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Tender agency member, others sent to prosecution over graft

Assembly braces for battle over MPs' membership • Panel delays vote on PM's grilling

By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT: The Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) referred yesterday a member of the Central Agency for Public Tenders and his spouse, along with a company staff member, to the public prosecution on corruption charges, including the deliberate act of inflicting damage to public funds. Mohammad Buzubar, Nazaha's Assistant Secretary General for Investigations and its official spokesman, told KUNA that Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for

Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh referred a report in early 2018 based on Cabinet decision no. 1657 of Dec 25, 2017.

The report, which was prepared by a judicial fact-finding committee, was based on suspicions and accusations that some members of the tender agency's board of directors were directly involved in approving a contract with the health ministry and a company that provides ambulances. Buzubar added that the authority also received a letter earlier from the ministry of health suspecting officials in the ministry of corruption over the supply of

ambulances to the ministry worth KD 3,720,000 from the same company and using the same style in contracting.

Buzubar noted that the department in charge of corruption detection and investigation carried out its investigative work with regards to both incidents of communications and found a link between them in the suspicious approval issued by the tender agency and the ministry of health contracting a direct order to buy the ambulances from a local company. The Nazaha official affirmed that their procedures and referral have been complete

and thorough after examining all collected information and finding the suspects mentioned did receive bribes, and investigations are ongoing with other suspects.

Later yesterday, the Cabinet voiced determination to go ahead with earnest moves to promote integrity and combat corruption at the behest of HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and commended Nazaha for referring the suspects to the public prosecution. Some MPs also welcomed the move by Nazaha.

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نزهة Nazaha

Saudi woman 'under the care' of UN agency

BANGKOK: The Saudi woman who made a desperate plea for asylum after landing at Bangkok airport has been placed "under the care" of the United Nations refugee agency, a Thai official said late yesterday. Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun told AFP she ran away from her family while travelling in Kuwait because they subjected her to physical and psychological abuse. The 18-year-old said she had planned to seek asylum in Australia and feared she would be killed if repatriated by

Thai immigration officials who stopped her during transit on Sunday.

Thai immigration chief Surachate Hakparn had said Sunday that Qunun was denied entry because of her lack of documents. But he made an abrupt about-face the next day, following a global media frenzy as the young woman pleaded on Twitter for different countries to help her. After announcing that Thailand "will not force her" to leave, Surachate told reporters late yesterday that Qunun would be "allowed to stay" after a meeting with officials from the UN refugee agency UNHCR.

"She is under the care of the UNHCR now but we also sent Thai security to help take care (of her)," Surachate told reporters at Suvarnabhumi airport. He said Qunun had told UNHCR officials she "wants to stay in Thailand for a while seeking asylum to a third country".

The agency "will take five days to consider her status" and another five days to arrange for travel, Surachate said, adding that he would meet with Saudi diplomats today to explain Thailand's decision.

Following the announcement, a relieved Qunun tweeted that she felt safe "under UNHCR protection with the agreement of Thailand authorities", adding that her passport had been returned to her after being taken away on Sunday. UNHCR's spokesman in Geneva Babar Baloch confirmed Qunun had "left the airport to a safe place in the city" and said agency officials would interview her once she had had some rest.

Surachate had told reporters earlier yesterday Qunun was stopped by immigration because Saudi officials had contacted them

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BANGKOK: This handout picture shows 18-year-old Saudi woman Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun being escorted by a Thai immigration officer and a United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) official at Suvarnabhumi International airport yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

World Bank chief Kim resigns

WASHINGTON: World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim will resign effective Feb 1, more than three years ahead of the expiration of his term in 2022, the multilateral lender said yesterday. Kim, 59, announced that he will immediately join a firm and focus on increasing infrastructure in developing countries, but the bank did not provide further details. Kristalina Georgieva, the World Bank's chief executive officer, will assume the role of interim president when Kim departs. — Reuters

Iraqi officials visited Israel

BAGHDAD: Visits by Iraqi officials to Israel announced by the Jewish state stirred controversy yesterday in Iraq, where the deputy parliamentary speaker demanded a probe to identify those who crossed a "red line". Israel's foreign ministry said on Twitter on Sunday that three Iraqi delegations visited Israel in 2018. It said the 15 Iraqi visitors were "influential Shiite and Sunni personalities in the country", adding the travellers had visited "Israeli officials and universities" as well as the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. — AFP

Sisi acknowledges Israel coordination

WASHINGTON: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi offered a rare acknowledgement of his close security cooperation with Israel in the Sinai Peninsula during a US television interview with CBS' "60 Minutes". Asked whether the cooperation was the closest and deepest that he has had with Israel, Sisi responded: "That is correct." Asked why he had not managed to wipe militants out, Sisi asked: "Why hasn't the US eliminated the terrorists in Afghanistan after 17 years and spending a trillion dollars?" Sisi also denied that Egypt was holding any political prisoners after CBS cited one rights group's estimate of 60,000 political prisoners. — Reuters

Court rejects Sirisena sanity test

COLOMBO: A Sri Lanka court yesterday rejected calls to subject the president to a mental health examination after he sacked a former ally, dissolved parliament and plunged the country into crisis. The court of appeal rejected a petition to force Maithripala Sirisena before a panel of psychiatrists to scrutinize his mental state in the wake of the political upheaval. — AFP

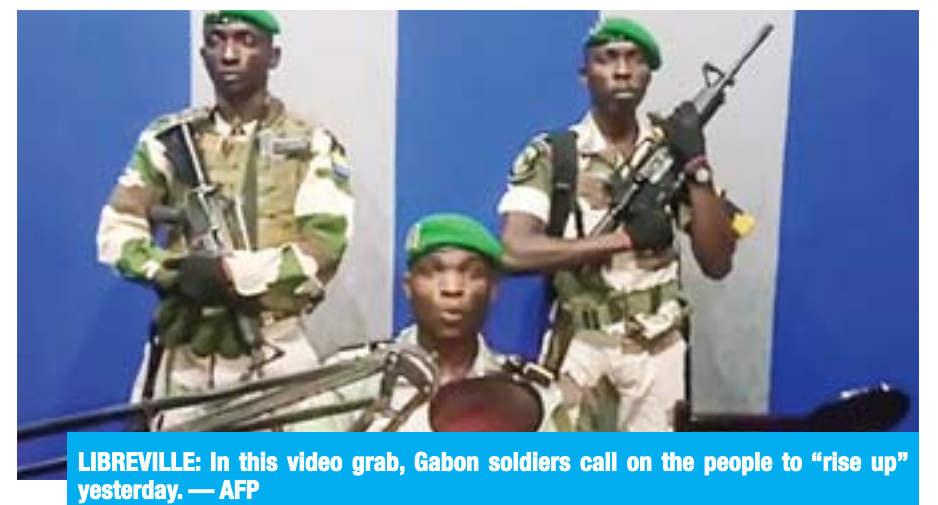
Gabon foils coup, kills two plotters

LIBREVILLE: Gabon said it foiled an attempted coup yesterday after a group of soldiers called for a popular uprising while the country's ailing president was abroad. The soldiers burst into state radio offices at dawn and urged the public to "rise up" in a broadcast made as President Ali Bongo remained in Morocco after suffering a stroke last year. Three soldiers wearing the green

beret of the elite Republican Guard, two of them carrying assault rifles, were visible on a video of the speech released on social media.

But security forces stormed the building, capturing the rebel chief, killing two of his team and freeing journalists and technicians who had been held hostage and forced to help the mutineers make their broadcast, the presidency said. "The situation is under control," it said in a statement. Shots were heard earlier around the RTG state broadcasting headquarters in Libreville, capital of the oil-rich West African nation, at about the same time as the message was read at 6:30 am (0530 GMT).

Continued on Page 24



LIBREVILLE: In this video grab, Gabon soldiers call on the people to "rise up" yesterday. — AFP

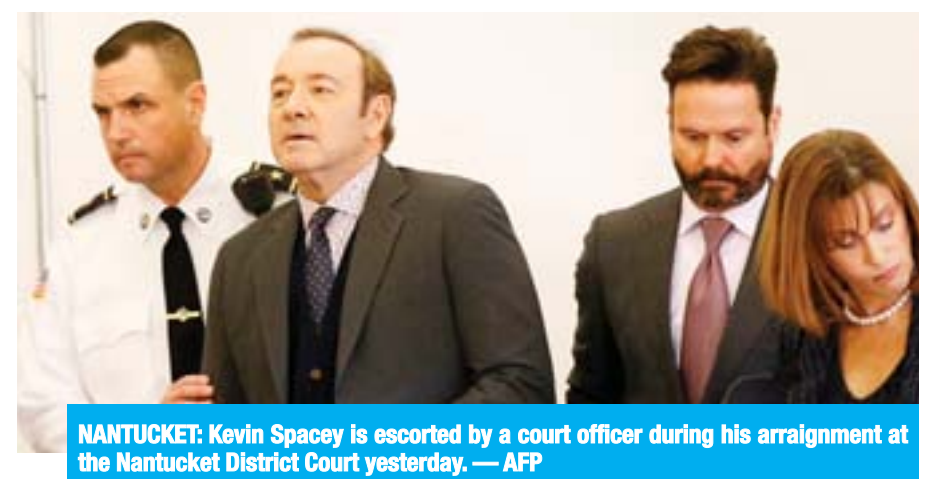
Spacey denies indecent assault in groping case

NANTUCKET, Massachusetts: Kevin Spacey pleaded not guilty yesterday to indecently assaulting a teenager who alleged that the Oscar-winning US actor groped him in a bar in Massachusetts in 2016. The "House of Cards" star, who faces five years in prison if convicted, is accused of repeatedly reaching down into the pants of a man identified as William

Little, who was 18 at the time of the alleged attack at a Nantucket restaurant.

Spacey, dressed in a gray coat over a dark blazer and tie, was not asked for his plea during the brief arraignment in a crowded Nantucket courtroom, but his lawyer entered the denial on Spacey's behalf. A follow-on hearing was scheduled for March 4, but Spacey is not required to attend. The 59-year-old actor stood quietly with his hands clasped as the clerk read out the charge "that in the town of Nantucket on July 18, 2016 (the defendant) did commit indecent assault and battery on someone 14 and over."

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NANTUCKET: Kevin Spacey is escorted by a court officer during his arraignment at the Nantucket District Court yesterday. — AFP

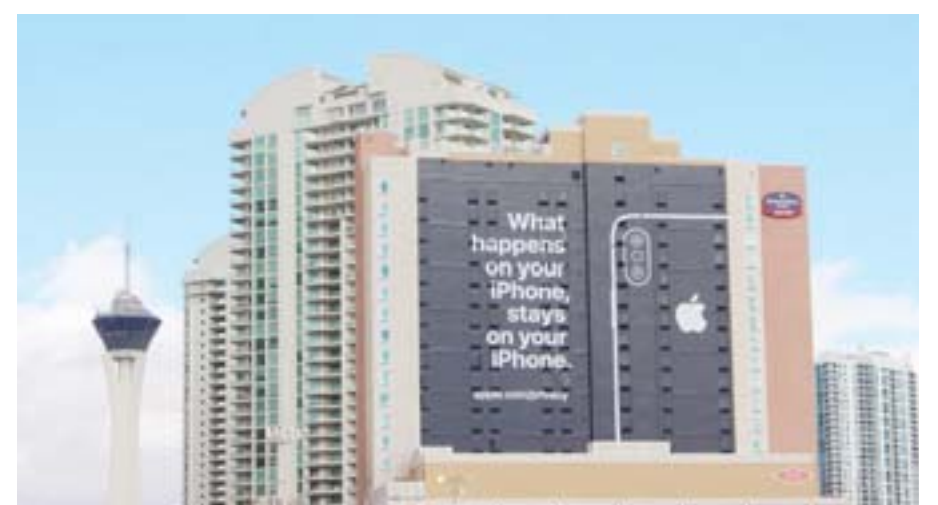
Privacy becomes a selling point at US tech show

LAS VEGAS: Apple is not among the exhibitors at the 2019 Consumer Electronics Show, but that didn't prevent the iPhone maker from sending a message to attendees on a large billboard. "What happens on your iPhone stays on your iPhone," Apple says in the message to be seen by tens of thousands attending the Las Vegas tech show. The message comes as gadget makers are concerned about data protection scandals and in many cases looking to make their own point about respect for privacy.

Some companies are offering better ways of protecting Internet routers or services without a need for an internet connection - reducing the potential for data leaks and breaches. Dutch startup Scalys is showing its Trustbox, a router that aims to protect the user's connection as well as devices using it. Another router from Chicago-based Winston stops tracking and surveillance and can also block ads and geolocation.

The data scandals "are like Christmas presents for us," by prompting more consumers to look for better security, said Winston founder Richard Stokes. "As we see more things being connected I think that you'll definitely hear people talk about security more and really looking at how would you secure the data," said analyst Carolina Milanesi

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LAS VEGAS: Apple takes a shot at rivals on the data privacy front at the major Consumer Electronics Show with a message on the side of a hotel. — AFP

Local

Amir receives Secretary General of Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions

Crown Prince receives Sheikh Thamer Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Head of the Tunisian Auditing Department and Secretary General of the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI) Najeeb Al-Qattari. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



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



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Tunisian Auditing Department and Secretary General of the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI) Najeeb Al-Qattari.



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Tunisian Auditing Department and Secretary General of the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI) Najeeb Al-Qattari.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Deputy Chairman of State Audit Bureau Adel Al-Sarawi and the visiting Head of the Tunisian Auditing Department and Secretary General of the Arab Organization of

Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI) Najeeb Al-Qattari. Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah also attended the reception. Sarawi later introduced the visiting Tunisian official to National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the

Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Sheikh Thamer Al-Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA

Coptic Orthodox Church hosts Christmas mass



KUWAIT: Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah visits the St Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral yesterday. — Amiri Diwan photo



KUWAIT: The St Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral in Kuwait hosted a Christmas mass Sunday night, which was attended by a large gathering of Egyptian Orthodox Copts living in Kuwait. Meanwhile, Kuwait's Minister of State for Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah visited the St Mark Coptic Orthodox Cathedral yesterday to offer his well wishes on the occasion. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Egypt advocates interfaith harmony, says Kuwaiti official

CAIRO: Egypt's efforts to extol the virtues of tolerance and accept different faiths and beliefs are commendable, His Highness the Kuwaiti Amir's envoy Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq said yesterday. The Kuwaiti official's remarks came after a mosque and a Coptic church were opened simultaneously in the Egyptian capital, an accomplishment he hailed as a religious milestone. The opening of the mosque and church is a testament to the notion that Christians and Muslims can peacefully co-exist, he said, wishing the Arab world's most populous nation continued prosperity and development.

Egyptian President Abdulfatah Al-Sisi inaugurated on Sunday Al-Fattah Al-Alim Mosque and the Nativity of Christ Cathedral in the country's new administrative capital. The inauguration ceremony was attended by several international dignitaries, including Maatouq representing His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, as well as Egyptian official, military and religious figures. "This occasion is a message that we will not allow anybody to come between us, and I do not like to use the term sectarian strife because Muslims and Christians in Egypt are one, and will stay one," Sisi said. He, however,

warned that attempts to instigate sedition would not end.

Al-Fattah Al-Alim Mosque will accommodate for more than 14,000 worshippers and is considered the biggest mosque in the country and one of the largest in the Middle East. The Nativity of Christ Cathedral, the largest church in the Middle East, will serve over 8,200 worshippers. The Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmad Al-Tayeb said that this is a momentous occasion hailed the occasion as "the embodiment of the soul of brotherhood and love." Tayeb also said that Islamic law dictates that Christian and Jewish houses of worship must be safeguarded to the same extent that mosques are protected.

Meanwhile, the Coptic Orthodox Pope Tawadros II cheered the achievement. "This is a day of joy as we see our beloved country write a new page in the history of civilization," Pope Tawadros II said. "Today we celebrate an unprecedented occasion where the minarets of Al-Fattah Al-Alim Mosque are embracing those of the Nativity of the Christ Cathedral, opening a new horizon for our beloved country on this happy occasion, achieved through the Egyptian people's donations and efforts with sincerity and love," the pope said. — KUNA



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdulfatah Al-Sisi greets His Highness the Kuwaiti Amir's envoy Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq during the inauguration of Al-Fattah Al-Alim Mosque. — Amiri Diwan photo

Local

Six talented Kuwaiti graduates enter fourth edition of Zain Group's 'Generation Z' program

Initiative makes a difference to the future prospects of talented young Kuwaitis: Kharafi

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa announces the commencement of its 'Generation Z 2019' program for six high-achieving Kuwaiti graduates, who were selected to enter the initiative following a rigorous assessment process.

The 'Generation Z' Youth Empowerment initiative is the brainchild of Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi, a keen supporter of developing and empowering Kuwaiti youth. This year's program builds on three previous year-long graduate programs commencing in 2015, which have seen talented graduates from each of the previous years offered full-time employment at Zain.

The aim of the year-long graduate development program is to develop young high caliber Kuwaiti nationals with potential, and enhancing their digital and behavioral skill sets to the level required to support Zain Group's expanding digital lifestyle strategy.

'Generation Z 2019' will focus on developing participants' soft skills to foster collaboration and team effectiveness, develop creativity and enable innovative thinking, thereby preparing graduates to enter the workforce and contribute successfully. The program will heighten behaviors already possessed by the participants such as empathy, determination, and team work, as well as develop competencies such as problem solving, influencing people, adaptability and delivering results.

At a ceremony honoring the 'Generation Z 2018' graduates and welcoming the 'Generation Z 2019'

graduates held at ZINC, Bader Al-Kharafi commented, "This initiative has matured into a program that is genuinely making a difference to the prospects and experience of talented young Kuwaitis in enhancing their digital skill sets. Investment in and development of young people is the most prudent long-term plan an organization or nation can make, and we are delighted with the caliber of individuals who are graduating from Generation Z on an annual basis."

Kharafi continued, "We live in highly changeable times, and equipping young people with the tools necessary to adapt quickly to new environments is critical to maintaining a competitive edge. We wish the incoming participants the very best in the year ahead, and my advice to them would be to grab this opportunity with both hands and be open to learning as much as possible in a bid to becoming successful corporate leaders of the future."

The latest set of program participants will be helped to cultivate customer-centric ideas that are relevant and impactful. The program is clustered under the themes of Empowerment, Digital Transformation, Corporate Culture and Sustainability, with a focus on developmental areas of interest to Zain including Big Data, digital services, drone technology, mobile money, and data analytics.

Participants will also be exposed to a wide range of corporate and team-building activities, including undertaking extreme sports, volunteering activities in vulnerable communities, developing their self-awareness and international travel to expand on their cultur-



KUWAIT: Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi (left) and Group CEO - Operations Scott Gegenheimer (right) with the new Generation Z graduates.

al appreciation and bring emerging technologies and cultural aspects back to Kuwait.

The six new successful candidates for the 2019 program were judged on their creativity, passion, resilience and initiative. They were hand-picked following a two-week-long assessment that included panel interviews, individual research, customer research, team presentations and psychometric assessments. This year's Generation Z program received 277 applicants of whom 77 proceeded to personal interviews. 13 short-listed candidates advanced to panel interviews, with an initial nine candidates being short-listed and finally narrowed to

the final six.

The six selected 'Generation Z 2019' interns are: Shaha Al-Khamees; Dalal Al-Sultan; Mohammed Al-Gharabelli; Thuraya Al-Ateeqi; Laila Al-Melhem; and Jumana Al-Mutawa. Over recent years, Zain Group has launched various Empowerment initiatives including WE that is aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering women in the organization to be future leaders. Regarding the company's ZY, Youth Empowerment strategy, many of Zain's Middle East and African operations have rolled-out numerous inspiring youth related programs that can be viewed on #zyouthtakeover.



Four 2018 program graduates hired full time



KUWAIT: The Ambassador of Malaysia Dato Mohammad Ali Selamat visited Kuwait Times yesterday and discussed matters of mutual concern with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. — Photo by Joseph Shagra



The Charge d'Affaires of Democratic People's Republic of Korea Ju Myong Chol visited Kuwait Times yesterday and discussed matters of mutual concern with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. —Photo by Joseph Shagra

Deputy FM meets US ambassador

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah yesterday hosted US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence R Silverman as part of preparations for the third version of Kuwaiti-US strategic dialogue due in Kuwait on January 15. Both diplomats also addressed relations between both countries

and the latest regional and international developments. Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Ayham Al-Omar and Assistant Foreign Minister for the Americas Minister Plenipotentiary Reem Al-Khaled were present at the meeting. The Kuwaiti-US strategic dialogue was launched in 2016, with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah leading the Kuwaiti side, and US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo leading the US one. Several ministries and state agencies from both sides are participating in the dialogue. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence R Silverman. — KUNA

Kuwait eyes closer cooperation with Australia on food security

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Al-Ghanem yesterday stressed the importance of boosting Kuwaiti-Australian cooperation in the food security sector. Ghanem said during the reception of a visiting Australian parliamentary delegation headed by Maria Vamvakinou, accompanied by Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Jonathan Gilbert, that this visit aims to strengthen commercial ties between the two countries and to discuss common issues.

Meanwhile, Vamvakinou said that the purpose of this visit is to promote bilateral ties between Kuwait and Australia, and to look into available investment opportunities in Kuwait. Vamvakinou also invited KCCI to visit Australia to find similar opportunities in different fields provided by the Australian Parliament that works hard to provide a good commercial environment for foreign investments. In the meantime, Ambassador Gilbert made similar remarks about commercial opportunities in Kuwait and Australia, stressing the impor-



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Australian MP Maria Vamvakinou, who leads an Australian parliamentary delegation visiting Kuwait. — KUNA

tance of strengthening those relations between the two friendly countries.

Earlier yesterday, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received the visiting Australian parliamentary delegation, and the two sides discussed ways

of strengthening bilateral ties between the two parliaments, in addition to important and common matters. The meeting was attended by Foreign Affairs Committee head MP Dr Abdulkarim Al-Kandari, and MPs Ali Al-Deqbasi, Safaa Al-Hashem and Mohammad Al-Dallal. — KUNA

Fiber optics essential part of smart cities' projects

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait has set plans to use fiber optic networks as an essential part of developing smart cities in the country as well as aiding the state's development scheme 'Vision 2035'. Fiber optics applications could be used in various domains especially within the development of telecommunication, the internet, and Information Technology (IT). The main focus of fiber optics in Kuwait is to establish a link between Kuwaiti residential areas as well as public and private entities.

The Ministry of Communication is handling the installation of the fiber optic networks via a three-phase process. Currently there are around 122 housing units benefiting from fiber optics in the first two phases, while future plans will include around 120 housing units in various governorates.

Speaking on the issue, Director General of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) Qusai Al-Shatti said that fiber optics technology was an important tool to measure the success of any given economy. Fiber optics would be a vital tool in utilizing the 'internet of things', a term describing the use of internet in every tool an aspect of life, said Shatti, affirming that this concept was part of Vision 2035. The internet of things will streamline governmental services and fiber optics will be the door to carry out such an ambitious plan, indicated the official.

On the nitty-gritty of fiber optics, expert Hajaj Bukhdhoor said that in essence, the material used in fiber optics allowed for fast transportation of information whether wired or otherwise. It also consumes less power, he said, adding that fiber optics was used in various products other than communication-based technologies.

Meanwhile, Dalal Yaqoub - an owner of a small enterprise - stressed that her use of fiber optics had helped her business immensely. Broadly, fiber optics had boosted Kuwait's development index within the telecommunication and IT domain, which in turn would reflect positively on local businesses and the economy of the country as a whole, she said. Reflecting a similar attitude, both Abdulaziz Habib and Ziyad Al-Banwan said that fiber optics are integral for the development of communication and the internet in Kuwait, affirming that it was a priority for Kuwait to continue its plans to spread networks throughout the country. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Souq Sharq's marina during sunset. — Photo by Hatem Al-Sheikh (KUNA)

Clean fuel project 97% complete, set to finish in November 2019

Project creates over 1,000 jobs for citizens

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Under the auspices and with the attendance of the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Dr Khaled Mahdi, the plans and programs follow-up department yesterday visited the site of the clean fuel project, which is carried out by Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC). Speaking during the occasion, Mahdi said around 97.12 percent of the project has been completed and that according to the plan, the KD 4,680,000,000 project is expected to be completed in November 2019. He added that the new project provided 537 job opportunities for citizens during construction and will provide 592 more on operation by December.

Mahdi added that the clean fuel project aims at enhancing the capacities of Ahmadi and Mina Abdullah refineries to 800,000 barrels per day and help produce high quality petrochemical derivatives needed in Kuwait as well as European and American markets, which will revive the national economy.

The council's assistant secretary general for planning

and follow-up affairs Bader Al-Refae said the aim of the visit was to check the progress of work at this strategic project compared to its schedule. He also stressed that no delay was detected. Also speaking during the visit, the council's plans and programs follow-up department manager Suad Al-Awadhi stressed that visiting KNPC's clean fuel project was of great strategic significance to the state's development plan.



Boosting capacity to 800,000 bpd

E-visas to visit Uzbekistan

Starting from Feb 1, 2019, Kuwaitis will be able to obtain e-visas to visit Uzbekistan, said a statement by the Uzbek Embassy in Kuwait, adding that president Shavkat Mirziyoyev had signed a presidential decree allowing nationals of 76 countries, including Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Algeria, Morocco, Lebanon, Egypt and Tunisia, to get e-visas to enter Uzbekistan.

The statement explained that the decision was made to enhance and boost tourism to Uzbekistan - the most densely populated country in Central Asia, which is a federal Muslim republic of the former Soviet Union with Tashkent as its capital and Samarkand as one of its most important cities. The statement also explained that Uzbekistan had recently launched new types of visas including three-month ones for treatment, a one-year visa



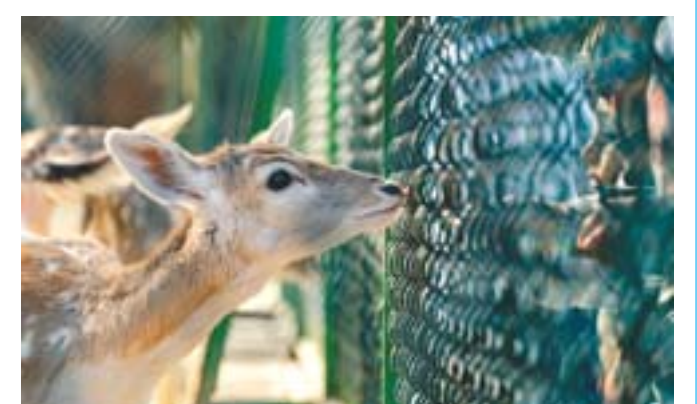
KUWAIT: This archive photo shows construction works at the clean fuel project. — KUNA

for students registered with and accepted by the ministry of higher education and three-month to two-year visas for academics desiring to conduct research requested by the Uzbek Academy of Sciences.

Kuwait Zoo: A family-friendly spot

KUWAIT: Kuwait Zoo, located in Omariya, is considered one of Kuwait's main tourist attractions for many reasons, most notable of which is its family-friendly atmosphere. During the winter, visitors

flock to the wildlife park to enjoy their time by touring the place's facilities and seeing various species of animals. Kuwait Zoo opens six days a week, with Sundays off, from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. — KUNA



Local

Time limit for expat employees' replacement not possible: Minister

Nod to hiring expat Quran teachers in religious schools and institutes

By A Saleh and Agencies

KUWAIT: Setting a time limit for replacing expatriate public sector employees with Kuwaiti manpower is not possible because implementing such plan is closely related to labor market needs and the outcome of the educational system, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel explained.

The minister's remarks were quoted in an Al-Rai daily report yesterday, which indicates that she made that clarification in response to demands made by the National Assembly's human resources committee, which called the government to provide it with a 'timed plan' to complete the replacement of expatriate employees in state departments with Kuwaiti staff members.

In this regard, committee chairman MP Khalil Al-Saleh said that during a meeting with Aqeel, the committee asked her, as minister of economic affairs who is directly responsible for all the files of substitution and unemployment, to set specific dates and a timed plan to implement substitution that had remained mere talk by the government for years.

Saleh added that an agreement was made with Aqeel to come up with the plan within a fortnight. "We will only accept a mechanism to put the plan into practice. No more studies, statistics or memos - we need actual implementation of any mechanism the government opts for and reviews with us," he underlined. The committee's rapporteur MP Mohammed Al-Huwailah said that

the committee members urged the government to provide them with short and medium term plans to 'Kuwaitize' all government and private sector staff. The government has embarked last year on a plan to create jobs for Kuwaiti manpower by releasing around 80,000 non-Kuwaitis currently working in state departments and have similar qualifications. The plan's ultimate goal is to achieve complete 'Kuwaitization' of public sector jobs within five years of its commencement.

Quran teachers

The finance ministry has no objections to appointing expats who memorize the entire Holy Quran as Quran recitation and memorization teachers in religious schools and institutes, in Quran Houses and

memorization circles in return for limited monthly payments, said informed sources. The sources added that the ministry responded to a parliamentary proposal aiming at encouraging people to memorize the Quran. However, the finance ministry remarked that the proposal did not explain the cost of such a decision and called for more coordination with relevant bodies such as the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and the general authority to take care of the printing and publication of Holy Quran and Sunnah and their sciences.

Jordanian universities

A new list with accredited Jordanian universities will be issued in February, said informed sources, noting that the list will also include

the names of suspended and discredited universities with the ultimate goal of ensuring high-quality education. The sources explained that the national apparatus for academic accreditation and quality education had already started acting to verify the quality of education at various Jordanian universities a year ago by dispatching special delegations to Jordan.

The sources added that the new list is almost the same as the current one, which includes 12 public and seven private universities. "The change might only be in suspending some universities," the sources remarked, noting that the delegation found that some universities provide special treatment for Kuwait students, which negatively affects the quality of education they get.



Economic Affairs Minister Mariam Al-Aqeel

Motorist killed in Jahra accident

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: An Arab man was killed in a car accident reported on Sunday night between Waha and Oyoun in Jahra. Firefighters headed to the scene in response to an emergency call, and discovered that the man had already succumbed to his injuries. An investigation was opened to determine the cause of the accident.

Salmiya fire

No injuries were reported in a fire that engulfed a third-floor apartment in a Salmiya building yesterday. Firefighters had arrived to the scene shortly after the blaze was reported yesterday afternoon, and they battled the blaze after evacuating the building. An investigation was opened to reveal what caused the fire.

Traffic campaign

Ahmadi traffic department carried out a campaign in southern and northern areas yesterday against drivers who acted recklessly during New Year celebrations. Their license plates were noted down and their locations were determined. Many sports cars were impounded.

Media figure released

The public prosecution released Kuwaiti media figure Ayesha Al-Rushaid following a complaint against her by the Amiri Diwan and other officials who accused her of insulting them in an audio recording on social media, Al-Rai daily reported yesterday.

Smuggler caught

Inspectors at Rafiq Al-Hariri International Airport in Beirut detained a Kuwaiti man who was caught with possession of 195 grams of hashish. The drugs were found in the man's undergarments when he was searched while preparing to fly to Kuwait, Al-Rai reported yesterday. Separately, Kuwait International Airport customs officers arrested two men, Kuwaiti and Egyptian, in two separate cases as they arrived with eight pieces of hashish and 167 illicit tablets.

Officer attacked

Concerned authorities ordered the detention of a royal family member who attacked a police officer on duty. A high-ranking security source said a misdemeanor charge was lodged against the 'sheikh' after he was accused of insulting an officer while on duty. A medical report documented the injuries as a result of the beating.

Fugitive detained

Police arrested a bedoon (stateless) man wanted to serve a total of 90 years in felony cases, most notably kidnap and rape, in addition to drug use. Police asked the suspect for his ID, but he claimed to have forgotten it at home. He then handed them proof of being a bedoon. When they checked his record, he was found to be wanted by authorities, reported Al-Rai.



KUWAIT: The National Guard Training Institute held the final exercises for infantry officers (Saqer 4). The event was held under the patronage of National Guard Undersecretary Lt Gen Staff Hashim Al-Refai and in the presence of assistant undersecretary for operations and training Maj Gen Faleh Shujaa. The exercise dealt with countering violence and fighting in built areas as well as isolation, surrounding, storming and medical evacuation in order to train officers for real operations in similar situations.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's weekly meeting yesterday. — KUNA

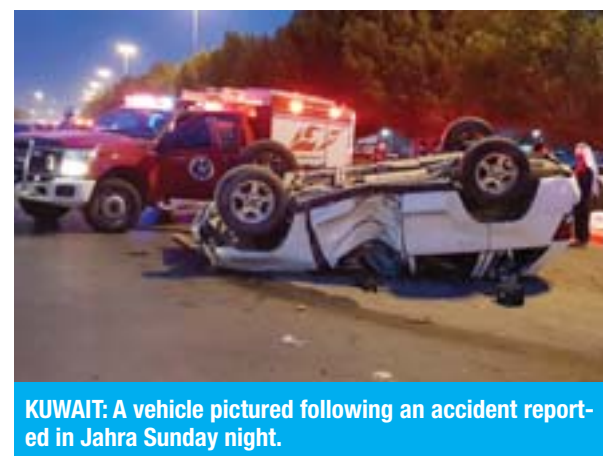
Cabinet briefed on 2019-2020 development plan

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel gave a briefing during the cabinet's weekly meeting yesterday on the state's 2019-2020 development plan; the fifth and final part of the 2015/2016-2019/2020 mid-term development drive, which is primarily based on seven core pillars that reflect economic, social, environment and administrative development. She assured that the annual development plan involves stricter and more serious criteria for selecting projects of high development returns, whether directly or indirectly.

The minister explained that the mid-term drive policies have been linked to international indexes and sustainable development goals, stressing that for the plan to work out, everyone, including development partners and citizens, should share development responsibility.

Meanwhile, the cabinet hailed a recent decision by First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to set up a probe panel to look into audit reports pertinent to defensive budgets, Al-Saleh said. In the meantime, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet on the outcomes of a recent visit by Tunisian Foreign Minister Khemaies Jhinaoui to Kuwait, and talks held on ways of promoting and developing bilateral relations and the latest regional and international developments.

Internationally, the cabinet offered heartfelt condolences to Denmark over the victims of a train accident, which left a number of people dead or injured, along with Russia over the victims of a recent apartment building collapse. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A vehicle pictured following an accident reported in Jahra Sunday night.



Firefighters battle a blaze reported yesterday in Salmiya.

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French cardinal trial begins over child abuse cover up

New Malaysian king to be picked this month after shock abdication

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DHAKA: Bangladesh President Abdul Hamid (L) swears in Sheikh Hasina (R) for her fourth term as Bangladesh's prime minister at the Presidential Palace. —AFP

Hasina sworn in as Bangladesh PM

Critics have accused her of creeping authoritarianism

DHAKA: Sheikh Hasina was sworn in as Bangladesh's prime minister for a record fourth term yesterday after a crushing election victory marred by deadly violence and claims of widespread rigging. Hasina, 71, has presided over record economic growth in the South Asian country of 165 million people but critics have accused her of creeping authoritarianism.

Her ruling Awami League party and its allies won the December 30 elections by a landslide, securing 288 seats in the 300-seat parliament compared to just seven for the main opposition. The campaign saw mass arrests of opposition activists and candidates and allegations of widespread rigging including ballot stuffing and voter intimidation. Seventeen people were killed on Election Day. The European Union has called for a probe into allegations of irregularities, saying "significant obstacles to a level playing field..."

tainted the electoral campaign and the vote."

The United States expressed concern about "credible reports of harassment, intimidation and violence". The United Nations on Friday said there were indications that "reprisals" have targeted the opposition since the election, including physical attacks, arbitrary arrests, harassment, disappearances and filing of criminal cases. The opposition, which last week boycotted the oath taking ceremony of the newly elected MPs, has demanded fresh polls under a neutral caretaker government — something Hasina and the election commission have rejected outright.

'Mother of humanity'

President Abdul Hamid administered Hasina's oath in a ceremony at the presidential palace, Bangabhaban. A 47-member cabinet with many new

faces was also sworn in. To her supporters, Hasina is known as Bangladesh's "mother of humanity" for allowing in hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees fleeing a military crackdown in neighboring Myanmar in 2017.

Opponents accuse her of jailing arch-foe Khaleda Zia on politically motivated charges, of orchestrating mass arrests, enforced disappearances and passing draconian anti-press freedom laws to try to cling to power.

Hasina was abroad in August 1975 when a group of renegade military officers assassinated her father, Bangladesh's first president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, his wife and three sons. She started her political career as a hero of the people, returning from exile in 1981 to take over as Awami League leader and beginning a long struggle to restore

democracy in Bangladesh.

Hasina joined forces with Zia's BNP to help oust military dictator Hussain Muhammad Ershad in 1990 but the pair soon fell out and were branded the "Battling Begums". Their rivalry has dominated Bangladeshi politics for the last 30 years. Hasina was first elected prime minister in 1996 but she struggled to emerge from the shadow of her father during her first term and lost the 2001 contest.

She returned to power after winning the December 2008 polls by landslide, just months after she was imprisoned by a military-backed government on corruption charges. She has been in power ever since, presiding over economic expansion of more than six percent every year since 2009. GDP growth last year was 7.86 percent and Hasina has promised to take that into double digits. — AFP

A look at Saudi Arabia's treatment of women

DUBAI: A desperate legal fight by 18-year-old Saudi Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun to stop her deportation from Bangkok airport has yet again shone a spotlight on the treatment of women in her homeland. Ultraconservative Saudi Arabia is striving to craft a new image — but a number of policies remain unchanged, leaving male relatives in charge of decisions that determine women's lives. Here is where the Sunni Muslim kingdom stands on five core issues:

Education

Saudi Arabia's so-called guardianship system places the legal and personal affairs of women in the hands of the men in their lives — fathers, brothers, husbands and sons. Under the system, women require the formal permission of their closest male relative to enroll in classes at home, or to travel to enroll in classes abroad.

In July 2017, Saudi Arabia's education ministry announced girls' schools would begin to offer physical education classes for the first time, so long as they conformed with Islamic law. The ministry statement did not specify whether girls were required to have male permission to take the classes. Saudi Arabia is home to a number of women-only universities.

Employment

Restrictions on women's employment, long ruled by the guardianship system, have been loosened as Saudi Arabia tries to wean itself off its economic dependency on oil. Prince Mohammed bin Salman, named heir to the throne in June 2017, has pushed an economic plan, known as "Vision 2030", that aims to boost the female quota in the workplace from 22 percent to 30 percent by 2030. King Salman — his father — has signed off on decrees allowing women to apply online for their own business licences. Women are now also permitted to join the Saudi police force.

Travel, driving

Women still require male permission to renew their passports and leave the country. But the biggest change over the past year came on June 24, 2018, when women took the driver's seat for the first time in the

kingdom's history. While the end of the driving ban was a welcome major step, a number of women's rights activists were rounded up that same month and put behind bars — some of them campaigners for the right to drive.

Personal status

Under the guardianship system, women of any age cannot marry without the consent of their male guardian. A man may also divorce his wife without the woman's consent. On Sunday, the Saudi justice ministry said courts were required to notify women by text message that their marriages had been terminated, a measure seemingly aimed at ending cases of men getting a divorce without informing their partners.

Public spaces

In January 2018, women were allowed into a special section in select sports stadiums for the first time. They had previously been banned from attending sporting events. Saudi Arabia has also dialed back the power of its infamous morality police force, or "mutawa", who for decades patrolled the streets on the lookout for women with uncovered hair or bright nail polish. Some women in the capital, Riyadh, and other cities are now seen in public without headscarves. — AFP

Hamas staff reclaims Egypt-Gaza border as PA withdraws

RAFAH: Hamas employees retook control of the border crossing between Gaza and Egypt yesterday after the Palestinian Authority withdrew its own staff, an AFP journalist and Hamas officials said. The PA's civil affairs authority had on Sunday accused Hamas of "summoning, arresting and abusing our employees", leading it to conclude that their presence was futile, according to official Palestinian news agency Wafa.

An AFP journalist saw Hamas officials at the border crossing's main gate and inside accompanying offices in southern Gaza yesterday. A Hamas border official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they had taken control "to avoid a vacuum". Rafah — the only way for Gazans to leave their enclave that bypasses Israel — was closed yesterday due to the Orthodox Christmas holiday but it was not clear whether it would reopen as scheduled today.

Hamas' interior ministry spokesman Iyad Al-Bozum said his organization "will protect the interests of our people." Islamist movement Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007 in a near civil war with Palestinian president Mahmud

Abbas' Fatah party. But the Palestinian Authority took control of Rafah in November 2017, as part of a deal for Egypt to reopen a border that had been entirely shut from August that year and largely sealed for years before that.

There was no immediate comment from Egypt about whether its side of the crossing would be open today. The PA's taking control of Rafah in 2017 was seen as a first step towards implementing a reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah. The deal has subsequently broken down and Abbas' PA has taken a series of measures against Gaza.

Egypt has allowed the border to be open regularly since August 2018, providing a lifeline to the enclave's two million residents. Israel has maintained a crippling blockade of Gaza for more than a decade, in a bid to isolate Hamas and keep it from obtaining weapons. Critics say the policy amounts to collective punishment. Israel and Hamas have fought three wars since 2008. A planned event commemorating the anniversary of the founding of Fatah — due to take place in Gaza yesterday — was cancelled on Sunday, as organizers said they faced threats. — AFP

International

Ukraine's independent Orthodox church holds 'historic' first service

'The doors of our united Orthodox Church are open to everyone'

KIEV: Ukraine's newly created independent Orthodox Church held its first service in Kiev yesterday after a historic break with the Russian Orthodox Church that has enraged Moscow. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko attended the service in Kiev's most ancient church, the 11th-century Saint Sophia's Cathedral, as Ukrainian Orthodox believers celebrated Christmas Day according to the Julian Calendar.

The service came a day after the Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew based in Istanbul handed over a formal decree that finalised recognition of Ukraine's new Church. "We broke the last bonds that tied us to Moscow with its fantasies about Ukraine as the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church," Poroshenko said after the service. Clerics showed worshippers in the cathedral the decree that formally sealed a break with the Russian Orthodox Church. Metropolitan Yefimiy, the 39-year-old leader of the new Ukrainian Orthodox Church, led the service, which he called "a truly historic event."

"The doors of our united Orthodox Church are open to everyone," he told the assembled believers. "There is still a lot of joint work ahead to strengthen this unity." The head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill earlier Monday held a Christmas service at Moscow's Church of Christ the Saviour while President Vladimir Putin attended a church in his hometown of Saint Petersburg.

'A theatre of the absurd'

In an interview with Russian channel Rossiya 1, Patriarch Kirill slammed the new Ukrainian church as "a union of two schismatic groups" and accused the Kiev authorities of destroying the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. "This is turning into a theatre of the absurd," he said. For more than 300 years the Ukrainian Church was split into three, with one Church overseen by the Patriarch of Moscow. The Kiev government now considers this unacceptable given its ongoing war with Russia-backed rebels in the east that has already killed more than 10,000 people.

The Russian-controlled branch of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine has refused to participate in establishing a unified church and has broken off ties with the Istanbul-based Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Constantinople Patriarch's decision to recognize the Ukrainian Church's independence from Russia was a huge blow to Moscow's spiritual authority in the Orthodox world.

The Russian Orthodox Church has repeatedly voiced fears that Ukraine will make legal moves or even use force to seize churches and monasteries that it currently controls, and some priests have told parishioners to be ready to defend them. Poroshenko has stressed that the government will respect the choice of believers who remain faithful to the Moscow Patriarchate. — AFP



KIEV: Children dressed in traditional Ukrainian costumes look at the tomos of autocephaly (autonomy proclamation) of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine which is set to be displayed in Saint Sophia cathedral. — AFP

Britain's battle over Brexit resumes ahead of big vote

LONDON: Britain's battle over Brexit resumes yesterday as parliament returns from its Christmas break to debate and — most likely — defeat Prime Minister Theresa May's unpopular EU divorce deal. The stakes could hardly be higher as the clock ticks down to the moment the world's fifth-biggest economy splits from its main trading partner on March 29.

May and the other 27 EU leaders agreed on a draft agreement in November designed to keep the process as orderly and damage free as possible. The accord took nearly two years to negotiate but has managed to upset just about everyone in British politics. May survived her party's resulting leadership no-confidence motion but was forced to abort a December vote on the pact in parliament after admitting it would lose by a "significant margin". There are few signs that much has changed since.

May returned empty handed from a subsequent EU summit in December which she had hoped could address the concerns of her disgruntled Northern Irish coalition partners. Brexit-backing MPs in her Conservative party are still in open revolt while opposition Labour leaders are angling for new elections.

Vote to go ahead

The BBC reported yesterday that the Brexit deal vote in parliament is now set for January 15. Downing Street declined to confirm the date, but May insisted Sunday that it would not be delayed again. The formal debate kicks off in parliament on Wednesday. May warned Sunday the deal's defeat would put Britain "in uncharted territory (in which) I don't think anybody can say exactly what will happen".

London has been swirling with rumors about how exactly May intends to avoid Britain crashing out of the bloc without any trade or other arrangements in place — something a large chunk of MPs oppose. The prime minister received a cross-party letter Sunday from 209 lawmakers urging her "to agree a mechanism that would ensure a 'no-deal' Brexit could not take place". One tactic touted by advisers to force May's deal through parliament would see the government re-introducing more or less the same version of the draft over and over again. "If we



LONDON: Conservative MP Sam Gyimah, the former universities minister who resigned over the prime minister's Brexit deal, speaks at an event organised by the People's Vote campaign group supporting a second referendum on the Brexit vote. — AFP

have to have the vote 30 times, we will," a Downing Street source told BuzzFeed News.

May refused to rule out the possibility of a second or third vote when pressed about it in the BBC interview Sunday. May will meet her party's MPs over private drinks yesterday and Wednesday in an attempt to sway waverers. The arm twisting will be accompanied by a new government campaign designed to prepare Britons for the full impact of a disruptive no-deal scenario. One test yesterday will see dozens of trucks taking over a disused airport earmarked as a future lorry park and then driven down a highway to the Channel port of Dover to assess how the infrastructure can cope. Dover handles most of Britain's trade with Europe and is expected to get quickly clogged up if no customs arrangements are made. The pro-Brexit former foreign secretary Boris Johnson claimed in Monday's Daily Telegraph that leaving without an agreement is actually "closest to what people voted for".

Involving parliament

May outlined a formal plan of action Sunday that included the possibility of giving parliament a big-

ger say in a new round of trade talks with Brussels, due to start immediately after March 29. "There's a number of ways which we're looking to see how we can involve parliament in a greater way in the future," she said. These negotiations will also try to resolve the prickly issue of keeping the border between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic open while preserving the integrity of the EU's single market. The temporary solution laid out in the draft withdrawal agreement does not suit Northern Ireland's tiny Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) that props up May's government. Nigel Dodds MP, its deputy leader, said Sunday the party had seen no tangible change in the proposal since December.

"The backstop remains the poison which makes any vote for the withdrawal agreement so toxic," he added. The DUP wants a binding guarantee from Brussels that Northern Ireland's trade with the rest of Britain will not be subjected to any types of checks. May spent part of her holidays ringing up EU leaders about possible concessions. Brussels has made clear it will cede nothing before the vote. The prime minister told the BBC she would continue to seek "further assurances from the European Union" about the border issue ahead of the vote. — AFP

Family fears US man held in Russia is a diplomatic pawn

NEWMARKET: The brother of an American detained in Russia for alleged spying says the ex-Marine might be caught in a diplomatic tug-of-war between the two powers, and the family fears he could be convicted on flimsy evidence. But in an interview with AFP, David Whelan said they have faith that the US government will be able to bring his brother home.

He was arrested on December 28 "while carrying out an act of espionage," Russia's FSB security service said. "There are no details about the circumstances of his arrest, so it's hard not to connect it as merely tugging between the two countries for whatever reason," David Whelan said in Newmarket, Ontario, north of Toronto. "I'm very worried, particularly because there's no transparency for the Russian legal system," the brother said. "We have a great deal of concern that he will be charged without sufficient evidence, he'll be convicted."

Despite US President Donald Trump's repeatedly accommodating words towards Russian President Vladimir Putin, the arrest of Whelan is the latest in a series of espionage cases between the two countries. Asked by reporters on Sunday about Whelan's case, Trump said only: "We're looking into that." Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Wednesday that Washington was trying to learn more about the situation.

"We have faith that they're working on it," David Whelan told AFP, adding that the family is hopeful that "the ridiculousness of this whole situation will eventually cause the US government to step forward and to have him brought home." Whelan held a British passport, as well as others, and on Friday Britain's Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said "we don't agree with individuals being used in diplomatic chess games."

Whelan also holds an Irish passport, although he entered Russia on his US one, an official source told AFP. The Washington Post said Whelan also carries a passport from Canada, where he was born. On Saturday, Russia demanded an explanation from the United States over the arrest of one of its nationals, Dmitry Makarenko, held since December 29 for alleged money laundering and attempting to export defense-restricted goods. Analysts have speculated that Moscow could be hoping to swap Whelan for Maria Butina, a Russian held in the United States, or for another Russian held there. US intelligence services have accused Moscow of interfering in the 2016 presidential election.

US security experts have raised doubts that Whelan was a spy, given that he was, according to The New York Times, court-martialed in 2008 from the US Marine Corps for larceny and passing bad checks. Whelan worked as director of global security for US-based automotive components supplier BorgWarner. His family said he was visiting Moscow for a friend's wedding. In the interview, David Whelan reiterated his belief in his brother's innocence. — AFP

'Yellow vest' boxer sought after punching policeman

PARIS: French police were hunting for a ex-professional boxer yesterday who was filmed at the weekend punching an officer on a bridge in central Paris during a demonstration by "yellow vest" protesters. The shocking images show the heavily built man land several punches on a policeman who falls to the ground and is then kicked by protesters wearing yellow vests, just a few hundred metres (yards) from the national parliament building.

"Sir, you knocked a colleague to the ground. You have been identified," said a tweet from France's SCPN police union said. "For a boxer, apparently you don't respect any of the rules. You are going to learn those of the criminal code." The man, named by French media as 37-year-old Christophe Dettinger, is a former heavyweight professional boxer who reportedly works for the local government in the Essonne area south of Paris.

'Surrender plea'

The French boxing federation issued a statement condemning the violence, saying that it "ran completely contrary to the values of our sport." "The French Boxing Federation sends its support to the family and loved ones of the officer who was a victim of this individual, but equally to all the security forces who have been on duty these last weeks," it said.

Dettinger's former coach, Jacky Trompesaue, urged the father of three to give



ROUEN: A "Yellow Vest" (Gilets jaunes) anti-government protester is detained by security personnel in Rouen, north-western France on January 5, 2019, during a nationwide day of demonstrations. — AFP

himself up to police after he was caught on camera on the Leopold-Sedar-Senghor bridge which links the Tuileries gardens to the Musee d'Orsay. "There was something that set it off, which I learned overnight," Trompesaue told RMC radio yesterday morning. "There was a woman who was attacked by CRS (riot police)." Attacking and injuring a police officer in France can lead to up to three years in prison and a fine of 45,000 euros (51,000 dollars), though sentences can be increased in certain circumstances. Around 50,000 protesters took to the streets again on Saturday in cities around France to protest the centrist government of

President Emmanuel Macron, leading to clashes in Paris and Bordeaux.

Several men driving a forklift truck also smashed open the doors of the ministry of government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux in Paris, who denounced the break-in as an "unacceptable attack on the Republic". Protests against fuel taxes began in rural and small-town France in late November, but then mushroomed into a wider revolt during December against the policies and governing style of 41-year-old Macron. On Friday, Griveaux had denounced those still protesting as "agitators who want insurrection and, basically, to overthrow the government". — AFP

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International

New Malaysian king to be picked this month after shock abdication

The succession may not be as straightforward this time

KUALA LUMPUR: A new Malaysian king will be elected and sworn in this month, royal officials said yesterday, after Sultan Muhammad V abdicated in a historic first following his reported marriage to a Russian former beauty queen. The king stepped aside Sunday following intense speculation about his future after reports surfaced in recent weeks that he had taken medical leave, and then wed the former Miss Moscow.

As the country reacted with shock to the news, Malaysia's Islamic royal families met at the national palace to push ahead with the task of picking a king to take over from Muhammad V, 49, who gave up the throne after just two years. Keeper of the Ruler's Seal, Syed Danial Syed Ahmad, said after the meeting that a new king and his deputy would be elected on January 24 and installed on January 31.

Swearing in ceremonies for Malaysian kings are lavish affairs, marked by honor guards and Islamic prayers and attended by hundreds of guests in traditional finery. Muslim-majority Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy, with a unique arrangement where the throne changes hands every five years between rulers of the country's nine states. The royal households take it in turn to provide the country's king, and it is usually known before the formal election who will become the monarch.

While their role is ceremonial, Malaysia's royalty command great respect, especially from Muslim Malays, and criticizing them is strictly forbidden. But the succession may not be as straightforward this time as the next in line to the throne, Sultan Ahmad Shah of Pahang state, is elderly and reported to be

ailing. Royal officials said he did not attend Monday's meeting due to ill health.

Game of thrones

After him, the next in line under the rotation system is the sultan of southern Johor state. Sultan Nazrin Shah of northern Perak state is the acting king, as he is the current deputy and performed Muhammad V's duties after he went on medical leave at the start of November. Despite mounting speculation in recent days the king might give up the throne, there was still palpable shock across the country at the first abdication of a king since the end of British rule in 1957. "I am naturally stunned. The (king) is a man of the people," Siti Nur Fahimah Razali, a 25-year-old trader from the king's home state of Kelantan, told the New Straits Times newspaper.

The relatively youthful Muhammad V was known for his relaxed persona and love of off-road driving and other extreme sports. But there had been growing unease at his reign after reports emerged in foreign media in late November — several weeks after the king went on leave — that he had married the Russian, Oksana Voevodina, in a lavish ceremony in Moscow.

Royal officials in Malaysia have not so far commented on the reported wedding, or said what condition prompted him to take medical leave. But such a marriage is unlikely to sit well with the country's conservative royal households. Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, who had a tense relationship with the royals during his first stint as premier from



KUALA LUMPUR: This file photo taken on July 17, 2018 shows the 15th King of Malaysia, Sultan Muhammad V (R), preparing to deliver his address during the opening ceremony of the parliament in Kuala Lumpur as Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad (L) looks on. —AFP

1981 to 2003 as he sought to curb their powers, said the government accepted Muhammad V's abdication, official news agency Bernama reported. The

leader said he hoped that a new king would be elected soon while insisting the government would not "interfere in this matter", it said. —AFP

Four decades on, Cambodia reflects on its 'Killing Fields'

PHNOM PENH: At the height of Pol Pot's genocidal Khmer Rouge "killing fields" regime which devastated Cambodia for more than three years from 1975-79, Srey Heng overcame her crippling hunger by catching and eating frogs, snails and insects. "I was just skin and bones," said Srey Heng, who was conscripted by the Khmer Rouge into a mobile labor unit for children, and forced to dig canals.

Thousands of Cambodian survivors of the Khmer Rouge marked the 40th anniversary of their demise in a commemoration in Phnom Penh yesterday. About 60,000 people gathered at a stadium in the capital, where dancers and performers held banners and waved flags in scenes reminiscent of an Olympic opening ceremony. The event was organized by the ruling Cambodian People's party (CPP), whose Prime Minister Hun Sen has led the Southeast Asian country for more than 33 years.

The 66-year-old, a former member of the Khmer Rouge, came to power under a government installed by Vietnam, which invaded Cambodia at the end of 1978 and captured Phnom Penh on Jan. 7, 1979, ending Khmer Rouge rule and forcing its leader, Pol Pot, into hiding. Much of the event was dedicated to the achievements of Hun Sen, who has come under fire from rights groups for his intimidation of political opponents and for winning a widely criticized general election last July. Songs praising the prime minister as a "peaceful and loyal statesman" echoed through the stadium. Traditional dancers performed in honor of his policies. Outside, survivors like Srey Heng, now a street vendor selling water and soft drinks, cast a more somber figure compared with the scenes inside. "Many of my relatives died under Pol Pot because they were hungry," Srey Heng said. "I don't even know what happened to the others".

'Chaos'

An estimated 1.7 million people died at the hands of the extremist, communist regime. Most victims died of torture, starvation, disease, or exhaustion in labor camps. Others were beaten to death during mass executions. Seang Tharuon, 69, lost 11 siblings and both her parents during the killings. She was forced by the Khmer Rouge to marry her husband.

Like many others, Seang Tharuon was evacuated from Phnom Penh by the Khmer Rouge at the start of its nightmarish rule. She walked for more than 100 km (62 miles) from the countryside back to the capital when the regime fell in 1979. "We mainly had gruel to eat, and they would let us eat rice once a month," Seang Tharuon told Reuters as she bought drinks from Srey Heng's stall outside the stadium.

In downtown Phnom Penh, former Khmer Rouge soldier Prum Punly balanced on one leg as he fed birds by the river. He lost his other leg to a landmine while fighting against US-backed Cambodian government forces in 1975, as the Khmer Rouge came to power: "I was too young to understand politics," the 67-year-old said. "It was chaos". —Reuters

Myanmar army to launch 'crackdown' on Rakhine rebels

NAYPYIDAW: Myanmar has called on its military to "launch operations" against ethnic Rakhine rebels behind a deadly attack on four police stations last week, a government spokesman said yesterday, as a surge of violence forces thousands more from their homes. The country's troubled western Rakhine state has seen a series of clashes in recent weeks between security forces and the Arakan Army (AA), an armed group calling for more autonomy for the state's ethnic Rakhine Buddhist population.

The area is one of the poorest in Myanmar and is scarred by deep ethnic and religious hatred. A brutal army campaign in 2017 forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims over the border into Bangladesh, operations justified by the army as a way to stamp out Rohingya militants. The latest violence by ethnic Rakhine rebels culminated on Friday — Myanmar's Independence Day — in brazen pre-dawn raids on four police posts in Buthidaung township near the Bangladesh border.

Authorities said that the attack by hundreds of militants left 13 police offi-

cers dead and nine wounded before the army, known locally as the Tatmadaw, were able to provide back-up. The AA said that three of its fighters had been killed, accusing the military of using the police stations as a base from which to fire heavy artillery. "The president's office has already instructed the Tatmadaw to launch operations to crack down on the insurgents," government spokesman Zaw Htay told reporters in the capital Naypyidaw.

Civilians flee

Some 4,500 people have been displaced by the recent weeks of violence, the UN's humanitarian agency said yesterday. Over the weekend, people streamed to nearby monasteries and other makeshift camps to escape the crossfire, carrying infants and bags of belongings. The increase in fighting comes just two weeks after the military declared a four-month ceasefire with a number of armed groups in Kachin and Shan states on the other side of the country. But Rakhine was a notable exception, and army operations against the AA have continued.

Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi stated that the peace process would be her top priority after her party swept to power in landmark 2015 elections. There are around two dozen conflicts festering around the country's restive borderlands,



BUTHIDAUNG: Myanmar's police chief Lieutenant General Aung Win Oo visits an injured border guard police in a hospital. —AFP

some of which date back 70 years to when the nation declared independence from colonial power Britain.

Independent analyst David Mathieson told AFP the reasons behind the recent uptick in violence were still largely opaque. But he said the fighting could mean that greater numbers of AA fighters have "infiltrated the borderlands and are extending their reach" in what he

described as "classic guerrilla strategy". The AA has expanded its ranks since its formation in 2009 and is now believed to have several thousand recruits. Zaw Htay, the government spokesman, called on ethnic Rakhine people not to back the rebels. "Consider Rakhine's future deeply. Think carefully about the future you want to see before giving them your support," he said. —AFP

Nepal probes 'Buddha boy' over devotee disappearances

KATHMANDU: A Nepali spiritual leader believed by his followers to be a reincarnation of Buddha is under investigation over the disappearance of several devotees, police in Kathmandu said yesterday. Ram Bahadur Bomjan, dubbed "Buddha Boy", became famous in 2005 after followers said he could meditate motionless for months without water, food or sleep in Nepal's jungles.

The 28-year-old guru has a devout following but has been accused of physically and sexually assaulting some of his flock. Special police investigators have begun inquiries after the families of four of Bomjan's devotees allegedly vanished from his ashrams. "The police have started investigating these complaints against Bomjan," Uma Prasad Chaturvedi, a spokesman for Nepal's Central Investigation Bureau, told AFP. "The investigation is in preliminary stage and we cannot share many details."

Bomjan has long been dogged by accusations of abuse in deeply spiritual Nepal, even as thousands of worshippers queued for days to witness his so-called miracles of meditation deep in the jungle. In September last year, an 18-year-old nun accused the guru of raping her at one of his ashrams. Dozens more have filed complaints against him alleging assault. The self-styled godman said he beat them for disturbing his meditation. The Bodhi Shrawan Dharma Sangha, an organisation associated with the guru, recently



HETAUDA: In this file photo taken on November 21, 2008 Nepali spiritual leader Ram Bahadur Bomjan, dubbed "Buddha Boy", sits under a tree before an audience gathered to listen to his sermon in Ratanpuri in Bara District, some 100km (62 miles) south of Kathmandu. —AFP

slammed as baseless a series of fresh allegations made by a local website, Setopati.com, which published reports detailing cases of disappearances, sexual assault and violence in his ashrams. —AFP

side of the country in the southeastern province of Paktika, eight civilians were killed and 12 wounded on Monday when a roadside bomb exploded near a market in Janikhail district.

Among the dead were two brothers aged 10 and 12, provincial police spokesman Shah Mohammad Aryan told AFP. A group of children had been trying to remove the explosive device from the ground when it exploded, Aryan said. It was not clear if the bomb had been deliberately planted or was left over from decades of conflict. Civilians have long borne the brunt of the war, with 8,050 people killed or wounded in the first nine months of 2018, according to the latest UN figures. —AFP

First-family feud in Singapore flares up

SINGAPORE: A fragile truce in Singapore's founding family was shattered yesterday after state prosecutors alleged the wife of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's estranged brother may be guilty of professional misconduct. The allegations mark the latest flare-up in a bitter quarrel between Premier Lee, and his younger brother and sister following the death in 2015 of their father, Singapore's revered founding leader Lee Kuan Yew.

At the centre of the dispute is a century-old family bungalow, which the late Lee wanted demolished after his death to avoid the creation of a personality cult. The prime minister's siblings — Lee Hsien Yang and Lee Wei Ling — accuse their brother of blocking the house's demolition to capitalize on their father's legacy for his own political agenda.

The scandal erupted into public consciousness in 2017 and for months gripped a city-state not used to open criticism of its leaders, but had largely died down since the siblings vowed to stop their attacks on social media. But tensions rose again in a separate case Monday when prosecutors announced the wife of Premier Lee's brother, a top corporate lawyer, had been referred to a body that oversees the work of lawyers due to possible professional misconduct.

The Attorney General's Chambers (AGC), the government's prosecuting arm, said Lee Suet Fern's involvement in the preparation of the elder Lee's last will involved a conflict of interest as her husband was one of the beneficiaries. "Mr Lee Hsien Yang's share increased under the last will," the AGC said in a statement.

It said it had asked Lee Suet Fern multiple times to explain her position since October last year but did not receive a reply, prompting it to refer the matter to the professional lawyers' body for disciplinary action. Lee Wei Ling said in a Facebook post also shared by Lee Hsien Yang that the AGC's 500-page complaint was a repetition of allegations made by Premier Lee. She called the prosecutors' actions an "unprecedented use of such legal process involving a private will" and "wholly without merit". Premier Lee has denied the allegations of blocking the bungalow's demolition. —AFP

Taliban kill 10 Afghan forces in bloody 24 hours

HERAT: Taliban fighters attacked two checkpoints in western Afghanistan, killing at least 10 members of the security forces and pro-government militia, officials said yesterday, in a

bloody 24 hours in the war-torn country. At least 15 militants were killed in the fighting in Qadis and Ab Kamari districts of Badghis province that began late Sunday, provincial governor spokesman Jamshid Shahabi told AFP.

Provincial council chief Abdul Aziz Bek gave a higher death toll of 21 — 14 police and seven militia members — but that figure could not be immediately confirmed by AFP. "The Taliban captured both checkpoints and took all the military equipment and ammunition with them," Bek said. The Taliban, who have been slaughtering Afghan security forces in record numbers, claimed responsibility for both attacks. On the other

International

French cardinal trial begins over child abuse cover up

‘The goal is to stop the same mistakes being repeated’

LYON: The highest-profile Catholic cleric to be caught up in a pedophile scandal in France went on trial yesterday charged with failing to report a priest who abused boy scouts in the 1980s and 90s. Cardinal Philippe Barbarin, the archbishop of Lyon in southeastern France, is accused along with five others from his diocese of helping cover up abuse in one of the parishes in the area.

The 68-year-old bishop, one of the most prominent Catholic figures in France, arrived for the start of proceedings at a court in Lyon wearing a cap and leather jacket. “The goal is to stop the same mistakes being repeated,” Francois Devaux, a former scout who brought the allegations in Lyon to light, said shortly before the trial began.

Barbarin refrained from appearing publicly in church on Sunday, instead sending a message which was read out to worshippers. “Ask unto God that the work of justice is done, ask also that he heals everything that needs to be healed in the hearts of victims of acts of pedophilia, which are as wrong as they are terrible,” the message said.

He faces up to three years in prison and a fine of 45,000 euros (\$54,000) if convicted of failing to report the abuse on minors. He denies the allegations. The case is likely to hinge on whether he should have reported a priest under his responsibility to police once he learned about the allegations against him. After initially saying he first knew about the allegations in 2014, he admitted in 2016 to having known about them for nearly a decade.

France’s Catholic church has been roiled in recent years by claims against priests which have come to light in the wake of a global move by victims to come forward with evidence. Clerics have been denounced

in countries as far afield as Australia, Brazil, Chile, Ireland, and the United States, leading Pope Francis to promise to rid the church of the scourge that has done enormous damage to its standing.

The scandal in Lyon first came to public attention in 2015 when Devaux went public with allegations that a local priest, Bernard Preynat, had abused him as a child 25 years earlier. Devaux also filed a complaint against Barbarin, who has retained the support of Pope Francis. After six months of investigation and 10 hours of interviews with the cardinal, investigators dropped the case in 2016, saying the allegations against Barbarin were either too old or impossible to prove. But nine victims succeeded in reopening the probe which led to him and the others, including the now-archbishop of Auch and the bishop of Nevers in France, having to stand trial. All of them worked in the Lyon diocese at the time of the abuse. “We hope this time to have a ruling that will be clear and obvious for everyone,” Devaux said before the start of the trial.

Vatican implicated

The victims’ group, La Parole Liberee (Freed Speech), began with a handful of people, but soon received calls and testimony from a total of 85 people claiming to have been victims of Preynat in Lyon. After he was first denounced in 1991, Preynat was prevented from leading scout groups, but he was later allowed to teach children and held positions of authority in parishes until the scandal became public in 2015. Preynat has acknowledged abusing boys and is set to be tried later this year.

Two other French religious figures have been convicted of failing to report child abuse in the past: the archbishop of Bayeux-Lisieux, Pierre Rican, in 2001,



LYON: Lyon archbishop, cardinal Philippe Barbarin (C) gestures as he arrives in Lyon court to attend his trial, yesterday, charged with failing to report a priest who abused boy scouts in the 1980s and 90s. —AFP

and the former bishop of Orleans, Andre Fort, last year. The head of the Vatican’s powerful Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Spanish Archbishop Luis Francisco Ladaria Ferrer, has also been accused of complicity in the alleged cover-up in Lyon.

In correspondence with Barbarin about the priest, the Vatican’s number three advised the cardinal to

take “necessary disciplinary measures while avoiding public scandal” — seen as a warning to keep the abuse quiet. The Vatican has cited his immunity from prosecution and he will not go on trial. The story of Devaux, the victim who brought the scandal to light, is to be told in a film this year called “Grace a Dieu” (“Thanks to God”) which has been made by French director Francois Ozon. —AFP

Radicalized in jail, teen thug becomes hardened jihadist

BRUSSELS: Mehdi Nemmouche stands accused of carrying out Europe’s first attack by an Islamist fighter returning from the war in Syria. But his journey from a French foster home to a Brussels court began not in a Middle Eastern desert but in a run-down industrial town. This week, he will go on trial for four anti-Semitic murders during a shooting spree at Belgium’s Jewish Museum.

Separately, he is also accused of acting as the jailer of four French journalists taken hostage by jihadists in Aleppo in 2013. The trial will last several weeks, but the 33-year-old is already a case study in the radicalization of some young European Muslims. Belgium and France, in particular, fear the defeat of groups like the Islamic State in Syria will send more angry young men homewards. But Nemmouche seems to have been on a radical path long before he set off, in early 2013, for the so-called “caliphate” on the Euphrates. The investigation into the May 2014 massacre in the museum has pieced together elements of his background.

Troubled and angry youth

Nemmouche was born April 17, 1985, in the northern French town of Roubaix, to a family of Algerian origin. He never knew his father and his mother was judged not “capable” of raising him, investigators say. Aged only three months, he was moved to a foster family in the northern industrial

city of Lille, where he would stay — off and on — until he was 16. But his upbringing was not stable. He would make difficult trips to stay with his grandparents, and sometimes to care homes or a Parisian orphanage.

His foster parents, in documents seen by AFP, describe him as an “angry” youth, “capable of the worst as well as the most kindly” acts. He committed his first known crime at 13, then at 16, he spent three weeks in a juvenile prison for a hold-up with an air pistol after being convicted by a children’s court. His criminal record grew ever longer in his late teens, with traffic offences and muggings, and his grandmother lost track of him after his second jail term. In 2007, aged 22, he headed to Provence in southern France after gaining a vocational qualification as an electrician, but soon fell back into trouble.

“What an enormous waste,” his former lawyer Soulifa Badaoui said after the museum murders, lamenting the fact that the authorities had not helped Nemmouche integrate. “No one knew what to do with an intelligent, lively young man who wanted to get out, become an ordinary French citizen,” she told AFP.

‘Strict and violent’

Between December 2007 and December 2012, he spent five years in custody — and investigators believe this is when his ideas hardened. In prison, he was known as an “extremist proselytiser” who tried to organize group prayer and spoke of jihad and the 1995 “genocide of Muslims in Bosnia”. This linked him to the “Roubaix gang” — French Islamists who returned from the Bosnian war and carried out robberies to fund Al-Qaeda, some of whom he knew.



VERSAILLES: This file court drawing made on June 26, 2014, shows Mehdi Nemmouche (C), the 29-year-old suspected gunman in a quadruple murder at the Brussels Jewish Museum, during a court hearing. —AFP

When his grandmother saw him in Tourcoing in December 2012, he had a long beard and was praying daily, something she had not seen before. Less is known about his experiences in Syria, but three former French hostages have identified him as their “strict and violent” overseer. They say he did not hide his admiration for Mohammed Merah, who murdered three French soldiers, a Jewish teacher and three young children in 2012.

Nemmouche, who was extradited to Belgium over the museum shooting after being arrested in Marseille, will go on trial in France over the hostages at a later date. Held under tight security at a prison in Leuze-en-Hainaut, his lawyers describe him as a man of “steely will” who was bearing up well under incarceration. “When he greets me with a warm, relaxed smile it’s as if we’re not in prison,” defence counsel Francis Vuillemin said. “The walls seem to slip off him.” —AFP

Vast areas of impunity for people trafficking: UN

VIENNA: A UN report has warned that “vast areas of impunity” remain globally for people traffickers, with victims subjected to crimes ranging from sexual exploitation to organ removal. Despite a recent trend towards more people trafficking convictions in many African and Middle Eastern countries, the report from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) pointed out that “the total numbers in these areas remain very low”. “There appears to be hardly any risk for traffickers to face justice,” it said. The report said 100 cases of organ removal had been reported over the period 2014-17, mostly in the Middle East and North Africa, with cases also reported in Europe and Central and South America. It cites research saying that in some cases there is evidence of traffickers colluding “with medical professionals, relying on corrupt and fraudulent practices”.

Perpetrators of this form of trafficking take advantage of “severe levels of vulnerability”, the UNODC says, for example people in refugee camps who are recruited “with false promises of receiving payments and/or transport to safer locations”. However, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation was by far the most common form found in the data compiled by the report, accounting for 59 per cent of victims detected in 2016.

The UNODC underlined the role of groups involved in various armed conflicts in using human trafficking “to finance activities or increase their workforce”, as well as for sexual slavery. It highlighted the case of the thousands of girls and women from the Yazidi minority enslaved by the so-called Islamic State group in Iraq. —AFP

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Land defenders on heightened alert a year after Trump shrinks monuments

One year after US President Donald Trump declared the biggest rollback of public land protection in the country's history, conservation groups have rallied to protect other at-risk places. In December 2017, Trump announced that Utah's Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante national monuments would be shrunk by 2 million acres, from a combined 3.2 million acres, to expand hunting and grazing. The Department of the Interior (DOI) then recommended cutting by an unspecified amount another four protected sites, including Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, a biodiversity reserve on the Oregon-California border.

That followed a seven-month DOI review of 27 monuments that had been established or expanded since 1996. The review was part of a broader push by the Trump administration to reopen areas to drilling, mining and other development. Unlike national parks, which require an act of Congress, national monuments can be designated unilaterally by presidents under the century-old Antiquities Act, a law meant to protect sacred sites, artifacts and historical objects.

Public land advocates have challenged the administration in federal court over the legality of removing protection from sites that had been designated under the act. Monuments for All, which defends national monuments but is not involved in the court case, said that more than 500,000 comments were submitted in support of the Utah monuments during a public comment period that closed in November 2018. Terry Dickey, chairman of the Friends of the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, which supports the court case, said "an attack on one monument is an attack on all monuments". "Because it's the same national law that governs those monuments as well as our one small monument," Dickey told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Sacred ground

Trump's targeting of the protected areas came as he sought to reverse a slew of environmental protections ushered in by former President Barack Obama under the Antiquities Act. Trump said those protections hobbled economic growth - cheering industry and angering conservationists. The case against the administration is being heard in Washington, DC after an unsuccessful attempt to move proceedings to Utah. In November, five Native American tribes filed briefs on behalf of Bears Ears, which they deem sacred.

The cuts to the two Utah monuments have gone into effect, although in September the judge in the federal case ruled the government must inform the plaintiffs of any mining applications submitted for land inside the original larger boundaries. Cuts to the other four, including the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, are pending.

Biodiversity bonanza

In Jan 2017 - days before he left office - then-President Obama expanded the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument by about 48,000 acres. Obama's proclamation was welcome news to Dave Willis, who leads the Soda Mountain Wilderness Council, a conservation group that lobbied in the 1980s for tens of thousands of acres to be set aside as wilderness in what became the national monument. "The monument was established first in 2000 because of its importance as an ecological crossroads and its incredible biodiversity," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

In 2015, 85 scientists endorsed a report for the monument's expansion to include more high-elevation terrain and a broader range of habitat for species like newts and owls. "The monument (was) in jeopardy in its original size because of logging and other development around the original monument," Willis said, adding that its biodiversity had been under threat prior to its 2017 expansion.

Willis showed stands of towering old-growth trees slated for logging until the expanded monument boundaries protected them. "There's not much old forest like this left." Other sections were crisscrossed by forest roads and pockmarked with stumps in areas already harvested for timber. Those tracts, he said, could be restored. A DOI spokesman declined to comment on whether the proposed cuts would threaten biodiversity and pointed to a December 2017 report recommending that the monument be reduced.

The expanded Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument is popular in southern Oregon, prompting local officials and business leaders to rally for its preservation. Visitors base themselves out of the nearby valley towns of Ashland and Talent to hike its trails, including a section of the Pacific Crest Trail. During the DOI's monument review, mayors of both towns submitted letters urging it to maintain the expanded boundaries, as did Oregon politicians and legislators, local tribes and chambers of commerce.

"Oregonians value the Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument," Willis said, citing a review that showed more than 99 percent of 1.3 million respondents who submitted comments to the DOI had called for national monument boundaries to be left untouched. "Across the country, Americans value their national monuments as national treasures," said Willis. — Reuters



In this photo taken on Jan 4, 2019, attendees shout slogans during a rally in support of a new year's address by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at Kim Il Sung square in Pyongyang. Much of Kim's speech focused on North Korea's moribund economy, saying that improving people's lives was his top priority and tackling energy shortages was an urgent task. — AFP

Kim vision of coal-fuelled future tough to realize

When North Korean leader Kim Jong Un used his New Year speech to highlight coal as a "primary front" in developing the economy, he was making a case for what analysts see as a flawed but key resource on which his country increasingly relies. Coal has long been a major resource for North Korea, and Kim's call for self-sufficiency in the face of international pressure is a recurring theme. But as international sanctions have increased over the past year, coal is one of the few local resources to which Kim can turn as he tries to make good on promises to improve life in a country notorious for limited electricity, analysts and defectors say.

Last year Kim declared that his nuclear arsenal was "complete" and vowed to focus on building the economy. South Korea-based analysts and North Korean defectors report that with sanctions still blocking most coal exports, the North has put more of its stockpile to use domestically. "My acquaintances in North Hamgyong province told me... they got power for 14-15 hours a day in 2018, versus 8-10 hours in 2017," said Kim Young Hui, a defector who now works as an economist at South Korea's state-run Korea Development Bank.

A "highly noticeable" increase in electricity in 2018 compared to the year before has increased power availability for many homes and boosted the operations of factories and trains, said Kang Mi-jin, a defector who now writes about North Korea for the website Daily NK and speaks to sources inside the North. "As Kim Jong Un said in the New Year speech, North Korea will focus on the domestic economy," she said. "Instead of finding another route to sell coal, they will continue to use it domestically."

But the ageing technology is limited in how much it can contribute to the broader economy, analysts said. "Focusing on coal and electricity is a way to survive, and Kim Jong Un is trying hard to make the country a bit more

self-sufficient, but (coal is) not enough to turn around the whole economy as long as exports are capped," economist Kim Young Hui said.

Lights on

In the New Year speech, Kim Jong Un called for the coal industry to focus on helping power stations "normalize electricity generation without letup". He noted that output at the country's largest coal power plant in Pukchang had increased "remarkably" and called for more progress on a "far-reaching plan" to develop tidal, wind and atomic power. Politically and economically isolated and repressed under Kim's authoritarian regime, North Korea has long suffered from electricity shortages.

In recent years, the lack of a reliable power supply led many North Koreans to install cheap household solar panels to charge mobile phones and light their homes. During a reporting trip to Pyongyang in September, multiple North Korean sources told Reuters that more electricity could help make some of Kim's most prized building projects usable. At some recently constructed high-rise apartment buildings, for example, potential residents fear facing dozens of flights of stairs during power outages.

Electricity in North Korea is prioritized for factories or areas of political importance, but people with money or connections are often able to tap power lines illegally. A source who regularly speaks to Pyongyang residents told Reuters that pre-ordering coal for boilers was no longer necessary because it had become more abundant. "People had to book coal early, about two months before running boilers when the weather gets chilly. But thanks to reduced coal exports, it is not hard to buy it anymore after last year. Sanctions have been tougher, but North Koreans can buy coal whenever they want if they have money," the source said.

Dwindling exports

North Korea generates nearly 50 percent of its electricity from seven coal power plants and one oil-fired plant, and the rest from hydroelectric facilities. Many of its decades-old coal plants were built by the former Soviet Union and China, according to South Korean data. Since 2015 North Korea has been working to convert the oil power plant to coal, according to US-based monitoring group 38 North. In the last year it has added generators to the biggest coal power complex and built a new hydro power plant.

A 1994 deal for an international consortium to provide two light-water reactors to North Korea in exchange for its ending some of its weapons-related operations fell through. Since then, the country has been working on an experimental light water reactor. Coal exports to China fell to 4.83 million tons in 2017, from more than 20 million tonnes in 2016, according to Chinese data. China says it imported no North Korean coal from January to March 2018.

North Korea's coal production rose from 2013 to 2016, but fell 30 percent to 21.66 million tons in 2017 from 2016, according to South Korean government data. Reliable data on North Korea's reserves is hard to come by, but 2015 BP's Statistical Review of World Energy reported that North Korea has 600 million tons of coal as proven reserves, while South Korea says the North has 20.5 billion tons in reserve.

North Korea is known to have 4.5 billion tons of anthracite, a higher quality of coal, and the rest is lignite, which is mainly suitable for power plants. The North mostly exports anthracite, according to South Korean government data. North Korea has tried unsuccessfully to circumvent sanctions by smuggling coal into China and South Korea, monitors say. "Smuggling coal into China is not easy these days as even bribes for Chinese traders have become more expensive," said Choi Kyung-soo, head of the North Korea Resources Institute. — Reuters

As Lahore chokes, Pakistan moves to cut air pollution

At his house on busy Mall Road in Lahore, environmental lawyer Rafay Alam runs three air purifiers around the clock, keeps his windows shut and stuffs towels into the gaps under his doors. Some winter days, when the city's smog is particularly bad, "I don't send my daughter to school," he admits. "I am not going to risk permanent damage to her lungs." Pakistan's second-largest city is choking on smog, driven in part by smoke from bricks kiln and steel mills, burning of rice stubble and garbage, growing numbers of vehicles on the road and large-scale losses of trees as the expanding city makes way for new roads and buildings, residents say.

Many in the city of 11 million complain of headaches and burning eyes and throats as air pollution levels this winter have on some days hit five times the legal limit, according to a global air quality index that many in Lahore check via the AirVisual phone app. Alam thinks it's time for the government to declare a public health emergency on the worst days, when the air is full of dust and pollutants that can cause health issues including asthma, lung damage, bronchial infections and heart problems.

"The air pollution in Lahore is bad throughout the year, but in the winter there is temperature inversion where a layer of warm air is prevented from rising and it traps all the pollutants below it, which renders them visible," he said. Lahore, once known as the Garden City but now choked with cars, regularly figures on air quality indexes as one of the most polluted cities in the world - and many of the pollutants are also drivers of climate change.

Prime Minister Imran Khan's government, which came to power four months ago, has restarted air quality monitoring in Lahore after the previous government ceased it two years ago, said Malik Amin Aslam, the prime minister's climate change advisor. During that two-year period, air quality monitoring stations in the province weren't working because of a lack of fund-

ing and capacity, Alam said. The prime minister, who grew up in Lahore, said he sees tackling the city's smog problem as a priority. "It is a serious issue that must be addressed," Khan told his cabinet.

In November, the Lahore High Court ordered the Punjab provincial government to implement recommendations of the Smog Commission, set up by the court in 2017 to look at the drivers of smog and find ways to reduce them. Those included curbing emissions from factories, closing brick kilns that fail to use fuel-efficient technology, and fining polluting vehicles and farmers burning rice stubble in the winter. The commission also ordered the planting of trees in urban areas and efforts to spread environmental awareness in schools.

Monitors and meetings

Aslam said the government now has a team traveling around Lahore reading the city's air quality monitors, with the data feeding into the city's own air quality index. That index, updated daily, is posted for public use on the Environmental Protection Department's website. Since coming into office, Khan has organized meetings with brick kiln owners and won a two-month winter shutdown of factories in 12 districts, including Lahore.

The government has also pushed brick kiln owners to shift to cleaner technology, offering loans to make the switch, as well as issuing fines for kilns that operate using the dirtiest technologies, such as burning used tires. The Environment Protection Department has fined farmers who burn crop stubble - a traditional practice - and is looking at promoting zero tillage farming as an alternative, though making the switch will be costly for farmers, Aslam admitted. As well, the government is considering setting higher emissions standards for vehicles - but warned the switch could make petrol "more expensive for consumers as a result", Aslam said.

The Environmental Protection Department said the level of smog pollution was lower this year than last in Lahore because of anti-smog measures already underway. But Alam said monitors installed in his house continue to show hazardous levels in his neighborhood. "It's not just brick kilns and farmers who are causing air pollution." — Reuters

Sri Lanka slaying 'versary highlights hunt for justice

Ten years after top newspaper editor Lasantha Wickrematunge was killed by a suspected government death squad the failure to secure a prosecution has come to highlight Sri Lanka's struggle with a dark past. Just days before he was due to give evidence against the brother of the country's then strongman leader Mahinda Rajapakse, two assailants on motorcycles blocked the car of the 50-year-old editor of the Sunday Leader newspaper before smashing the windows and stabbing him in the head.

The assassination is one of many unresolved killings of journalists carried out during Rajapakse's decade in power - which also saw a 37-year conflict with Tamil separatists brought to a brutal conclusion, raising other ugly, unanswered questions. Journalists and relatives will hold a vigil at Wickrematunge's grave today, to put a new spotlight on the case that drew US-led condemnation.

"Lasantha's case attracted international attention, his killing was condemned globally, but we have not been able to secure justice yet," Free Media Movement (FMM) spokesman C Dodawatte told AFP. "We want to use the tenth death anniversary to step up a campaign for justice for the dozens of journalists killed in the past two decades," Dodawatte added.

Litany of sabotage

Before his death Wickrematunge - who endured years of harassment and intimidation for his work - had uncovered corruption in a multi-million dollar purchase of second-hand MiG planes from Ukraine implicating Rajapakse's brother Gotabhaya, a top defense ministry official at the time. Critics say the investigation into the killing has been a litany of

deliberate sabotage and misdirection. A doctor who performed the first autopsy reported that Wickrematunge was shot dead. But a second examination after the body was exhumed in September 2016 said he had been fatally stabbed in the head. Furthermore, a deputy inspector-general of police who was initially in charge of the case was arrested for trying to destroy evidence before being released on bail, while the then-head of military intelligence was taken into custody for his alleged involvement in the killing.

Possible breakthrough

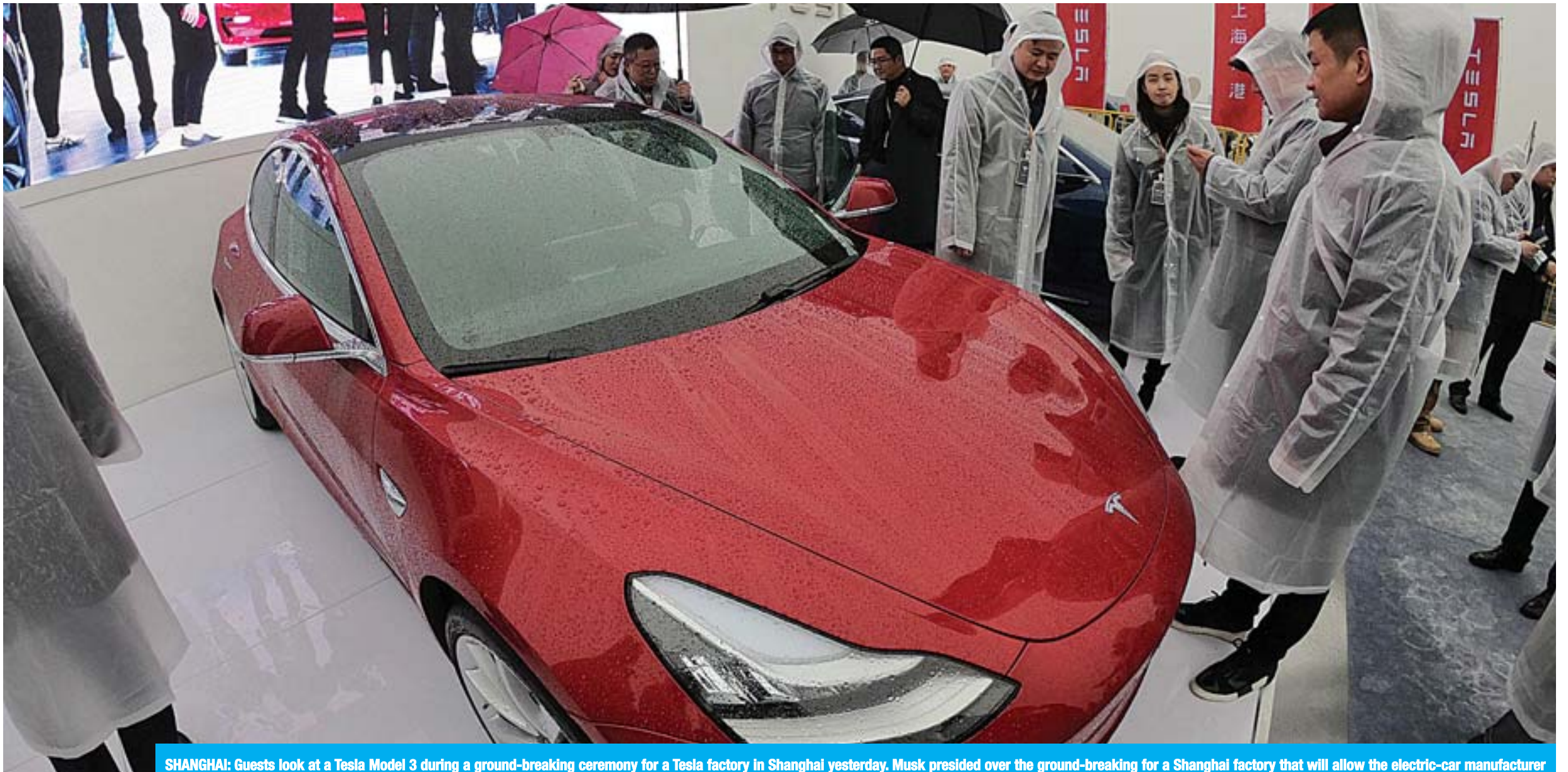
After Rajapakse lost a 2015 election, a breakthrough in the case saw investigators inform a court that army spies had been responsible for Wickrematunge's killing. A former army commander accused Gotabhaya in court of running a secret unit used to target journalists and dissidents during his brother's presidency. Gotabhaya has denied any link to the killings and remains under investigation for corruption related to the MiG deal.

Rajapakse staged a brief return to office last year amid a power struggle between the president and prime minister. Shortly after his return, the lead investigator in the Wickrematunge case was transferred, sparking alarm among rights groups. As the crisis dragged on, Amnesty said in November it was concerned about the "seeming interference by the authorities" into investigations into attacks on journalists and human rights violations during the civil war. "Justice in these cases is long overdue," it added. Following widespread protests, President Maithripala Sirisena restored the investigator and Rajapakse was forced out of office.

In a letter released to the media ahead of the anniversary of her father's death, Wickrematunge's daughter Ahimsa, who lives in Australia, said she had full confidence in the investigators. But she doubted whether they would be allowed to do their job given Sirisena's new political alliance with Rajapakse. "It becomes clearer by the day that covering up the truth of the MiG deal was literally worth a killing," she said. — AFP

Business

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SHANGHAI: Guests look at a Tesla Model 3 during a ground-breaking ceremony for a Tesla factory in Shanghai yesterday. Musk presided over the ground-breaking for a Shanghai factory that will allow the electric-car manufacturer to dodge the China-US tariff crossfire and sell directly to the world's biggest market for "green" vehicles. —AFP

Musk breaks ground on Tesla Shanghai plant

Factory to help electric-car maker dodge China-US tariff crossfire

SHANGHAI: Tesla boss Elon Musk presided yesterday over the ground-breaking for a Shanghai factory that will allow the electric-car manufacturer to dodge the China-US tariff crossfire and sell directly to the world's biggest market for "green" vehicles.

The plant in a Shanghai suburb is Musk's biggest overseas move yet and will eventually have an annual production capacity of 500,000 vehicles, Tesla says, dramatically increasing the California-based company's output. "China is becoming the global leader in electric vehicle adoption, and it is a market that is critical to Tesla's mission to accelerate the world's transition to sustainable energy," Musk said, according to a statement released by the manufacturer.

Musk had hinted recently at an upcoming Shanghai trip to break ground for the plant but Monday's event was not publicly announced until the Tesla CEO broke the news in a series of tweets earlier in the day. In typically iconoclastic style, the 47-year-old Musk changed

his Twitter profile picture around the time of the ceremony to one showing his face with an exaggerated handlebar moustache drawn on it.

The Shanghai government later posted photos on social media showing Musk and officials from Tesla and the city on a large stage at a launch ceremony at the site, located on Shanghai's distant outskirts.

No investment figures were given but the cost of the project has been estimated by analysts at up to \$5 billion. The Shanghai venture comes as US companies face pressure from President Donald Trump to keep manufacturing jobs at home, and as Beijing and Washington wage a trade spat that has seen both sides levy tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of products.

Slowing down

Analysts say production in China would allow Tesla to side-step such measures, which have already caused a spike in the price of the cars the company now

imports to the Chinese market. But construction of the plant—the subject of stop-start negotiations between Tesla and Shanghai for well over a year—gets under way just as the outlook for China's consumer market has turned worrisome.

Apple sparked global alarm over the prospects for the world's second-largest economy last week when it cut its revenue forecast, citing slowing demand in China and the trade war.

Domestic and foreign automakers have been racing to grab shares of China's electric-vehicle sector—already the world's biggest and expected to continue to grow as the Chinese government pushes clean technologies.

But the pace of growth is expected to slow along with China's economy. The Shanghai factory will be Tesla's first production line outside the United States. Musk tweeted earlier yesterday that Tesla was "aiming to finish initial construction this summer, start Model 3 production end of year & reach high-volume produc-

tion next year". The Shanghai plant would supply the "Greater China region" with "affordable versions" of the Tesla Model 3 — the carmaker's first mid-price, mass-market vehicle—and its planned Model Y, Musk tweeted.

The Model S, Model X and "higher cost versions" of the 3 and Y would continue to be made in the United States for the global market, including China, he added. Despite its relative affordability compared to other Tesla models, the price of a US-made Model 3 now starts at about \$50,000, but Musk has said he aims to get that down to \$35,000. He provided no price figures for China-made cars.

China typically requires foreign automakers to forge joint ventures with domestic firms when establishing manufacturing plants, which means sharing profits and technology with local partners. But Tesla has said its Shanghai plant will be "wholly-owned" by the company. —AFP

China has 'good faith' to fix trade issues as talks with US resume

BEIJING: China has the "good faith" to work with the United States to resolve trade frictions, the Foreign Ministry said yesterday, as the world's two largest economies resumed talks in a bid to end their trade dispute. US officials are meeting their counterparts in Beijing this week for the first face-to-face talks since US President Donald Trump and China's President Xi Jinping agreed in December to a 90-day truce in a trade war that has roiled global markets.

Trump said on Sunday that trade talks with China were going very well and that weakness in the Chinese economy gave Beijing a reason to work toward a deal.

Yesterday, US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross told NBC the talks were being held with appropriate level staff and would help determine how the administration moves forward. Ross also said he saw "a very good chance that we will get a

reasonable settlement that China can live with, that we can live with and that addresses all of the key issues," adding that it would be easiest to tackle immediate trade but harder to resolve enforcement issues and structural reforms such as intellectual property rights and market access." The two sides agreed to hold "positive and constructive" dialogue to resolve economic and trade disputes in accordance with the consensus reached by the countries' leaders, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told reporters at a regular news briefing.

"From the beginning we have believed that China-US trade friction is not a positive situation for either country or the world economy. China has the good faith, on the basis of mutual respect and equality, to resolve the bilateral trade frictions," Lu said.

Trump imposed import tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of Chinese goods last year and has threatened more to pressure Beijing to change its practices on issues ranging from industrial subsidies to intellectual property to hacking. China has retaliated with tariffs of its own.

"As for whether the Chinese economy is good or not, I have already explained this. China's development has ample tenacity and huge potential," Lu said. "We have firm confidence in the strong long-term funda-

mentals of the Chinese economy."

Lu also said that Vice President Wang Qishan would attend the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in late January, but added that he had not yet heard of any arrangements for a meeting with Trump there. By yesterday afternoon, few details had emerged of the talks, which were scheduled to run through today.

The US delegation, led by Deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish, includes undersecretaries from the US Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy and Treasury, as well as senior officials from the White House. Tu Xinquan, a Chinese trade expert at Beijing's University of International Business and Economics, told Reuters before talks began that the meetings would likely focus on technical issues and leave major disagreements to more senior officials.

"China's economy is significantly slowing down, and the US stock market is declining quickly. I think the two sides need some kind of agreement for now," Tu said. Data last week showed manufacturing has slowed in both China and the United States, though the US Labor Department on Friday reported a surge in new jobs in December along with higher wages.

Officials have given scant details on concessions that China might be willing to make to meet US demands, some of which



BEIJING: Members of the US trade delegation to China leave a hotel in Beijing yesterday. US negotiators yesterday headed into talks with Chinese counterparts as the two countries seek a deal to end a trade war that has raised fears of global economic turmoil. —AFP

would require structural reforms unpalatable for Chinese leaders. Even if a trade agreement is reached soon, analysts say it would be no panacea for China's economy, which is expected to continue decelerating in coming months.

China's stridently nationalist Global

Times tabloid said in an editorial late on Sunday that statements from both sides that they hoped to reach a deal were cause for optimism, but that Beijing would not cave in to US demands. "If China was going to raise the white flag, it would have done it already," the paper said. —Reuters

Business

KFH goes live on RippleNet for money transfer service

Alhous: Service available now in SAR at Al-Rajhi Bank

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH), a member of RippleNet, has started operating an instant cross-border remittance service "Instant International Transfer" using Ripple's blockchain technology. KFH announced this significant milestone after completing the technical preparations and conducting a number of pilot testing, and obtaining Central Bank of Kuwait approval.

The Currently zero fees remittance is available now in Saudi Riyal SAR where customers can make remittance transactions to beneficiaries at Al-Rajhi Bank. This service will expand to encompass more countries in different currencies. The service allows KFH customers to make instant and secure zero fees remittances through their accounts in kfh.com. This affirms KFH's strategy of adopting digitization, delivering superior customer service, while demonstrating excellence in operating RippleNet remittance services in record time after it had announced joining RippleNet last May.

Group Chief Operations Officer at KFH, Abdullah Alhous said that KFH customers can now make

instant remittance transactions to a beneficiary account at Al-Rajhi Bank utilizing Ripple Net. He hailed the joint efforts and the positive cooperation with the representatives at Al-Rajhi Bank, indicating this resonated with expediting the transfer operations to Al-Rajhi Bank. Al-Rajhi Bank is a strategic partner and it enjoys a great importance and a prestigious status in the record of the correspondent banks both in terms of cooperation and continuing communication, or the volume of mutual transfers between the two sides.

Abu Alhous added, in a press release, that applying this service comprises a paradigm shift and an unprecedented development at the level of the market in general and at the level of the Bank's array of services in particular. This service combines both banking business and technological development. Its serves in improving and facilitating customers' cross-border payment methods through trusted global network, maximizing the role of blockchain instant payment in providing best service as per highest quality standards and in line with security and speed manners.

He reiterated that this step emphasized KFH flagship position in adopting innovative financial solutions, while offering the most advanced services as per highest standards of transparency and efficiency. He said that blockchain technology gives KFH the opportunity to apply novel approaches to achieve its objectives, improve customer service and add more value to maintain the leadership position of KFH. "KFH has reached the final stages of implementing "Instant International Transfer" service on mobile phones through KFHonline", he added.

It is worth noting that KFH has succeeded in launching several innovative services. KFH has lately implemented Chatbots on the Bank's banking platform be it online or mobile which is available to customers 24/7, this improves service especially to our millennial customers. KFH implemented a Robotic Process Automation (RPA) program to streamline internal processes for customer financing transactions increasing efficiency and reducing processing time. Also, KFH launched the XTM that provides customers with unique self-service banking experience, "KFH

Xpress" for instant cross border money transfers, "cardless" cash withdrawals using QR codes or the mobile number or simply using ID card. This is in addition to the KFH-Wallet, a 'Mobile Wallet Payment Service which allows customers to store specific banking cards on their mobiles. KFH also unveiled KFH Go, the first-of-its-kind fully-automated self-banking station.

Meanwhile, Managing Director, South Asia & MENA at Ripple- Navin Gupta said "Kuwait and KSA are large economies in the GCC and Ripple is excited to get customers of KFH to send instant payments into Al-Rajhi Bank in KSA. In 2019, we will work with KFH to deliver quicker, cheaper payments to many more countries."



Abdullah Alhous

Hedge funds dump crude and diesel as economic outlook darkens

LONDON: Hedge funds are cautious on the outlook for oil prices, despite a slump at the end of last year, as fears about the global economy outweigh output cuts by OPEC and its allies.

Fund managers cut bullish positions in Brent crude futures and options by 10 million barrels in the week to Dec. 31, exchange data published on Friday showed. Funds have cut their net long position in Brent to just 152 million barrels, down from almost 500 million at the end of September, and close to the lowest level since 2015. Portfolio managers' bullish long positions outnumbered bearish short ones by a margin of just 2.5 to 1, down from a ratio of more than 19 to 1 at the end of September. There are some signs the heavy liquidation of bullish positions between the start of October and early December has run its course, with Brent prices seeming to find a floor above \$50 per barrel. But most fund managers have preferred to wait before taking new long positions until the outlook for the global economy and equity prices becomes clearer.

Diesel gloom

Portfolio managers were even more bearish towards middle distillates such as diesel, jet fuel and heating oil, cutting their net long position in European gasoil by 9 million barrels. Net length in ICE gasoil was cut to just 2 million barrels, down from a recent high of 112 million barrels in early October. The ratio of long to short positions was cut to just 1:1, down from a peak of more than 30:1 less than three months ago, and the lowest for more than two years. Middle distillate consumption is heavily geared to freight transportation by ship, road, rail and aircraft, as well as manufacturing, mining and the farm sector.

Distillates tend to be in short supply towards the end of the economic and oil price cycles as industrial activity heads towards a peak, helping put upward pressure on crude prices.

Until recently, fears of cyclical shortages were exacerbated by the scheduled introduction of new regulations on shipping fuels, which are likely to boost distillate consumption from the start of 2020. —Reuters

Assets worth \$1tn to shift from UK to EU due to Brexit: EY

LONDON: Assets worth nearly 800 billion pounds (\$1 trillion) are being moved from Britain to new financial hubs in the European Union ahead of Brexit, consultancy EY said yesterday.

Britain, which is due to leave the bloc in March, has yet to approve a deal to avoid an abrupt severing of ties with the EU. Although the British parliament is due to vote on a proposed settlement next week, it is unclear if it will be approved.

"The closer we get to 29 March without a deal, the more assets will be transferred and headcount hired locally or relocated," Omar Ali, UK financial services leader at EY, said.

EY has been tracking the Brexit plans of 222 financial firms since Britain voted in June 2016 to leave the EU. In its latest update to the end of November 2018, it said that 80 firms are considering or have confirmed relocating assets and staff.

The latest estimate from EY says that 800 billion pounds in assets would move, a fraction of Britain's 8 trillion pound banking sector.

Frankfurt Main Finance, which promotes the German financial centre, has said it expects 750 to 800 billion euros of assets to transfer there alone, largely during this quarter. —Reuters

US gadget love forecast to grow despite trust issues

LAS VEGAS: The US tech industry is weathering a crisis of confidence over data protection and a difficult geopolitical situation, with record sales expected in 2019, organizers of the Consumer Electronics Show said Sunday.

The Consumer Technology Association (CTA) predicted that US retail revenue in the sector would climb to a record high \$398 billion this year. The forecast was unveiled ahead of the opening of the giant fair which from January 8-11 will showcase the newest tech in mobile computing, health, sports, automobiles, agriculture and more. "There are so many cool things happening in the consumer electronics industry right now," said CTA vice president of market research Steve Koenig.

Trends gaining momentum, and expected to be on display on the CES show floor, included super-high resolution 8K televisions, blazingly fast 5G wireless internet, and virtual aides such as Google Assistant and Amazon's Alexa woven into devices of all kinds.

CTA director of market research Lesley Rohrbough pointed out that "digital assistants are going into everything." The CTA forecast revenue growth in the US for smartphones, speakers, homes and watches along with televisions, drones, "in-vehicle tech," and streaming services.

Outlook clouded

The upbeat outlook, however, has been tempered by concerns about trust and a simmering trade war with China which has seen President Donald Trump slap hefty tariffs on imports of tech products. Gary Shapiro, president and chief executive of the CTA, said the dramatic drop in sales of US goods to China reported by Apple and other firms suggests potential troubles ahead.

"If China catches a cold we get the sniffles," Shapiro told AFP in an interview during the CES media preview day. "The economies are interrelated now. It's some-



LAS VEGAS: Members of the media cover the CES Unveiled Las Vegas event in advance of CES in Las Vegas, Nevada, on Sunday. —AFP

thing President Trump doesn't quite understand... President Trump's motives are appropriate but his tactics are inappropriate."

The trade event features 4,500 exhibitors across 2.75 million square feet (250,000 square meters) of exhibit space showcasing artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, smart homes, smart cities, sports gadgets and other cutting-edge devices. Some 182,000 trade professionals are expected.

Visitors are likely to see more dazzling TV screens, intuitive robots, a range of voice-activated devices, and folding or roll-up smartphone displays.

Data deluge

There will be a focus on artificial intelligence that can "personalize" a user's experience with a device or a car, or even predict what someone is seeking—whether it's music or medical care. But because this ecosystem

is built around data, confidence has been eroded by scandals involving Facebook, Google and other guardians of private information. "Everywhere you go, data is going to be the common denominator," Koenig said while discussing CES trends.

"We are transitioning into the Data Age; I think it is going to be a little bit like 'The Matrix,'" he added, referring to the hit 1999 science fiction film. Shapiro said he believes the industry is capable of self-regulation, but that Congress could likely act as a result of data protection scandals.

But he said the US should not follow the example of Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), saying that it is "stifling innovation." "We want to balance innovation with data collection and it should be situational," he said. "If your car is about to hit another car, privacy is irrelevant. But if you're talking about someone's medical history, that's very important." —AFP

Italy Q3 budget deficit improves

MILAN: Italy's budget deficit improved in the third quarter of 2018 to 1.7 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), shedding 0.1 percentage point compared with a year earlier, official figures showed yesterday. The improvement came despite market apprehension over the election promises of the populist government which came

to power in June and a subsequent standoff with Brussels over its big-spending budget plans.

Statistics agency ISTAT said government revenues rose 1.7 percent while expenses were up 1.5 percent. Italy's deficit for the first nine months of 2018 was 1.9 percent, a marked improvement on the 2.6 percent for the same period in 2017, statistics agency ISTAT said.

The amount Italy has had to pay in interest on its massive public debt has risen sharply, gaining 12 percent or 1.7 billion euros since the coalition of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement and the far-right

League took over from the previous center-left government. Rome's cost of borrowing is expected to have continued to rise in the fourth quarter of 2018 because of the standoff with the European Commission over the 2019 budget that spooked markets.

The Italian government eventually agreed to water down some key budget measures, reducing the 2019 deficit forecast from 2.4 percent to 2.04 percent of GDP. That target is nevertheless much less ambitious than the previous government's estimate of 1.6 percent in 2018, 0.8 percent in 2019 and a balance in 2020. Italy's deficit in 2017 was 2.4 percent of GDP. —AFP

Aston Martin triggers Brexit contingencies to prepare for no deal

LONDON: Aston Martin has hired a supply chain chief and approved Brexit plans to avoid delays by using ports other than Dover and flying in components as the carmaker prepares for a possible no deal in March, its boss told Reuters.

Britain, the world's fifth largest economy, is due to leave the globe's biggest trading bloc in just over 80 days but a Brexit agreement looks set to be voted down by lawmakers next week, making a no deal and potential trade barriers more likely. Britain's car industry, which employs over 850,000 people and has been lauded as a success story by politicians, has consistently warned that leaving the EU without an agreement would add costs and could halt output due to snarl-ups.

Chief Executive Andy Palmer said the luxury automaker, which was in October considering plans to fly components and move more in through other ports, had no

choice but to authorize such contingencies at a board meeting in December. "I don't think we've been in a position in the last two years where we've been further apart from understanding where we're going to end up," Palmer told Reuters.

"We program a car to align and order all the parts for those cars twelve weeks in advance. You don't need to do the maths to know that therefore takes us across the Brexit period."

"We have to prepare for the worst case scenario." Aston is signing deals with its first-tier supplier, DHL, to allow for the use of ports other than Dover and has triggered the authority for its supply chain team to make bookings for air freight.

But the government has already said it will prioritize the movement of key supplies such as medicines in a scenario where the free-flow of goods is hit after Brexit so it is unclear what would happen to other items. "We don't have any assurances," said Palmer. "One assumes if you're putting parts onto a standard chartered plane, no one's going to kick you off."

The company, which built over 6,000 top-end models last year at its central English plant in Gaydon, its only factory, is also holding a stock of cars in Germany.

"It's an inventory to some extent that we put in place during the course of 2018...



LONDON: Cars are displayed for sale on the forecourt of a Vauxhall dealership in London, England.

and depending on what happens in the next few weeks, may or may not increase," Palmer said.

The firm's Brexit plans have added an "accumulating cost," he added.

Aston has hired John Griffiths, who has worked for Nissan and aerospace firm Rolls-Royce, as Interim Vice President for supply chain, in a role Palmer said "there was a nagging need (for) which has been

confirmed with Brexit."

Palmer also criticized politicians on both sides of the Channel who have failed to provide the stability needed for businesses to succeed. "Both the European and the UK politicians, are not discharging the duty for which they are put in place which is basically to plan and bring certainty to allow the country to thrive," he said. —Reuters

Business

Chinese tech investors flee Silicon Valley as Trump tightens scrutiny

Trade tensions add to decline in Chinese investment

SAN FRANCISCO: New Trump administration policies aimed at curbing China's access to American innovation have all but halted Chinese investment in US technology startups, as both investors and startup founders abandon deals amid scrutiny from Washington.

Chinese venture funding in US startups crested to a record \$3 billion last year, according to New York economic research firm Rhodium Group, spurred by a rush of investors and tech companies scrambling to complete deals before a new regulatory regime was approved in August.

Since then, Chinese venture funding in US startups has slowed to a trickle, Reuters interviews with more than 35 industry players show. US President Donald Trump signed new legislation expanding the government's ability to block foreign investment in US companies, regardless of the investor's country of origin. But Trump has been particularly vocal about stopping China from getting its hands on strategic US technologies.

The new rules are still being finalized, but tech industry veterans said the fallout has been swift. "Deals involving Chinese companies and Chinese buyers and Chinese investors have virtually stopped," said attorney Nell O'Donnell, who has represented US tech companies in transactions with foreign buyers. Lawyers who spoke to Reuters say they are feverishly rewriting deal terms to help ensure investments get the stamp of approval from Washington. Chinese investors, including big family offices, have walked away from transactions and stopped taking meetings with US startups. Some entrepreneurs, meanwhile, are eschewing Chinese money, fearful of lengthy government reviews that could sap their resources and momentum in an arena where speed to market is critical.

Volley Labs, Inc. a San Francisco-based company that uses artificial intelligence to build corporate training materials, is playing it safe. It declined offers from Chinese investors last year after accepting cash from

Beijing-based TAL Education Group as part of a financing round in 2017.

"We decided for optical reasons it just wouldn't make sense to expose ourselves further to investors coming from a country where there is now so much by way of trade tensions and IP tensions," said Carson Kahn, Volley's CEO. A Silicon Valley venture capitalist told Reuters he is aware of at least ten deals, some involving companies in his own portfolio, that fell apart because they would need approval from the interagency group known as the Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS). He declined to be named for fear of bringing negative attention to his portfolio companies.

CFIUS is the government group tasked with reviewing foreign investment for potential national security and competitive risks. The new legislation expands its powers. Among them: the ability to probe transactions previously excluded from its purview, including attempts by foreigners to purchase minority stakes in US startups.

China is in the crosshairs. The Asian giant has been an aggressive investor in technology deemed critical to its global competitiveness and military prowess. Chinese investors have bought stakes in ride-hailing firms Uber Technologies Inc and Lyft, as well as companies with more sensitive technologies including data center networking firm Barefoot Networks, autonomous driving startup Zoox and speech recognition startup AISense.

A dearth of Chinese money is unlikely to spell doom for Silicon Valley. Investors worldwide poured more than \$84 billion into US startups for the first three quarters of last year, exceeding any prior full-year funding, according to data provider PitchBook Inc.

Still, Chinese funders are critical to helping US companies gain access to the world's second-largest economy. Volley's Kahn acknowledged that rejecting Chinese investment may make his startup's overseas expansion more difficult. "Those of us who are operators and



US President Donald Trump shakes hands with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in this file photo. —AFP

entrepreneurs feel the brunt of these tensions," Kahn said. It is a radical shift for Silicon Valley. Money has historically flowed in from every corner of the globe, including from geopolitical rivals such as China and Russia, largely uninhibited by US government scrutiny or regulation.

Reid Whitten, an attorney with Sheppard Mullin, said that of the six companies he recently advised to get CFIUS approval for their investment offers, only two have opted to file the paperwork. The others abandoned their deals or are still considering whether to proceed.

"It is a generational change in the way we look at foreign investment in the United States," Whitten said.

The decline in Chinese investment comes amid heightened tensions between Beijing and Washington. Trump has blasted China for its enormous trade surplus and for what he claims are its underhanded strategies to obtain leading-edge American technology. The nations have already levied billions in tariffs on each other's goods. And Trump is considering an executive order to bar US companies from using telecommunications equipment made by China's Huawei and ZTE, which the US government has accused of spying. —Reuters

China FX reserves fall in 2018 as slowing economy, trade war weigh

BEIJING: China's annual foreign exchange reserves fell for the third time in four years in 2018 as the yuan came under strong selling pressure from the cooling economy and escalating Sino-US trade tensions. Depreciation pressure on the yuan is likely to persist this year as Beijing is expected to roll out more policy easing measures to reduce the risk of a sharper slowdown.

But a test of the yuan's decade lows that was feared by global financial markets just months ago may be less of a risk, if analysts are correct in forecasting the US dollar's long rally is drawing to a close. China's foreign exchange reserves - the world's largest - fell by \$67.24 billion last year to \$3.073 trillion, central bank data showed yesterday. That compared with a \$129.4 billion increase

in 2017 to \$3.14 trillion. In December, reserves rose by \$11 billion, after a rise of \$8.6 billion in November. The latest gain was slightly above forecasts of \$8 billion by economists in a Reuters poll. The country's foreign exchange regulator attributed the increase to valuation effects due to the appreciation of non-dollar currencies and increases in prices of major countries' bonds held by China. Reserves are likely to remain generally stable in 2019, the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) said in a statement.

Under pressure

In a rare respite last year, the yuan rebounded 1.3 percent against the dollar in December as the greenback faltered and Washington and Beijing agreed to resume negotiations to end their bitter trade dispute. But the Chinese currency still fell 5.3 percent for 2018 as a whole, its fourth annual loss in five. Still, the risk of heavy capital outflows from the cooling economy seem to have been largely contained last year, thanks to timely interventions by authorities in currency markets, tougher capital controls adopted in the last downturn in 2014-2015, and a sudden shift in expectations for US policy tightening.

But even if the dollar falters as expected, the yuan faces the same key pressure points this year as last. US President Donald Trump has said talks toward a trade deal are progressing well, but it is unclear if Beijing will yield to key US demands over trade imbalances, market access, and more protection for intellectual property. Failure could quickly reignite pressure on the yuan, as Trump has threatened to proceed with a sharp US tariff hike on Chinese goods and Beijing is widely expected to retaliate. The trade dispute between the world's largest economies has already disrupted the flow of hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of goods and stoked fears of a global economic slowdown.

Domestic pressures

Even if a trade agreement is reached soon, analysts say it would be no panacea for China's economy, which is expected to continue decelerating in coming months. China's manufacturing activity contracted in December for the first time in more than two years and key credit gauges are hovering around record lows. On Friday, the central bank said it was cutting the amount of cash banks must hold in reserve for the fifth time in the past year, freeing up \$116 billion for new lending. —Reuters



BEIJING: Logos of Luckin Coffee are seen on bags at a store in Beijing, China's annual foreign exchange reserves fell for the third time in four years in 2018 as the yuan came under strong selling pressure from the cooling economy and escalating Sino-US trade tensions. —AFP

Pakistan says UAE's financial assistance to shore up economy

ISLAMABAD: A loan facility from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will help cash-starved Pakistan bridge a yawning current account deficit and shore up foreign reserves, Pakistan's chief government spokesman said yesterday. The UAE's crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, visited Islamabad on Sunday and confirmed a \$3 billion loan package first announced last month.

"The \$3 billion package which has already been announced was formalized," the government's top spokesman, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry, told a news conference. Chaudhry did not give any details about any further assistance through deferred oil payments, which he said late last year the UAE would be extending to Pakistan on top of the loan. Nor did he give details of the interest rate on the \$3 billion loan. However, Pakistan's English-language daily Dawn quoted Chaudhry as saying the loan had been given on an interest rate of 2.8 percent, and that the UAE would be giving another \$3.2 billion for the

supply of oil on deferred payment. Pakistan has been facing an economic crisis due to depleting foreign reserves and a widening current account deficit since the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan took office in August.

Khan, who has been critical of foreign loans throughout his political career, had no option but to seek financial support from friendly countries besides approaching the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a bailout. Pakistan secured a \$3 billion loan from Saudi Arabia and a similar amount every year in oil supply on deferred payment for three years.

Pakistan has also been trying to get loans from neighboring China, which has pledged nearly \$60 billion for energy and road and rail infrastructure projects as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), known as China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Last week, in response to a Financial Times report that China had agreed to lend Pakistan \$2 billion to bolster foreign exchange reserves, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said China would continue to provide support to Pakistan "in the form of aid, trade, investment and in other ways". After several rounds of talks late last year, discussions with the IMF broke for unexplained reasons, although Pakistan said it was already taking most of the steps the IMF required, including steps to bridge the budget deficit, more revenue collection and devaluation of the rupee. —Reuters

Central banks, US employers support world stock markets

LONDON: Strong employment data in the United States, decisive action from the Chinese central bank and dovish messages from US Federal Reserve chief Jerome Powell steadied markets yesterday, pushing an index of world stocks to a 2-1/2 week high.

The resumption of talks between the United States and China on tariffs also helped restore some optimism to a market battered in recent weeks by trade tensions and a weakening global growth outlook.

Though European shares were in the red yesterday, they were still close to three-week highs after Friday's strong gains and a stellar opening for Asian bourses. MSCI's world equity index, which tracks shares in 47 countries, was still at its highest level in 2-1/2 weeks and about 6 per-

cent higher than its December trough.

"It is a reminder that central banks still have some firepower to deal with lower growth prospects, and perhaps what we are also getting some return of liquidity as investors return from the holidays," said Investec economist Philip Shaw. He warned, however, that there is continued uncertainty about global growth, trade talks between the United States and China and US monetary policy.

"There are a number of questions that remain unanswered," Shaw said. On Friday, US non-farm payrolls data showed the world's largest economy added 312,000 net new jobs in December, while wages rose at a brisk annual pace of 3.2 percent, both way above expectations. This, along with a 100 basis point cut in China's bank reserve requirement ratios and comments from Fed Chair Jerome Powell that the US central bank would be flexible in its approach in 2019, has been the main driver for the recovery.

The boost to stock markets saw them recapture all the year's losses and push into positive territory for 2019, with Wall St's main indices closing up more than 3 percent by the close on Friday. After gains of more than 2 percent in Shanghai and HK on Friday before the US jobs

data and Powell's comments, both markets added almost 1 percent more on Monday. Japan's Nikkei reversed Friday's plunge to gain 2.4 percent.

European stocks were slightly lower across the board, though mining stocks were up 0.7 percent after the reserve requirement ratio cut from China boosted metals prices, especially steel and iron ore. This renewed optimism saw US Treasury yields rise off recent lows, and two-year yields move back above the federal funds rate to 2.49 percent.

That is nearly 50 bps below the November peak, however, suggesting there is still plenty of nervousness around growth prospects for the US economy. "Clearly markets are now pricing in the risk of a cut in 2019," said Shaw of Investec. "That's a big shift given until relatively recently when we've been focusing on rate hikes."

Buying the dip?

Some of the stocks recovery may be attributed to investors buying stocks once again in the belief that the market had bottomed out or had overshot in pricing in global risks. In any case, Friday was a strong session for Wall Street, with the Dow recording gains of 3.29 percent, while the S&P 500 jumped 3.43 percent and the Nasdaq 4.26 percent. —Reuters

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Business

KIB awarded 'Best Sharia-compliant Bank in MENA' by Capital Finance

KIB aims at becoming the Islamic bank of choice in Kuwait: Sheikh Jarrah

KUWAIT: For the fourth consecutive year and in recognition of its commitment to providing exceptional Islamic banking services, KIB received the 'Best Sharia-compliant Bank in MENA' award by Capital Finance International (CFL.co): an organization specializing in the finance and banking sectors.

KIB received this award based on the result of a judging panel, which included a group of professional editors. Accordingly, the Bank was chosen for its outstanding performance in the Islamic banking sector, continued growth trajectory, strong financial position, as well as its commitment to complying with Islamic finance practices and principles. The Bank was judged

against several key criteria, namely financial performance, risk management, corporate governance, customer service, innovation, corporate social responsibility, market leadership, transparency, response to market demands, and strength of nominations.

On this occasion, Chairman of KIB, Sheikh Mohammad Jarrah Al-Sabah



Sheikh Mohammad Jarrah Al-Sabah

Sabah congratulated KIB staff for winning this prestigious award, saying: "KIB is revamping older business models to provide for more modern, sophisticated sharia-compliant banking services. As always, the Bank continues to harness its decades-long expertise to meet the diverse needs of the local market through its comprehensive suite of sharia-compliant banking offerings."

Al-Jarrah also pointed out that KIB aims at becoming the Islamic bank of choice in Kuwait by implementing three main pillars: improving customer service by focusing on technology and enhancing digital services, expanding services for corporate banking and SMEs, as

well as enriching its experience by continuing to provide comprehensive real estate services to customers.

It is worth noting that CFL.co, one of the most prominent organizations in London, is an independent global evaluating body specialized in the banking and finance sectors. The organization holds some of the most important events across the globe, dedicated to honoring individuals and institutions that have showcased the highest standards of innovation and excellence in the global financial sector. Additionally, CFL.co sheds light on leading institutions in specialized fields that have demonstrated remarkable performance amidst challenges facing the financial sector.

Renault alliance 'not in danger': Nissan CEO

TOKYO: Nissan's alliance with France's Renault is not in danger "at all", the Japanese automaker's CEO told AFP yesterday, despite tensions exposed by the arrest of the partnership's chief Carlos Ghosn.

In an interview, Hiroto Saikawa brushed aside suggestions that the alliance, which also includes Mitsubishi Motors, had been damaged by the aftermath of Ghosn's arrest for alleged financial misconduct. "I don't think it's in danger at all," he said.

He declined to comment directly on the case against Ghosn, who will appear in court Tuesday to hear an explanation of his ongoing detention. "This is a process of the Japanese system, so I have nothing to say," Saikawa said. "I just want to focus on stabilizing the company."

Ghosn's arrest rocked the auto industry and exposed rifts in the three-firm alliance that he forged, particularly between Nissan and Renault. Nissan and Mitsubishi Motors swiftly removed Ghosn from his leadership positions after his arrest, with Saikawa even referring to the "dark side" of his former mentor's tenure.

But Renault has kept Ghosn on as CEO, and the French firm has repeatedly urged Nissan to call a shareholder meeting, reportedly seeking to bolster its representation on the company's board.

Officials at both companies have also complained about a breakdown in communication in the wake of the arrest. But despite the apparent tensions, Saikawa said he was communicating with Renault on a "day-to-day" basis and "alliance work is going well".

"The core, the value, of the alliance itself is coming from the day-to-day work," he added. "This work, this energy, this direction of activities are not at all affected."

'Ready to accept fundamental change'

But in an indication of one of the issues underlying the tensions, Saikawa suggested that the current distribution of shares in the partnership could be up for renegotiation. Renault is currently the dominant partner in the alliance, holding 43 percent of Nissan's shares, while the Japanese firm holds only a 15 percent stake in Renault and has no voting rights. While the alliance as a whole is the world's top-selling car company, Nissan outsells its French counterpart.

There have been rumors that before his arrest, Ghosn was moving towards consolidating the alliance, despite growing resentment in Nissan about the partnership's existing framework.

"Currently, we don't have to change anything, but maybe in the future," he said. "Can we say this current credo is stable or sustainable? We may have to review it. This is the kind of homework for (the) current generation's leaders, before handing over to next generations. We need to work on it."

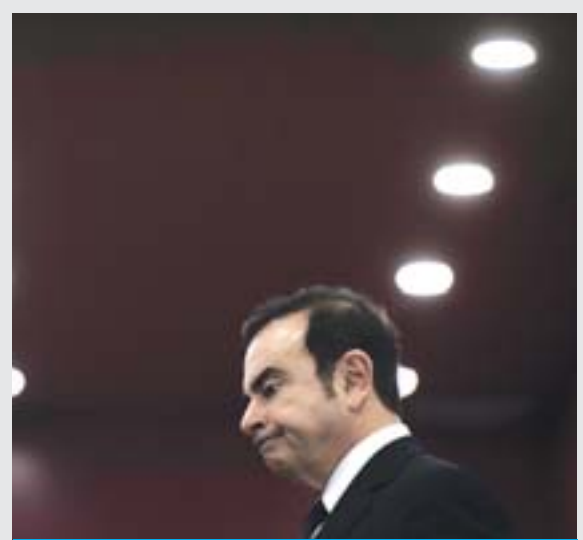
Ghosn faces allegations including under-reporting his compensation, attempting to shift investment losses onto Nissan's books, and using company funds to repay a friend who put up collateral for him.

He denies the allegations, and is expected to make his first public statement since his arrest when he appears in a Tokyo court today.

Nissan says the alleged financial misconduct came to light through a company whistleblower, which then prompted a full-blown investigation. In the wake of the case, and Ghosn's removal as chairman, Nissan has launched a wide-ranging review of its governance.

The firm itself faces charges for submitting falsified documents in one of the cases involving the alleged under-reporting of Ghosn's salary. Saikawa said he expected the review to produce "deep and wide recommendations". "I am ready to accept fundamental change," he added, speaking on the sidelines of the New Year's gathering organized by Japan's Keidanren business lobby.

He said the review could result in an enhanced role for independent directors, and possibly a change in the make-up of Nissan's board. — AFP



In this file photo, Nissan Carlos Ghosn attends a press conference at the Beijing Auto Show in Beijing. — AFP

Infiniti Al-Babtain impresses crowds with new Infiniti models at Al-Murouj

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the authorized dealer for Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait recently demonstrated the unique features that accompany its new premium INFINITI range, the QX50, QX80 and Q30. Visitors engaged and experienced the models high quality performance blended with aesthetic world class interiors at one of Kuwait's famous lifestyle destinations, Al-Murouj.

The new INFINITI QX50 is the world's first variable compression ratio engine in a production vehicle which was created to fully meet the needs of today's premium car buyers and to deliver on their desire to own the latest masterpiece of technology. The VC-Turbo engine delivers the strong and convincing performance of a V6 and the fuel economy of a 4-cylinder engine - transforming on demand and based on the input of the drivers. Instantly adapting to their needs, the VC-Turbo lets them harness the exhilarating performance of 268 hp and 380 nm at 4,400 rpm of torque.

The QX50 appeals to buyers who require the unique combination of interior space, power, efficiency, hand-crafted quality, and modern design, along with effortless on-road performance.

Exemplifying INFINITI's presence in the luxury SUV segment, the INFINITI QX80 takes INFINITI's 'Powerful



Elegance' design language in a bold new direction and come with a taut yet comfort-oriented suspension, and ample performance from its 5.6-liter V8 engine. The flagship SUV model has been created to meet the needs of today's luxury car buyers, and introduces a more modern interpretation of upscale luxury to the full-size SUV segment. It will appeal to a buyer that wants for nothing: affluent, high-achieving entrepreneurs and business leaders, often with families, who demand space and utility, hand-crafted quality and modern design, and effortless on-road performance. The QX80 has a refined and spacious cabin that features high-quality materials, a hand-crafted finish and advanced drive-assist technologies.

The Q30 which is Infiniti's signature design is a premium compact vehicle that is popular among the younger drivers. Q30 comes with a double-arch grille with a unique 3D mesh and is powered by 1.6L or 2.0L Turbo engines in a 2WD configuration. For enthusiasts, the 2.0L Turbo is also offered with an optional AWD drivetrain. The 2.0L Turbo engine is a power-horse as it delivers 208hp and 350Nm torque. At peak performance, the INFINITI Q30 blasts from 0-to-100kph in 7.3 seconds.

Infiniti Al-Babtain encourages its customers to continue exploring the advantages of its best in class models in Kuwait by visiting the designated showroom located in Al-Rai.

NBK Capital Global Markets Commentary

MENA equities performed well in December

KUWAIT: Despite the slide in oil prices and the global turmoil in financial markets, MENA equities performed fairly well during the last month of the year. The S&P GCC Composite was up 0.83 percent bringing its full year advance to 11.47 percent supported by a robust performance in Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, and Qatar. The Tadawul All Share Index advanced 8.31 percent for the year after adding 1.61 percent in December, while Abu Dhabi's ADX General Index finished the year with a positive 11.75 percent after advancing 3.04 percent in December. The biggest gainer, however, remains the Qatar Exchange Index which declined marginally in December by 0.63 percent but managed to close the year up 20.83 percent.

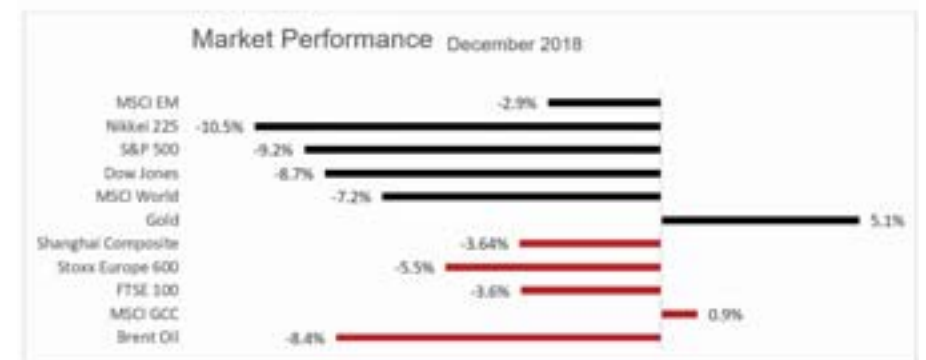
Boursa Kuwait All Share Index was down slightly by 0.58 percent closing its first year up 1.59 percent. Dubai and Oman were the only negative performers in the GCC with the DFM General Index down 25 percent for 2018 and the Muscat Securities Market Index down 15.21 percent. In the broader MENA region, the S&P Pan Arab Index was up 0.65 percent for December and 6.16 percent for the year, while Egypt's EGX 30 was down by 2.13 percent bringing its full year performance for 2018 to a negative 13.21 percent.

Global markets

The volatility which characterized the fourth quarter of 2018 intensified during the last month of the year and the market sell-off continued well into the end of December. Fears of a global economic slowdown fueled by trade tensions, in addition to decelerating growth in the US in the middle of a Fed tightening cycle took their toll on global markets during the last few months of the year.

The MSCI All Countries World Index lost more than 7 percent during December to bring its full year decline to 11.2 percent while the MSCI EM closed the year down 16.64 percent after shedding 2.92 percent in December. Major US indices managed to end the year down in single digits after a record 5 percent rebound on December 26 that saw the Dow gain more than a thousand points in a single day. The S&P 500 was down 9.18 percent in December to close the year at a negative 6.24 percent, while the Dow Jones Industrial Average lost 8.66 percent in the last month of the year closing 2018 down 5.63 percent. Both indices had a total drawdown of 19.8 percent and 18.8 percent peak to trough in the fourth quarter. Treasury yields, on the other hand, continued their reversal that start-

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month. Unemployment continued its advance higher registering 2.5 percent in November compared to 2.4 percent and 2.3 percent for the previous two months.

Emerging markets

Despite the negative performance, emerging markets managed to outperform global equities during December. The MSCI EM Index declined by 2.92 percent closing the year with a total loss of 16.64 percent. Major emerging markets indices declined during the month, but the declines were relatively mild compared to global peers. MSCI Asia ex-Japan was down 2.93 percent, while the Russia Stock Exchange was down 1.42 percent and India's NIFTY 50 and Taiwan Stock Exchange closed

down 0.13 percent and 1.62 percent respectively.

Oil markets

Oil rebounded from the year lows with Brent bouncing off the \$50/bbl mark in late December after data showed OPEC output plunging by 530,000 barrels a day in December, even before the deal to curb output came into effect in January. The decline in output was the result of planned cuts by Saudi Arabia and unintentional cut-backs from Libya and Iran. Libyan output was down 110,000 barrels as violent demonstrators put the country's biggest oil field, Sahara, offline, while Iran's output was down 120,000 barrels a day due to sanctions.

UK new car sales slump ahead of Brexit 'existential threat'

LONDON: British new car sales in 2018 fell at their fastest rate since the global financial crisis a decade ago, hit by the collapse in demand for diesel, as the industry body warned of the existential threat to the sector posed by Brexit. Registrations dropped 6.8 percent last year to 2.37 million vehicles, the largest fall since sales nosedived 11.3 percent in 2008, according to data from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) showed.

A nearly 30 percent drop in demand for diesel was the most significant factor in the decline. Diesel has been pummeled since the Volkswagen emissions cheating scandal of 2015, prompting a crackdown and higher levies. But the industry also warned that Britain's departure from the European Union due at the end of March risks the future of a sector which employs over 850,000 people and has been one of Britain's few manufacturing success stories since the 1980s. "It's still hard to

see any upside to Brexit," said SMMT Chief Executive Mike Hawes. "Everyone recognizes that Brexit is an existential threat to the UK automotive industry and we hope a practical solution will prevail," he said, calling for lawmakers to back Prime Minister Theresa May's deal to guarantee a transition period.

Britain, the world's fifth largest economy, is due to leave the globe's biggest trading bloc in just over 80 days with May's agreement looking set to be voted down, leading to a possible no deal Brexit and the imposition of tariffs and customs checks.

Investment looks very likely to have fallen in 2018, the SMMT said, and sales this year are forecast to drop again as the industry body warned a no-deal Brexit would hit jobs.

"You're not going to see immediate closure of plants but what you could see is a reduction in production volumes and certainly, these are often international companies who have alternatives," said Hawes. After record highs in 2015 and 2016, sales fell in 2017 and some analysts see car demand as a leading indicator which could be a harbinger for future economic performance. Britain's economy slowed to a crawl at the end of 2018, the housing market is stalling and lending to consumers growing at its slowest pace in nearly four years, according to data released on Friday. — Reuters

Technology

Breadmaking robot startup eyes fresh connections

Bread robot can produce at far lower cost



LAS VEGAS: The Bread Bot — a fully automated bread-making machine that mixes, kneads, proofs, bakes and sells bread like a vending machine is displayed at CES Unveiled, the preview event for CES 2019 consumer electronics show in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP photos

LAS VEGAS: The robot breadmaker came to Las Vegas this week, aiming to bring some freshness to a sector that may be ready for disruption. Wilkinson Baking Company unveiled its BreadBot at the Consumer Electronics Show, a machine that mixes and bakes up to 235 loaves a day. Chief executive Randall Wilkinson said the device can lower costs and produce fresher breads than are available in most American supermarkets.

"Consumers want the freshest thing possible, but when they go into the store they don't know when that bread was baked," said Wilkinson, a member of the family-owned firm in Walla Walla, Washington. Wilkinson said the machine, which takes up as much room as a mid-sized car, has more automation technology than bread factories, and can produce at a far lower cost. He noted that using in-store robotic machines could eliminate the need for

truck delivery, which accounts for as much as 45 percent of the cost of most bread. This means profits could get a rise. The company is in talks with major supermarket chains and also plans to deliver the robots to the US military for making buns on carrier fleets, Wilkinson said.

The bread robot—which was at a startup showcase Sunday and will be on the show floor from today—joins a line of devices aimed at disrupting the food industry, including pizza-making robots and robotic baristas. The current generation of BreadBot is designed for standard kinds of loaves but Wilkinson said the robots can be adapted for customized breads, even French baguettes. "At some point you will be able to order a special loaf on your phone—you can add sunflower seeds, use less salt or whatever—and pick it up in an hour," he said. —AFP

“ Consumers want the freshest thing possible ”



LAS VEGAS: An attendee plays with pinball machine by Stern Pinball.

Japan billionaire says 'free cash' tweet most shared of all time

TOKYO: Billionaire Japanese tycoon and future space tourist Yusaku Maezawa said yesterday his tweet promising a cash giveaway of nearly \$10,000 was the most retweeted ever. The 43-year-old Maezawa posted a tweet on Saturday promising one million yen (\$9,250) in cash each to 100 randomly selected followers who had retweeted it by Monday. The tweet—now retweeted more than 4.3 million times—is the most shared in history, accord-

ing to the entrepreneur. "Hit the new world record. Surpassed Twitter's world record number of retweets (it was 3.55 million RTs before) and more people are still retweeting," wrote the high-profile Maezawa. The previous record-holder was an American teenager in 2017 trying to win a year's supply of chicken nuggets from fast food chain Wendy's, according to media. In October, Maezawa said he paid an undisclosed sum for a ticket on fellow tycoon Elon Musk's SpaceX rocket around the moon as early as 2023.

Maezawa will hitch a ride aboard Musk's Big Falcon Rocket, which SpaceX has acknowledged may not be ready for human flight for at least five years. Known as a passionate art collector, he also plans to take around half a dozen artists with him on the trip. Maezawa is chief executive of Japan's largest online fashion store and is the 18th richest person in Japan, with an estimated fortune of \$2 billion, according to business magazine Forbes. — AFP

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What's On

IIK EDU EXPO 2019 to be held at Crowne Plaza



Indian Education Exhibition "IIK EDU EXPO 2019" in Kuwait will be held on January 11 and 12, 2019 at Crowne Plaza, Al Murjan Hall, Farwaniya, Kuwait from 10 AM to 8 PM. The expo will be inaugurated by DCM, Indian Embassy. IIK EDU EXPO is the only approved Indian Edu expo in Kuwait by the Ministry of Higher Education. Admission is free to the expo on both days.

The expo will give a good opportunity to the parents and students seeking admissions for higher educations in India. Reputed business schools, medical and engineering colleges, Universities in India will be participating in the expo to showcase the latest educational opportuni-

ties available in India.

This pioneering endeavor from IndiansinKuwait.com will be a one-stop destination that caters to the needs of young expats in Kuwait. This will give students an opportunity to meet face-to-face with representatives from Indian universities and institutions directly and ask them their burning questions, get advice on their applications and more.

Career consultants from reputed universities will give free counseling to the students at the venue. The platinum exhibitor of the exhibition is Manipal University. The gold exhibitors are SRM University, Amity University-Dubai, Hindustan Institute of Technology & Science,

NITTE Education Trust, Vellore Institute of Technology - VIT and American University of Kuwait - AUK.

Other exhibitors are Algonquin College - Kuwait, Middlesex University Dubai, Ajeenkya Dy Patil University, S P Jain School of Global Management, BMS College of Engineering, RAK Medical & Health Sciences University, British Council, Manipal University- Dubai, MAAS Global Co. WLL, Career Links Academy for NEET Coaching, EduGermany and many more Universities. In a unique opportunity, IIK offers the visitors to the expo a chance to win a branded watch by pre-registering for the expo.

TV series lovers are in for a real treat this January only on OSN

From the highly anticipated new seasons of The Blacklist, Suits, True Detective, Deadly Class, Strike Back, Brooklyn Nine and more, OSN promises to light up your entertainment with irresistible, fresh and exclusive programming this January. OSN's new year line-up offers more than 35 new and returning series and this is just the start! OSN customers can also watch and catch up on their favorites anytime, anywhere and on any device with OSN Play. Here's a list of our top 7 - the full grid of all the shows as well as exclusive movie premieres, top-kids, factual, lifestyle and entertainment content for January is enclosed.

Brand New Series: Deadly Class, season 1

From the directors of Avengers: Infinity War, a brand new coming-of-age drama set against the backdrop of late 1980s counterculture, follows a disillusioned teen recruited into a storied high school for assassins. Premieres on January 28, 2019 at 9 pm (KSA), exclusively on OSN first HD Home of HBO.

Les Miserables

A brand new six-part adaptation of Victor Hugo's French historical novel, Les Misérables, starring Dominic West, David Oyelowo, Lily Collins and Olivia Colman. An epic story of love, injustice, redemption and hope, set in 1815, when France had been defeated at the battle of Waterloo. Premieres on January 13, 2019 at 8 pm (KSA) on BBC first available only on OSN.

Returning Favourites: The Blacklist, season 6

FBI profiler, Elizabeth Keen, has her entire life uprooted when a mysterious criminal, Raymond Reddington, who has eluded capture for decades, turns himself in and insists on speaking only to her. Premieres on January 5, 2019 at 8 pm (KSA), exclusively on OSN Series First HD.

Suits, season 8

Big-time Manhattan corporate lawyer Harvey Specter and his team, Donna Paulsen, Louis Litt, and Alex Williams are launched into a play for power when a new partner joins the firm. Premieres on January 7, 2019 at 6 pm (KSA), exclusively on OSN Series First HD.

True Detective, season 3

Seasonal anthology series starring Academy Award winner Mahershala Ali (Moonlight and House of Cards) in which police investigations unearth the personal and professional secrets of those involved, both within and outside the law. Premieres on January 14, 2019 at 10 pm (KSA), exclusively on OSN First HD Home of HBO.

Brooklyn Nine, season 6

Jake Peralta, an immature, but talented NYPD detective in



Brooklyn's 99th Precinct, comes in to immediate conflict with his new commanding officer, the serious and stern Captain Ray Holt. The season five finale centred on Jake and Amy's wedding which eventually happened after a bomb threat which derailed the original ceremony. Chelsea Peretti won't be making a full return as Gina. Premieres on January 20, 2019 at 9 pm (KSA), exclusively on OSN Series Comedy HD.

Luther, season 5

Multi-award-winning crime series Luther returns with a new four-part series written by Neil Cross and starring Idris Elba. DCI John Luther and new recruit DS Catherine Halliday are faced with a series of monstrous killings, and many unexpected turns. Premieres on January 1, 2019 at 12 pm (KSA) on BBC First available only on OSN.



The raffle draw winner of 'Koyilandy Fest 2018' in association with Malabar Gold and Diamonds, Athul receives an eight gram gold coin from Deputy Country Head Shahil in the presence of officials from Malabar Gold and Koyilandykootam Kuwait chapter.

Recipe

Chicken Garden Medley



Ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/4 cup butter, divided
- 1 small yellow squash, halved lengthwise and sliced
- 1 small zucchini, halved lengthwise and sliced
- 1/2 cup julienned sweet red pepper
- 1/2 cup julienned green pepper
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced onion
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper
- 3/4 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup half-and-half cream
- 8 ounces angel hair pasta, cooked and drained
- 2 tablespoons shredded Parmesan cheese

Directions:

In a large skillet, saute chicken and garlic in 2 tablespoons butter for 10-12 minutes or until chicken juices run clear. Add vegetables. Cook until crisp-tender; remove from skillet and set aside. In the same skillet, melt remaining butter. Add flour, salt and pepper; stir to form a smooth paste. Gradually add broth. Bring to a boil; cook and stir for two minutes or until thickened. Stir in cream and heat through. Add chicken and vegetables; stir until well mixed. Place pasta in a greased baking dish. Pour chicken mixture over top. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Cover and bake at 350° for 15 minutes; uncover and bake five minutes longer.

Otto Kurzendorfer takes the helm at The Regency Kuwait



The Abdul Razzaq Al Sane & Sons Group of Companies announced the appointment of Otto Kurzendorfer as General Manager for its flagship hotel, The Regency Kuwait in Salmiya district. Reopened in 2009 after a complete four years rebuild, this 1981 opened Kuwait landmark beachfront Resort and Convention Hotel offers a majestic lobby of eclectic taste and composition, 203 keys including 50 suites of ultimate luxury and a variety of dining and recreational choices, including a state of the art Ladies Lounge with two climate-controlled pools and separate indoor and outdoor dining.

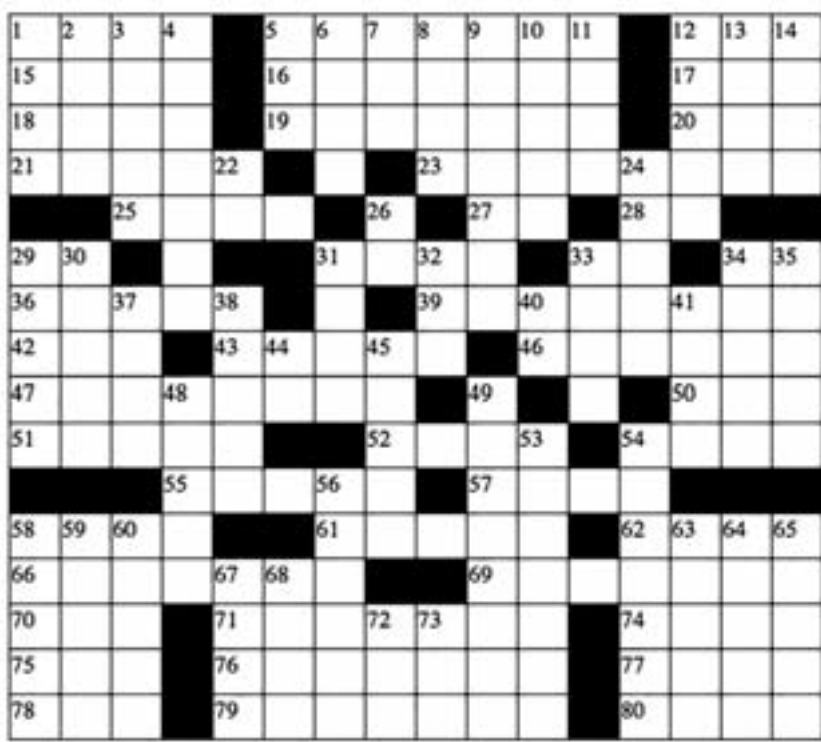
Kurzendorfer joins The Regency Kuwait with a well-established career in hospitality management and operation, spanning three decades and three continents. From humble beginnings in the kitchen, working in prestigious Leading Hotel of the World and Relais & Chateaux trophy hotels such as the Savoy in London and the Munich Mandarin Oriental, building the foundations of his career before attending a German higher hotel school in Dortmund.

In the following 22 years, Otto worked with global hotel giants, as Kempinski, IHG and Starwood, which included spending 10 years in Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Syria and Qatar before taking his first General Manager role in 2007 in Shanghai. After six years in China he returned to Dubai for another four years with JA Resorts & Hotels as General Manager of their flagship resort complex which included JA Palm Tree Court and JA Jebel Ali Beach Hotel.

His recent appointment in Kuwait is described by Kurzendorfer as "a lifelong dream to lead a team in a hotel offering ultimate luxury, European flair in an Arabesque setting. The Regency Kuwait is undoubtedly the crown jewel of Kuwaiti hospitality." This belief is supported by the hotel winning the prestigious World Travel Award competition as the 'Best Luxury Hotel in Kuwait' six years in a row. "This proves the continuous commitment of the Al Sane Group and the hotel team to achieve and maintain the highest level of guest satisfaction - creating remarkable hospitality born from Kuwaiti tradition," stated Kurzendorfer.

Stars

CROSSWORD 2104



ACROSS

1. Speaking a Slavic language.
 5. A port town on the Atlantic coast of Portugal southeast of Lisbon.
 12. (computer science) The smallest discrete component of an image or picture on a CRT screen (usually a colored dot).
 15. A Loloish language.
 16. Spread or diffuse through.
 17. A rapid bustling commotion.
 18. Prevent from being included or considered or accepted.
 19. Shrubby or herbaceous low-growing evergreen perennials.
 20. A doctor's degree in dental surgery.
 21. A civil or military authority in Turkey or Egypt.
 23. Bubble shells.
 25. Earn on some commercial or business transaction.
 27. A bivalent and trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
 28. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
 29. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
 36. Take away the weapons from.
 39. Someone who tries to bring peace.
 42. (usually followed by "of") Released from something onerous (especially an obligation or duty).
 43. Similar to the giraffe but smaller with much shorter neck and stripe on the legs.
 46. West Indian tree having racemes of fragrant white flowers and yielding a durable timber and resinous juice.
 47. Plant cultivated for its enlarged fleshy turnip-shaped edible stem.
 50. A flexible container with a single opening.
 51. Give qualities or abilities to.
 52. Elegant and stylish.
 55. Based on or being a test of reading skill using the cloze procedure.
 57. A member of an Algonquian people living in central Canada.
 58. The capital of Western Samoa.
 61. Having or covered with hair.
 62. An informal term for a father.
 66. French botanist who categorized plants into families and developed a system of plant classification (1748-1836).
 69. Someone who performs a service or does a favor.
 70. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
 71. A bitter yellow powder used to treat skin diseases.
 74. A stick that people can lean on to help them walk.
 75. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
 76. (British) A minicar used as a taxicab.
 77. A primeval personification of air and breath.
 78. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
 79. A solicitation for money or food (especially in the street by an apparently penniless person).
 80. A small cake leavened with yeast.
- DOWN**
1. A mercantile establishment for the retail sale of goods or services.
 2. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
 3. Native to Egypt but cultivated widely for its aromatic seeds and the oil from them used medicinally and as a flavoring in cookery.
 4. (Norse mythology) One of the Aesir.
 5. A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
 6. Suggestive of the supernatural.
 7. The universal time coordinated time when a transmission is sent from Earth to a spacecraft or other celestial body.
 8. The part of the eye that contains the iris and ciliary body and choroid.
 9. An employee who mixes and serves alcoholic drinks at a bar.
 10. A farewell remark.
 11. British artist and writer of nonsense verse (1812-1888).
 12. A genus of Ploceidae.
 13. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
 14. Fail to keep or to maintain.
 22. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
 24. Conforming to an ultimate standard of perfection or excellence.
 26. A heavy ductile magnetic metallic element.
 30. A negatively charged atom.
 31. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
 32. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
 33. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
 34. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
 35. An ancient city in northern Portugal.
 37. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
 38. Any of various edible mushrooms of the genus *Morchella* having a brownish sponglike cap.
 40. A small digital computer based on a microprocessor and designed to be used by one person at a time.
 41. A island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
 44. Unknown god.
 45. A genus of temperate and arctic evergreen trees (see spruce).
 48. United States screenwriter and filmmaker (born in 1944).
 49. The absolute unit of pressure equal to one dyne per square centimeter.
 53. A person who lacks confidence, is irresolute and wishy-washy.
 54. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
 56. A branch of the Tai languages.
 59. The act of clearing yourself (or another) from some stigma or charge.
 60. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
 63. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
 64. The brightest star in Cygnus.
 65. A particular environment or walk of life.
 67. A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
 68. A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
 72. Gear (including necessary machinery) for a particular enterprise.
 73. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A seriousness comes over you today. This is a great time to think and study. Enroll in an online course, or sign up for classes to further your education. Your frame of mind now is perfect for it. This is a great time to reorganize for you. Getting things in order will come naturally and with ease. Connect with old acquaintances. Reach out and connect with someone you love. Clear thoughts and an open mind make for great times with those you love.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Plan for the worst but expect the best. Don't let yourself be caught off-guard. A pleasant surprise is much better than experiencing a let down. Buckle down, focus and apply yourself and you will reap great reward. Anything less will likely lead to a setback and frustration. Keep your eye on the prize. Keep your attitude positive and reach for the stars.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may find this a great time to reflect and gain understanding of your own situation. How did you get to this point in your life? You know that everything happens for a reason and you have learned to have a positive outlook on adversity. You have learned lessons from obstacles that have been place in your path in the past. This a great time for you to gain a sense of understanding for those around you. A deeper connection is possible for your relationships. This is a good time for you to spend with a loved one. Gemini, you may find yourself at peace today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Harmony and beauty can be deeply satisfying for you now. You have no room nor tolerance for drama or chaos in your world. You have great support from your family and friends. Your focus seems to turn on spending time with those you love. You will find great satisfaction caring for others and knowing how they care for you. Plan a trip or a weekend getaway with your special someone. This is a great time for you to strengthen a bond with someone special.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may be feeling emotionally detached from your surroundings at this time. You tend to be viewed as detached by others when you are in all reality your mind is highly focused and your wheels are turning. You are fascinated by the unusual and are finding yourself lost in your thoughts. You may find it hard to focus in the workplace today. Today may not be the best day for important decisions in the work place as you have lost yourself in your thoughts. You are quick witted and are no stranger to finding yourself having to apologize for having offended someone. Bite your tongue, keep it to yourself today as this could result in a battle of words with someone close to you. Leo, settle in with a book tonight and give your mind a break from reality. This will provide a much-needed escape for you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

What a great day to spend some time with those you love. Enjoy some time sitting around with friends and family. You may find taking a walk down memory lane will bring much laughter into your life today. You live and learn. You have had your share of both. Good times are yours for the taking. You may find yourself extremely sensitive to the needs of others. You find yourself very understanding. Others seem drawn to you today. You are the friend others want to have.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You yearn for adventure. A visit to a far away land seems to draw you in. You long for an escape and to experience new places and new things. A sense of romance seems to come into your world. A romantic venture into the unknown. If traveling isn't in your budget you may want to grab a book and take that route of escape. Freedom is what you seek. Freedom from the everyday life you are living. Take the trip. Read the book. Let the ordinary escape and enjoy your travels.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You feel great about your accomplishments and position in life. Your advice and guidance may be sought from someone who looks to you as a mentor. You may feel as if your greatest growth comes when you are helping others. Today may be one of those days you are spinning your wheels getting physical tasks accomplished. Before frustration takes hold, stop and realize your shoulder to lean on and your listening ear and wonderful advice may be a much greater accomplishment than a completing a simple chore. Scorpio, be proud of who you are and what you mean to others.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Out with the old and in with the new. You are ready for a change. This is a time you are high energy and feel as if you have the world in the palm of your hand. Ambition is overflowing. You seek freedom from all habits and challenges that have been present in your past. You are ready to pave new roads and find your way to all that is new. This excites you. You are ready to take on the world.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday. The sun came up this morning, and you are still here. Try to focus on the present. Stressing ahead rarely changes outcomes. Many of the "what ifs" you fret about will never happen. Save your energy to deal with the realities. You are flexible, and you have the coping skills to handle whatever comes up. No problem is too large for you to conquer.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Today seems to bring an awareness of a sense of time into your world. You aren't getting any younger. You can honestly say with age has come wisdom. You are wise beyond your years and you have life experience to thank for that. You have successfully turned every road block into a life lesson and learned from your mistakes. This awareness will be a guiding force in decisions that need to be made today. If one thing is certain, making the same mistakes you have made in the past is not an option. You have lived and learned. Be grateful for the bumpy road you have traveled. It is leading you straight to the ultimate goal you crave. Live, laugh, and learn. Aquarius. You've got this!



Pisces (February 19-March 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.

Wordsearch Puzzle

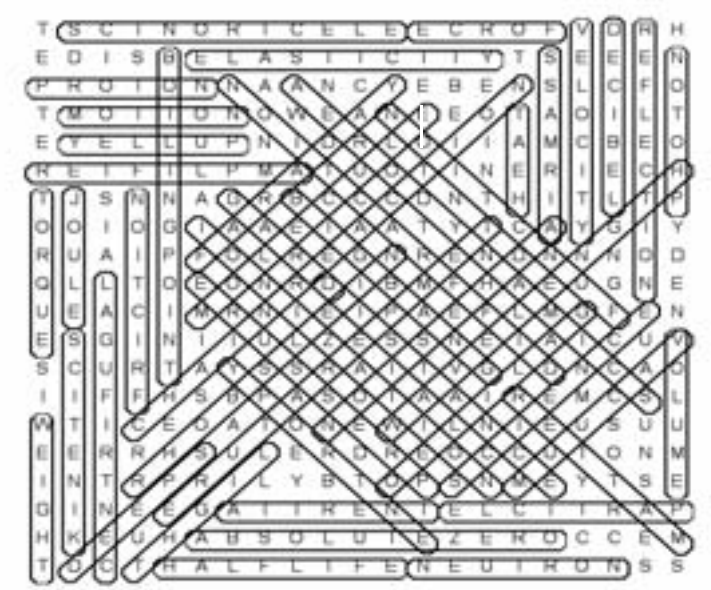
Pizza

Find and circle all of the pizza ingredients and toppings that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell four additional pizza toppings.



- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| ARTICHOKE HEARTS | CRUST | JALAPENOS | PROVOLONE |
| ASAGO | EGGPLANT | MONTEREY JACK | RICOTTA |
| ASPARAGUS | FETA | MOZZARELLA | SALAMI |
| BACON | GARLIC | MUSHROOMS | SAUSAGE |
| BANANA PEPPERS | GOAT CHEESE | OLIVE OIL | SHRIMP |
| BASIL | GOUDA | ONIONS | SPINACH |
| BELL PEPPERS | GREEN OLIVES | OYSTERS | TOMATO SAUCE |
| BLACK OLIVES | GROUND BEEF | PARMESAN | TOMATOES |
| BROCCOLI | HAM | PEPPERONI | ZUCCHINI |

Physics 2



- | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| ABSOLUTE ZERO | DRAG | IONIZATION | PROTON |
| ADHESION | ELASTICITY | KINETICS | REFLECTION |
| AERODYNAMICS | ELECTRONICS | LIGHT | SCIENCE |
| AIR MASS | ENTROPY | MATTER | SPEED |
| AMPLIFIER | FARADAY | MOLECULE | TEMPERATURE |
| BIG BANG | FORCE | MOTION | TORQUE |
| BOILING POINT | FRICTION | NEUTRON | VACUUM |
| CENTRIFUGAL | FUNCTION | NIELS BOHR | VELOCITY |
| CHAIN REACTION | GALILEO | PARTICLE | VOLUME |
| DECIBEL | HALF LIFE | PHOTON | WAVELENGTH |
| DIFFRACTION | HEAT | PRESSURE | WEIGHT |
| DISTANCE | INERTIA | | |

The hidden message is: THE DISTANCE BETWEEN INSANITY AND GENIUS IS MEASURED ONLY BY SUCCESS

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

TUESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2019



Best Actor in a Motion Picture - Drama for 'Bohemian Rhapsody' winner Rami Malek poses with Graham King (second right), Brian May (third left) and Mike Myers (right) in the press room during the 76th annual Golden Globe Awards on January 6, 2019, at the Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

Golden Globes: What they said

The Golden Globes, the first entertainment awards gala of 2019, was full of heartfelt speeches, laughs and a few tears on Sunday at the Beverly Hilton. Here are a few key quotes from the winners, presenters and organizers of the event:

Time's up

"In the next two years... I'm making a vow—and it's going to be tough—to make sure that everything that I produce is 50 percent women." Regina King, standing up for gender equality in Hollywood as she accepted the Globe for best supporting actress in a film for "If Beale Street Could Talk"

Is this just fantasy?

"Thank you to Freddie Mercury for giving me the joy of a lifetime. I love you, you beautiful man. This is for and because of you, gorgeous." Rami Malek, who plays the Queen frontman in "Bohemian Rhapsody," accepting the Globe for best actor in a drama film

Open your eyes

"We are women and nurturers, we have our children, and our husbands, if we are lucky enough, our partners.



whoever. But we have to find personal fulfillment. We have to follow our dreams. And we have to say I have to do that. And I should be allowed to do that." a tearful Glenn Close, accepting her award for best actress in a drama film for "The Wife," about a writer who spends her entire life in the shadow of her author husband

Devil worship

"Thank you to Satan for giving me inspiration to play this role." Christian Bale, who portrayed former US vice president Dick Cheney in the offbeat biopic "Vice"

Building bridges, not walls

"Cinema at its best builds bridges to other cultures. (...) We need to understand how much we have in common." Mexican filmmaker Alfonso Cuarón, whose latest work "Roma," an ode to his childhood in 1970s Mexico City, won two Globes for best foreign language film and best director

Change

"I wanted to be here to look out into this audience and witness this moment of change. And I'm not fooling myself. I'm not fooling myself. Next year could be different. It probably will be. But right now, this moment is real." Globes co-host Sandra Oh, talking in her opening speech about why she accepted to emcee the event with comedian Andy Samberg

Beauty of diversity

"They are not just here tonight because they resonated with audiences Hollywood often ignores. They are here because they told stories that resonated with everyone. And that is truly a beautiful thing." Samberg, also striking a serious note after a light-hearted opening

Telling it like it is

"You demanded everything of me except sex, which is exactly how it should be in our industry." Actress Patricia Clarkson, a winner for best supporting actress in a TV role for HBO's "Sharp Objects," addressing her director Jean-Marc Vallée. — AFP

First-ever Golden Globe television special achievement award, named after her, recipient actress Carol Burnett poses with the trophy during the 76th annual Golden Globe Awards on January 6, 2019, at the Beverly Hilton hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

The art of shedding light on gifts with possible Nazi ties

When Georges F. Keller began donating paintings by masters like Henri Matisse and Salvador Dalí to the Kunstmuseum in Bern his reputation was not in doubt. The Swiss-Brazilian national had been a respected art dealer who gifted 116 works to the museum from the 1950s until his death in 1981. But last year, the Kunstmuseum's provenance researcher came across an archival document linking Keller to Etienne Bignou, a Frenchman now considered a "red-flag" dealer because he traded art with Germans in Nazi-occupied Paris. For the Bern museum, the potential fallout of gifts with possible Nazi ties was not new.

The museum was the sole heir of hundreds of major pieces left behind by Cornelius Gurlitt, who died in 2014 and whose father, Hildebrand, was tasked by the Nazis with selling art stolen from Jews or confiscated as "degenerate" works. The case captured huge global attention and the arduous process of trying to restore the Gurlitt treasures to their rightful owners is ongoing. But there are signs that the Gurlitt ordeal, with the heavy legal and historical responsibility accompanying the artworks, has changed attitudes across Switzerland about an institution's duty concerning suspect art.

"I clearly see a before and after the Gurlitt case," Kunstmuseum director Nina Zimmer told AFP. "The climate has changed, the tone has changed, the questions have changed and I think we all agree that it is part of the museum's task to look at where the collections come from and to deliver answers," she said.

Who was Georges F Keller?

Keller and Bignou worked together in Paris at the Galerie Georges Petit, which specialised in Impressionist works, until it closed in 1933, according to archives published by the Frick Art Reference Library. Bignou then set up his own eponymous gallery in the French capital with Keller, who also had French nationality, as his

partner. Keller later became the director of the New York branch of the Bignou gallery, the archives show.

Amelie Ebbinghaus, a provenance researcher at the firm Art Loss Register, said that documents from both the French state and the Allied powers indicate that Bignou traded with German buyers in Paris and was identified at the time as a "collaborator." "That obviously doesn't mean that the works came from problematic sources, but it can't be ruled out," she said. It is not clear what Bignou's potentially dubious connections mean for the works Keller gave to the Kunstmuseum, including Matisse's "The Blue Blouse" (1936), which depicts a young woman in bold, primary colours.

Zimmer told AFP that she had her own questions about Keller before the Bignou connection was established, since none of his donations to various Swiss museums had come with documentation. "I was always curious," she said. "We have almost zero knowledge of where these works came from before he gave them to us." But once the Keller-Bignou link was confirmed, it was "immediately clear that we need to know more about these works," she said.

Changing attitudes

The Bern museum has applied for federal funding to conduct a full audit of Keller's legacy. That approach—and new Swiss government grants for provenance research—point to changing practices in a country with a mixed record on Nazi-looted art. "Switzerland had the position that it was a neutral, free country and that any trade that happened in Switzerland in the period of 1933 to 1945 was not affected by the Nazis," Ebbinghaus said. But that view was not necessarily shared by other countries, who pointed to artworks sold in Switzerland at cut-rate prices by Jews fleeing the Nazis, she said.

In the late 1990s, Switzerland and others came under pressure to probe their World War

II-era history, not only in looted art but also bank accounts and gold deposits. A 1998 landmark international agreement on returning art stolen by the Nazis known as the Washington Declaration was drawn up. The question of what constitutes looted art, as well as research suggesting that possibly thousands of works held in Switzerland were sold by Jews under threat, continue to provoke debate. However, Swiss museums and auction houses are increasingly showing caution in handling problematic pieces, Ebbinghaus told AFP.

Hitting a brick wall

Establishing ownership of a looted piece, let alone identifying a rightful heir, is notoriously tricky. This has been highlighted in prominent cases such as the battle between an American descendant of Jewish Holocaust victims and Austria's Belvedere Museum over masterpieces by Gustav Klimt which featured in the 2015 film "Woman in Gold" starring Helen Mirren. Zimmer said the challenges for Switzerland were a lack of qualified provenance researchers and limited funding.

But she identified private archives as a roadblock that threatens all provenance investigations. "Sometimes you make great progress and then you find out that the exact next document you need is in a family archive and you need to convince them to open it for you," she said. And that can be quite a tall order, she added. She stressed that the Bern museum would continue to push for more provenance research by building ties with universities and creating programmes to cultivate a new generation of specialists. "We need to dive deeper in there, and we will," she said. — AFP



Kunstmuseum Bern director Nina Zimmer poses next to a painting by Henri Matisse entitled 'The Blue Blouse' in Bern. — AFP photos



A painting by Edgar Degas entitled: 'Before the race' at the Kunstmuseum Bern in Bern.

Lifestyle | Awards



Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama for 'Bohemian Rhapsody' winner Rami Malek (center) with Brian May and Roger Taylor of Queen pose in the press room during the 76th Annual Golden Globe Awards. — AFP photos



Best Actor in a Motion Picture Drama for 'Bohemian Rhapsody' winner Rami Malek.



Viggo Mortensen (left), Best Director and Best Screenplay - Motion Picture for "Green Book" nominee Peter Farrelly, Linda Cardellini and Best Actor in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture for "The Green Book" nominee Mahershala Ali pose with the trophy.

'BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY' ROCKS GOLDEN GLOBES WITH SURPRISE CODA



Best Actor in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture for 'The Green Book' winner Mahershala Ali.



Best Director - Motion Picture and Best Motion Picture - Foreign Language for "Roma" winner Alfonso Cuarón.



Winner for Best Original Song - Motion Picture for "Shallow - A Star is Born" Lady Gaga.



Best Actress in a Motion Picture Drama for 'The Wife' winner Glenn Close.



Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series - Drama for "Bodyguard" winner Richard Madden.

"Bohemian Rhapsody" pulled a major upset at the close of the Golden Globes on Sunday, taking home the final two top prizes to put itself into the Oscars conversation along with "Green Book" and "Roma." On a night of wins for movies representing minorities, two awards favorites about white people-Dick Cheney biopic "Vice" and musical romance "A Star is Born"-all but struck out, with each picking up just one trophy in the run-up to the all-important Oscars on February 24. "Bohemian Rhapsody"-which charts the rise of British rock group Queen-picked up best actor for Rami Malek, who plays legendary frontman Freddie Mercury. It also bagged the biggest movie award of the night-best drama.

"I am beyond moved. My heart is pounding out of my chest right now," said Malek, whose list of people to thank included the Queen singer, who died in 1991. "Thank you to Freddie Mercury for giving me the joy of a lifetime. I love you, you beautiful man. This is for and because of you, gorgeous." The two trophies were the final prizes in a ceremony that had been expected to be a consecration for "A Star is Born"-starring Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper in the age-old Hollywood fable of an ailing performer and his muse-which went into the night with five nods.

"Star" had to content itself with a statuette for best song, which went to Gaga and writing partner Mark Ronson, while Christian Bale-who plays Cheney-picked up the solo gong for "Vice." Civil rights dramedy "Green Book" was the numerical winner-if not the prestige player-picking up awards for best comedy movie, best supporting actor Mahershala Ali and best screenplay.

The boozy gala at the Beverly Hilton also recognized Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma," a cinematic ode to his childhood in 1970s Mexico City, with best director and foreign film honors, while seven movies bagged one statuette each. "Cinema at its best builds bridges to other cultures," Cuarón told the audience. "We need to understand how much we have in common."

Less edgy

Under an azure southern California sky, Tinseltown's A-listers worked the red carpet with last year's gender politics still very much in mind. Many wore "Time's Up" bracelets in a nod to the movement for sexual equality in the workplace that grabbed the headlines 12 months ago as the industry faced a reckoning about rampant harassment and abuse. Hosting the Globes were comedian Andy Samberg and actress Sandra Oh, who made history as the first Asian woman to have presented a major awards show while also taking home her second Globe for "Killing Eve."

As the only awards show where alcohol is served, the evening is usually more colorful than showbiz's other big nights.

But the presenters set the tone for a less edgy affair than in previous years with a relatively tame opening that gave more time to complimenting the nominees than assailing them with "roast"-style jokes. Samberg paid tribute to the diversity among the slate of films up for

awards, singling out "If Beale Street Could Talk," whose star Regina King took home best supporting actress honors, as well as "Black Panther" and "Crazy Rich Asians," which went home empty-handed.

"And they are not just here tonight because they resonated with audiences Hollywood often ignores," he said. "They are here because they told stories that resonated with everyone. And that is truly a beautiful thing."

King vowed that, for the next two years, she would only produce projects that employ 50 percent women, exclaiming: "Time's Up times two!" "And I just challenge anyone out there anyone out there who is in a position of power, not just in our industry, in all industries-I challenge you to challenge yourselves and stand with us in solidarity and do the same," she said.



Best Actor in a Motion Picture - Musical or Comedy for "Vice" winner Christian Bale with his wife Sibi Blazic.

Bellwether of momentum

This year, the Globes come at the start of voting for Oscar nominations, and while they are not always a clear predictor of Academy Award success, they are a bellwether of momentum. In the acting categories, Glenn Close ("The Wife") bested the favorite Lady Gaga on the drama side. Olivia Colman, who plays Queen Anne in offbeat royal romp "The Favorite," and Bale won as expected in the com-



Winners for Best Original Song - Motion Picture for "Shallow - A Star is Born" (from right to left) Mark Ronson, Lady Gaga, Andrew Wyatt and Anthony Rossomando pose with the trophy.

edy acting races. "Thank you to Satan for giving me inspiration for playing this role," deadpanned Bale. Bradley Cooper-who plays the aging rocker opposite Gaga's singer in "Star"-had been favorite for best actor in a drama but was edged out by Malek.

The television side of the Globes can feel a bit redundant coming so soon after the Emmys in September, with many of the same nominees

as the Television Academy field. Best drama series went to the acclaimed FX Cold War spy thriller "The Americans"-its first Golden Globe for its sixth and final season. But adding spice to the mix on Sunday are programs that aired too late for Emmys contention. Netflix comedy "The Kominsky Method" took home the best comedy series trophy and best actor honors for Michael Douglas. — AFP



Host and Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series Drama 'for Killing Eve' winner Sandra Oh.



Best Actress in a Motion Picture Musical or Comedy for 'The Favorite' winner Olivia Colman.



Best Motion Picture, Musical or Comedy, award for 'Green Book' winners (Third from left to right) Kwame Parker, Brian Currie, Viggo Mortensen, Linda Cardellini, Jim Burke, Mahershala Ali, Peter Farrelly, Octavia Spencer, Charles B. Wessler, and Nick Vallelonga pose in the press room.

Lifestyle | Awards



Best motion picture animated winner for "Spiderman into the Spider Verse" director Peter Ramsey (third right) with co-directors and producers pose with the trophy.



Cast and crew of 'The Americans' including Producer Justin Falvey, Brandon J. Dirden, Keidrich Sellati, Holly Taylor, Producer Joel Fields, producer Joe Weisberg pose in the press room with award for Best Television Series poses in the press room.



Regina King winner of the Best Actress in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture 'If Beale Street Could Talk' award arrives with Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for "A Very English Scandal" winner Ben Whishaw.



Outstanding Limited Series award for 'The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story' winner Ryan Murphy.



Winner for Best Performance by an Actor in a Television Series - Musical or Comedy' - The Kominsky Method, Michael Douglas.

List of key Golden Globe winners

Here are the winners in key categories at the 76th Golden Globe Awards, which were handed out Sunday in Beverly Hills. Queen biopic "Bohemian Rhapsody" pulled a major upset, taking home two top prizes—best drama film and best actor for Rami Malek, who played the band's frontman Freddie Mercury. Civil rights dramedy "Green Book" took home three prizes overall, and Mexican filmmaker Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma" won two Globes.

FILM
 Best film, drama: "Bohemian Rhapsody"
 Best film, musical or comedy: "Green Book"
 Best actor, drama: Rami Malek, "Bohemian Rhapsody"
 Best actress, drama: Glenn Close, "The Wife"
 Best actor, musical or comedy: Christian Bale, "Vice"
 Best actress, musical or comedy: Olivia Colman, "The Favorite"
 Best supporting actor: Mahershala Ali, "Green Book"
 Best supporting actress: Regina King, "If Beale Street Could Talk"
 Best director: Alfonso Cuarón, "Roma"
 Best foreign language film: "Roma" (Mexico)
 Best screenplay: "Green Book"—Nick Vallelonga, Brian Currie and Peter Farrelly
 Best original song: "Shallow" (from "A Star Is Born")—Lady Gaga, Mark Ronson, Anthony Rossomando, Andrew Wyatt
 Best animated feature: "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse"

TELEVISION
 Best drama series: "The Americans" (FX)
 Best drama actor: Richard Madden, "Bodyguard"
 Best drama actress: Sandra Oh, "Killing Eve"
 Best musical or comedy series: "The Kominsky Method" (Netflix)
 Best musical or comedy actor: Michael Douglas, "The Kominsky Method"
 Best musical or comedy actress: Rachel Brosnahan, "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"
 Best supporting actor (all categories): Ben Whishaw, "A Very English Scandal"
 Best limited series or TV movie: "The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story" (FX)
 Best limited series or TV movie actor: Darren Criss, "The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story"
 Best limited series or TV movie actress: Patricia Arquette, "Escape at Dannemora"

FILMS WITH MULTIPLE WINS
 "Green Book" — 3
 "Bohemian Rhapsody" — 2
 "Roma" - 2—AFP



Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for 'A Very English Scandal' winner Ben Whishaw.



Best Performance by an Actor in a Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for 'The Assassination of Gianni Versace' winner Darren Criss.



Outstanding Limited Series award for 'The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story' winners, (third from left to right) Cody Fern, Judith Light, Penelope Cruz, Edgar Ramirez, Darren Criss, Ricky Martin, Ryan Murphy, Alexis Martin Woodall, Jon Jon Briones, Finn Wittrock, cast and crew pose in the press room.

Stars sparkle on Golden Globes red carpet



Best Actress in a Motion Picture - Drama for "A Star Is Born" nominee Lady Gaga.

A year ago, the Golden Globes red carpet was a total blackout as Hollywood's A-listers drew attention to the problem of sexual harassment in entertainment and other industries. On Sunday, the message remained, but the sartorial choices were far more diverse. Here is a look at some trends from the Globes, the first showbiz awards gala of 2019:

Pops of color

Every color of the rainbow was on display at the Beverly Hilton, from the canary yellow on winner Rachel Brosnahan ("The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel") and nominee Claire Foy ("First Man") to the bold blue-green gown worn by presenter Allison Janney. Lady Gaga—a winner for best original song for her hit "Shallow" from "A Star Is Born"—stunned in an strapless periwinkle Valentino gown with full puff sleeves and a long train. She even had blue hair in a bun to match.

A giant diamond choker completed her look—seemingly a throwback to Judy Garland's style in the 1954 version of "Star." Melissa McCarthy, a nominee in the best drama actress category for "Can You Ever Forgive Me?" sparkled in deep purple with silver star accents, while winner Regina King ("If Beale Street Could Talk") glittered in a shimmering, strapless pink column gown. Nicole Kidman, always a red carpet darling, wore a long-sleeve, floor-length, form-fitting Michael Kors gown in deep burgundy. But the best bit was her disco ball of a handbag. US actress Blanca Blanco was wearing Christophe Guillarmé's fuchsia pink off the shoulders and slit gown in silk Mikado.



US actress Blanca Blanco in French designer's dress Christophe Guillarmé.

Lifestyle Awards



Claire Foy



Allison Janney



Melissa McCarthy



Regina King



Nicole Kidman



(From left) Isan Elba, actor Idris Elba and his fiancée model Sabrina Dhowre.

Men rock the rainbow too

The basic black tux was definitely out on the Globes carpet, with Tinseltown's stars sporting jackets in a rainbow of colors. British star Idris Elba slayed in an emerald green jacket, waistcoat and shoes, while nominee Darren Criss ("The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story") opted for a black and white floral pattern. "Star" director/actor Bradley Cooper went for a classic white dinner jacket, and nominated director Spike Lee rocked up in head-to-toe purple, including his beret. Winner Mahershala Ali ("Green Book") paired a blue paisley scarf with his tux.

Time's Up, year two

It's been a year since the Time's Up movement to combat sexual harassment in the workplace was launched. After last year's all-black statement, this year is all about the bracelets. White and black "Time's Up X 2" bracelets were seen on everyone from King to Elba. Others wore pins, or carried ribbons with the message attached to their handbags, like winner Olivia Colman ("The Favorite").

Old Hollywood

Globes host Sandra Oh, who won an award for her star turn in BBC America TV thriller "Killing Eve," swooped her hair into finger waves a la Veronica Lake and donned a white-hot Versace gown for the red carpet-oozing the glamour of old Hollywood.

Amy Adams—a double acting nominee for her work in biopic "Vice" as the wife of former vice president Dick Cheney and on dark HBO drama "Sharp Objects"—wowed in a simple turquoise, off-the-shoulder Calvin Klein gown, her red hair also side-swept into soft curls. — AFP



Regina King winner of the Best Actress in a Supporting Role in any Motion Picture 'If Beale Street Could Talk' award arrives with Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role in a Series, Limited Series or Motion Picture Made for Television for "A Very English Scandal" winner Ben Whishaw.



Olivia Colman



English actress Jodie Comer (right) and Host Sandra Oh



Irina Shayk and Bradley Cooper



Best Director - Motion Picture and Best Motion Picture - Foreign Language for "Roma" winner Alfonso Cuarón.



Darren Criss



US actress Judy Greer



TV host Tanika Ray



US actress Camilla Belle



US actress Kiki Layne



Actress Linda Cardellini



Actress Catherine Zeta-Jones



US actress Gina Rodriguez



US actress Isla Fisher and husband English actor Sacha Baron Cohen



Actress Dakota Fanning



Actress Jamie Lee Curtis

Classifieds

Tuesday, January 8, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas northerly wind to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h with a chance for scattered rain over northern areas.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 32 km/h.

| WEATHER WARNING | | | No Current Warnings | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| STATION | MAX. EXP. | MIN. REC. | SFC. CHART 07/01/2019 0000 UTC | | |
| KUWAIT CITY | 20 °C | 16 °C | | | |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 20 °C | 16 °C | | | |
| ABDALY | 19 °C | 12 °C | | | |
| BUBYAN | *** °C | *** °C | | | |
| JAHRA | 20 °C | 16 °C | | | |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 19 °C | 16 °C | | | |
| SALMIYAH | 18 °C | 16 °C | | | |
| AHMADI | 20 °C | 17 °C | | | |
| NUWAISIB | 20 °C | 16 °C | | | |
| WAFRA | 21 °C | 15 °C | | | |
| SALMY | 19 °C | 12 °C | | | |

| 4 DAYS FORECAST | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|-------------------------|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| DAY | DATE | WEATHER | Temperatures | | Wind Direction | Wind Speed |
| | | | MAX. | MIN. | | |
| Tuesday | 01/08 | Partly cloudy to cloudy | 19 °C | 09 °C | NW-VRB | 06 - 28 km/h |
| Wednesday | 01/09 | Partly cloudy to cloudy | 22 °C | 12 °C | VRB-NW | 08 - 35 km/h |
| Thursday | 01/10 | Partly cloudy to cloudy | 19 °C | 10 °C | NW | 15 - 45 km/h |
| Friday | 01/11 | Mostly Sunny | 18 °C | 10 °C | NW | 20 - 45 km/h |

| PRAYER TIMES | |
|--------------|-------|
| Fajr | 05:19 |
| Sunrise | 06:43 |
| Zuhr | 11:54 |
| Asr | 14:46 |
| Sunset | 17:05 |
| Isha | 18:27 |

| RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| MAX. Temp. | 25 °C |
| MIN. Temp. | 12 °C |
| MAX. RH | 95 % |
| MIN. RH | 30 % |
| MAX. Wind | S 53 km/h |
| TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR. | 0 mm |

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION



| Arrival Flights on Tuesday 8/1/2019 | | | | Departure Flights on Tuesday 8/1/2019 | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------|-------------|-------|---------------------------------------|------|------------|-------|
| Airlines | Fit | Route | Time | Airlines | Fit | Route | Time |
| JZR | 254 | Amman | 00:05 | JZR | 213 | Jeddah | 12:00 |
| JZR | 406 | Kochi | 00:10 | JZR | 405 | Kochi | 12:45 |
| JAI | 572 | Mumbai | 00:15 | MEA | 405 | Beirut | 12:55 |
| JZR | 734 | Cairo | 00:50 | QTR | 1075 | Doha | 13:00 |
| THY | 772 | Istanbul | 00:50 | SAW | 702 | Damascus | 13:30 |
| JZR | 722 | Alexandria | 00:55 | MSC | 412 | Asyut | 13:30 |
| PGT | 858 | Istanbul | 01:00 | JZR | 113 | Doha | 13:30 |
| KAC | 102 | London | 01:20 | KAC | 545 | Cairo | 13:30 |
| DLH | 625 | Dammam | 01:25 | JZR | 123 | Dubai | 13:40 |
| RJA | 642 | Amman | 01:35 | MSR | 611 | Cairo | 14:10 |
| UAE | 853 | Dubai | 01:45 | UAE | 872 | Dubai | 14:15 |
| THY | 764 | Istanbul | 01:50 | AXB | 394 | Kozhikode | 14:15 |
| IGO | 1757 | Kochi | 01:55 | QTR | 1079 | Doha | 15:00 |
| ETH | 620 | Addis Ababa | 02:15 | FDB | 060 | Dubai | 15:10 |
| KLM | 446 | Bahrain | 02:30 | GFA | 222 | Bahrain | 15:25 |
| GFA | 211 | Bahrain | 02:30 | KAC | 673 | Dubai | 15:40 |
| QTR | 1086 | Doha | 02:40 | SGO | 501 | Jeddah | 15:45 |
| OMA | 643 | Muscat | 02:55 | KAC | 775 | Riyadh | 15:50 |
| JZR | 1736 | Cairo | 03:00 | KAC | 754 | Dammam | 15:55 |
| RBG | 211 | Luxor | 03:05 | KNE | 530 | Jeddah | 16:00 |
| KKK | 1268 | Istanbul | 03:05 | KAC | 615 | Bahrain | 16:05 |
| ETD | 305 | Abu Dhabi | 03:05 | KAC | 563 | Amman | 16:10 |
| MSR | 612 | Cairo | 03:15 | KAC | 619 | Doha | 16:10 |
| KAC | 414 | Bangkok | 04:00 | ETD | 304 | Abu Dhabi | 16:20 |
| QTR | 1076 | Doha | 04:00 | FEG | 342 | Sohag | 16:25 |
| LMU | 5510 | Cairo | 04:00 | KAC | 283 | Dhaka | 16:30 |
| IGO | 1751 | Chennai | 04:10 | OMA | 646 | Muscat | 16:35 |
| KAC | 418 | Manila | 04:25 | KAC | 785 | Jeddah | 16:40 |
| KAC | 784 | Jeddah | 04:30 | ABY | 128 | Sharjah | 16:45 |
| DHX | 170 | Bahrain | 04:35 | JZR | 105 | Bahrain | 16:55 |
| FDB | 069 | Dubai | 05:00 | SYR | 342 | Damascus | 17:00 |
| KAC | 382 | Delhi | 05:05 | FDB | 052 | Dubai | 17:40 |
| JZR | 404 | Hyderabad | 05:10 | UAE | 858 | Dubai | 17:45 |
| KAC | 1544 | Cairo | 05:10 | QTR | 1073 | Doha | 17:50 |
| THY | 770 | Istanbul | 05:10 | KAC | 343 | Chennai | 18:00 |
| KAC | 284 | Dhaka | 05:15 | KAC | 331 | Trivandrum | 18:00 |
| JZR | 112 | Doha | 05:25 | JZR | 733 | Cairo | 18:10 |
| KAC | 346 | Ahmedabad | 05:30 | SVA | 511 | Riyadh | 18:15 |
| KAC | 332 | Trivandrum | 05:40 | JZR | 253 | Amman | 18:15 |
| JZR | 402 | Mumbai | 06:05 | GFA | 216 | Bahrain | 18:20 |
| KAC | 362 | Colombo | 06:10 | JZR | 127 | Dubai | 18:35 |
| KAC | 302 | Mumbai | 06:25 | JZR | 501 | Lahore | 18:40 |
| THY | 6376 | Istanbul | 06:30 | JZR | 403 | Hyderabad | 18:40 |
| KAC | 678 | Dubai | 06:55 | KAC | 381 | Delhi | 18:55 |
| BAW | 157 | London | 07:05 | FDB | 064 | Dubai | 19:20 |
| JZR | 708 | Luxor | 07:15 | JZR | 721 | Alexandria | 19:20 |
| KAC | 354 | Bengaluru | 07:35 | UAE | 876 | Dubai | 19:30 |
| KAC | 358 | Kochi | 07:35 | MSR | 2621 | Cairo | 19:30 |
| FEG | 241 | Alexandria | 07:40 | QTR | 1081 | Doha | 19:55 |
| FDB | 053 | Dubai | 07:50 | RJA | 641 | Amman | 20:00 |
| KAC | 384 | Delhi | 08:00 | RBG | 556 | Alexandria | 20:05 |
| JZR | 102 | Bahrain | 08:25 | ABY | 124 | Sharjah | 20:05 |
| UAE | 855 | Dubai | 08:35 | GFA | 218 | Bahrain | 20:15 |
| ETD | 301 | Abu Dhabi | 09:05 | JZR | 1735 | Cairo | 20:20 |
| ABY | 125 | Sharjah | 09:05 | NIA | 0162 | Cairo | 20:30 |
| QTR | 1070 | Doha | 09:30 | FDB | 058 | Dubai | 20:35 |
| IRA | 675 | Lar | 09:40 | KAC | 353 | Bengaluru | 20:55 |
| IGO | 1753 | Ahmedabad | 09:40 | KAC | 301 | Mumbai | 20:55 |
| FDB | 055 | Dubai | 09:40 | JZR | 401 | Mumbai | 20:55 |
| JZR | 410 | Delhi | 10:00 | KAC | 357 | Kochi | 21:00 |
| SVA | 512 | Riyadh | 10:00 | OMA | 648 | Muscat | 21:20 |
| SAW | 703 | Damascus | 10:30 | DLH | 624 | Dammam | 21:30 |
| IRC | 6507 | Shiraz | 10:30 | DHX | 171 | Bahrain | 21:50 |
| KAC | 624 | Doha | 10:40 | QTR | 1089 | Doha | 22:00 |
| GFA | 213 | Bahrain | 10:40 | ETD | 308 | Abu Dhabi | 22:10 |
| JZR | 122 | Dubai | 11:20 | KAC | 205 | Islamabad | 22:15 |
| QTR | 1074 | Doha | 11:35 | KAC | 1543 | Cairo | 22:15 |
| JZR | 216 | Jeddah | 11:45 | MEA | 403 | Beirut | 22:20 |
| MEA | 404 | Beirut | 11:55 | ALK | 230 | Colombo | 22:25 |
| KAC | 614 | Bahrain | 12:25 | GFA | 220 | Bahrain | 22:30 |
| MSC | 411 | Asyut | 12:30 | KAC | 383 | Delhi | 22:30 |
| SAW | 701 | Damascus | 12:30 | KLM | 445 | Bahrain | 22:50 |
| JZR | 714 | Sohag | 12:35 | KAC | 783 | Jeddah | 22:55 |
| JZR | 142 | Al Najaf | 12:50 | UAE | 860 | Dubai | 23:00 |
| KAC | 742 | Dammam | 12:50 | JAI | 573 | Mumbai | 23:00 |
| UAE | 871 | Dubai | 12:50 | KAC | 411 | Bangkok | 23:00 |
| MSR | 610 | Cairo | 13:10 | ETD | 310 | Abu Dhabi | 23:05 |
| AXB | 393 | Kozhikode | 13:15 | RBG | 214 | Sohag | 23:10 |
| | | | | KAC | 795 | Madinah | 23:15 |
| | | | | QTR | 1083 | Doha | 23:25 |

Nigerian military criticized for raiding newspaper over story

LAGOS: Nigeria's military was yesterday accused of attacking press freedom after troops raided a newspaper for publishing a front-page story about its handling of the Boko Haram insurgency. Computers were seized and two journalists in the northeast city of Maiduguri were detained following the Daily Trust story about military plans to recapture the town of Baga on the shores of Lake Chad. The army said it acted because the newspaper had compromised national security by publishing details of future operations against the militants.

Soldiers and operatives from the secret police and civil defense paramilitary raided the daily's offices in Maiduguri, the capital Abuja, and commercial hub, Lagos, on Sunday. Army spokesman Brigadier-General

Sani Usman said the report "divulged classified military information, thus undermining national security". He alleged it gave the Islamist extremists "early warning" and as a result "sabotaged the planned operations... putting the lives of troops in imminent and clear danger".

Usman, who has previously threatened the media with legal action for publishing unofficial information on the violence, said the action was conducted in good faith. Operatives had only wanted to "invite" those behind the report to discuss its implications, he added in a statement late on Sunday. Daily Trust editor Mannir Dan-Ali condemned the action as "unlawful" and said the stand-off at the newspaper's Abuja headquarters lasted five hours.

President Muhammadu Buhari ordered an end to the newspaper office siege, his spokesman said, which provoked strong condemnation on social media and comparisons to media repression under decades of military rule. Some commentators compared the action to harassment of the media and censorship during former army general Buhari's previous time as military head of state in the 1980s. In 2018 Nigeria ranked 119 in Reporters Without Borders' global press freedom index, a notch lower than war-torn Afghanistan.

The Africa Program Coordinator at the Committee to Protect Journalists, Angela Quintal, said the army's raid of the Daily Trust was "outrageous" and a "blatant violation" of media and citizens' rights. Amnesty International Nigeria said the authorities had an "oblig-

ation to protect freedom of the press... as provided by the constitution and international human rights laws".

The Daily Trust was one of four newspapers that were targeted under the previous administration of president Goodluck Jonathan in 2014 after publishing articles critical of the military. The newspaper last week reported that Boko Haram, which the government has repeatedly said is on the verge of defeat, had captured six locations in northern Borno state, including Baga. The claimed seizure came after months of attacks on military bases in the remote region blamed on or claimed by the Islamic State-backed faction of Boko Haram, ISWAP. More than 27,000 people have been killed in the violence since 2009 and more than 1.8 million remain homeless. — AFP

Gabon foils coup, kills...

Continued from Page 1

Security forces were deployed in the capital and remain there over the coming days in order to maintain order, a government spokesman said. The Republican Guard was stationed around the radio building, armored vehicles blocked access to the area and a helicopter circled overhead, an AFP correspondent saw. In a rundown district nearby, dozens of young people torched a car and set fire to tyres, while the security forces fired teargas to try to disperse them.

Elsewhere, much of the city appeared deserted, with businesses closed and local and foreign companies telling their workers to stay home. Internet access was also briefly cut on government instructions, said an employee of Canal+, one of the main internet providers. The dramatic developments came as Bongo is living at a private residence in the Moroccan capital Rabat after suffering a stroke. He made a televised speech on New Year's Eve but has not been in the country since October.

The rebel message was read on state radio by a person who identified himself as Lieutenant Ondo Obiang Kelly, describing himself as deputy commander of the Republican Guard and head of a previously unknown group, the Patriotic Youth Movement of the Gabonese Defence and Security Forces. He announced a "national restoration council" would be formed "to guarantee a democratic transition for the Gabonese people". The movement "calls on all young people from forces for the defence and security and Gabonese young people to join us," the officer said.

"We cannot abandon our homeland," the officer said.

"The eagerly-awaited day has arrived when the army has decided to put itself on the side of the people in order to save Gabon from chaos. If you are eating, stop; if you are having a drink, stop; if you are sleeping, wake up. Wake up your neighbors... rise up as one and take control of the street," he said, calling on the people to seize public buildings and airports.

The African Union and France strongly condemned the attempted coup and warned against any "unconstitutional" change of power in Gabon. The 59-year-old Bongo has not been back to Gabon since he fell ill in Saudi Arabia on Oct 24. In his absence, the Constitutional Court transferred part of the powers of the president to the prime minister and the vice president.

The statement read out yesterday attacked the arrangement as "illegitimate and illegal". On Dec 31, Bongo addressed the country for the first time since falling ill, saying in a recorded speech from Morocco that he had "been through a difficult period". His critics seized on signs of apparent ill-health, pointing to an address that was unusually short, his slurred speech and a right hand that seemed stiff and immobile. The speech was "shameful", the officer said in yesterday's address, describing Gabon as "country (which) has lost its dignity".

The Bongo family has governed the equatorial African nation for five decades. Bongo took over from his father Omar, who took office in 1967 and gained the reputation of a kleptocrat - one of the wealthiest men in the world, with a fortune derived from Gabon's oil wealth. He was also a pillar of "Francafrique" - a now much-contested strategy by which France bound itself to its former African colonies through cronyism, often tainted with corruption and rights abuses. Ali Bongo was elected head of state after his father's death in 2009. He was narrowly re-elected in 2016 following a presidential poll marred by deadly violence and allegations of fraud. — AFP

career nosedived following allegations of sexual misconduct by more than a dozen men in the United States and Britain. Forced out of public life, Spacey posted a video online in December in which he discussed allegations of sexual abuse in character as Frank Underwood, the scheming politician he played in "House of Cards" before the show dropped him.

"You wouldn't believe the worst without evidence, would you? You wouldn't rush to judgments without facts, would you? Did you? No, not you. You're smarter than that," Spacey said in the video. "Of course, some believed everything and have been just waiting with bated breath to hear me confess it all. They're just dying to have me declare that everything said is true and that I got what I deserved. Only you and I both know it's never that simple, not in politics and not in life."

In addition to the Nantucket case, two other investigations are underway in Los Angeles and London, where Spacey served as artistic director of the prestigious Old Vic theater from 2004 to 2015. Mexican actor Roberto Cavazos, who performed in several Old Vic productions, said it seemed that "it only took a male under 30 to make Mr Spacey feel free to touch us".

The first public allegation of abuse came from actor Anthony Rapp, who claimed that Spacey sexually assaulted him when Rapp was 14, in 1986. Spacey has not appeared on the screen or on stage since Rapp came forward. Director Ridley Scott even removed Spacey from his film "All the Money in the World" (2017) by shooting all scenes in which the actor appeared again with another star, Christopher Plummer. — AFP

tained the membership of Tabtabaei and Harbash even after they were sent to jail in a final verdict for storming the Assembly building during a protest. That Assembly vote was based on article 16. The Assembly may however decide to debate the issue in its session today, and MPs must decide whether the membership of the two MPs is still legal and holding.

There are two groups in the house - the first insists that the court ruling does not mean revoking the membership of the two MPs because the Assembly decision was taken before the court ruling. This group considers the ruling as an infringement on the powers of the Assembly and violates the constitution. The other group says that the court ruling must be implemented immediately by revoking the membership of the two lawmakers.

Also, the Assembly's legal and legislative committee again delayed a crucial vote on the constitutional status of a grilling filed in November against the prime minister. The committee was asked to review the grilling to decide if it violated the constitution as claimed by the government. MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri, who filed the grilling, has refused to attend the committee's meetings. The issue was supposed to be debated today.

MP Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday urged the Assembly to pass the early retirement law in its original form and not after the amendments that were pushed by the government. Adasani said that it was illogical that the Assembly has to accept changing a law that was passed in the previous term by 43 lawmakers out of 50.

Assam protests citizenship bill

GUWAHATI, India: Thousands in northeastern India protested yesterday against a proposal to grant citizenship to religious minorities in the region, except Muslims, with critics attacking the bill as prejudiced and a sop to Hindus before elections. Protesters burned copies of the legislation in angry marches across Assam state, where millions have settled in recent decades after fleeing neighboring Muslim-majority nations.

The controversial bill would grant citizenship to select groups - including Hindus, Christians and Sikhs, but not Muslims - who have moved from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan and lived in India for at least six years. The proposal has been hotly contested in Assam, a hilly state that has witnessed violence between settlers and indigenous groups, who say they have lost land and jobs to the

newer entrants. The legislation could be tabled in parliament as early as today, according to the Press Trust of India news agency.

Critics say the bill, which offers preferential treatment to certain groups seeking citizenship, is a transparent pitch to voters as Hindu-majority India prepares for the world's largest election. Assam, which is controlled by an alliance led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu-right Bharatiya Janata Party, is known for its lush tea estates and rhino sanctuaries. But for decades it has been plagued by violence between tribal and ethnic groups indigenous to the state and settlers from outside the region.

A small regional party in India quit Modi's ruling coalition yesterday. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP), based in Assam, has become the fourth ally to quit the ruling National Democratic Alliance in the past year, for a variety of reasons. "The home minister clearly told us they will try to get this bill passed tomorrow, so there's no question us staying with the BJP anymore," AGP President Atul Bora told reporters in New Delhi. — Agencies



GUWAHATI, India: Activists of the Assam Pradesh Congress committee shout slogans during a rally in protest yesterday against Citizenship Amendment Bill 2016, which will provide citizenship or stay rights to minorities from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan in India. — AFP

Privacy becomes a selling point...

Continued from Page 1

of Creative Strategies. "More companies are going to take kind of a cue from the marketing that Apple has been doing."

An estimated 74 million Americans have smart speakers, according to the research firm eMarketer, with Amazon and Google controlling the lion's share of the market. One of the fears of customers is that these devices are always listening, potentially putting privacy at risk. One device being launched at CES is called Mute from a startup called Smarte, creating a

Saudi woman 'under the care'...

Continued from Page 1

to say she had fled her family. "Thailand is a land of smiles. We will not send anyone to die," he said. "We will take care of her as best as we can." Qunun had earlier posted a video on Twitter of her barricading her hotel room door with furniture in a bid to stop her deportation from Thailand.

She said Saudi and Kuwaiti officials had taken her passport from her when she landed - a claim backed by Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. Abdullilah Al-Shouaibi, charge d'affaires at the Saudi embassy in Bangkok, told Saudi-owned TV channel Khalijia that the woman's father - a senior regional government official - had contacted the diplomatic mission for "help" bringing her back. But he denied that her passport had been seized and that embassy officials were present inside the airport. A Twitter statement from the Saudi embassy in Bangkok said Qunun was stopped by Thai authorities for "violating the law".

The ultraconservative Saudi kingdom has long been criticized for imposing some of the world's toughest restrictions on women. That includes a guardianship system that allows men to exercise arbitrary authority to make decisions on behalf of their female relatives. In addition to facing punishment for "moral" crimes, women can also become the target of "honor killings" at the hands of their families, activists say.

If sent back, Qunun told AFP she would likely be imprisoned and was "sure 100 percent" her family would kill her. "My family is strict and locked me in a room for six months just for cutting my hair," she said. She told Reuters via text and audio messages she had fled Kuwait during a family visit there, and had planned to travel to

layer of protection to stop the devices from picking up conversations not intended for queries.

French startup Snips is offering its own digital assistant which can be installed on a device without an Internet connection. "Customers are turning to us because they don't want to depend on Big Tech," said Snips founder Rand Hindi. Hindi said the argument from tech firms that they need user data to make things work is false. "The only reason they need your data is to target you (with ads) to the maximum," he said.

Analyst Bob O'Donnell of Technalysis Researchers said more companies are starting to wake up to issues surrounding privacy and data protection in light of the revelations on Facebook and others over the past year. "We've all started to become painfully aware of how big (and far-reaching) the problem of data privacy is," O'Donnell said. — AFP

Australia to seek asylum. She said she was held after leaving her plane in Bangkok and told she would be sent back to Kuwait. "They will kill me," Qunun told Reuters. "My life is in danger. My family threatens to kill me for the most trivial things."

Qunun said her family was powerful in Saudi society but she did not identify them. Asked why she was seeking refuge in Australia, she told Reuters: "Physical, emotional and verbal abuse and being imprisoned inside the house for months. They threaten to kill me and prevent me from continuing my education. They won't let me drive or travel. I am oppressed. I love life and work and I am very ambitious but my family is preventing me from living."

Qunun said she had obtained an Australian visa and booked a flight. She said she had planned to spend a few days in Thailand so she would not spark suspicion when she left Kuwait. Surachate, however, said that Qunun did not have a visa for Australia. The Australian Embassy said it had no immediate comment.

HRW's Robertson said Qunun "faces grave harm if she is forced back to Saudi Arabia". "Given Saudi Arabia's long track record of looking the other way in so-called honor violence incidents, her worry that she could be killed if returned cannot be ignored," he said. "She has clearly stated that she has renounced Islam which also puts her at serious risk of prosecution by the Saudi Arabian government."

An Australian government spokesman said the claims made by Qunun "that she may be harmed if returned to Saudi Arabia are deeply concerning" and they are monitoring the case "closely". Australian embassy representatives in Bangkok have reached out to Thai authorities and the UNHCR to "seek assurances" that she will be able to access the "refugee status determination process". The UNHCR said that according to the principle of non-refoulement, asylum seekers cannot be returned to their country of origin if their life is under threat. — Agencies

Tender agency member, others...

Continued from Page 1

MP Rakan Al-Nasef said the referral confirms concerns raised by lawmakers in the past.

Meanwhile, the National Assembly looks set today for an unprecedented legal battle over whether the membership of opposition members Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbash should be revoked or not after two important court rulings. The issue seems to have been complicated even further yesterday after Tabtabaei filed a motion to the constitutional court asking it to stop the implementation of a ruling it issued last month in which it said article 16 of the Assembly's internal charter is unconstitutional.

Although it is unlikely that the court will change its opinion on the ruling, it may delay a planned Assembly debate for today over how to implement the key judgment. Opposition MP Mohammad Al-Dallal, who is a lawyer, said yesterday that after the constitutional court accepted the motion by Tabtabaei, it is likely that the Assembly could delay its debate on the fate of the membership of the two lawmakers until another session.

The constitutional court ruling on article 16 effectively annulled a vote by the Assembly in October that main-

Sports

Pacioretty wins it again as Knights edge Devils

Just shut out, Oilers rebound to blank Ducks

LAS VEGAS: Max Pacioretty scored the game-winning goal for the second straight game, and Malcolm Subban had 36 saves to pick up his first home win of the season as the Vegas Golden Knights moved back into a first-place tie in the Pacific Division with a 3-2 victory over the New Jersey Devils on Sunday afternoon in Las Vegas. Brayden McNabb scored his first goal of the season, and Ryan Reaves also scored for Vegas, which extended its win streak to six games. Subban, making his first home start of the season, had 20 saves in the third period and picked up his second win in seven starts (2-5-0) for the Golden Knights, who extended their home point streak to 11 games (9-0-2). Vegas last fell in regulation at T-Mobile Arena on Nov. 16, a 4-1 loss to St. Louis. Defenseman Ben Lovejoy, who had no goals and three assists in 37 games entering the contest, finished with a goal and an assist, and Nico Hischier also scored a goal for New Jersey. Goalie Keith Kinkaid finished with 25 saves.

CAPITALS 3, RED WINGS 2

Michal Kempny scored the game-winning goal on a shot from the point that went off the stick of Detroit forward Tyler Bertuzzi with 3:52 remaining to lift visiting Washington. Tom Wilson and Travis Boyd also scored for the Capitals, who avoided their first three-game losing streak of the season. Goalie Braden Holtby stopped 23 of 25 shots. Anthony Mantha and Filip Hronek scored for the Red Wings, who lost all three games against the Capitals this season. Jimmy Howard made 31 saves for Detroit.

BLACKHAWKS 5, PENGUINS 3

Dylan Strome scored a tiebreaking, third-period goal as Chicago snapped a two-game losing streak while ending host Pittsburgh's eight-game winning streak. Alex DeBrincat, Chris Kunitz, Duncan Keith and Jonathan Toews also scored for the Blackhawks, and Patrick Kane added three assists, including one on Strome's go-ahead goal. Goaltender Cam Ward stopped 31 of 34 Pittsburgh shots. Patric Hornqvist, Jake Guentzel and Derick Brassard scored for the

Penguins, who got 26 saves from goalie Casey DeSmith.

JETS 5, STARS 1

Host Winnipeg scored five unanswered goals through the second and third periods, and Connor Hellebuyck turned away 26 shots in beating Dallas. The Stars scored first on a power-play goal from Alexander Radulov early in the second period, but Adam Lowry and Tyler Myers scored later in the period for Winnipeg, and Kyle Connor, Josh Morrissey and Bryan Little scored in the third period. The Jets are 4-4-0 in their past eight games after a five-game winning streak and enjoy a six-game home win-streak against Dallas. Ben Bishop stopped 25 of 29 shots for Dallas, which had a two-game winning streak snapped.

COYOTES 5, RANGERS 0

Conor Garland scored twice, and Alex Galchenyuk had a goal and two assists as Arizona snapped a three-game losing streak at the expense of New York, which lost its third in a row, in Glendale, Ariz. Coyotes goaltender Darcy Kuemper made 23 saves in posting his first shutout of the season. His best stop came on a Chris Kreider breakaway midway through the second period. Arizona's Rick Tocchet got his 100th career NHL coaching victory. Clayton Keller and Mario Kempe also scored for the Coyotes. Rangers goalie Henrik Lundqvist was pulled at 16:38 of the second period after allowing five goals on 32 shots. It was the second consecutive start that Lundqvist did not finish.

OILERS 4, DUCKS 0

In a battle of slumping divisional rivals, Edmonton scored three times in the first period, and Cam Talbot made 39 saves in his first shutout of the season in beating host Anaheim. Connor McDavid posted his team-high 24th goal, and Jesse Puljujarvi and Kyle Brodziak added markers in the opening period for the Oilers, who won for just the second time in their last nine games. John Gibson stopped 20 of 24 shots in his seventh consecutive start, and the Ducks lost their



LAS VEGAS: William Karlsson #71 of the Vegas Golden Knights skates with the puck against Blake Coleman #20 of the New Jersey Devils in the second period of their game at T-Mobile Arena yesterday in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Golden Knights defeated the Devils 3-2. — AFP

eighth straight (0-6-2). Offense continued to be the biggest problem for Anaheim, which has just 11 goals in its last eight games.

HURRICANES 5, SENATORS 4

Justin Williams scored on a power play for the game's only third-period goal as Carolina stretched its winning streak to four games by beating host Ottawa. Justin Faulk, Brock McGinn, Jacob Slavin and Dougie Hamilton scored earlier for Carolina.

Hurricanes goalie Petr Mrazek made 27 saves, facing only two shots in the third period despite the Senators going on a late-game power play. Ottawa dropped its eighth game in a row (0-7-1) despite goals from Matt Duchene, Ryan Dzingel, Rudolf's Balcers and Jean-Gabriel Pageau. Ottawa goalie Marcus Hogberg was pulled after giving up three goals on 16 shots in 26:13. Anders Nilsson stopped 11 of 13 shots while in his second game for the Senators since last week's trade from Vancouver. — Reuters

Monfils pulls out, Shapovalov beaten in Auckland Classic

WELLINGTON: Gael Monfils became the third big name to pull out of the ATP Auckland Classic yesterday sidelined by injury while seventh seed Denis Shapovalov was bundled out in three sets.

Monfils, the eighth seed, said he was hampered by a nagging pain in the leg.

His withdrawal followed the absence of top seeds Tomas Berdych and Roberto Bautista-Agut, who both pulled out after contesting the Qatar Open final on Saturday which Bautista Agut won 6-4, 3-6, 6-3.

The flamboyant Monfils said his injury flared Saturday and had not responded to treatment.

"I have had a pain for two days with my quadriceps and unfortunately I am not able to play the tournament," he said.

"So I'm disappointed about the situation I've put myself and the tournament through, because obviously this year is tough because they've had a couple of retirements."

Shapovalov, the 19-year-old Canadian and only seed in action on day one, romped through the first set against Portugal's Joao Sousa, but went off the boil for most of the second set.

The third set went with serve until 3-3 when Sousa made the vital break and then held on to win the error-filled match.

"The first tournament of the year is not easy," Sousa said of the below par performance.

"For sure it was not his best day, me neither, but this is tennis, you try your best with what you have and I made it."

In the reshuffled draw, John Isner takes over as top seed and goes straight through to the second round to play fellow American Taylor Fritz.

Fritz, who opened with a 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 win over Romanian Marius Copil 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, has lost his two previous matches against Isner.

Germany's Philipp Kohlschreiber continued his phenomenal run in Auckland when the 35-year-old defeated American Bradley Klahn 6-4, 7-6 (7/2) to move through to the second round for the 11th time in 12 years. In other action, German Jan-Lennard Struff won his first set 7-6 (7/5) against Laslo Djere and led 2-0 in the second when the Serbian retired.

Tennys Sandgren raced through his opening singles 6-3, 6-4 against qualifier Mackenzie McDonald and will face third seed Marco Cecchinato in round two. — AFP



Denis Shapovalov

Sydney to host finals of new ATP World Team Cup

SYDNEY: Sydney will host the finals of the new innovative ATP World Team Cup, organisers announced yesterday, while Brisbane and one other city will feature round-robin games in a revamp of the season-opening tennis calendar.

The Association of Tennis Professionals, which runs the men's game, voted in London earlier this year to award the tournament to Australia. It will be played from January 3 over 10 days in the lead-up to the Australian Open, the first Grand Slam of the year, starting in 2020.

Sydney will host the final of the 24-team event at the Ken Rosewall Arena, which will get a new roof, along with some round-robin matches. There will be group action in Brisbane along with another city, reportedly Adelaide. The existing Brisbane International will continue as a women-only event.

Perth was widely seen to be in the running, but the ongoing success of the mixed-teams Hopman Cup, spearheaded this year by Roger Federer and Serena Williams, has thrown that into doubt. "The ATP Cup fits perfectly with our strategy to innovate and look towards the future," said ATP chief Chris Kermode.

"We know from our extensive discussions with the players that the ATP Cup will provide a great way for them to open their season. "It will bring together the world's best for a major team event that compliments existing scheduling, provides highly-coveted ATP ranking points and clearly links to the Australian Open."

The event, supported by the likes of Federer and Novak Djokovic, is returning to the global calendar for the first time since taking place in Dusseldorf from 1978 to 2012, and will feature US\$15 million in prize money, along with rankings points.

It will see nations split into six groups, with eight teams emerging from the round-robin stage to compete in the knockout phase until one team is left standing. There will be up to five players in each team, with ties comprising two singles matches and one doubles, and player eligibility determined by ATP rankings.

Tennis Australia chief Craig Tiley said "the timing is right for expansion". "We want more players rewarded, more opportunities for them, more opportunities for fans to get to see them, more global exposure for the sport," he said.

"A major step toward achieving that vision is to deliver world-class tennis to cities across Australia which is what the ATP Cup will do. "It is the next piece in a vision that will ultimately grow tennis and provide inspiration for future generations."

The new competition will be held on the back of a revamped Davis Cup tournament, run by the International Tennis Federation, which will take place from November 2019, bringing together 18 nations in one place for a week at the end of the season. — AFP

Late Sheikh Abdallah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Cup tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Sport Club (KSSC) will organize the late Sheikh Abdallah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Cup Tournament at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex in the 10m air pistol and gun and Olympic archery. The tournament will start Thursday Jan 10 and will end Saturday Jan 12 with a closing ceremony at 5:30 pm.

President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations said KSSC is always proud to organize a tournament in the name of late Sheikh Abdallah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah each year.

Al-Otaibi hoped Kuwait shooters will exert their utmost efforts in this tournament, as it is one of the beneficial experiences for our national teams before the start of their participation in international events that will qualify to the Tokyo Olympics 2020.

He said it will also be an opportunity for shooters to prepare for IHH the Amir Eighth International Grand Prix to be held Feb 8 until Feb 15, with participation by major international shooting federations.

Eng Al-Otaibi thanked the family of Sheikh Abdallah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah for their continued support of Kuwait Shooting.

Kyrgios to face Tomic in Kooyong Classic today

MELBOURNE: Nick Kyrgios will face off against Bernard Tomic for the first time as Australia's most combustible pair battle for last-minute Grand Slam form at the Kooyong Classic from today.

The three-day event, at the private club which served as the home of the Australian Open until 1988, is famed as a relatively stress-free preparation for the opening major of the year next week at Melbourne Park.

Kyrgios and Tomic will both count on lifting their games, with each suffering in his own way from burnout and lack of motivation.

Controversial Tomic could not even qualify for the Australian Open 12 months ago following a car-crash season, and faced a backlash after later boasting "I just count my millions". His ranking is now back up to 51st.

Kyrgios, infamous for petulant behaviour and outbursts on court, ended his season early after arguing with an umpire at Shanghai then picking up an elbow injury in Moscow.

While Australia's notorious pair will not clash until Wednesday, organisers have lined up a tasty programme, leaving gaps for any late requests in case other top players want match practice under competitive conditions.

In 2018, both Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal played in one-off exhibition matches.

The opening day line-up announced Monday includes American Jack Sock playing Tomic, Serb Filip Krajinovic taking on Damir Dzumhur of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Australian Jason Kubler playing Janko Tipsarevic of Serbia. The event once again features women's matches, which were reintroduced in 2017 after more than two decades. Day one sees rising American teenager Amanda Anisimova face Britain's Katie Boulter, fresh from the Hopman Cup last week.

In addition a new format-as used last week at the Hopman Cup-will see matches played as best of two sets



Nick Kyrgios

with a third set, if necessary, a 10-point tiebreak. The field is headed by top 10 players Marin Cilic and Wimbledon finalist Kevin Anderson.

World number seven Cilic did not play last week as he works to heal a knee problem while Anderson, ranked six, began 2019 with a title in Pune, India.

"The 2018 highlight for me was achieving some of the goals I had set for myself, specifically making London year-end finals, winning more than one tournament in the year, winning a 500 (series event), and of course making another Grand Slam final," Anderson said. "In 2019, I hope to continue pushing the boundaries. A big goal of mine is winning the Masters series, being in the finals there, and giving myself a shot at another Grand Slam." — AFP

Sports

Powell picks up slack as Raptors beat Pacers without Leonard

Timberwolves rout Lakers before Thibodeau firing

NBA results/standings

Toronto 121, Indiana 105; Atlanta 106, Miami 82; Phoenix 113, Charlotte 119; Oklahoma City 98, Washington 116; Chicago 100, Brooklyn 117; Minnesota 108, LA Lakers 86; LA Clippers 106, Orlando 96.

Eastern Conference

| | W | L | PCT | GB |
|--------------|----|----|-------|------|
| Toronto | 30 | 12 | 0.714 | - |
| Milwaukee | 27 | 11 | 0.711 | 2 |
| Indiana | 26 | 13 | 0.667 | 2.5 |
| Philadelphia | 26 | 14 | 0.650 | 3 |
| Boston | 23 | 15 | 0.605 | 5 |
| Miami | 19 | 19 | 0.500 | 9 |
| Brooklyn | 20 | 21 | 0.488 | 9.5 |
| Charlotte | 19 | 20 | 0.487 | 9.5 |
| Detroit | 17 | 20 | 0.459 | 10.5 |
| Orlando | 17 | 22 | 0.436 | 11.5 |
| Washington | 16 | 24 | 0.400 | 13 |
| Atlanta | 12 | 27 | 0.308 | 16.5 |
| New York | 10 | 29 | 0.256 | 18.5 |
| Chicago | 10 | 30 | 0.250 | 19 |
| Cleveland | 8 | 32 | 0.200 | 21 |

Western Conference

| | | | | |
|---------------|----|----|-------|-----|
| Denver | 26 | 11 | 0.703 | - |
| Golden State | 26 | 14 | 0.650 | 1.5 |
| Oklahoma City | 25 | 14 | 0.641 | 2 |
| LA Clippers | 23 | 16 | 0.590 | 4 |
| Houston | 22 | 16 | 0.579 | 4.5 |
| San Antonio | 23 | 17 | 0.575 | 4.5 |
| Portland | 23 | 17 | 0.575 | 4.5 |
| LA Lakers | 21 | 19 | 0.525 | 6.5 |
| Utah | 20 | 20 | 0.500 | 7.5 |
| Sacramento | 19 | 20 | 0.487 | 8 |
| Minnesota | 19 | 21 | 0.475 | 8.5 |
| Memphis | 18 | 21 | 0.462 | 9 |
| Dallas | 18 | 21 | 0.462 | 9 |
| New Orleans | 18 | 22 | 0.450 | 9.5 |
| Phoenix | 9 | 32 | 0.220 | 19 |

TORONTO: Norman Powell scored a season-best 23 points off the bench and the Toronto Raptors, playing without Kawhi Leonard but with Kyle Lowry back in the lineup, defeated the visiting Indiana Pacers 121-105 Sunday night. Lowry had 12 points and eight assists after missing six straight games with a stiff back. It was the Pacers' 11th regular-season loss in a row in Toronto, dating to March 2013. Serge Ibaka added 18 points and Danny Green chipped in 15 for the Raptors, who beat the Bucks in Milwaukee on Saturday night. Bojan Bogdanovic had 21 points and nine rebounds to lead the Pacers, who saw their six-game winning streak end. Domantas Sabonis scored 16 points and had 11 rebounds, and Victor Oladipo added 16 points.

TIMBERWOLVES 108, LAKERS 86

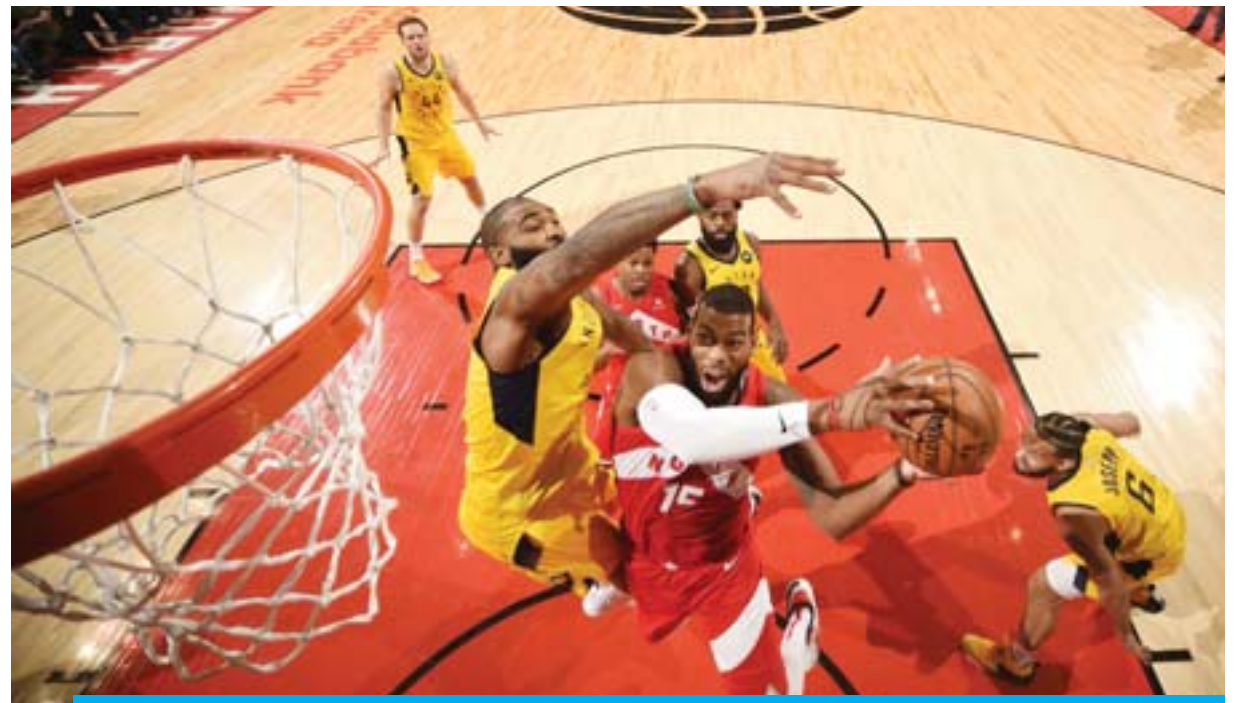
Jeff Teague contributed a pair of 3-pointers to a game-opening, 15-1 run that paved the way for host Minnesota to rout Los Angeles, which is still without LeBron James. The win came shortly before head coach and president of basketball operations Tom Thibodeau was fired, ending his tenure midway through his third season in Minnesota. The team announced the move after the game, with assistant Ryan Saunders being named interim head coach. Teague finished with 15 points and a game-high 11 assists, while Karl-Anthony Towns added 28 points and a game-high 18 rebounds for the Timberwolves. Lance Stephenson came off the bench for 14 points and six assists to lead the Lakers, who lost for the fifth time in six games since James suffered a groin injury in a Christmas Day win over the Golden State Warriors.

CLIPPERS 106, MAGIC 96

Host Los Angeles played one of its best defensive games of the season to beat Orlando. The Clippers are 24th in defense, giving up an average of 114.7 points per game, but they held the Magic to 37.1 percent shooting from the floor. Tobias Harris had 28 points and nine rebounds, and Lou Williams scored 17 off the bench for the Clippers, who have won six of their last nine. Nikola Vucevic had 16 points and 24 rebounds for the Magic, who have lost three of their last four and seven of their last 10 games.

WIZARDS 116, THUNDER 98

Bradley Beal scored 25 points, including seven in the decisive third quarter, to lead Washington past host Oklahoma City, despite a triple-double from Russell Westbrook. Washington broke an eight-game road losing streak and had never won in Oklahoma City. Their last road win against the franchise came in March 2008 at Seattle's Key Arena against the SuperSonics. Otto Porter



TORONTO: Greg Monroe #15 of the Toronto Raptors drives to the basket against the Indiana Pacers on Sunday at the Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

added 20 off the bench for the Wizards, who also got 16 from Jeff Green and 15 from Tomas Satoransky. Westbrook finished with 22 points, 15 rebounds and 13 assists, his 12th triple-double of the season and his third in the last four games. Paul George added 20 points.

NETS, 117, BULLS 100

D'Angelo Russell scored 28 points as Brooklyn pulled away in the fourth quarter to beat host Chicago. Russell scored at least 20 points for the fourth straight game to match the longest streak of his career. He shot 10 of 19 from the floor and made six 3-pointers. Reserve DeMarre Carroll added 20 points for the Nets. Zach LaVine scored 27 points to lead the Bulls, who lost their fourth straight and dropped to 5-11 under new coach Jim Boylen. Reserve Bobby Portis added 17 in his return from a right ankle sprain.

HORNETS 119, SUNS 113

Kemba Walker scored 29 points, including 18 in the final 4:26, and Charlotte snapped a two-game losing streak with a victory over host Phoenix. Walker scored 18 of the Hornets' last 19 points. Charlotte didn't take the

lead for good until a free throw by Walker with one minute remaining gave them a 112-111 edge. Tony Parker and Willy Hernangomez came off the bench to spark the Hornets, with Parker scoring 20 and Hernangomez adding 19 points and nine rebounds. T.J. Warren led the Suns with 23 points. Josh Jackson scored 22. Deandre Ayton 19 and Jamal Crawford 16. The Suns lost their sixth straight, all at home to start a seven-game homestand.

HAWKS 106, HEAT 82

Veteran point guard Jeremy Lin came off the bench to score 11 of his 15 points during a third-quarter run that sparked host Atlanta over Miami. DeAndre' Bembry, who started his third game for the Hawks, finished with 17 points — 16 of them in the second half. John Collins tallied 13 points and 13 rebounds-nine in the first half-to secure his 13th double-double over the last 16 games. Derrick Jones Jr. came off the bench to lead Miami with 14 points, and Justise Winslow added 13 points, five rebounds and three assists. Dwyane Wade, playing his final game in Atlanta, scored 11 points with four rebounds and three assists. — Reuters

Paine struggles to find any gain from Australia loss

SYDNEY: Australia skipper Tim Paine desperately looked for positives yesterday after his side's calamitous 2-1 Test series loss to India, but struggled to find many. While they won in Perth, Australia were comprehensively outplayed the rest of the series, losing in Adelaide and Melbourne before being spared by the rain in a one-sided Sydney finale.

Pace spearhead Mitchell Starc failed to fire, and Australia's batsmen plumbled disappointing lows. Their squad for two Tests against Sri Lanka is due to be announced on Wednesday, with the matches Australia's last red-ball cricket before the Ashes tour to England later in the year.

And there will be some nervous players waiting to find out their fate. "We're really disappointed. We know we had some guys missing but we honestly felt coming into this series that in Australia, we could beat India," said Paine, who has won only one of the seven Tests he has been in charge.

"But throughout the series, more often than not when those big moments came up, Virat (Kohli) scored a century or (Cheteshwar) Pujara scored one, or (Jasprit) Bumrah bowled a great spell and got them

through those moments. "Their best players stood up in the big moments."

The same can't be said for Australia, who capitulated at crucial times. Starc was criticised for not being at his best, while none of the batsmen reached three figures, making it the hosts' first four-Test home series without scoring a century in their history.

It exposed the gaping hole left by the banned Steve Smith and David Warner, who are due back from 12-month ball-tampering bans in late March. Asked how the batsmen will be able to handle an English attack on home territory if they were not able to deal with India's quicks on docile pitches in Melbourne and Sydney, Paine said: "We'll have conversations in the next day or two". But he also suggested that not much will be changing. "I have faith that the guys we have around the team are the right guys — (we) just have to keep putting some faith and trust in them," he said.

"They are learning on the job a bit, but I think we'll get there. "We can't help that we haven't got Mike Husseys or Michael Bevens," he added, referring to the two explosive former players. "We've got what we've got and the playing group is trying as hard as we can to get better."

Paine pinpointed the opening Adelaide Test as one that got away and could have changed their fortunes. India won it on the fifth day by just 31 runs. "We honestly feel that we let that Test match slip. We thought we had a number of opportunities in that Test to get ahead of the game, and when those key moments came up, India outplayed us," he said. "We can learn a lot from the way they went about it, and we'll make sure we do." — AFP

with Allen Robinson on a 22-yard touchdown pass for a 15-10 Bears lead with 9:04 remaining, but Chicago failed on a 2-point conversion run. Foles, last year's Super Bowl Most Valuable Player, drove the Eagles to Chicago's 2-yard line, where the NFL's stingiest defenders at allowing points denied two runs and a pass to set up a tension-packed fourth-down all-or-nothing play.

Foles hit Golden Tate with a 2-yard touchdown pass for a 16-15 Eagles lead with 56 seconds remaining but a 2-point conversion run failed, giving Chicago a final chance. "I just waited on my opportunity. I just tried to make a play and it worked out," Tate said. "A great collective effort. We found a way."

But the drama wasn't over. Trubisky marched the Bears downfield where Parkey was foiled the first time when the Eagles called timeout just before the snap to negate a kick he booted down the middle between the uprights.

On the next attempt, Parkey struck an upright for the fifth time this season and saw the ball bounce off the crossbar before falling on the wrong side for the Bears. Jake Elliott's 43-yard field goal had put the Eagles ahead only 5:23 into the game but Parkey answered from 36 and 29 yards for a 6-3 Bears half-time lead.

Foles tossed a 10-yard touchdown pass to tight end Dallas Goedert with 5:20 remaining in the third quarter to put the Eagles in front 10-6. The 83-yard, seven-play touchdown march was aided by two key penalties against Bears defenders, a third-down unnecessary roughness call on Adrian Amos sustaining the drive and a 33-yard pass interference call against Prince Amukamara, a cornerback of Nigerian heritage, putting the ball at the Chicago 10-yard line.

But the Bears rallied to reclaim the lead, starting with Parkey's 34-yard field goal with 14:13 remaining to pull Chicago within 10-9.

At Baltimore, the Ravens fell behind 23-3 on rookie



Tim Paine



CHICAGO: Cody Parkey #1 of the Chicago Bears misses a field goal attempt in the final moments of their 15 to 16 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles in the NFC Wild Card Playoff game at Soldier Field on Sunday in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

Mike Badgley's fifth field goal, a 47-yarder with 9:14 to play. Baltimore rookie Lamar Jackson, who became the youngest quarterback in NFL playoff history on the eve of his 22nd birthday, threw touchdown passes of 7 and 31 yards to Michael Crabtree to pull the Ravens within the final margin. Jackson got the ball back with 45 seconds remaining but Uchenna Nwosu, a Chargers linebacker of Nigerian descent, knocked loose a fumble from him and Melvin Ingram recovered for Los Angeles to secure the victory. — AFP

India series win 12 months in making, says 'proud' Kohli

SYDNEY: Superstar captain Virat Kohli yesterday called winning a series in Australia his proudest ever moment, capping a 12-month journey for his India team of hard graft, fixing mistakes and comradeship.

Their 2-1 triumph achieved what no other Indian side has managed since they started touring to Australia in 1947-48, with the foundations for success laid not in the first Test at Adelaide, but on their tour of South Africa last year.

It was there, and the subsequent tour of England, that he and coach Ravi Shastri identified the attacking brand of cricket that they wanted to play, all in preparation for Australia. "We wanted to experiment with combinations and find out what suits the team best and take it forward from there," said coach Ravi Shastri. "So we learned a heck of a lot in South Africa, we learned a lot in England. We made mistakes, which we didn't make in this series. We learned from those mistakes. India lost 2-1 in Tests to South Africa in January last year, and were then outplayed in England 4-1. "So the most satisfying part of it (winning in Australia) was it was a team working towards this goal over the last 12 months," said Shastri. That journey has led to India boasting one of the most fearsome bowling attacks in the world, with the breakthroughs of speedster Jasprit Bumrah and spinner Kuldeep Yadav.

While India's batting in Australia was a class above, anchored by Kohli and Cheteshwar Pujara, it was the consistency of the bowling that made the difference, with no Australian batsmen scoring a century. "The way the bowlers have dictated and dominated, not here but also in England and South Africa, it's something I haven't seen before," said Kohli.

"Hats off to them, the way they've prepared, their fitness levels, and their mindset." So important was the win that Kohli, the best batsmen in the world in all three formats, placed it above being part of the Indian team that won the 2011 World Cup.

"It's obviously a very proud moment. More so because for the last 12 months we understand what we have gone through as a team, we understand the kind of cricket we have been able to play," he said.

"The fact that the reward has come in the most historic series for Indian cricket is the cherry on top of the cake." And while accolades will inevitably fall on Kohli, he has consistently stressed through the series that it can never be about one person. "It was a team effort through and through and that's what we strive for. We strive to play well as a team," he said.

"Single innings and single spells don't win games of Test cricket. We play to make the team win." India was already the number one team in the world before the series began, with the win only shoring up their formidable reputation.

Kohli is passionate about Test cricket and said he wanted youngsters to look at what the team had achieved, and they way they have done it, for inspiration to keep the red ball game in focus as limited-overs formats gain ever more traction. — AFP

Eagles edge Bears, Chargers oust Ravens in NFL playoff

CHICAGO: Defending Super Bowl champion Philadelphia edged the Chicago Bears and the Los Angeles Chargers ousted Baltimore from the championship chase in two NFL playoff thrillers Sunday. Bears kicker Cody Parkey clanked a 43-yard field goal attempt off the left upright and crossbar with five seconds remaining as the Eagles sealed a 16-15 victory at Chicago.

"It came down to the wire. We were just hoping for a miss," said Eagles quarterback Nick Foles. "The big thing is we saw some adversity in the first half with a couple turnovers but no one loses faith. We were able to rally behind our defense and we were able to get the win."

The Chargers seized a 20-point lead but needed a turnover in the final seconds to thwart a Ravens fightback and claim a 23-17 first-round triumph at Baltimore. "Our defense was unbelievable," Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers said. "We couldn't get anything but field goals early on offense but we finally got it done. It was a great team win." The Eagles booked a trip to top seed New Orleans next Sunday with the other National Conference playoff matchup sending the Dallas Cowboys to the Los Angeles Rams on Saturday. The Chargers have a second-round date next Sunday at New England while top seed Kansas City will entertain the Indianapolis Colts on Saturday in the other American Conference contest.

Mitch Trubisky drove Chicago 80 yards and connected

Sports

Madrid slip 10 points behind Barca after shock defeat by Real Sociedad

Barcelona beat Getafe, Atletico and Sevilla gain on European champions

MADRID: Real Madrid may not even challenge for the title let alone win it as a shock 2-0 defeat at home to Real Sociedad on Sunday left them 10 points behind Barcelona in La Liga. Barca took their advantage over their fiercest rivals into double figures by beating Getafe 2-1 while Atletico Madrid and Sevilla also gained on the European champions, despite earlier sharing a 1-1 draw.

Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez's goals were enough for Barca, for whom the weekend could hardly have gone better. Antoine Griezmann's stunning free-kick earned Atletico a point at the Ramon Sanchez Pizjuan.

Madrid played with 10 men for half an hour after Lucas Vazquez was sent off but by then they already trailed to Willian Jose's early penalty. Ruben Pardo wrapped up a brilliant victory for La Real, who had won this fixture only once in their last 22 attempts.

This was their first victory at the Santiago Bernabeu since 2004 and then, Madrid fired coach Carlos Queiroz a day later. Santiago Solari is not there yet, even if he was asked afterwards if he deserved to keep his job. "We fight to win the next game," he said.

The honeymoon period Solari enjoyed in November though after replacing Julen Lopetegui is well and truly over. This loss, coming after the draw away to Villarreal on Wednesday, means Madrid sit fifth, outside even the Champions League places.

"Everything went against us today," Solari said. "We did everything we could but the ball just would not go in." A stoney-faced Florentino Perez was among the 53,412 watching on, the club's second lowest attendance of the season. "We will try to get them back," Solari said, before making a swift exit.

Barcelona have won seven out of the last 10 La Liga titles and now own a five-point cushion. If they are to slip up in 2019, Atletico or Sevilla would seem the ones

able to take advantage. Gareth Bale was missing with a calf injury but it was the 18-year-old Vinicius Junior that came in, not Isco, who is yet to start a league game under Solari.

La Real's penalty was awarded after 75 seconds and converted after 150. Mikel Merino ghosted past Sergio Ramos and inside Marcelo. Casemiro tried to cover but bundled Merino to the ground. Willian Jose went high and down the middle.

GRIEZMANN ON TARGET

Karim Benzema spurned the best of Madrid's chances before the break, lashing wide with only Geronimo Rulli to beat. Rulli was not needed then but he would be, many times. He denied Vinicius, Benzema and Luka Modric in quick succession. Ramos wanted a penalty for a push in his back but the appeal was desperate.

Vazquez clipped the post with a looping cross but that was not enough to hush the angry whistles at the end of the half. The second period was frantic, with chances at both ends. La Real could have sealed it when Mikel Oyarzabal fired over and the weaving Januzaj twice went close.

Isco replaced Casemiro in the 57th minute and in the 61st Vazquez was sent off. A rash sliding challenge had earned a yellow card towards the end of the first half and even if the chip at Merino's heels seemed harmless, he was foolish to take the risk.

Down to 10, Madrid still pushed and had a more convincing penalty appeal when Vinicius tumbled over the arm of Rulli. Referee Jose Munuera stood firm. The decision was "scandalous", Ramos said later.

Januzaj should have wrapped it up when his shot was saved by the legs of Thibaut Courtois but Pardo did, heading in a cross from Willian Jose, who could



MADRID: Real Sociedad's Belgian midfielder Adnan Januzaj (R) vies with Real Madrid's Spanish defender Sergio Reguilon during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid CF and Real Sociedad at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Sunday. — AFP

even have made it three in injury time.

Defeat made Griezmann's superb free-kick seem all the more valuable as the Frenchman's fifth goal in as many games earned Atletico a point away to Sevilla. Wissam Ben Yedder had put Sevilla ahead.

Barca rode their luck as Getafe missed several chances to snatch a draw. Instead, Messi's 399th La Liga goal and a sumptuous volley from Suarez did the job at the Coliseum Alfonso Perez, despite Jaime Mata giving Getafe hope. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ASIAN NATIONS CUP 2019

| | |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Iraq v Vietnam | 16:30 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Saudi Arabia v North Korea | 19:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |

Pound blasts WADA critics for acting like a lynch mob

LONDON: The numerous critics attacking the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) over Russia's failure to meet a deadline to hand over data from its drug-tainted Moscow laboratory are acting like a "lynch mob", said former president Dick Pound.

The 76-year-old Canadian lawyer—who was WADA's inaugural president from 1999-2007 and sits on its Foundation Board—wrote in his blog for influential sports politics website InsideTheGames that those demanding WADA be overhauled had their own personal agendas.

The end-of-year deadline was set in September, when WADA lifted a ban on the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA), paving the way for Russian athletes to return to competition across all sports after a report which uncovered a state-sponsored doping programme in Russia. However, when WADA personnel travelled to Russia in December they were unable to extract all of the promised data. WADA said at the time its team could not complete its mission "due to an issue raised by the Russian authorities that the team's equipment to be used for the data extraction was required to be certified under Russian law". WADA's leadership has been strongly criticised by the likes of Travis Tygart, head of USADA, and NADO (National Anti-Doping Agencies) over its decision to lift Russia's suspension before obtaining access to the information sought from its Moscow laboratory.

This information was expected to shed light on the extent of Russian cheating spanning several years and including multiple major championships. Pound, a former vice-president of the International Olympic Committee who ran unsuccessfully to replace Juan Antonio Samaranch as president in 2001, took aim at the critics with typical bluntness.

"Lynch mobs are just that—unruly gangs having a single objective, murdering someone without any due process of justice," said Pound. "Much of the response to Russia's failure to provide access to the former Moscow Laboratory data by the deadline (31 December 2018) imposed by the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA) Executive Committee in September 2018 has all the elements of a lynch mob."

"Many of those making up the mob know or should know that they are out of line. 'What is their real end-game?'"

Pound, who is a long-standing friend to present under-fire WADA president Craig Reedie, said those demanding Russia be immediately declared non-compliant and the meeting of the WADA Compliance Review Committee (CRC) on January 14-15 be brought forward knew this was impossible.

"This process is well-known to the entire anti-doping community" said Pound. "It is disturbing to see otherwise responsible and sophisticated organisations urge that the process be completely ignored and incite others to adopt a similar view."

"I come from a country—Canada—that has a strong tradition of respect for the rule of law. That tradition is the direct opposite of mob rule." Pound, a former top-class swimmer who competed in the 1960 Olympics, questions the motives of those seeking to destabilise WADA and warns the previous state of "anarchy" which existed before its creation could return.—AFP



LONDON: File photo shows Tottenham Hotspur's English midfielder Dele Alli (L) vies with Wolverhampton Wanderers' Portuguese midfielder Ruben Neves during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Wolverhampton Wanderers at Wembley Stadium in London. — AFP

Spurs ready for trophy charge after 11-year drought: Alli

LONDON: Dele Alli has pledged to end Tottenham's 11-year wait for a major trophy as his side head into an explosive League Cup semi-final showdown with Chelsea. Tottenham haven't won a leading competition since they beat Chelsea in the 2008 League Cup final.

But Tottenham midfielder Alli is convinced the north London club will finally add to their trophy cabinet this season. Tottenham are still in the Champions League and FA Cup, and also have an outside chance in the Premier League title race.

But it is the League Cup that presents their first opportunity to end the silverware drought, starting with their last four first leg clash against bitter rivals Chelsea at Wembley. While the League Cup is often written off as an after-thought for the top clubs, England star Alli is adamant Mauricio Pochettino's team must use the tournament as the catalyst to kick-start a successful period.

League Cup glory would also secure a first major prize for Pochettino, who is widely regarded as one of Europe's brightest young coaches but has yet to win a single trophy in his managerial career with Tottenham, Southampton and Espanyol.

"I think every game, every competition, you want to win it," Alli said. "As players you want to get as far in the cup as we can, hopefully win it. 'We want to win trophies, that's our aim and we've been playing well."

"We've been getting quite far in recent years without quite having the finishing product at the end and not getting over the line." Tottenham crushed fourth tier minnows Tranmere 7-0 in the FA Cup third round on Friday as Pochettino used only three first-team regulars in a bid to keep his key men fresh for the Chelsea tie.

Alli was one of the trio who featured in the rout at Prenton Park and he expects Pochettino's plan to pay dividends against the Blues.

"Some people maybe expect you to prioritise different things, but I believe we've got a strong squad," Alli said. "Players work hard in the gym and on the training field to make sure we're fully fit and the manager makes changes."

"I think he's very good at that and as players we want to play every game anyway. 'We've just got to make sure everyone is on it and keep up the consistency because that's the big thing. 'When you're going into different competitions, you can't take your foot off the gas. You've got to be consistent and keep up your top level.'—AFP

hosts United Arab Emirates, Thai officials added. Rajevac, who has had spells in charge of Algeria and Qatar, famously steered Ghana to the quarter-finals of the 2010 World Cup where they were beaten on penalties by Uruguay. But he was left shell-shocked by Thailand's horror show against underdogs India, whose veteran striker Sunil Chhetri scored twice, overtaking Lionel Messi's 65 international goals in the process.

Lamenting his side's abject display, Rajevac admitted that India were worthy winners. "They were phenomenal—they ran more, were more aggressive and wanted it more," he said.

"They absolutely deserved to win. But we underperformed, especially in the second half." Rajevac has been criticised for his defensive style but the Serb clearly felt otherwise after watching Thailand over-run by a hungry India side.

"It's not always about technical ability and skill on the ball," he said. "We lacked power, strength and aggression. We need to put more pressure on the ball and show more passion." Thailand, appearing for the first time since co-hosting the Asian Cup in 2007, have now won just one of 21 games at the continent's showcase competition.

Crickets-mad India find themselves as unlikely leaders of Group A thanks to their first Asian Cup win in 55 years. The Emiratis were held 1-1 by Bahrain in Saturday's curtain-raiser.—AFP

Thailand axe coach Rajevac after Asian Cup horror show

ABU DHABI: Thailand have fired coach Milovan Rajevac following a humiliating 4-1 thrashing by India in their opening Asian Cup game at the weekend. The 65-year-old Serb, who took charge of Thailand in 2017, paid the price after the War Elephants conceded three second-half goals to slump to a shock defeat in Abu Dhabi on Sunday.

Thai football chiefs took a dim view of their Group A flop and acted swiftly to remove Rajevac the morning after. "The result is not what is expected of the Thai national team and that our supporters deserve," Thailand's FA president Somyot Poompanmoung said.

"Like all Thai football fans across the country, I am also disappointed with the result. But as president of the football association, I cannot stand still with this problem." Former assistant coach Sirisak Yodyardthai will assume control of the team when they face Bahrain and

Barca bets big on India in bid for global expansion

MUMBAI: Soccer is slowly but surely getting traction in India and Barcelona see the world's second most populous nation as a key part of their global expansion plans, the Spanish side's Asia Pacific Director General Jordi Camps has told Reuters.

Cricket-mad India, home to 1.3 billion people, is a massive underachiever as far as football is concerned and the country has yet to make a single appearance at the World Cup finals. Access to better coaching has long been highlighted as one of the key elements needed for Indian football to develop, though hosting the FIFA under-17 World Cup in 2017 could prove to be a turning point in attracting youngsters to the game who would otherwise be heading to the local cricket academy.

A number of European clubs have come to India over the last few years to set up academies on a franchise basis in a bid to establish a foothold in a potentially huge market. Barcelona have opened three centres in the country and Camps said they could prove a win-win for the La Liga side and India.

"The growth of the Indian Super League and the success of the under-17 World Cup held in India in 2017 have been absolutely vital for the development of the sport in the country," he said in an interview.

"Not only did it garner global coverage and engage young people of India, it also helped develop infrastructure, upskill personnel and transfer knowledge to a range of governmental organisations and businesses to help stage major footballing events."

"We feel that we have a part to play in the growth of football in the country too." After China embarked on a multi-billion dollar mission to become a soccer superpower by 2050, India followed suit with its own plan to raise its status in the game to match its burgeoning economic power.

Described as a sleeping giant by former FIFA president Sepp Blatter, India launched a programme in 2016 to engage more than 11 million children in soccer-related activities in the leadup to hosting the U-17 World Cup.

Barcelona have been in India with the Barca Academy since 2013 and say they have trained more than 25,000 young footballers through various programs. It has been rated as the top academy in India by the All India Football Federation.

"There seems to be a real interest and investment happening in grassroots football - with the AIFF grassroots program launch in October 2012," Camps said. "This isn't quite as ambitious as the growth proposed by President Xi (Jinping) in China, for example - but it's certainly a strong initiative for increasing the popularity of the sport."

"Still, 95 percent of children taking up the sport still do so at the local football centre or ground - with unqualified coaches. With our Barca Academies, this is what we are aiming to change - structured, consistent and well defined programmes that promote the club's working philosophy."

Spain's top-flight division, La Liga, also underlined the region's importance by opening an office in New Delhi in September 2016. Last year, La Liga also announced a landmark deal with Facebook to allow viewers in the Indian sub-continent to watch every game over the next three seasons for free on the social network site. Barcelona will host the Barca Academy Asia Pacific Cup 2019 at their Delhi facility, featuring over 500 players from six countries with ages ranging from under-nine to under-15, and Camps said they were always looking to grow the game in India.—Reuters

25 Pacioretty wins it again as Knights edge Devils



26 Eagles edge Bears, Chargers oust Ravens in NFL playoff



27 Madrid slip 10 points behind Barca after shock defeat by Real Sociedad



India end 71-year drought after draw

First Asian team to win Test series in Australia, PM praises India's historic win



SYDNEY: India's team pose with the Border-Gavaskar trophy as they celebrate their series win on the fifth day of the fourth and final cricket Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

SYDNEY: India ended a 71-year wait for a Test series victory in Australia yesterday, their 2-1 triumph finally confirmed when the rain-affected fourth and final Test ended in a draw at Sydney Cricket Ground early yesterday afternoon. The finale may have ultimately been turned out to be a damp squib but Virat Kohli's tourists utterly dominated what action there was to deservedly become the first side from the Asian sub-continent to take the honours Down Under. Praise and congratulations poured in for Virat Kohli's India yesterday after the tourists won their first-ever Test series in Australia, underlining their world number one ranking. "A historic cricketing accomplishment in Australia!" Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote on his official Twitter handle.

"Congratulations to the Indian Cricket Team for the hard-fought and richly deserved series victory. "The series witnessed some memorable performances and solid teamwork. Best wishes for the various games ahead." Batting legend Sachin Tendulkar called it "an amazing day for Indian cricket. #TeamIndia has made this a series to be cherished. Proud of the boys."

Wins in the first Test in Adelaide and third in Melbourne

ensured they could not lose the series and their batsmen, led by a 193 from Cheteshwar Pujara, batted Australia out of the fourth match with a daunting 622-7 declared total in the first innings. That all but destroyed home hopes of a face-saving victory and India's spinners then got to work to drive home the advantage in the field against an Australia side that failed to muster a single century over the series.

The hosts were duly dismissed for 300 and Kohli did not hesitate to go for the jugular by enforcing the follow-on—the first time in 30 years Australia had suffered such ignominy on home soil. Ultimately, it was the Sydney weather that saved Australia from a 3-1 humiliation with no play possible after tea on day four, when they had mustered up six runs without loss in their second innings. "It's obviously a very proud moment. More so because for the last 12 months we understand what we have gone through as a team," said Kohli. "The fact that the reward has come in the most historic series for Indian cricket is the cherry on the top of the cake."

"In the 10 years that I have played, it is the proudest moment that I have experienced and we're so happy for the whole team. "It is a young bunch of guys and to have that belief to keep striving for excellence on a daily basis and to

get a reward like this we definitely have to be happy."

For some Australians the series will always carry an asterisk given their two best batsmen, Steve Smith and David Warner, were unavailable because of bans they received for the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa last year. Tim Paine's side were unable to paper over the cracks left by their absence, and even the vaunted pace attack of Josh Hazlewood, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins failed to fire, except for spells in the victory in Perth.

"I thought we actually had our chances to win the test match in Adelaide, India just outplayed us in big moments in that test," Paine said. "In Perth, I thought we played a very good game of cricket but when we went to Melbourne and Sydney, we've been outplayed in all departments."

India's trio of seamers Ishant Sharma, Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah, by contrast, were highly disciplined and executed their plans to perfection to exploit the weaknesses in the Australian batting.

"I feel great standing in the slips cordon and watching these guys run in," said Kohli.

"You can see that hunger and that passion to win for India. We put everything on the line to win for the team.

"They take ownership of their skills. They are dictating terms now which is the most amazing thing you can ask for from your bowlers."

With the bat, the tourists managed to score five centuries over the four matches with Player-of-the-Series Pujara recording three of them, aggregating 521 runs from seven innings at an average of 74.42.

There was a century for captain Kohli, of course, and one in Sydney for the younger generation through the irrepressible wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant.

India have still never won a series in South Africa but finally breaking through in Australia will do much to burnish the reputation of Kohli and a team already ranked number one in the world in the longest format of the game.

"This is an Indian team that will jump over a cliff to win a game for their country," said coach Ravi Shastri. "That's the determination and the ruthlessness, the mindset with which this team went out to play in this series."

"This team now has an identity to look at any other Indian team from the past in the eye without being intimidated and say 'We play proper test match cricket. You did, and we do too.'" — Reuters (See Page 26)

Iran batter Yemen as China, Korea survive scares at Asian Cup

AL-AIN: Mehdi Taremi scored twice as Iran crushed Yemen 5-0 in the war-torn country's Asian Cup debut yesterday to send a message to their title rivals. Looking to end a 43-year title drought since last winning Asian football's most coveted prize, Iran ruthlessly dispatched the Group D minnows in Abu Dhabi.

Joint favourites with South Korea, Iran took just 12 minutes to take the lead as Taremi finished clinically from close range after a shot from Sardar Azmoun was fumbled by Yemen keeper Saud Alsowadi.

Captain Ashkan Dejagah doubled his side's lead in the 23rd minute with a low free kick which cannoned in off the post and the hapless Alsowadi before Taremi powered home a header moments later. Azmoun tapped in a

fourth goal seven minutes into the second half, by which time Iran were playing some champagne football, pulling off extravagant flicks and back-heels that left Yemen's players chasing shadows.

Earlier favourites South Korea scraped past the Philippines and China needed a spectacular goalkeeping gaffe to spark their comeback against lowly Kyrgyzstan as lesser teams continued to trouble bigger sides at the Asian Cup yesterday.

A day after defending champions Australia were rocked 1-0 by Jordan, South Korea, still awaiting the arrival of star forward Son Heung-min, left it late before beating the Philippines by the same scoreline.

Fellow debutants Kyrgyzstan led China 1-0 at half-time but they were left to rue a costly error by goalkeeper Pavel Matiash, whose embarrassing own goal put the Chinese on course for a 2-1 win. After hosts UAE were held by Bahrain, and Syria were kept to a goalless draw by Palestine, it provided more evidence that the gap has narrowed between Asian teams.

Kyrgyzstan looked capable of pulling off an almighty upset against China when Akhliidin Israelov smashed home the opening goal just before half-time in Al Ain. But China profited

from the howler of the tournament so far when Matiash, attempting to claw a defensive header over the bar, batted it over the line instead.

A Chinese winner looked inevitable and it was Yu who completed the turnaround, rounding Matiash and scoring from a tight angle 12 minutes from time.

Later in Dubai, prolific goal poacher Hwang Ui-jo snatched a second-half winner as South Korea beat Sven-Goran Eriksson's Philippines, who impressed on their tournament debut. The Koreans, looking to end 59 years of hurt after failing to win the title since 1960, soaked up considerable pressure in their opening Group C fixture before Hwang broke the deadlock after 67 minutes.

The Japan-based striker swivelled and smashed home from close range to settle his side's nerves after Newcastle midfielder Ki Sung-yuung limped off with a suspected hamstring injury.

South Korea, who will be boosted by the arrival of Tottenham star Son after their first two games, joined China on three points at the top of the group. The Koreans, runners-up to hosts Australia four years ago, were indebted to goalkeeper Kim Seung-Gyu, who plunged to his right to deny Javier Patino in the 54th minute. — AFP



ABU DHABI: Yemen's defender Mohammed Fuad Omar (L) fights for the ball with Iran's midfielder Mehdi Taremi during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup Group D football match between Yemen and Iran at the Mohammed Bin Zayed stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP