from either side across the series and his ton followed a stellar 123 in Adelaide and 106 in Melbourne.

Agarwal shines

Playing in only his second Test, the Bangalore-born Agarwal was also impressive. He was targeted with bouncers and struck on the helmet but held firm, reinforcing his credentials after a solid debut in Melbourne. He worked hard to make his second Test 50 in only three innings by caressing a Mitchell Starc delivery through the covers for four. But he began to open up with the bat and after hitting Nathan Lyon for six to bring up his highest Test score of 77, attempted to do the same from the next delivery and was caught by Starc at long-on.

Master batsman Kohli was welcomed by boos from a section of the crowd and immediately silenced them with an exquisite four off Ha-



SYDNEY: India's Cheteshwar Pujara hits a boundary in front of Australia's captain and wicketkeeper Tim Paine during the first day of the fourth and final cricket Test at the Sydney Cricket Ground. — AFP

zlewood. But after a restrained 23 Hazlewood snared him in the first over after tea, caught behind by wicketkeeper Tim Paine. Vice-captain Rahane looked good in making his way to 18, but a Starc bouncer caught him off guard and Paine collected another catch.

For Paine, it was the sixth toss he had lost

in seven Tests and it could prove costly on a Sydney Cricket Ground pitch expected to be conducive to spin as it wears. When Australia bat, they will have a new-look opening pair with Usman Khawaja padding up with Marcus Harris after the underperforming Aaron Finch was axed. — AFP

Guptill shows six appeal as New Zealand beat Sri Lanka

TAURANGA: Jimmy Neesham made a dream return to international cricket yesterday, crushing Sri Lanka with bat and ball as New Zealand won the opening one-day international by 45 runs in Tauranga. Neesham, recalled after 18 months in the wilderness as New Zealand look to trial all-rounder options before the World Cup, flayed the Sri Lankan bowling with an unbeaten 47 off just 13 deliveries. He then took three for 38 to share the spotlight with man-of-the-match Martin Guptill who set the New Zealand innings alight with 138 off 139 deliveries.

On a placid wicket favoring the batsman and on a ground with short boundaries, Kusal Perera also reached three figures with 102 for Sri Lanka while Niroshan Dickwella added 76. But in reply to New Zealand's 371 for seven, Sri Lanka were all out for 326 with six balls remaining. Free-scoring Sri Lankan openers Dickwella and Danushka Gunathilaka had been on track to chase down the target when they reached 119 off 17 overs. But when Neesham came into the attack he had Gunathilaka caught behind for 43 and Dickwella bowled in the space of four deliv-



MOUNT MAUNGANUI: New Zealand's Martin Guptill (R) plays a shot watched by Sri Lanka's Niroshan Dickwella (L) during the first one-day international cricket match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Bay Oval. — AFP

eries. Kusal Mendis and Perera smacked 52 off 50 deliveries until an Ish Sodhi googly removed Mendis for 18. Neesham returned for his second spell to dismiss Dinesh Chandimal for 10, before more success for spinner Sodhi who had Asela Gunaratne caught in the deep for 11. Trent Boult eventually dismissed the stubborn Perera as Sri Lanka's last five wickets fell for 53 runs. New Zealand had elected to bat first and after the early loss of Colin Munro, Guptill and Kane Williamson put on 163 for the second wicket. — AFP

'Cricket in heaven': Tendulkar honors boyhood coach

NEW DELHI: Indian cricket legend Sachin Tendulkar paid a glowing tribute yesterday to Ramakant Achrekar, his childhood coach and lifelong mentor who has died aged 87. Achrekar, a club-level coach, discovered a 12-year-old Tendulkar's extraordinary talents in Mumbai and nurtured him on his way to becoming cricket's most prolific run-scorer of all time. Achrekar died at his home in Mumbai on Wednesday.

"Cricket in heaven will be enriched by the presence of Achrekar Sir. Like many of his students I learnt the ABCD of cricket under Sir's guidance," Tendulkar said in a statement. "His contribution to my life cannot be captured in words. He built the foundation that I stand on. 'Achrekar Sir taught us the virtues of playing straight and living straight. Thank you for making us a part of your life and enriching us with your coaching manual. Well played Sir and may you coach many more,'" the 45-year-old Tendulkar added.

Tendulkar, who holds many batting records in his illustrious career including 100 centuries in Test and ODIs, retired in 2013 after scoring more than 34,000 international runs. He attended Achrekar's funeral which was carried out according to Hindu traditions sday. Besides Tendulkar, the top coach also trained other prominent Indian players including Vinod Kambli, Pravin Amre and Balwinder Singh Sandhu. — AFP

Sports

Never let me go: Solskjaer wants to stay as Man United manager

NEWCASTLE: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer joined Matt Busby in the Manchester United record books in his team's 2-0 win at Newcastle on Wednesday and admitted he does not want to leave the club in the summer. The United interim manager, in charge until the end of the season when he is scheduled to return to his Norwegian club Molde, has now won his first four games in charge.

In United's history, only the legendary and iconic Busby has matched that achievement and Solskjaer celebrated enthusiastically with his club's travelling supporters after goals from Romelu Lukaku and Marcus Rashford secured the win. "I don't want to (leave)," said Solskjaer when asked about his future beyond this season. "It is such a great bunch of players, a fantastic atmosphere. But it is the next game, the next game and I am doing my job for as long as I am here."

United will now move on to much tougher challenges, starting with the Premier League visit to Tottenham a week on Sunday. But, given the manner of Wednesday's victory, Solskjaer has the look of a manager at the top of his game after his decision to throw on Lukaku and Alexis

Sanchez, two of the biggest under-achievers under former manager Jose Mourinho, after 63 minutes. Instantly, Newcastle keeper Martin Dubravka fumbled a 25-yard Rashford free-kick and Lukaku, with his first touch of the game, tapped the rebound home from five yards.

The game hung in the balance until the 79th minute when Newcastle, pushing upfield for an equaliser, were caught on the counter-attack. Lukaku found Sanchez whose astute pass reached Rashford in space and the England forward showed great poise to curl the ball past Dubravka. "It was a tough test," said Solskjaer of Rashford's performance.

'He will be top number 9'

"He gets kicked, and he gets tackled, he goes for headers, he wins, he challenges, he runs. "He is going to be a top, top number nine, definitely but then we've got Rom (Lukaku), so sometimes he'll play on the right, sometimes on the left, sometimes through the middle. He'll get enough games. "But I felt it was time to put Rom and Alexis on and, of course, it was a great shot by Marcus and Romelu

does his job as a striker to be following in on the rebound. If you do that you'll get five or six goals every season for free, really."

United's victory could have been even more emphatic after Paul Pogba raced clear in injury-time and rounded the keeper only to roll the ball into the side-netting. But that hardly mattered on an evening when Solskjaer pulled to within one victory of the record five that Busby won in his first season in charge of the club in 1946-47. "That will be in the books but it's nothing I'm thinking of," said Solskjaer of his record-equaling fourth win. "I'm just thinking about the next game, because if you win four you can win another four with this club, that's the challenge, that's the standard we're used to."

"The 'gaffer' (Alex Ferguson) used to challenge us on them and when we've won four you can go onto the next four and think about them." The only slight concern for Solskjaer was an injury suffered by Pogba who was caught by an appalling late foul by Newcastle substitute Jonjo Shelvey which went unpunished by referee Andre Marriner. There were also some anxious



NEWCASTLE: Manchester United's Norwegian caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer applauds the fans following the English Premier League football match between Newcastle United and Manchester United at St James' Park. — AFP

first half moments for Solskjaer thanks to some moments of poor defending although United eventually emerged with just their third clean sheet of the season and the first under their interim boss. — AFP

Sarri admits striker needed as Chelsea frustrated by Saints

LONDON: Maurizio Sarri admitted Chelsea need attacking reinforcements after they wasted a chance to cement their place in the Premier League's top four with a 0-0 draw against struggling Southampton on Wednesday. Sarri's team remain in fourth place, but they are now just three points ahead of fifth placed Arsenal in the race to qualify for next season's Champions League. It was a frustrating evening for Chelsea, who dominated possession but lacked any cutting edge, maintaining a worrying sequence for Sarri.

His side failed to score for the third time in their last five Premier League games at Stamford Bridge, raising more questions about Chelsea's need for a top-class striker in the January transfer window. "The club knows my opinion. I think we need something else for our characteristics," Sarri said when asked if he would consider recalling on loan forwards Michy Batshuayi and Tammy Abraham.

Quizzed on the possibility of signing a new forward, he made it clear the responsibility lies with owner Roman Abramovich as he said: "It depends on the board, not on me. "I have to think of my responsibility with the training. I have to try to improve my players in the offensive phase. "We played a good match for 80 meters, then we were in trouble in the last 20 meters. "We have to try to solve the problem. We were in control of every match recently, but it was not easy to score the first goal."

With Olivier Giroud sidelined after suffering an ankle injury in Sunday's win at Crystal Palace, Sarri opted to recall misfiring striker Alvaro Morata. Morata has played so badly this season that Sarri had used Belgian winger Eden Hazard in the central forward's role recently rather than turn to the Spaniard, who had managed only seven goals this term and none in the league since November 4. But, once again, former Real Madrid star Morata looked completely bereft of touch and confidence.

It was no surprise Morata wasted a golden opportunity to open the scoring when he met Cesar Azpilicueta's long pass with a tame header straight at 22-year-old Angus Gunn — the son of ex-Norwich goalkeeper Bryan Gunn. Having announced the signing of Borussia Dortmund midfielder Christian Pulisic earlier in the day, Chelsea are planning ahead following a season of incon-



LONDON: Chelsea's French midfielder N'Golo Kante (L) vies with Southampton's English midfielder James Ward-Prowse (R) during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Southampton at Stamford Bridge. — AFP

sistent displays from Willian and Pedro on the right flank. United States international Pulisic will return to Dortmund on loan before completing his move to Chelsea in the close-season. For the moment, Sarri continues to use Willian, but the Brazilian's bid to prove his worth was ruined when he was forced off with an injury late in the first half.

Mounting frustration

Hazard hinted several times that he preferred to play wide rather than up front during Sarri's experiment with the Belgian as a 'false nine'. Looking more vibrant back in his favored role, Hazard made a fine run that opened up the Southampton defense, yet his fierce drive was well saved by Gunn, making his Premier League debut after his close-season move from Manchester City. But Hazard couldn't do it all on his own and, while successive away wins at Watford and Palace made it a happy Christmas for Chelsea, their first home game of the new year was a lot like their last in 2018. Despite dominating against Leicester, Sarri's team were beaten 1-0 as they paid the price for lacking the incisive passing and movement needed to break down the visitors' obdurate defense. It was exactly the same story against Southampton. Although they controlled the game, chances were few and far between for Chelsea until Hazard burst down the left for a shot that Gunn beat away at his near post. — AFP

Saudi may need time to privatize soccer clubs

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's plan to privatize its soccer clubs could be delayed beyond the targeted 2020, the head of the country's soccer federation told Reuters, in what would be the latest setback to economic reforms. Sport is one of the pillars of the government's Vision 2030 goal to raise living standards and diversify the economy beyond oil exports, while the privatization of soccer clubs has been earmarked as an early candidate in a drive to privatize state-linked assets.

Former Croatia manager Slaven Bilic and Brazilian player Giuliano are among the top names to grace the Saudi league, in which Al Hilal are reigning champions. The authorities previously indicated soccer clubs would be part of an initial tranche of privatizations to be finalized by 2020, but Qusai Al-Fawaz said the date was uncertain. "Privatization is the long-term plan," he said. "I don't have an exact time for this. I don't know whether it will be 2020 or 2022 until the plan is ready."

A delay would be the latest setback to the planned sale of state assets. Last year, the country shelved plans to float oil giant Aramco, but said the sale would happen by early 2021. Sources told Reuters last year that privatization proposals for King Khaled International Airport in Riyadh had also stalled. Still, plans to sell flour mills are moving ahead. The investment climate in Saudi Arabia has recently been hit by the murder of Saudi dissident Jamal Khashoggi.

Fawaz said the kingdom expected to draw up a blueprint for the privatization of soccer clubs in the coming months. "Nothing is seriously happening so far but we expect the privatization of clubs will move very quickly in the upcoming months," he told Reuters. "We will pass a very comprehensive plan on how to move forward." Jadwa Investment, one of the kingdom's largest privately owned investment banks, was previously appointed to advise on the privatization of up to five soccer clubs in the Saudi Professional League. Reuters reported in February 2017. "Until we get a full plan, we can't tell whether it's the five clubs or full 16 (that will be privatized)," Fawaz said. — Reuters

Sports

Five teams to watch at the upcoming Asian Cup in UAE

ABU DHABI: Five leading contenders for football's Asian Cup, which starts in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday:

AUSTRALIA

The Socceroos won the biggest title in their history at the last Asian Cup in 2015, where they edged South Korea after extra time to win a thrilling final in Sydney. It provided further vindication for their switch from Oceania to the Asian confederation in 2006, since when they have never failed to qualify for the World Cup. However, Australia's star has dimmed in recent times, and after reaching Russia 2018 via the play-offs they exited without a win after scoring only twice in their three group games. New coach Graham Arnold must fill the void left by retired record scorer Tim Cahill, and get the goals flowing again, if the Socceroos are to keep the trophy in Australian hands.

IRAN

Asia's top-ranked team won credit at last year's World Cup, where they were edged 1-0 by Spain and finished 1-1 against Cristiano Ronaldo's Portugal, before exiting at the group stage. However, they will want to go home with more than just praise at the Asian Cup, a tournament where success has eluded them since their run of three straight titles ended in 1976. Ex-Real Madrid coach Carlos Queiroz, also a former assistant to Alex Ferguson at Manchester United, has forged a formidable unit which was unbeaten in World Cup qualifying, strolling into the Asian Cup along the way. Last time around, Iran went out on penalties to arch-rivals Iraq in a pulsating quarter-final which featured four goals in extra-time and a contentious second yellow card for simulation to Iranian defender Mehrdad Pooladi. Similar fireworks can be ex-

pected when the two teams meet for their final Group D game on January 16.

JAPAN

Japan go into the Asian Cup chasing a record-extending fifth title and in a rich vein of form. The Blue Samurai are unbeaten in five games since Hajime Moriyasu replaced Akira Nishino as coach after their surprise run to the knockout stages of last year's World Cup. But Japan embark on their Middle Eastern adventure without two players who epitomize their waspish energy — Shinji Kagawa and Shinji Okazaki. Both were omitted by Moriyasu, who looks to Red Bull Salzburg's Takumi Minamino to provide the creative spark in Kagawa's absence. Portimonense's Shoya Nakajima and Groningen's Ritsu Doan will add thrust as they try to avenge their 2015 Asian Cup flop when they crashed out in the quarter-finals. Southampton defender Maya Yoshida and Galatasaray full-back Yuto Nagatomo bring experience to Japan, who face Uzbekistan, Oman and Turkmenistan in Group F. Ranked 50th in the world, behind Iran (29) and Australia (41), anything less than the semi-finals would be seen as failure for Japan.

SAUDI ARABIA

The former giants of Asian football need to reverse a poor run of form as they look to return to the winners' circle for the first time since the 1990s. Victories in 1984, 1988 and 1996 made the Saudis the continent's premier side but despite reaching the 2000 and 2007 finals they have been unable to add to their tally. There wasn't much to shout about at last year's World Cup, when Saudi Arabia lost 5-0 to Russia in their opening game and never recovered. In the UAE, a short hop over the Saudi border, Juan Antonio Pizzi — the fourth coach in the Saudi hotseat

man up front — usually Cahill — but the traditional centre forward role has been replaced with an attacking trio. "The need for speed is up front," Arnold declared, naming a host of players who can "make a difference" in such a role — Matt Leckie, Jamie Maclaren, Andrew Nabbout, Chris Ikonomidis, Awer Mabil, Robbie Kruse and Tom Rogic. "They're technically very good but quick," he said. "People talk about the goalscoring side of it — we've got goalscorers everywhere."

Arnold is keeping opposition teams guessing who will lead the line. McLaren and Leckie would seem to be the frontrunners. He was also banking on Martin Boyle, but the Hibernian striker was ruled out of the eve of the tournament after picking up a knee injury in their 5-0 rout of Oman in a warm-up game on Sunday. It is a blow for Australia with Boyle already scoring two goals in three appearances for a country he had never even visited until Arnold travelled to Edinburgh to convince him to switch allegiances in recent months.

Australia are already without midfielders Daniel Arzani and Aaron Mooy due to knee injuries. When Cahill has not played, Australia have struggled to get goals and former long-time Socceroos goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer said he was a hard act to follow. — AFP

Australia target back-to-back Asian Cups

SYDNEY: Australia are banking on pace and versatility up front to win back-to-back Asian Cups as they embark on a new era without stalwarts Tim Cahill and Mile Jedinak. The Socceroos are a different beast to Ange Postecoglou's team that beat South Korea in extra time to lift the trophy on home soil in 2015.

They have a new coach in Graham Arnold and a mostly inexperienced squad, with the majority of the 23 in the United Arab Emirates never having experienced the cut and thrust of Asian Cup football before. Since taking the reins after Australia's poor showing at their fourth consecutive World Cup in Russia under Bert van Marwijk, Arnold has asserted his authority with the team unbeaten in his four games in charge. He has jettisoned several players and changed the style of play.

For years Australia used to have one target



ABU DHABI: Japan's football team arrives at Dubai airport to participate in the AFC Asian Cup UAE 2019. — AFP

since the 2015 Asian Cup — can expect an easier ride than in Russia as they open against North Korea on Tuesday. However, Saudi Arabia flopped at the last Asian Cup, going out at the group stage, and they are under pressure heading into this edition after winning only one of their six games since the World Cup.

SOUTH KOREA

In Tottenham Hotspur flier Son Heung-min, South Korea boast Asia's most exciting player and they will be regarded as narrow favourites to hoist the trophy on February 1. The Taeguk

Warriors showed their quality when they stunned holders Germany at last year's World Cup and they came within a whisker of winning their third Asian title in 2015, going down to James Troisi's extra-time strike for hosts Australia in the final. Son will miss South Korea's first two games, against the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan, owing to club commitments with Spurs. But with a wealth of talent including Newcastle's Ki Sung-yueng and goalkeeper Jo Hyeon-woo, man of the match in the 2-0 win over Germany, South Korea should have at least one foot in the knock-out stages by then. — AFP

Lippi left needing a Chinese miracle

SHANGHAI: China coach Marcello Lippi has put his players through a tough month of training ahead of the Asian Cup, but the decorated Italian will need to inspire something special if his ageing side are to be serious contenders. Lippi looks set to leave the well-paid post when his contract expires after the tournament in the United Arab Emirates, which begins tomorrow, and at the age of 70 the end of his coaching career is in sight.

He is aiming to add an Asian Cup to a long managerial CV that includes the 2006 World Cup as well as a Champions League medal and five Italian league titles with Juventus. Lippi was also a Chinese Super League winner three times in a row with Guangzhou Evergrande from 2012 to 2014. But his two years in charge of the national side have been underwhelming.

The Chinese government is throwing money at youth football but the squad at Lippi's disposal is limited and one of the oldest at the tournament. Their build-up to the UAE has been complicated by injuries to back-up goalkeepers,

while cold and flu have crept into the squad. China have won only one of their previous seven games, and scoring goals has been a particular problem during Lippi's stuttering reign, managing on average barely a goal a game.

Lippi drove his players hard to ramp up their fitness while at a closed camp on the wet and humid southern island of Hainan, where the bulk of China's Asian Cup preparations took place. "I am very satisfied with the performance of the players in training, (but) injuries and sickness did occur," Lippi, reportedly one of the best-paid coaches in football, said. The Italian was buoyed however by being able to get the squad together at the start of December, giving him ample time to get his message across.

"This is truly the first time that we have enough time for better preparation tactically and physically," added the Italian, who must find a way to get Shanghai SIPG forward Wu Lei, last season's CSL top-scorer, banging in goals for his country. Expectations back home are as low as ever — Chinese football fans have long been exasperated by their team — though Lippi's men ought to have enough to squeeze out of Group C, most likely behind South Korea. Kyrgyzstan and the Philippines are the other countries in the group and failure to qualify for the knock-out rounds would trigger another bout of hand-wringing. — AFP



JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA: In this file photo taken on October 12, 2006 seven-time world Formula One champion German Michael Schumacher takes part in a training session at the Jerez racetrack in Jerez de la Frontera. — AFP

F1, Ferrari pays tribute to Schumacher on 50th birthday

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