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Trump is right on Syria. Turkey can get the job done



By Recep Tayyip Erdogan
President of Turkey

There will be no victory for the terrorists. President Trump made the right call to withdraw from Syria. The United States withdrawal, however, must be planned carefully and performed in cooperation with the right partners to protect the interests of the United States, the international community and the Syrian people. Turkey, which has NATO's second largest standing army, is the only country with the power and commitment to perform that task.

In 2016, Turkey became the first country to deploy ground combat troops to fight the so-called Islamic State in Syria. Our military incursion severed the group's access to NATO's borders and impeded their ability to carry out terror attacks in Turkey and Europe. Unlike coalition operations in Raqqa and Mosul, which relied heavily on airstrikes that were carried out with little or no regard for civilian casualties, Turkish troops and fighters of the Free Syrian Army went door to door to root out insurgents in Al Bab, a former stronghold of the so-called Islamic State.

Our approach left the city's core infrastructure largely intact and made it possible for life to return to normal within days. Today, children are back at school, a Turkish-funded hospital treats the sick, and new business projects create jobs and bolster the local economy. This stable environment is the only cure for terrorism. Turkey is committed to defeating the so-called Islamic State and other terrorist groups in Syria, because the Turkish people are all too familiar with the threat of violent extremism. In 2003, when I became prime minister, coordinated attacks by Al-Qaeda claimed dozens of lives in Turkey.

More recently, the so-called Islamic State terrorists targeted our citizens, our way of life and the inclusive, moderate worldview that our civilization represents. A few years back, the terrorist group called me "treacherous Satan." We saw the horror in the faces of thousands of Christians and Yazidis, who sought refuge in Turkey when these terrorists came for them in Syria and Iraq.

I say this again: There will be no victory for the terrorists. Turkey will continue to do what it must to ensure its own safety and the well-being of the international community.

Militarily speaking, the so-called Islamic State has been defeated in Syria. Yet we are deeply concerned that some outside powers may use the organization's remnants as an excuse to meddle in Syria's internal affairs.

A military victory against the terrorist group is a mere first step. The lesson of Iraq, where this terrorist group was born, is that premature declarations of victory and the reckless actions they tend to spur create more problems than they solve. The international community cannot afford to make the same mistake again today.

Turkey proposes a comprehensive strategy to eliminate the root causes of radicalization. We want to ensure that citizens do not feel disconnected from government, terrorist groups do not get to prey on the grievances of local communities and ordinary people can count on a stable future.

The first step is to create a stabilization force featuring fighters from all parts of Syrian society. Only a diverse body can serve all Syrian citizens and bring law and order to various parts of the country. In this sense, I would like to point out that we have no argument with the Syrian Kurds.

Under wartime conditions, many young Syrians had no choice but to join the PYD/YPG, the Syrian branch of the PKK, that Turkey and the United States consider a terrorist organization. According to Human Rights Watch, the YPG militants have violated international law by recruiting children.

Following the United States withdrawal from Syria, we will complete an intensive vetting process

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KUWAIT: MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri (left) and Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem argue during a National Assembly session yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday delayed a highly anticipated debate on the membership of opposition MPs Waleed Al-Tabtabaei and Jamaan Al-Harbash until after the constitutional court issues its opinion on an objection filed by one of the lawmakers. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem told reporters after the session yesterday that he has decided to wait for the opinion of the constitutional court on the objection filed by Tabtabaei asking the court to delay the implementa-

tion of its earlier key verdict.

The constitutional court last month ruled that article 16 of the Assembly's internal charter is unconstitutional and all actions based on it should be rescinded. The Assembly in late October used the article to vote to retain the membership of Tabtabaei and Harbash even though they had been handed a final jail term by the cassation court for storming the Assembly building during an opposition protest in Nov 2011. The constitutional court ruling means that the Assembly vote on the membership is null and void.

MPs have been divided towards the verdict, with some saying it amounted to interference in the Assembly's internal affairs, while others said it must be implemented immediately. Ghanem said the Assembly's office discussed the verdict and has approved the legal measures required, but he decided to delay those measures until the court reviews Tabtabaei's objection.

The Assembly session yesterday saw Ghanem and senior opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri trading strong language and accusations over the issue.

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18 vehicles with speed cameras hit the streets

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic and Operations Affairs Maj Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh yesterday launched 18 vehicles fitted with mobile speed cameras on main and side roads. He also launched a point-to-point (P2P) system along Abdaly Road to detect speed limit violations, which will become operational from Sunday, Jan 20. Operations Director at the Traffic Department Col Yusuf Al-Khaddah gave an explanation about the mobile speed camera vehicles and how they check the speed of vehicles while moving or



KUWAIT: Vehicles equipped with mobile speed cameras are seen yesterday.

remaining stationary, and how the license plate numbers are captured. He also explained the P2P system and how it checks and films all inbound and outbound vehicles.

Pompeo rallies Mideast allies on Iran, IS fight

AMMAN: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo urged Middle East allies to confront "significant threats" posed by Iran and jihadists as he visited a region shaken by Washington's surprise decision to withdraw from Syria.

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AMMAN: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (left) meets King Abdullah of Jordan yesterday. — AFP

Ghosh protests innocence in first appearance

TOKYO: Former Nissan boss Carlos Ghosh could spend another six months behind bars before his case comes to trial, his lawyer said yesterday. In his first public appearance since his arrest in November rocked the business world, Ghosh told a Tokyo court yesterday he had been "wrongly accused and unfairly detained". But he appears unlikely to win release anytime soon, as Japan allows prosecutors to seek lengthy pre-trial detention as well as further detention periods to investigate allegations even before pressing charges.

His lawyer said it would be "very difficult" to win bail and it could be months before his case is heard. "I believe it

could be considered that at least six months will be needed before being able to go to the first trial," Motonari Otsuru said, citing the complexity of the case and the fact that the documents involved are in both Japanese and English.

Appearing in the Tokyo District Court handcuffed with a rope around his waist, Ghosh earlier mounted a passionate defense against a string of financial misconduct allegations. The 64-year-old was thinner - his family says he has lost up to 20 kg due to the rice-based diet in his Tokyo detention center - and his hair was greying. He appeared in a dark suit without a tie and wore plastic slippers.

"I have been wrongly accused and unfairly detained based on meritless and unsubstantiated accusations," the once-revered titan of the auto industry told the court in a clear and steady voice. He showed no emotion and mostly faced forward or looked down, glancing occasionally at the gallery in the packed courtroom.



TOKYO: Pedestrians pass by a television screen showing a news program displaying a sketch of former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosh in the courtroom yesterday, as the headline reads "Innocence claim". — AFP

In a career spanning decades, during which he won praise for turning around the struggling Japanese car maker, he said he had "always acted with integrity"

and had never before been accused of any wrongdoing. "I have acted honorably, legally and with the knowledge and

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Amir congratulates Bahrain's Prime Minister on his recovery

Amir receives letters from leaders of Croatia, Guinea-Bissau



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Hessa Mohammad Ahmad Abdullah, Mohammad Ibrahim Al-Mulla and Ali Ibrahim Al-Mulla.



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



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Croatian Ambassador to Kuwait Amir Muharemi.



Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Guinea-Bissau's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and non-resident ambassador in Kuwait Mamadou Sano.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of congratulations yesterday to the Prime Minister of Bahrain Prince Khalifa bin Salman Al-Khalifa over his full recovery, praying to Allah Almighty to offer him everlasting health and wellness. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent the Bahraini premier a similar cable. Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak

Al-Hamad Al-Sabah phoned his Bahraini counterpart to inquire about his health. During the call, His Highness the Premier wished his Bahraini counterpart everlasting health and wellbeing. He further stressed the significance of strong relations between the two brotherly Gulf nations, expressing hope for more progress and welfare for the Bahraini people.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received at Bayan Palace His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-

Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir then received Hessa Mohammad Ahmad Abdullah, Mohammad Ibrahim Al-Mulla and Ali Ibrahim Al-Mulla. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received at Bayan Palace His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad.

In other news, His Highness the Amir received a letter from President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic of Croatia on bilateral relations and ways of developing them in all

fields. Croatian Ambassador to Kuwait Amir Muharemi handed the letter over to Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah yesterday. His Highness the Amir also received a letter from President Jose Mario Vaz of Guinea-Bissau regarding bilateral relations and ways of promoting them in various domains. The letter was handed by Guinea-Bissau's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and non-resident ambassador in Kuwait Mamadou Sano to Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Ambassador of Hungary to Kuwait Dr Istvan Soos visited Kuwait Times yesterday and discussed matters of mutual concern with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Bahrain's chief lawmaker praises ties with Kuwait

MANAMA: Chairman of Bahrain's Consultative Council Ali Al-Saleh yesterday stressed the deep-rooted ties between his country and Kuwait, noting the keenness of both nations' wise leaderships to fulfill joint achievements in various fields, to best serve mutual interests. Bahrain News Agency (BNA) quoted Saleh yesterday as expressing his extreme pride of the distinguished

bilateral ties between both countries, as he met the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Bahrain, Ambassador of Kuwait to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah.

Bahrain's Consultative Council would continue boosting relations with Kuwait's National Assembly, and would work hard to unite visions towards joint issues, especially in international arenas, he promised. Kuwait has made great contributions to fulfilling comprehensive development in many countries, and adopted humanitarian initiatives to achieve peace and stability in various parts of the world, he affirmed. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti diplomat praised the historical relations with Bahrain, pointing out the keenness of both nations on boosting and developing their deep-rooted ties. — KUNA



MANAMA: Chairman of Bahrain's Consultative Council Ali Al-Saleh meets with Ambassador of Kuwait to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Amir lauded for devoting special care for Quran award

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah patronizes Kuwait International Award for Memorization, Reading and Recital of the Holy Quran in line with his special concern for supporting the competitors, the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Undersecretary said. His Highness the Amir's directions to hold the final ceremony for distributing the award at Bayan Palace is an honoring for the contestants, said Farid Al-Imadi, who doubles as the chairman of the award supreme committee, speaking at a news conference marking its ninth anniversary. The award had been launched according to a proposal by the ministry to the cabinet, he said, adding that its total value reached KD 167,000 (\$560,000). The Kuwaiti award now perches atop similar awards abroad, some launched 50 years ago, he said, noting that it is sub divided into several branches, including the seventh and 10th recitals and the new award for young memorizers. Meanwhile, Abdulhamid Al-Mutairi, the award committee chairman, echoed identical sentiments with respect of His Highness the Amir special care for the Quran award. Up to 119 persons, including 36 Kuwaitis, have won the award since its launch. — KUNA

Saudi king shares Amir's letter in Cabinet meeting



JEDDAH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz attends the Saudi Cabinet's meeting. — KUNA

JEDDAH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz yesterday discussed with the Saudi Cabinet the contents of a letter he received from His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Kuwaiti Amir's letter highlighted the amity and the tight-knit bond shared by the Gulf neighbors, in addition to their common interests. The Saudi executives also conversed about recent global happenings, in addition to the kingdom's efforts to keep security and stability in the region intact, Minister of Media Turki Al-Shabanah told state-run Saudi Press Agency. Meanwhile, the Saudi Cabinet excoriated the Iran-allied Houthi militia for their "continued transgressions," holding the group accountable for impeding the delivery of humanitarian aid to Yemen. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Residency Affairs Major General Talal Maarafi met with retired ministry employees during their weekly gathering yesterday at the ministry's 'retirees diwaniya.' The senior official conveyed greetings of Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Lt Gen Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and ministry undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Nahham, and promised to continue providing support for retirees as gratitude to their service.

Local

Civil servants' interests taken into consideration in authorities' merger

Parliament OKs bill on regulating credit information

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti government is taking a rational and careful approach in merger of the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) with the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM), considering interests of the employees and the country, a top official affirmed yesterday.

The government is quite willing to consider recommendations by the State Audit Bureau, the Parliamentary Accounting and Final Accounts Committee, the Health, Social and Labor Affairs Committee with respect of the integration and transfer of jurisdictions of the MGRP and PAM, said Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, addressing a regular parliamentary session.

Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled made the comments during a debate in response to a letter by MP Mohammad Al-Dallal on tasking the Parliamentary Health, Social and Labor Affairs Committee to examine the incorporation. Moreover, the government is keen on cooperating with the legislative authority, on basis of Article 50 of Kuwait Constitution, as to non-intervention in issues of any authority, he said. However, he added that its cooperation would not imply stripping it of its right as an executive authority to take decisions, in line with its prerogatives.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled pledged that the government would take into consideration interests of the citizens and the country "in any decisions it may take as stipulated in the jurisdictions accorded to it." Meanwhile, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel also spoke during the session, affirming in part that the planned merger triggered concerns about employees' "legal status" and financial conditions, indicating that the



KUWAIT: (From left) Ministers of economic affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel, oil Khaled Al-Fadhel, social affairs Saad Al-Kharraz and cabinet affairs Anas Al-Saleh attend yesterday's parliament session. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

process should ensure that the staff be paid fairly.

Credit information

Separately, the National Assembly approved a bill stipulating regulations for credit information. The draft law, endorsed in the second reading, was blessed by 45 members, with six objecting out of the present 51 legislators. The voting took place after examining a relevant report by the parliamentary financial and economic committee.

It stipulates clients' consent for inquiring about personal data and information according to executive by-laws; data presenters must supply the

relevant company with clients' credit information, prohibiting circulation of information about persons' private life, views, beliefs or health condition; credit information companies must be subject to supervision by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) to ensure adherence to related laws. Moreover, the credit information company must be a

shareholding firm, with a capital no less than KD 25 million (some \$82 million). The CBK issues rules for regulating companies' operations, their dealings with the clients and the credit information companies.

Process to ensure staff paid fairly



Offenders are punished with a year behind bars, a fine of KD 5,000 (\$16,000), or one of these two penalties. — KUNA

News in brief

Free Trade Zone 'cancelled'

KUWAIT: The Cabinet cancelled the decision that established the Free Trade Zone at Shuwaikh Port issued in June 29, 1997, while the Public Authority for Industry will continue its duties until April 1, 2019. No other contracts will be renewed, while investors will be asked to vacate buildings and land, while keeping work going in some facilities until the new free zone at Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port becomes operational. The new decision linked the future of the free zone in Shuwaikh with what will be reached by the fourth structural project of the country. — Al-Qabas

Family savings

Official sources said Kuwait registered the lowest rate for family savings in the Gulf at only 8 percent. The sources said the study prepared by McKinsey & Company for Kuwait Central Bank and Credit Bank about credit in Kuwait showed the average savings of a family is KD 279 per month based on a monthly spending rate of KD 3,072, measured against a monthly salary of KD 3,351 for the family. The study also showed that two members of each family represent the only earners for their families, while the 25-34 year group forms the highest number of consumer loan recipients, as 81 percent of this group - whose workforce numbers 170,253 - receive loans at an average debt of KD 22,122. It said the age group of 35-44 years comes in second place among debtors, who make up 87 percent of its workforce estimated at 128,385, as the number of debtors in it is 111,283, with a debt rate of KD 27,826. — Al-Rai

TV supervisor reprimanded

A kissing scene in a cartoon broadcast on Kuwait TV's children channel angered social media users. They asked how such a scene escaped the censors, especially since the channel is dedicated to children. The information ministry said it is following the matter and will take all official measures regarding this mistake. Sources said it was old material used by mistake, adding that the general supervisor of the channel was relieved of his duties. — Al-Qabas

Former minister referred to Constitutional Court

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Justice (MoJ) yesterday suspended an embezzlement case against former Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obeidi, Health Ministry Undersecretary Dr Khaled Al-Sahlawi and Assistant Undersecretary for Legal Affairs Dr Mahmoud Abdulhadi, referring it to the Constitutional Court. The court said in its decision that this referral was to settle the case and the constitutionality of the second paragraph of Article 8 and Article 11 of Law 88/1995 on the trial of ministers. Last August, former and current officials at the Ministry of Health were referred to the public prosecution on corruption charges.

Highway development

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri issued a ministerial decision to add the project of developing Abdaly highway to those being investigated by a special committee formed to investigate the reasons of delay. The decision urged the investigating committee to examine the withdrawal of the lowest bidder in the tender of building, developing and maintaining roads and intersections to serve Mutlaa city as well

as suspicion of deliberate delay in awarding the tender.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare reviewed in its monthly press conference the projects it executed and accomplished in 2018, including housing units, apartments, land plots and infrastructure. The housing authority's official spokesperson Ibrahim Al-Nashi said the authority had accomplished several projects in 2018 including low cost cities in Sulaibiya and Taima, residential apartments in Sabah Al-Ahmad City and West Abdullah Mubarak, in addition to the infrastructure needed for these projects. Nashi added that the authority signed 35 contracts in 2018 and that 24 others are pending.

Free licensing

Separately, Kuwait Municipality's acting director Faisal Al-Jumaa said occasional marquees and tents will be licensed for free after only paying a deposit. In other news, the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) announced its readiness to connect electricity to plots in Naayem scrap market after it installed and operated a main 5-megawatt unit and laid the grid cables, said power grids engineer Mohammed Al-Otaibi.

Driver killed in Abdullah Port accident

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A motorist died after his vehicle caught fire following an accident reported in the Abdullah Port area yesterday morning. The man had already succumbed to his injuries by the time first responders arrived to the scene. An investigation was opened to reveal the causes of the accident, the Interior Ministry's Public Relations and Information Department said in a statement.

Prostitutes arrested

Three prostitutes (French, Romanian and Czech) were arrested by vice police

who stormed an apartment in Salmiya they were renting. The women - who entered Kuwait on tourist visas - were charging KD 150 per hour. The women confessed to practicing prostitution using social media. They were sent to concerned authorities for further legal action.

Smuggling foiled

A Saudi man failed to smuggle 100,000 Captagon tablets and 2 kg of shabu from Iraq that he hid in his bus. Recently installed systems indicated something alien in the engine, so it was opened and the drugs were found. The suspect and drugs were handed to concerned authorities.



THE INDIAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL

المدرسة الهندية الشعبية الخاصة

HIGHER EDUCATION FAIR 2019

The Indian Community School, Kuwait is celebrating the 60th year of its prestigious existence this year. The school is organizing a Higher Education Fair, first time in Kuwait on 11th & 12th January 2019 in the ICSK Senior school campus, as the first event of its Diamond Jubilee Celebrations. This educational fair is a maiden venture in Kuwait, organized by the school with exclusive focus on the students of Indian schools in Kuwait. It is a distinctive programme which is not only a career fair & exhibition by the universities all over the world but also comprises of an aptitude test, a career counselling session with the students & parents on a one to one basis with the world renowned Career Guru - Dr. PR Venkataraman who has conducted more than 3000 career guidance seminars in India and abroad. There will be several Career Guidance Seminars by him as a part of the Educational Fair.

This Higher Education Fair is unique as it is organized with a different perspective unlike the usual university fairs which showcases the various opportunities of admission to the universities & colleges where the focus is on securing a seat in the college. ICSK's Higher Education Fair aims at nurturing the career dreams at a young age. So the school is organizing Career Guidance Seminars not only for classes 11 & 12 but also for classes 8, 9 & 10. On Friday 11th January 2019, there will be three sessions for classes 8, 9 & 10 (9.30 a.m.-11.30 a.m., 2.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. & 4.30 p.m.-6.30 p.m.) and on Saturday 12th January 2019, three sessions are arranged for classes 11 & 12 (9.00 a.m.-11.00 a.m., 11.30 a.m. - 1.30 pm & 2.30 p.m.-4.30 p.m.) by the prominent Career Guru Dr. P.R. Venkataraman. These career counselling sessions are free of cost and the students can register themselves through the link - www.icsk-kw.com/edufair.

The aptitude test which is a part of ICSK's Higher Education Fair was conducted earlier only for the students of classes 8, 9 & 10 with the participation of students from various Indian schools in Kuwait, like it is organized in the developed countries. It is not going to be conducted for the students of classes 11 & 12 as streamlining students according their interests has to start from class 8 onwards. The one to one counselling sessions for the students and parents are scheduled on 13th, 14th & 15th January 2019 from morning to evening. The counselling sessions & career guidance seminars are conducted by the distinguished career guru from India and the children are fortunate to interact with him and the parents too will have the opportunity of clarifying all their doubts.

The Higher Education Fair 2019 is being organized on 11th & 12th January 2019 in the ICSK Senior school campus. More than 40 universities from around the world are participating in this.

The participating universities are: University of Buffalo, New York, USA, Manipal Academy for Higher Education(MAHE), Manipal, Leeds

Beckett University, UK, SRM Institute of Science & Technology, Chennai, Loughborough University, UK, Rajagiri School of Engineering & Technology, Kerala, Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences (CUCMS), Malaysia, Heriot - Watt University, UK, Shiv Nadar University, NOIDA, UP Institut Francais Du Kuwait, Federal Institute of Science & Kerala, BITS - PILANI, O.P Jindal Global University, Haryana, Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Amity University, University of New Brunswick, Canada, Amal Jyothi College of Engineering, Kerala, Education Malaysia Global assist (EMGA), Trent University, Canada, Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore, Sunway University, Malaysia, University of Waterloo, Canada, St. Joseph Engineering College, Mangalore, Kuwait Technical College, Kuwait, De Montfort University, Leicester, UK, Memorial University, Canada, Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), Thapar Institute of Engineering & Technology, Punjab, Thompson Rivers University, Canada, Manipal Academy for Higher Education(MAHE), Dubai, Tbilisi University, Georgia, University of Bradford, UK, Kumaraguru Group of Institutions, Coimbatore, INTI International University & Colleges, Malaysia, Arab Open University, Kuwait, Labour India College, Kerala, SEGi University, Malaysia, Vancouver Island University, Canada, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada etc.

The Inaugural ceremony of the Higher Education Fair 2019 is scheduled on 11th January 2019 at 8.30 am. Malaysian Ambassador To Kuwait, H. E. Mr. Dato Mohammad Ali Selamat will grace the occasion as the Chief Guest. Dr. P.R. Venkataraman will be the Guest of Honour of this auspicious function.

ICSK's Higher Education Fair 2019 is a wonderful opportunity for the children to get the knowledge and awareness about all the opportunities from all over the world that await them in their life and have a long term effect in their future as it will help them realise and flourish their innate potentials and latent talents.

The Press Meet was held on 7th January 2019, 7.00 PM at ICSK Senior and Dr. V. Binumon Principal & Senior Administrator convened the conference. Mr. Shaikh Abdul Rahiman - Hon. Chairman, Mr. Amir Mohammed-Hon. Secretary, Mr. Vinu Kumar Nair- Hon. Vice Chairman, Dr. Sam T Kuruvila Vice Principal Senior School, Mrs. Susan Rajesh Deputy Vice Principal Senior School and Mrs. Mini Shaji Joseph Project Director of Higher Education Fair 2019 were present for the meet.

ICSK solicits the earnest cooperation from all of you for its efforts and expresses sincere gratitude for making its endeavors successful.

**Dr. V. Binumon
Principal & Senior Administrator**

Local

57% MENA women seek employment for financial independence: Survey

Establishing successful career a main source of happiness for female professionals

DUBAI: Financial independence was cited by 57 percent of respondents in a recent survey as a key reason women enter the workforce in the Middle East. Meanwhile, 48 percent of female respondents in a new survey conducted by Bayt.com - the Middle East's #1 Job Site - and YouGov - global online market research company - titled Working Women in the MENA, said that they seek employment to support or financially contribute to the household and 48 percent do it to broaden perspectives on life.

Gender equality

Many companies in the MENA region recognize that gender equality is a crucial component to creating inclusive workplaces. The majority of survey respondent believe that women and men are treated equally at their workplace across a variety of areas, including recruitment and selection, career progression, training and development. In line with the overall feeling of workplace equality, nearly two thirds (62 percent) reported working the same number of hours as male colleagues, while 23 percent reported working more hours than male colleagues.

While half of women surveyed (50 percent) believe promotions depend entirely on job performance and gender plays no role, 35 percent of respondents believe women have lower chance of being promoted. The Bayt.com survey also provided valuable information to employers on designing solutions for the common issues facing today's working females. Most women reported their organization offers official maternity leave of two to three months.

Future challenges

To understand what men and women value in their

decision to take a job, the survey asked women to reflect on challenges they faced in their most recent job. Fewer opportunities for promotions (49 percent), stressful and demanding work environment (38 percent), and insufficient job training and coaching or lack thereof (33 percent) are reported to be the top three challenges women face in their work environment.

Roba Al-Assi, Marketing Director, Bayt.com said: "More and more employers are interested in ensuring their

decision to have children has affected their career. At Bayt.com, not only do we provide such vital information to empower companies to design HR processes, but we also create various tools that aid employers find their talent needs and streamline the hiring process."

The pursuit of happiness

An analysis of survey data highlights some very concrete truths about the progress of female empowerment within the MENA region. Establishing a successful career emerged as the main source of happiness for most of female respondents (52 percent), travelling to other countries is also important for them (37 percent), followed by maintaining good health (36 percent).

To understand what female professionals value in their decision to take a job, the survey asked respondents to reflect on which job characteristics were important to them in choosing their most recent job. Overall, the majority (58 percent) of respondents selected a higher salary as the most important benefit, nearly two-fifths (39 percent) stated that opportunities for long term career growth were also very important to them as were flexible working hours (25 percent).

Kerry McLaren, Head of Omnibus MENA at YouGov said: "We teamed up with Bayt.com to analyze female job satisfaction in the region and found important links between women's job satisfaction and an employer's culture and benefits. While many of our respondents believe women and men are treated equally at their workplace; when women report there is gender inequality at work, the most commonly cited issue is with respect to promotions. This survey will help employers focus on what matters to



women in the workplace." Data for the Bayt.com and YouGov's Working Women in the MENA 2018 was collected online from October 21 to November 22, 2018. Results are based on a sample of 633 respondents. Countries assessed include UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Sudan.



48% women work to support household

workplaces are effectively attracting and retaining all types of talents. In light of this, Bayt.com's regional survey identifies the employment challenges that today's working women confront and examines how companies can innovate and alleviate these concerns to improve their workplaces. For example, this survey shows that companies can increase productivity by finding new, innovative ways to support professionals with children to balance between work and life, as half of the respondents stated that their

Mountaineer climbs North American summit

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti renowned mountaineer Youssef Al-Rifaie reached the highest stratovolcano summit in North America at the Pico de Orizaba mountain in Mexico, to become the first Kuwaiti with this achievement. In a phone call yesterday, Rifaie said that the mountain stands at 5,636 meters above sea level. He noted that among the hardships he faced while climbing the mountain was darkness, extremely cold weather and lack of oxygen. Rifaie, who had climbed his fourth stratovolcano summit, added that the way back down was also exhausting, however, he was overwhelmed with joy by his achievement.

Meanwhile, the climber revealed his future plans in continuing to climb stratovolcano summits to cover all seven around the world, as well as skating in the North and South poles. Rifaie started climbing in 2015 and was the first Arab to climb the highest stratovolcano summit in Papua New Guinea in Oceania last August, standing at 4,367 meters above sea level. — KUNA



Kuwaiti mountaineer Youssef Al-Rifaie raises Kuwait's flag at the Pico de Orizaba mountain in Mexico.

KFAED's distinguished students program to boost fund's goals

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) said Monday its program for distinguished high school students aimed at spreading its objectives regarding social and cultural development. This came by Muna Al-Ayyaf, Director of KFAED's Media Department, who was speaking to the press on sidelines of an orientation with distinguished high school graduates, selected to join the 'be amongst the distinguished' program.

The program will take a group of girls to Sri Lanka and a group of boys to Tajikistan on January 11-18, aimed at increasing awareness of students on KFAED's operations in the two countries. KFAED offered five loans to Tajikistan since 2001 valued \$24.994 million, while extending 15 loans to Sri Lanka since 1975 amounting to \$77.656 million.

Ayyaf said KFAED was offering easy loans to developing and poor countries to contribute to development and improvement of economic conditions. She said KFAED's assistance was strictly directed to Arab countries up until 1974. After that it expanded to reach developing countries. The fund's capital reached KD 2 billion (\$6.6 billion) in 1986, she said, thus enabling it to rely on its own resources to finance development projects.

Ayyaf said the fund's deposits were KD 6 billion (\$19.8 billion). KFAED's development assistance, said Ayyaf, was extended without discrimination which "encouraged many countries to support Kuwait's cause during Iraq's invasion." The fund, meanwhile, was offering training programs for newly-graduate Kuwaiti engineers to prepare them to work in public or private sectors. KFAED, she added, was allocating 25 percent of its yearly profits to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare. — KUNA



Muna Al-Ayyaf, Director of KFAED's Media Department, speaks to the students.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) officials with the distinguished high school graduates.— KUNA

ABK hosts event to launch 'Talent Program' for 2019

KUWAIT: In line with its continuous efforts to support the development of its employees, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) launched its 'Talent Program' for 2019, at the Four Seasons Hotel. The program witnessed participants from the bank's high performing and high potential employees coming together to undertake a structured learning experience, and ensuring they receive the support and guidance required to succeed in existing roles and future responsibilities. The talent program is divided into three

tiers namely high performing employees, high potential employees and current leaders in the organization.

Commenting on the program, Hamza Enki - Human Resources General Manager at ABK said, "Our people are at the heart of our business, and as a result we will always maintain their career development as a top priority. The talent program has been devised to recognize select ABK employees and empower them to further develop and succeed in their roles. At ABK, we strongly

believe that the success of our people is the success of the bank, and we endeavor to ensure that we sustain the culture of the bank through developing leaders from within. We are committed to investing in the development of young national talent through our 'ABK Youth Development Program', to prepare them for future leadership roles within the bank."

This year, ABK's high potential performers will cultivate their leadership capabilities through classroom learning

and project work in a move to be prepared for future leadership roles. This structured program is delivered in partnership with the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK), and is certified under the internationally recognized Highfield Leadership Institute. Current leaders that have been identified as part of the succession plan will have a more flexible program which focuses on conferences, seminars, and corporate events locally through VIGOR Events, and internationally through partnerships with extended companies.



Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A silhouette of Kuwait City before sunset. — Photo by Mohammad Sobhi (KUNA)

Hotels, restaurants' sector provides thousands of jobs: Minister

KUWAIT: The hotels and restaurants' sector in Kuwait provides thousands of jobs and investment opportunities in major projects, as well as medium and small enterprises that are gaining more momentum the closer we get to concluding major projects related to the 'New Kuwait 2035' vision, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said. The minister made her remarks in a statement released to the press yesterday on the occasion of the Horeca Kuwait 2019 exhibition, which is set to be inaugurated under her auspices on January 14, 2019 with participation of companies specialized in hospitality, catering and hotel equipment.

Aqeel added that the government fully supports all efforts that would help achieve this vision, namely in terms of the private sector's contribu-

tions. "Hence comes Horeca's significance," she underlined, pointing to the importance of exploring all sectors capable of creating more job opportunities for citizens and improving work environments for small and medium projects. "Tourism and hospitality services tops those sectors, especially after the cabinet decided to subject the Civil Service Commission to the Minister of State for Economic Affairs and combining all state departments entrusted with employment under one umbrella to set a clear strategy for labor markets," Aqeel elaborated, expressing hopes that local products would help the industrial sector, namely food industries, flourish. The three-day Horeca Kuwait 2019 exhibition is organized by the Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development in col-



Mariam Al-Aqeel

laboration with the Hospitality Services Company at Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref.

Burgan Bank conducts emergency evacuation drill

KUWAIT: As part of its regular in-house safety exercises, Burgan Bank recently conducted a surprise emergency evacuation drill for its employees at the Head office. The evacuation, which was attended by members of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSDD), helped to evaluate employee response time as well as understand potential gaps and areas for improvement.

Burgan Bank and KFSDD worked together to ensure employee safety and security of internal equipment. The staff underwent comprehensive training on how to manage disasters or accidents. Part of the exercise also involved the simulation of a fire in the building and also situation where few individuals were trapped or injured in one of the floors on the tenth floor.

Burgan Bank's Group Chief Operations and Technology Officer, Venkat Menon said: "By carrying out regular emergency drills, we are ensuring the protection of our staff as well as our facilities and customers' confidential data. As a bank, our customers expect the highest standard of quality and reliability, hence, the bank deploys international best practice methods to ensure sustainable

efficiency as top priority."

Burgan Bank's staff responded successfully to the mock drill and evacuated the building of all personnel on time. The exercise was carried out under the supervision of the Director of Capital Governorate Fire Department, Colonel Ahmad Hayef Al-Rashidi, in the presence of the Officer of Fire Prevention Department of the Capital Governorate. The exercise also involved the fire teams of Al Hilali and Al-Madina Fire centers, led by the Head of Al-Hilali Fire center, Col Fahad Al-Ajmi, and the Head of Al-Madina Fire center, Col Bashar Al-Nafe, where two teams were formed for rescue operations and others to fight the fire. On behalf of the bank the exercise was coordinated by Eng. Saud Abdulaziz Al-Hadbah AGM Head of General Services Administration

Burgan Bank thanked KFSDD for their years of support and diligence to sharing safety precautions during these procedures. The bank will continue to demonstrate its commitment to employee wellness and security through state of the art occupational training and learning programs.



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N Korea's Kim visits China ahead of expected summit with Trump

Merkel condemns an attack on far-right MP

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A handout photo taken yesterday and made available by the Hong Kong Government Flying Service shows a fire rescue ship spraying water towards the burning oil tanker 'Aulac Fortune' off the coast in southern Hong Kong. —AFP

One dead in HK oil tanker blaze

A potential environmental catastrophe off Hong Kong's coast

HONG KONG: One man was killed and two others declared missing after an oil tanker caught fire while it was being refuelled off Hong Kong yesterday, sending a huge cloud of dark smoke billowing into the air. Twenty-three people were rescued after those on board the stricken Vietnamese-listed vessel either fell or jumped into the sea, police said. Some of the victims suffered burns, with four people injured, one of them seriously.

Fears of a potential environmental catastrophe in a busy shipping channel also known for porpoises and turtles were dampened late yesterday after officials said no leak had been detected from the vessel which not carrying any oil cargo at the time of the accident. Fire department commander Yiu Men-yeung said the ship was about to be refuelled by an oil barge when the accident occurred.

He told reporters that according to the crew on the barge, they were "connecting the hoses for refueling for

the oil tanker, and then there were three explosions", before the ship burst into flames. Yiu added that the vessel, which was on its way from the southern Chinese industrial city of Dongguan to Thailand, was not at risk of sinking. It took around five hours for firefighters to put out the blaze. But the tanker, which had a crew of 25 Vietnamese, was listing at a 30 degree angle. One Singaporean national was slightly injured on the oil barge, authorities said.

Shockwaves

Witnesses described feeling shockwaves when the explosions tore through the ship. "I felt my boat shaking. The tremble came from the sea," said speedboat driver Michael Kwok, who told AFP he heard three explosions while out on his boat nearby. Footage from before the fire was brought under control showed the stricken vessel listing with large plumes of black smoke coming from its middle and flames still burning on the deck.

A Hong Kong government statement said firefighters used four jets to contain the blaze, which could be seen not far off the southern side of Hong Kong's Lamma island. A fireboat was seen spraying two streams of water into the sea near the tilted side of the tanker, according to an AFP reporter at the scene, with a mass of twisted metal on the deck and a charred exterior wall bearing a "No Smoking" sign. Three more fireboats, a helicopter and a police boat were also circling the scene.

"I heard several banging and rumbling sounds, like someone with big hands knocking my glass door," a resident of Lamma island's Mo Tat New Village who gave his name as Shu told AFP. He added that a smaller banging sound followed about 10 seconds later. A fisherman from Lamma told local news channel i-Cable he first heard explosions and then saw "dense smoke" followed by a "ball of fire".

The name on the front of the tanker was Aulac

Fortune, which the Hong Kong marine department tracker website showed as arriving at the South Lamma anchorage at 2:58 am Tuesday. Ship-tracking websites MarineTraffic and VesselFinder both classify the ship as an "oil/chemical tanker". The marine department said the tanker had already unloaded all oil cargo in previous ports and there was none onboard at the time of the accident. It added "the pollution control vessels are at (the) scene and no oil pollution is found so far".

Despite no reported leakage, environmentalist Gary Stokes said the incident was at an early stage and he was still trying to assess its ecological impact. "It is obviously something of concern when it comes to the environment with the animals out there — it is the home of the finless porpoise," said Stokes, director of OceansAsia.org, referring to the waters near Lamma, adding its population is believed to be declining. Turtles are also known to nest on one of Lamma's coves. — AFP

Afghan migrants returning from Iran hit record high

HERAT: The flow of Afghans forced to leave Iran turned into a flood in 2018, with a record nearly 800,000 coming back as renewed US sanctions sent the Iranian currency into freefall and fuelled inflation. The 773,125 voluntary returnees and deportees was 66 percent more than in 2017 and the trend is expected to continue, said Laurence Hart, the International Organization for Migration's (IOM) chief of mission in Afghanistan.

"The reason why people are coming back is because of the reduced economic opportunities in the region... including Iran," Hart told AFP. The 2018 figure was the highest since the IOM began systematically recording the volume of returnees to Afghanistan in 2012. In contrast, just under 33,000 Afghans came back from Pakistan, where many have lived since fleeing the Soviet invasion of 1979.

Desperate Afghans have been paying smugglers to cross the porous border with Iran for years in search of work to support struggling families. Smugglers can charge \$300-\$500 per person, turning it into a multi-million industry. An estimated 1.5 million to two million "undocumented" Afghans are in Iran, the United Nations' refugee agency said

in September, citing government estimates. Another one million are registered as refugees.

Many of the families of migrants are farmers who have been suffering through Afghanistan's worst drought in living memory, compounding the misery caused by 17 years of conflict and underscoring their reliance on the remittances. "There were no jobs in Afghanistan so I had to go to Iran for work," said Mohammad Sarwar, 39, who worked as a laborer for four months before he was arrested by Iranian police and deported.

"If I can make some money here, I will never go back to Iran," he said at the IOM's busy transit centre in the western Afghan city of Herat, roughly 140 kilometers from the border. Abdul Hakim, 28, had just found a job in Iran after a month of searching when he was detained and kicked out. He faces an uncertain future as he tries to find a way to support his wife and three young children.

"The situation is very bad in Afghanistan," said Hakim, who comes from the northwestern province of Badghis, which has been hit hard by the drought. Some, like 75-year-old Naseruddin, who only gave one name, have returned to Afghanistan penniless. "I was there for five months but the police caught me," he said. "I have no money on me." Nearly half of the returnees — 358,065 — volunteered to come back to Afghanistan after watching their earnings shrivel up and jobs disappear. Iran's rial lost around half its value against the dollar last year after US President Donald Trump pulled out of the 2015 nuclear deal. That move triggered a re-imposition of tough sanctions on the Islamic republic, which have exacerbated the country's economic problems. — AFP

IS counterattack in east Syria leaves 32 dead: Monitor

BEIRUT: Die-hard jihadists defending their last bastions in eastern Syria used the cover of bad weather to launch a vain but deadly counterattack against Kurdish-led fighters. The Islamic State group was unable to hold on to the positions they attacked but the assault killed 23 members of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and also left nine jihadists dead.

IS fighters took advantage of poor visibility to unleash suicide attackers on SDF forces along the front line in the Euphrates valley late on Sunday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said yesterday. "Twenty-three SDF fighters were killed and nine IS jihadists were also killed in fighting that lasted all night and into Monday morning," Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said.

The jihadists often launch attacks under the cover of bad weather that cancels out their opponents' advantage of US-led coalition air power. The SDF launched what is meant to be the final offensive on the jihadist organization four months ago with air and ground support from coalition forces. The Kurdish-Arab alliance has deployed some 17,000 fighters for an operation aimed at flushing out IS from the last rump of its now-defunct "caliphate". IS fighters "launched deadly counterattacks in three different directions against the Syrian Democratic Forces, including in the villages of Sousa and Al-Shaafa," Abdel Rahman said.

IS defense lines shattered

He said they used at least two suicide bombers in their attacks, which inflicted the latest in a string of heavy losses on the SDF. According to the Observatory, 1,087 IS

jihadists were killed since the start of the operation on September 10, while 602 members of the SDF also died. "On Monday morning, the SDF launched an offensive and retook all the positions they lost," the Observatory said. "Due to its depleted manpower, IS was unable to hold on to the positions it attacked," it said.

Abdel Rahman said the jihadists' defences in the area have collapsed and the end of the battle is near. The IS jihadists who remain however include seasoned fighters who have little to lose and are prepared to die in a last stand. The meanders of the Euphrates in the east of Deir Ezzor province near the border with Iraq are considered the heartland of IS and are perilous terrain for the SDF.

"Their defense lines have been shattered. The jihadists are mostly using snipers, snap attacks, tunnels and land-mines" to slow the SDF's inexorable advance, Abdel Rahman said. In mid-December, the SDF took Hajin, the last town of note in the IS-controlled pocket, signaling the imminent fall of the jihadists' last bastion.

Dregs of the caliphate

An announcement by US President Donald Trump last month that he was ordering a complete troop pullout from Syria rattled the Kurds. It left them exposed to the threat of a cross-border operation by their archfoe Turkey and protesting that they had been poorly rewarded for doing much of the costly ground fighting in the battle against IS.

They have pressed on with their operation in eastern Syria regardless and Washington has since stressed any withdrawal would be gradual. IS lost the village of Al-Shaafa on Saturday and is battling to hold on to Sousa and Baghouz. The fall of the two small villages would cap a years-long multinational effort to smash the sprawling proto-state IS declared over swathes of Syria and Iraq in 2014. IS would then no longer control any populated areas in Iraq or Syria and would have completely reverted to being a clandestine group carrying out hit-and-run attacks from its desert hideouts. — AFP

International

Trump ramps up Mexico wall row with speech, border visit

'The frontlines of the national security and humanitarian crisis'

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump is set to deliver a primetime address to the nation on immigration as he pushed for a showdown in his battle for a controversial US-Mexico border wall. Trump's plans for a national address at 9:00 pm (0200 GMT Wednesday) and a trip to the actual border Thursday raise the stakes in the row with congressional Democrats refusing to fund his wall project. The stalemate has led to a partial government shutdown now in its third week.

Democratic leaders responded to Trump's planned speech by calling for equal airtime to rebut the president's "malice and misinformation," though it is not yet clear how major networks will respond. The events — giving Trump the national stage against two very different backdrops — give him a chance to try to seize the narrative. They also follow his threats to bypass Congress by invoking emergency powers to order wall construction.

Those powers would in theory allow Trump to seek alternative funding for the wall and possibly free him to reopen parts of the federal government shut down as part of his row with Congress. However, opponents would almost certainly accuse him of presidential overreach and respond with court challenges. So far the White House has given no heads up regarding the details of Trump's message. Trump simply tweeted that his address from the Oval Office yesterday will cover "the Humanitarian and National Security crisis on our Southern Border."

Tomorrow's trip, his spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said, will be to "the frontlines of the national security and humanitarian crisis." The exact destination was not made public. "President Trump keeps rejecting the bipartisan House-passed bills, which have already received strong bipartisan support in the Senate, to re-open the government," said a joint statement by House Speaker Nancy

Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer. "Now that the television networks have decided to air the President's address, which if his past statements are any indication will be full of malice and misinformation, Democrats must immediately be given equal airtime," they added.

Government paralyzed

Trump has made building a wall the central theme of his nationalist domestic policies. He paints the Mexico border as an open gate for criminals, including rapists, terrorists, people with dangerous diseases and phony asylum seekers. The border has indeed for years seen significant numbers of illegal immigrants and a thriving drug trade. However, fact checkers have debunked the more hair-raising claims, including regarding terrorist threats.

Most recently, Sanders claimed on Sunday in an interview on the usually Trump-friendly Fox News channel that "nearly 4,000 known or suspected terrorists come into our country illegally." However, the interviewer immediately called her out, citing the government's own information that none of those individuals arrived across the southern border. Democrats, who won control of the House of Representatives in midterm legislative elections, say Trump overblows the "crisis" and call the wall a political stunt not worth taxpayer money. In retaliation, Trump has refused to sign a wider spending package — leaving sections of the federal government without funding and hundreds of thousands of employees facing delays in their paychecks.

Who will blink first?

Trump has often boasted of his tough negotiating skills as a real estate businessman, and he appears to relish the standoff, insisting he will deprive the government of full



Aerial view of US President Donald Trump's border wall prototypes as seen from Tijuana, in Baja California state, Mexico, on January 7, 2019. — AFP

funding for as long as it takes to force the Democrats' hand — "even years." Invoking emergency powers would potentially be an alternative, allowing him to get around Congress's control of the budget.

But that would pump up the political heat even further, because there is disagreement over the scope of a presi-

dent's right to use the measure. Further stoking the immigration debate is the looming race among potential Democratic candidates to win the nomination to take on Trump in 2020 presidential elections. The increasingly emboldened party is in no mood to grant Trump any kind of victory on the divisive issue. — AFP

Turkey trial opens into 2016 Russian ambassador killing

ANKARA: Twenty-eight suspects went on trial yesterday over the assassination of the Russian ambassador two years ago, including a US-based Muslim preacher blamed by Ankara for a failed coup the same year. Andrei Karlov, 62, was shot dead by an off-duty Turkish policeman at a photo exhibition in Ankara on December 19, 2016, in a shock attack that was captured on camera by photographers attending the event.

The 22-year-old gunman, Mevlut Mert Altintas, shouted "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest) and "Don't forget Aleppo", vowing that those responsible for events in Syria would be held accountable. Altintas was killed shortly after by members of the Turkish special forces. The Ankara prosecutor has charged 16 of the suspects with "premeditated murder with the intention of causing terror", according to the indictment. The other 12 were charged with "being a member of a terror organization".

Thirteen are currently in pre-trial detention, while five suspects are on conditional release and appeared in court yesterday. Six others are being tried in absentia. Four suspects appeared in court via video conference while nine were under gendarmic protection in the courtroom. Those not in Turkey include Fethullah Gulen, a US-based Islamic preacher seen as an arch foe of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and who Ankara blames for the July 2016 coup attempt. Gulen has denied links to both the failed coup and the murder.

Turkey refers to the organization as the "Fetullah Terrorist Organisation" (FETO) but followers say it is peaceful, promoting secular education. During the opening hearing in Ankara, two suspects who had attended the same police academy as Altintas and stood accused of being a member of a terror group denied any links to the Gulen movement. Bilal Dereli, 26, told the court that he had never been in the same class as



ANKARA: Two police officers stand in the courtyard in front of the courthouse in Ankara yesterday where opens today the trial of twenty-eight suspects over the assassination of the Russian ambassador two years ago, including a US-based Muslim preacher blamed by Ankara for a failed coup the same year. — AFP

Altintas and only knew him by his face. "I got into police school on the third attempt. If I had a link (to Gulen), I would have immediately been successful," he added. Dogukan Soylemez, a 26-year-old classmate of Altintas and a former security officer for the health minister, insisted he had no links with Gulen either during his time at school or in his working life.

'Attack' on Turkey-Russia ties

Penalties sought by the prosecution include aggravated life sentences, which have replaced the death penalty in Turkey and carry harsher conditions than normal life imprisonment convictions. The indictment says the Gulen movement plotted the murder of Karlov, who had been appointed as ambassador in 2013, to "break off bilateral relations" between Turkey and Russia and bring them to the brink of "hot

war". The Kremlin had previously warned against rushing to any assumptions.

But Selim Koru, a Black Sea Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute think tank noted in a report late last year that Russia sent investigators and "if they had different findings, they didn't say". Turkey and Russia had a dramatic falling out in November 2015 after a Turkish fighter jet shot down a Russian warplane along the Syrian border.

But by the summer of 2016 relations had improved, with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Erdogan keen to show they are working together to find a solution to the Syrian conflict despite being on opposing sides of the war. Tens of thousands of people have been arrested over alleged links to Gulen since 2016 in a crackdown criticized by human rights groups and Ankara's Western allies. — AFP

Teen trafficking victim granted clemency over killing man

CHICAGO: A US trafficking victim serving a life sentence for killing a man who bought her for sex when she was a teenager was granted clemency Monday following a celebrity-backed viral campaign for her freedom. Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam said Cyntoia Brown, now 30, had been given "too harsh" a sentence for the 2004 murder of a real estate agent in the city of Nashville.

Johnny Allen had picked up Brown, who was 16 at the time and a runaway under the influence of a dangerous pimp, and taken her to his home for sex. The ex-Army sharpshooter allegedly showed off his firearms and "grabbed" Brown forcefully between her legs. She said she shot him in fear for her life. A jury convicted Brown of first-degree murder and aggravated robbery, and she was given life with the possibility of parole after serving at least 51 years in prison.

Calling the case "tragic and complex," Haslam granted clemency under the condition of a 10-year parole. Brown will be released on August 7 after undergoing training on returning to society. "Cyntoia Brown committed, by her own admission, a horrific crime at the age of 16," Haslam said in a

statement. "Yet, imposing a life sentence on a juvenile that would require her to serve at least 51 years before even being eligible for parole consideration is too harsh, especially in light of the extraordinary steps Ms. Brown has taken to rebuild her life."

Without the governor's intervention, Brown would have remained in prison at least until 2055. In a statement released by her attorneys, Brown thanked her supporters and the governor and promised to "do everything I can to justify your faith in me." "My hope is to help other young girls avoid ending up where I have been," she added.

Prison transformation

Brown earned a high school degree while incarcerated and was on track to complete her college education this year. The governor's office said numerous prison employees and volunteers attested to her personal growth. "Her transformation, when given the opportunity, is nothing short of miraculous," her attorneys Charles Bone and J Houston Gordon said in a joint statement. "She is truly a remarkable young woman with so much to offer this world and will now have that chance."

Brown's case was featured in a 2011 documentary, and was the subject of a social media campaign involving multiple celebrities who advocated for clemency, saying she should have been treated as a traumatized child victim of sex trafficking. "Cyntoia never should have been sentenced so harshly to begin with, and we can't lose sight of the fact that she is still receiving an excessive 10 years' probation," the American Civil Liberties Union tweeted in response to the clemency news. — AFP

Children tortured in Kurdistan for 'IS links'

BAGHDAD: Security forces in Iraqi Kurdistan have been "torturing children" to force them to confess to having links with the jihadist Islamic State group, Human Rights Watch said yesterday. The rights group said it interviewed 23 boys aged between 14 and 17 who were charged with, or convicted of, belonging to IS, and that 16 of them said they had been "tortured" during questioning.

Some boys said members of the Kurdish security forces known as Asayesh beat them with plastic pipes, electric cables or rods while others said they were subjected to electric shocks or a painful stress position dubbed the "scorpion", the watchdog said. "Several boys said the torture continued over consecutive days, and only ended when they confessed" to involvement with IS, it said. "Most said they had no access to

a lawyer and they were not allowed to read the confessions Asayesh wrote and forced them to sign," it added.

It said the punishment inflicted by security forces of the Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq took place in 2017 and 2018 despite promises by authorities to investigate the torture claims. "Nearly two years after the Kurdistan Regional Government promised to investigate the torture of child detainees, it is still occurring with alarming frequency," said Jo Becker, children's rights advocacy director at HRW. The watchdog said its staff interviewed the boys during a November visit to a detention centre in Arbil, where 63 children are being held. A senior Kurdish official dismissed the allegations.

Dindar Zebari, international affairs adviser to the Kurdish government, told AFP that "HRW never visited" the detention centre. "No one can be arrested unless the judiciary authorizes it. And any person who has been arrested is treated in accordance with the law," he said, adding that the Kurdish government rejects the use of torture. According to HRW, most of the boys said their interrogators told them what they should confess and many said they gave false testimony only to stop the torture. — AFP

EU in talks with US over embassy 'downgrade'

BRUSSELS: The European Union said yesterday it is in talks with US officials after President Donald Trump's administration reportedly "downgraded" the bloc's embassy in Washington, in the latest blow to transatlantic relations. The US State Department lowered the EU mission's diplomatic status from member state to international organization late last year, according to a report by German broadcaster Deutsche Welle.

The move apparently only came to light when the EU ambassador in Washington did not receive an invitation to the funeral of former US president George HW Bush in December, DW reported. "We understand that there was a recent change in the way the diplomatic precedence list is implemented by the United States Protocol," Maja Kocijancic, spokeswoman for the European Commission's diplomatic service, told AFP in an email. "We are discussing with the relevant services in the administration possible implications for the EU Delegation in Washington."

Kocijancic confirmed the EU was not notified of the change and said the bloc expected "the diplomatic practice established some years ago to be observed". The news comes at a sensitive moment for EU-US relations, with the bloc's top trade negotiator Cecilia Malmstrom on her way to Washington to try to breathe life into efforts to strike a trade deal and calm raging commercial tensions. Officials in Brussels hope Malmstrom's talks with United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer will persuade Trump away from slapping 25 percent tariffs on European car imports, that would mostly affect Germany and possibly spark a trade war. — AFP

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International

German, 20, confesses to massive data hack spurred by 'annoyance'

Stunning cyber security breach affected around 1,000 German politicians

BERLIN: German authorities yesterday said a 20-year-old hacker had confessed to stealing and leaking private data from hundreds of politicians, including Chancellor Angela Merkel, because he was "annoyed" by some of their public statements. The young German, who lives with his parents, was taken into custody after police searched the family home in the western state of Hesse on Sunday.

The suspect was not remanded in custody however because he was fully cooperating with the enquiry and not deemed a flight risk, said Georg Ungeluk, a spokesman for the Frankfurt prosecution service's internet crime office ZIT. "The accused said he published the data because he had been annoyed by certain statements made by those affected," Ungeluk told a press conference in Wiesbaden. The suspect, who because of his young age falls under juvenile law in Germany, told police he acted alone.

Ungeluk added that the young man had shown "clear remorse" about the stunning cyber security breach which affected around 1,000 German politicians, journalists and celebrities and piled political pressure on the government. The information leaked online comprised home addresses, mobile phone numbers, letters, invoices and copies of identity documents. The data was first released via Twitter in December but its spread gathered pace last week.

Among those hit were members of the Bundestag lower house of parliament and the European Parliament as well as regional and local assemblies. Deputies from all parties represented in the Bundestag were targeted with the exception of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), the largest opposition group in parliament. Speaking at the same press conference, the head of cyber security at Germany's Federal Police Office (BKA), Heiko Locher, said it was too soon to say whether the suspect was acting out of far-right sympathies.

"We are still investigating his motives and whether they may have been criminal or politically motivated," he told reporters, adding that police were also working to confirm whether the suspect did indeed work alone.

Investigators have seized computers and hard drives from the scene that were now being combed over by experts, Ungeluk added. He confirmed media reports that the suspect had tried to destroy a computer before the raid, but said investigators were still able to retrieve data from the damaged device.

'Attack on democracy'

Although the leak was sweeping, there is no evidence that sensitive information reached the public, investigators and the interior ministry have said. In the vast majority of cases, only basic contact information was made available. The leak has nevertheless been deeply embarrassing for the political class, exposing a naive and sometimes reckless use of computer networks, and turned up the heat on the unpopular interior minister, Horst Seehofer.

Critics said the ministry and relevant authorities were slow in informing affected politicians of the leak and moving to stop it. Seehofer is due to speak to reporters in the afternoon. Beyond politicians, the leak also exposed the private data of celebrities and journalists, including chats and voicemail messages from spouses and children of those targeted. The information derived both from social media and private "cloud" data. The Twitter account @_Orbit published the links last month, along the lines of an advent calendar with each link to new information hidden behind a "door".

The account, which calls itself G0d and has now been suspended by Twitter, was opened in mid-2017 and purportedly has more than 18,000 followers. It described its activities as "security researching", "artist" and "satire and irony" and said it was based in Hamburg. Justice Minister Katarina Barley, who last week had labelled the data dump an attack on "our democracy and its institutions", called on internet service providers and social networks "to shut down accounts as soon as they have been hacked". German politicians and lawmakers have repeatedly fallen victim to cyberattacks in recent years.



BERLIN: (L to R) German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer, the President of the German Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) Holger Muench and the President of the German Federal Office for Information Security Arne Schoenbohm arrive to give a press conference a few days after private data from hundreds of politicians including German Chancellor have been published online. — AFP

In 2015, the Bundestag network was hit by a malware attack later blamed on Russian hackers. In March last year, computer networks belonging to the German gov-

ernment came under sustained attack and data from foreign ministry staff was stolen. At the time, Moscow denied that Russian hackers were involved. — AFP

Merkel condemns an attack on far-right MP

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel led condemnations yesterday of a "politically motivated" gang attack against a far-right German MP, an assault that underlined the increasingly tense political landscape in the country. Frank Magnitz, leader in Bremen of the anti-immigration populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD), was assaulted in the city centre on Monday afternoon. "Given the victim's work, we believe that this is a politically motivated act," police said.

The AfD party published a photo of Magnitz unconscious on a hospital bed, his face bleeding and swollen with a gash on his forehead. It said three masked men had carried out the attack. "They hit him with a piece of wood until he was unconscious and then kicked him on the ground," a statement from the party said, adding that a construction worker had intervened to stop the assault. "Today is a dark day for democracy in Germany."

Magnitz, who is still in hospital, told national news agency DPA that he neither saw the attackers nor heard them say anything. "I will in any case be more careful when walking through the area," he said, adding that doctors were likely to keep him in hospital until the weekend. AfD leader Joerg Meuthen tweeted that Magnitz was "beaten almost to death" in a "cowardly and sickening" attack.

Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert wrote on Twitter that the "brutal attack" was "to be condemned sharply". "Hopefully the police will succeed in catching the perpetrators quickly," he wrote. Foreign Minister Heiko Maas also said there was "absolutely no justification" for the use of violence despite political differences. "Anyone who carries out such a crime must be punished."

The AfD's entry into parliament in September 2017 with 13 percent of the vote unleashed a political earthquake in Germany. With their anti-immigration rhetoric and their challenge of post-WWII Germany's culture of atonement, the party's leaders and MPs have been knocking over taboo after taboo in the country's political arena.

While they have won fans in some quarters and are projected to make gains in European elections in May as well as three regional polls in the former communist east later this year, they have also sparked furor and become a target of attack. Last week, an explosive device detonated in a rubbish bin damaged an AfD office in Saxony. Three suspects were detained. And last weekend in Lower Saxony, the home of a local AfD politician was targeted with graffiti and a party office was attacked with a paint bomb.

Since mid-December, German police have recorded eight attacks against AfD offices. Party co-chiefs Alexander Gauland and Alice Weidel called the latest assault the "result of the incitement to hatred by politicians and media against us". Amid the heated atmosphere, Johannes Kahrs, an MP from the Social Democrats, junior partners in the ruling coalition, said "violence is never acceptable" and that "extremism in any form is rubbish". — AFP



BERLIN: Picture taken on September 26, 2018 shows Frank Magnitz, politician of the anti-immigration populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD), speaking during a session of the Bundestag (lower house of parliament). — AFP

MPs urge police to act over Brexit protesters

LONDON: Dozens of British MPs have written to London's police chief to warn about a "deteriorating public order and security situation" around parliament, after Brexit supporters assailed pro-EU figures there on Monday. A cross-party group of 55 lawmakers sent the letter to the Metropolitan Police commissioner after prominent Remain supporting MP Anna Soubry was called a "Nazi" by the protesters during live TV interviews near parliament.

The Conservative lawmaker and at least two pro-European Union commentators were then pursued and harangued by the group as they made their way through the area. "We write to express our serious concerns about the deteriorating public order and security situation in and around the exterior of the parliamentary estate," the MPs' letter to police chief Cressida Dick stated, noting similar incidents last year.

"An ugly element of individuals with strong far right and extreme right connections... have increasingly engaged in intimidatory and potentially criminal acts targeting Members of Parliament, journalists, activists and members of the public," it added. The Metropolitan Police said Monday it had received a complaint about a public order offence and its officers were "assessing if any crimes have been committed". But Soubry accused the force of ignoring the increasing levels of abuse hurled at politicians and journalists.

The MP told ITV's "Good Morning Britain" program that protesters were regularly "roaming around Westminster intimidating people going about their lawful business". There was a noticeable police presence around parliament on Tuesday, particularly on the College Green site where media outlets carry anchored live coverage and conduct interviews with MPs and commentators. Several police trucks were seen parked up, while pairs and clusters

Nigeria's Buhari accepts setbacks in Boko Haram fight

LAGOS: Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has acknowledged setbacks in the fight against Boko Haram as the jihadists launched fresh attacks in the restive northeast. The 76-year-old head of state was elected in 2015 on a promise to end the Islamist insurgency, which has killed more than 27,000 people since 2009 and left 1.8 million homeless. But as Buhari seeks a second term in elections next month, a wave of attacks, including against military bases, has undermined his repeated claim that the group is virtually defeated.

Soldiers have also complained that Boko Haram fighters are better armed and that morale is low, particularly because of a lack of rotation and support. In a recorded interview broadcast late on Monday on Arise TV, Buhari conceded that troops had come under pressure from the Islamists' guerrilla warfare. Buhari, a former army general who became military ruler after ousting the elected government in a coup in 1983, said the "question of morale is correct". Efforts were being made to address the issue, he said.

Relentless hit-and-run raids, as well as suicide bomb attacks, were hard to deal with by conventional means, he argued. "There is really what I would call battle fatigue," he said, adding that retraining would help combat the jihadists' tactics. On Monday evening, fighters loyal to factional leader Abubakar Shekau attacked Sajeri village on the outskirts of the Borno state capital, Maiduguri, killing three people.

At the same time, militants aligned to the Islamic State group-backed Boko Haram faction attacked a military facility in Auno, some 23 kilometers from the city. The increase in attacks has seen the appointment of five different commanders of the military operation against Boko Haram in the last two years. But Buhari has



LONDON: Activists hold up placards from the Leave Means Leave Pro-Brexit campaign group outside the Houses of Parliament. — AFP

of officers stood at different points around the perimeter of the laws. Political tensions are heightened in Westminster ahead of a crunch vote on Prime Minister Theresa May's draft Brexit deal next week.

Britain voted to leave the EU following a divisive 2016 referendum campaign and is set to depart the bloc on March 29. An AFP reporter on Monday saw anti- and pro-Brexit protesters, as on most days, around parliament, but there was no sign of those involved in

Monday's contentious scenes. Harry Todd, 27, a campaign organizer for the pro-Brexit Leave Means Leave group protesting at Westminster daily since early December, said: "We have condemned the behavior because it was unacceptable". Todd said he welcomed a more forceful police response because he did not want people's right to protest so close to parliament curtailed. "I want everyone to feel safe when they're protesting," he said. — AFP

refused to sack his military top brass, unlike his predecessor Goodluck Jonathan, who removed senior officers as the jihadists began taking over territory.

"I accept responsibility for that," Buhari said in the interview, adding that he was "measuring the options very critically". But he said that such appointments were not to be taken lightly. "My understanding of security is that when you have a case of emergency you have to be careful with the head of (the armed) services," he said.

Heavy fighting

Many of the attacks on military installations have been blamed on or claimed by the self-styled Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), headed by Abu Mus'ab Al-Barnawi. The group broke away from Shekau in mid-2016 in opposition to his indiscriminate targeting of civilians in the conflict. It has instead vowed only to hit "hard" targets. Security analysts have interpreted the surge in ISWAP attacks as a sign of renewed strength and organization, with possible support from the jihadist networks in the wider Sahel region. In late December, a naval base and another for troops from a regional force fighting the jihadists were overrun in the Baga area, on the shores of Lake Chad. Referring to Monday's clashes, Babakura Kolo, a member of the Civilian Joint Task Force militia, said soldiers and the CJTF in Auno were attacked by Al-Barnawi fighters. "There was heavy fighting and the gunmen were repelled with the help of a fighter jet," he told AFP.

"The insurgents had two days ago warned residents of (nearby) Jakana to vacate their homes by Wednesday because they were going to launch a major attack." Meanwhile, a community leader from Baga said 10,712 people had registered at camps for internally displaced people in the garrison town of Monguno and Maiduguri. All had fled their homes as the military prepares a fight-back. "More people are trooping in because they are scared to live under Boko Haram. At the moment they don't hurt civilians. They are only after soldiers and the CJTF," he added. In December, the National Emergency Management Agency said it registered 2,040 IDPs who fled Kukawa, Kuros-Kauwa and Bunduram communities in northern Borno following attacks. — AFP

Outrage in France as 'Yellow vest' boxer gets online funding

PARIS: French officials yesterday slammed an online fundraising drive that has raised tens of thousands of euros for a former boxer filmed punching police officers during anti-government protests in Paris over the weekend. As of Monday morning, over 7,000 people had pledged a total of 117,000 euros (\$134,000) on the Leetchi website for Christophe Dettinger, known as "The Gypsy From Massy" during his days in the ring.

Dettinger, 37, turned himself in to police Monday after videos emerged of him landing punch after punch on shield-carrying officers during the latest "yellow vest" demonstrations in the capital on Saturday. He was still in custody yesterday. In a video posted on YouTube on Sunday, he described himself as an "ordinary citizen" acting out of anger with what he called the repressive tactics of the police.

"I am a yellow vest. I have the anger of the people in me," said the 2007 and 2008 champion in the French junior heavy-weight division. But government officials assailed the fundraising drive, with many calling for it to be shut down or for the pledged funds to be seized. "Is it normal to want to support this man seen hitting an officer on the ground, boxing an officer," Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne told Franceinfo radio yesterday. "Apparently, hitting a police officer pays off," Digital Minister Mounir Mahjoubi had already tweeted on Monday. "Everyone must assume their responsibilities: this kitty is shameful," he added. The SCSJ-CFDT police union, for its part, said the funds should be seized to compensate the two officers targeted by Dettinger, who were removed from duty while recovering from their injuries. Many "yellow vests" point to a video showing a police captain beating protesters in the southern city of Toulon at the weekend—and their heavy use of teargas and rubber bullets—to support their claim that the violence runs both ways. — AFP

International

N Korea's Kim visits China ahead of expected summit with Trump

'Both Xi and Kim see value in coordinating their positions'

BEIJING: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived yesterday on an unannounced visit to Beijing for talks with President Xi Jinping, as preparations ramp up for an expected second summit with Donald Trump. China is the isolated, nuclear-armed North's key diplomatic ally and main source of trade and aid, and the visit is likely to heighten speculation about the potential meeting with the US president, as Kim could coordinate his strategy with Xi.

China's foreign ministry said Kim would meet with Chinese leaders to discuss "relevant issues" but did not reveal more about his itinerary. The North Korean leader, accompanied by his wife Ri Sol Ju and several senior officials, had set off from Pyongyang on his private train on Monday, the official Korean Central News Agency reported. The trip is at Xi's invitation and set to run until Thursday, according to KCNA and China's official Xinhua news agency. His fourth visit to China comes a week after Kim warned in a New Year's speech that Pyongyang may change its approach to nuclear talks if Washington persists with sanctions.

"Both Xi and Kim see value in coordinating their positions in advance of Trump-Kim summits. That appears to be a pattern," Bonnie Glaser, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, told AFP. "Kim also seeks Beijing's help in getting international sanctions eased." While China and Russia have said the United Nations should consider relaxing sanctions on North Korea, Trump insisted Sunday that they would remain "in full force and effect" until the US sees "very positive" results in the nuclear issue.

Kim's trip coincides with the second day of talks between US and Chinese officials in Beijing aimed at resolving their trade war, but China rejected the notion that it was using the North Korean issue as a bargaining chip in the negotiations. "Xi also gains from a summit with Kim — and the timing could not be any better," said Harry

Kazianis, director of defense studies at the Center for the National Interest, a US think tank.

"With Chinese and US officials meeting to discuss how to end the growing trade war between the two superpowers, it shows Beijing clearly has a North Korea card to play if it sees fit." The trip began under the usual veil of secrecy and Kim has not been spotted in public since a motorcade believed to be carrying the North Korean entourage left a Beijing train station under heavy security early yesterday. While the visit was the second item on China's important evening news broadcast, newscasters simply read out a statement from the morning without showing any images of the visit.

'Like family'

Kim — whose birthday was reportedly yesterday — visited China three times last year for talks with Xi. "This is Kim's first birthday in China. It shows his close relationship with China, like members of one family," said Beijing-based independent political commentator Hua Po. But relations went through a rough patch in recent years as China backed UN sanctions over the North's nuclear tests. Until his first trip in March, Kim had not met Xi in the six years after inheriting power from his father.

"At different times, our interactions are different, but communication is maintained," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said at a regular press briefing. "As to in what form this is reflected, I don't think there's a need to read too much into it," Lu said, adding that US trade talks and Kim's visit were unrelated. A whirlwind of diplomacy enveloped the Korean peninsula last year, with Kim also meeting the South's President Moon Jae-in three times, and culminating in his high-profile Singapore summit with Trump in June.

'Springboard' for Trump summit?

In Seoul, Kim Eui-lyeom, spokesman for the presidential Blue House, said it had been aware of the visit in



PYONGYANG: This picture taken on January 7, 2019 and released by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (R) and his wife Ri Sol Ju leaving Pyongyang Station to visit China. — AFP

advance. "We hope that the latest exchange between China and the North would help establish complete denuclearisation and permanent peace on the Korean peninsula and serve as a springboard for a second North-US summit," he told reporters.

At the Singapore summit, Kim and Trump signed a vaguely worded pledge about denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, but progress has since stalled amid disagreements over what that means, with meetings and visits cancelled at short notice. Negotiations were under way on the location of their next meeting, Trump said Sunday,

while remaining evasive on its timing. The US president said last week he had received a "great letter" from the North Korean leader but declined to reveal its contents. Washington is demanding Pyongyang give up its nuclear arsenal before any relief from economic sanctions is granted, while the North is insisting on immediate concessions from the US.

Culminating in late 2017, Pyongyang carried out six nuclear tests and launched rockets capable of reaching the entire US mainland, but has now carried out no such tests for more than a year. — AFP

India: Non-Muslim migrants have nowhere to go

NEW DELHI: India wants to give citizenship to immigrants belonging to religious minorities persecuted in neighboring Muslim countries, including Pakistan, because they have nowhere to go except India, the interior minister said yesterday. Critics have called the proposal, contained in a Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019, blatantly anti-Muslim and an attempt by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to boost its Hindu voter base ahead of a general election due by May.

The bill seeks to give citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Christians and Parsis from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh, who came to India before Dec. 31, 2014. "They have no place to go except India," Home Minister Rajnath Singh told parliament. "The beneficiaries of the bill can reside in any state of the country." But there is significant opposition to the proposal, in particular from the northeastern state of Assam, where residents have for years complained that immigrants from Bangladesh have put a big strain on resources. But Singh tried to reassure Assam it would not have to bear any burden alone.

"The burden of those persecuted migrants will be shared by the whole country. Assam alone should not have to bear the entire burden," he said. Members of religious minorities often face discrimination and sometimes violence at the hands of militant members of Muslim majorities, particularly in Pakistan and Afghanistan. — Reuters

Dozens of Rohingya are fleeing India for Bangladesh: Officials

DHAKA: Dozens of Rohingya Muslims have crossed the border into Bangladesh from India in recent days, officials said yesterday, as New Delhi faces censure for deporting the persecuted minority to Myanmar. Last week India handed a Rohingya family of five to Myanmar authorities, despite the army there being accused of genocide against the stateless group. The forced return — the second in recent months — was criticized by the United Nations and rights groups who accused India of disregarding international law and sending the Rohingya to danger.

India, which is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, arrested 230 Rohingya in 2018 — the most in years as Hindu hardliners called for the displaced Muslims to be deported en masse. Bangladesh border officials and police said dozens of Rohingya had been detained crossing from India in the past week. They were sent to refugee camps in the country's south, where a million of the displaced Muslims live in hardship.

The round-ups in India, and fear of deportation to Myanmar, had fuelled the recent exodus, Bangladesh officials said. "They told us they panicked after India started detaining Rohingya refugees and deporting them to Myanmar," said Shahjahan Kabir, a police chief in the eastern

Bangladeshi border town of Brahmanpara. He told AFP that 17 Rohingya were detained last Thursday after crossing into Bangladesh, followed by 31 at a different border point. Most had been living in India for up to six years, Kabir added.

In Cox's Bazar, a border district where some 720,000 Rohingya have sought refuge from a Myanmar army crackdown in August 2017, local officials said at least 57 had arrived in recent days. "They have come from places like Hyderabad and Jammu and Kashmir," said Rezaul Karim, government administrator of the giant Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. Hyderabad is a major city in southern India and Jammu and Kashmir the only Muslim-majority territory under Indian control.

For decades the Rohingya have faced persecution and pogroms in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, which refuses to recognize them as citizens and falsely labels them "Bengali" illegal immigrants.

They were concentrated in Rakhine state, the epicenter of a brutal Myanmar army offensive in August 2017 that UN investigators described as genocidal in intent. Amnesty International, among other rights groups, has blasted India for forcibly repatriating the Rohingya to Myanmar when persecution in Rakhine is ongoing. Dozens of Rohingya were also deported from Saudi Arabia to Bangladesh at the weekend, reported the London-based Middle East Eye website. Indian officials say around 40,000 Rohingya are living in India. The United Nations refugee agency says around 18,000 Rohingya are registered with the UNHCR. — AFP



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

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Good politics is at the service of peace

By Pope Francis

In sending his disciples forth on mission, Jesus told them: "Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace shall rest upon him; but if not, it shall return to you" (Lk 10:5-6). Bringing peace is central to the mission of Christ's disciples. That peace is offered to all those men and women who long for peace amid the tragedies and violence that mark human history. The "house" of which Jesus speaks is every family, community, country and continent, in all their diversity and history. It is first and foremost each individual person, without distinction or discrimination. But it is also our "common home": the world in which God has placed us and which we are called to care for and cultivate. So let this be my greeting at the beginning of the New Year: "Peace be to this house!"

The challenge of good politics

Peace is like the hope which the poet Charles Peguy celebrated. It is like a delicate flower struggling to blossom on the stony ground of violence. We know that the thirst for power at any price leads to abuses and injustice. Politics is an essential means of building human community and institutions, but when political life is not seen as a form of service to society as a whole, it can become a means of oppression, marginalization and even destruction.

Jesus tells us that, "if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mk 9:35). In the words of Pope Paul VI, "to take politics seriously at its different levels - local, regional, national and worldwide - is to affirm the duty of each individual to acknowledge the reality and value of the freedom offered him to work at one and the same time for the good of the city, the nation and all mankind".

Political office and political responsibility thus constantly challenge those called to the service of their country to make every effort to protect those who live there and to create the conditions for a worthy and just future. If exercised with basic respect for the life, freedom and dignity of persons, political life can indeed become an outstanding form of charity.

Charity and human virtues: The basis of politics at the service of human rights and peace

Pope Benedict XVI noted that "every Christian is called to practice charity in a manner corresponding to his vocation and according to the degree of influence he wields in the polis... When animated by charity, commitment to the common good has greater worth than a merely secular and political stand would have... Man's earthly activity, when inspired and sustained by charity, contributes to the building of the universal city of God, which is the goal of the history of the human family". This is a program on which all politicians, whatever their culture or religion, can agree, if they wish to work together for the good of the human family and to practice those human virtues that sustain all sound political activity: justice, equality, mutual respect, sincerity, honesty, fidelity.

In this regard, it may be helpful to recall the "Beatitudes of the Politician", proposed by Vietnamese Cardinal Francois-Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan, a faithful witness to the Gospel who died in 2002: Blessed be the politician with a lofty sense and deep understanding of his role. Blessed be the politician who personally exemplifies credibility. Blessed be the politician who works for the common good and not his or her own interest. Blessed be the politician who remains consistent. Blessed be the politician who works for unity. Blessed be the politician who works to accomplish radical change. Blessed be the politician who is capable of listening. Blessed be the politician who is without fear.

Every election and re-election, and every stage of public life, is an opportunity to return to the original points of reference that inspire justice and law. One thing is certain: good politics is at the service of peace. It respects and promotes fundamental human rights, which are at the same time mutual obligations, enabling a bond of trust and gratitude to be forged between present and future generations.

Political vices

Sadly, together with its virtues, politics also has its share of vices, whether due to personal incompetence or to flaws in the system and its institutions. Clearly, these vices detract from the credibility of political life overall, as well as the authority, decisions and actions of those engaged in it. These vices, which undermine the ideal of an authentic democracy, bring disgrace to public life and threaten social harmony. We think of corruption in its varied forms: the misappropriation of public resources, the exploitation of individuals, the denial of rights, the flouting of community rules, dishonest gain, the justification of power by force or the arbitrary appeal to *raison d'etat* and the refusal to relinquish power. To which we can add xenophobia, racism, lack of concern for the natural environment, the plundering of natural resources for the sake of quick profit and contempt for those forced into exile.

When the exercise of political power aims only at protecting the interests of a few privileged individuals, the future is compromised and young people can be tempted to lose confidence, since they are relegated to the margins of society without the possibility of helping to build the future.



This handout picture taken and released by the Thai Immigration Bureau on Monday shows 18-year-old Saudi woman Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qanun shaking hands with a Thai immigration officer at Suvarnabhumi international airport in Bangkok. — AFP

Phone, hashtag made teen's flight global cause

On Sunday morning, a new Twitter account was created by an 18-year-old Saudi woman denied entry into Thailand as she fled from what she said was an abusive family. The first message from Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun, in Arabic, was at 3:20 am Thai time (2020 GMT Saturday) and posted from the transit area of Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi airport. It said: "I am the girl who escaped Kuwait to Thailand. My life is in real danger if I am forced to return to Saudi Arabia."

Within hours, a campaign sprung up on Twitter dubbed #SaveRahaf. Spread by a loose network of activists around the world, within 36 hours it prompted Thailand's government to reverse a decision to force the young woman onto a plane that would return her to her family. Qunun was allowed to enter Thailand and yesterday was beginning the process of seeking asylum in a third country through the UN refugee agency.

"Everybody was watching. When social media works, this is what happens," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch, of the international outcry. Qunun's family could not be reached to respond to her allegations of abuse. Reuters could not directly contact Qunun, but spoke to several confidants who described how the dramatic campaign unfolded across the world. After her initial Tweet, Qunun posted nearly non-stop for five hours, saying she had been abused and threatened by her family.

Halfway around the world, retweets by Saudi Twitter users were noticed by Egyptian-American activist Mona Eltahawy in Montreal who began translating and retweeting Qunun's Arabic tweets at 4 am Thailand time, even though she was initially unsure if the account was authentic. "(I was) doing my best to get attention to her because I could not live with myself if she was real and I ignored it," Eltahawy told Reuters in an e-mail.

Bangkok, Montreal, Sydney

About two hours later - 6 am Sunday morning in Thailand but mid-afternoon in Australia - a Sydney-based video journalist noticed and retweeted Eltahawy's translated messages. The journalist, Sophie McNeill of Australia Broadcast Corp., began tweeting back to Qunun, and later the two began privately corresponding by direct message. At 11 am on Sunday in Thailand - eight hours after Qunun began tweeting - Human Rights Watch's Robertson, who is based in Bangkok, also began tweeting about the case.

He also contacted Qunun directly and she replied. "She said very clearly that she has suffered both physical and psychological abuse. She said she has made a decision to renounce Islam. And I knew once she said that, she is in serious trouble," Robertson told Reuters. Renouncing Islam is a crime punishable by death under the Saudi system of sharia, or Islamic law, though the punishment has not been carried out in recent memory. By early Sunday afternoon, Robertson had notified the UN refugee agency in Thailand and several foreign embassies about the unfolding case, and they began to contact Thai authorities.

Barricaded door

At around the same time, journalist McNeill decided to fly to Thailand and try to meet Qunun. "I'd never spoken to her before," she told Reuters. "For me, it was so

“ I wish you had taken her phone ”

important that this was documented, and I wanted to be there and witness it." While McNeill boarded a flight from Sydney to Bangkok, Qunun was holed up in an airport transit hotel and afraid she would be forced onto the next flight back to Kuwait. She continued tweeting and also corresponding with Robertson of Human Rights Watch.

At around 5 pm Sunday, she was taken out of her room by Thai officials but later allowed to return. "She filmed these two people talking to her," said Robertson. "They said to her very clearly that they will put her on the Kuwait Airways flight KU 412 leaving (Monday) at 11:15 am." By this time, global media outlets had picked up on the story and Thai immigration officials were confirming that Qunun was to be expelled on Monday morning. At about 1 am Monday morning, Qunun posted a video of herself pushing a table to barricade her hotel room door.

Threatening language

McNeill arrived in Thailand early on Monday and managed to join Qunun in her hotel room. "When it became clear that she wasn't going to leave, I decided it was important to stay and have someone documenting what was going on," McNeill said. Qunun refused to open the door when various officials came to escort her to the Kuwait Airways flight. "We were inside the room and there were numerous people coming to the door... There were several Arabic speakers who came and were using threatening language to try and force her back on the plane," McNeill recalled. The flight to Kuwait City left without Qunun.

At 3:30 p.m. on Monday, Thailand's immigration chief Surachate Hakpam held a press conference at the airport for dozens of Thai and international media representatives gathered in the transit area. After a day of insisting that Qunun must be sent back under Thai law, Surachate said she would not be immediately expelled since she could be in danger and he would meet UN officials to discuss her case.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) country representative Giuseppe de Vincentiis arrived at the airport at about 5 pm on Monday to meet Thai officials and Qunun herself. By about 7:30 pm on Monday, Surachate told reporters Qunun would be allowed to enter Thailand and apply for asylum in a third country. The UNHCR said on Tuesday that it would take time to process Qunun's application, and its officials continued to interview her at an undisclosed location.

Saudi Arabia on Tuesday denied on its Twitter account that its embassy in Thailand had asked for Qunun to be extradited, although Surachate had said the previous day the embassy had been in contact with Thai immigration before her arrival from Kuwait. The Saudi embassy in Bangkok declined to comment on Qunun's case when contacted by Reuters on Monday and could not be reached yesterday.

But yesterday, the Thai immigration office released a video clip of its officials meeting Saudi diplomats to discuss the case. "When she first arrived in Thailand, she opened a new site (account) and the followers reached about 45,000 within one day," a Saudi official speaking in Arabic through a translator tells Thai officials in the video. "I wish you had taken her phone, it would have been better than (taking) her passport," the official said. — Reuters

Will China go to war over Taiwan?

In the first week of 2019, as China grabbed headlines for landing a spacecraft on the far side of the moon, a New Year's Day editorial in the nation's official military newspaper told its readers that "war preparations" should be a top priority for the year. The following day, President Xi Jinping offered a forceful reminder of what Beijing considers its most likely focus of conflict to be: Taiwan.

China's rulers have long regarded the island as a rogue province, with regaining control a point of honor for the ruling Communist Party and military alike. In a major speech on Wednesday, Xi warned the "problem" could not be held over for another generation. While he talked primarily of "peaceful unification," he said Beijing reserves the right to use force if necessary. The speech brought a sharp rebuke from Taiwan, where residents remain strongly opposed to rejoining China, even under a Hong Kong-style "one country, two systems" deal.

Nothing in Xi's speech suggested China sees conflict as imminent. However, Xi's comments about support for peaceful "reunification" included a warning that "we do not promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option to use all necessary measures" to prevent Taiwan's independence. Ultimately, if Beijing truly wishes to reassert control over the island, military force may be its only option. That would be a risky step for a government that has not fought a war against a foreign state since a brief and unsuccessful conflict with Vietnam in 1979. It would also put Beijing on a collision course with Washington, which does not support Taiwan's independence but has what the US State Department describes as "a robust unofficial relationship" with Taipei.

To invade the island successfully, most military analysts

argue that Beijing would either have to deter the United States from intervening or defeat nearby US forces and prevent others from entering the region. China may not yet be strong enough to do this, but its military enlargement means that may not always be the case. Certainly, Chinese military thinking increasingly revolves around just this kind of potential war, in which Beijing would want to grab territory while keeping US forces back.

Much of China's military buildup has been based around ships, aircraft, and arms systems that appear suited for the type of conflict needed to take Taiwan. As well as landing ships to carry assault troops, that includes a focus on missiles designed to destroy US aircraft carriers - or prompting Washington to keep out of range of the conflict. How well those weapons would work is another question, but they would be central to any conflict over Taiwan or disputed islands elsewhere in the South China Sea.

To an extent, much of this is grandstanding geopolitical ballet. Beijing has been unable to stop Taiwan from acting as a de facto country over the last half century, but remains desperate to prevent the island from making an outright declaration of independence. To an extent, this posturing - like Beijing's increasing military assertiveness with warships and jets around Taiwan - is about reminding those in power in Taipei that any vote on independence might bring war. But there's more to it than that. As China asserts itself as a global power, Beijing wants to show the world that it is strong enough to take Taiwan at any point it wants.

Domestic Taiwanese politics also remain a factor. In the run-up to Taiwan's November elections, Taiwanese officials accused China of a Russia-style messaging campaign to undermine support for President Tsai Ing-wen's pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Those elections saw a serious setback for the DPP and a strong performance by the pro-Chinese Kuomintang opposition, but Xi's comments last week suggest Beijing still sees

military posturing as the best way of pressuring the island. Taking Taiwan militarily would not be a simple operation. Chinese forces would face sophisticated Taiwanese missile, mine, submarine and air attack if they tried to cross the 110-mile (180 km) Taiwan Strait. The island's highly populated cities and densely forested mountains would prove a guerrilla fighter's paradise. A botched Taiwan invasion, potentially with tens of thousands of casualties, could prove an international humiliation as well as kickstarting a domestic political crisis for Xi.

Taiwan, for its part, clearly wishes to persuade China that it is not an easy target. Taipei intends to spend \$11 billion on defense this year, a six percent increase from 2018. Much of that will be spent on cutting-edge US and Taiwan-made equipment - on Jan. 2, Taipei unveiled its latest domestically-built anti-ship missile, capable of inflicting serious casualties on any Chinese invasion force.

For Washington and Beijing alike, most of the military posturing for now is likely to remain limited to the Taiwan Strait. Last year, the US Navy sent several ships through the Strait in what a US Pacific Fleet statement described as a demonstration of the US commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific. In 1996, President Bill Clinton sent two US aircraft carriers - a much more potent force - through the same route during a crisis with China; some argue Washington should again take similar action. That would outrage Beijing - no US carrier has sailed through in more than a decade, although China's aircraft carrier has sailed the same waters in its own show of force.

China may be reaching for the moon, but Xi's speech was a reminder that its greatest territorial ambitions may lie much closer to home. Even if Beijing isn't on the verge of attacking the island, his rhetoric raises the risk that there may eventually be outright war. In a world where the risk of conflict between major nations seems to ratchet higher every year, China's desire to dominate Taiwan may yet be what lights the spark. — Reuters

Business

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China trade talks going 'very well': Trump

Analysts say Kim's visit to China could be a distraction for talks



BEIJING: Members of a US negotiation team leave a hotel for the second day of talks in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

WASHINGTON/BEIJING: US President Donald Trump yesterday said negotiators were making progress toward ending the current trade war with China but he offered no details. US officials in Beijing yesterday held the second day of meetings with their Chinese counterparts, as part of the first face-to-face meetings since the countries agreed to a 90-day tariff ceasefire last month.

Punitive US duties on \$200 billion in imports from China are due to rise to 25 percent from the current 10 percent if negotiators fail to reach an agreement by March 1 — a prospect that has roiled stock markets in recent months. "Talks with China are going very well!" Trump said on Twitter, but gave no further information.

Economic data show the Chinese economy has suffered since Trump last year slapped stinging tariffs on more than \$250 billion in Chinese imports. US officials say this gives Washington the upper hand in the talks as the trade war has yet to put much of a dent in the American economy.

However some signs of US slowing have begun to appear in recent weeks, with US manufacturing activity in December seeing its biggest one-month drop since the global financial crisis in 2008.

The talks between the US delegation led by Deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish and including officials from the Treasury, Commerce, Agriculture and Energy departments—and the Chinese side were still ongoing late yesterday, a source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Negotiators are seeking to resolve a number of thorny issues that have threatened an all-out trade war between the world's two biggest economies. These include more Chinese purchases of US goods and services to reduce a yawning trade gap, increased access to China's markets, stronger protection of intellectual property and a reduction in Beijing's subsidies. The temporary ceasefire came after the two sides imposed import duties on more than \$300 billion of each other's goods. US Commerce Secretary Wilbur

Ross said Monday that China's economy was more vulnerable to the fallout from the trade war. "It certainly has hurt the Chinese economy," Ross told CNBC, noting that China exports many more goods to the United States than the other way around.

Ross said there was a "very good chance" of reaching an agreement, although monitoring compliance would present a challenge. Without a resolution, punitive US duty rates on \$200 billion in Chinese goods are due to rise to 25 percent from 10 percent on March 2.

Geopolitical distractions

The second day of trade negotiations coincided with an unannounced visit by North Korea's Kim for talks with Xi in Beijing, amid speculation of a second meeting between Kim and Trump.

Some analysts say that China-Pyongyang's key diplomatic ally and main source of trade—could use Kim's visit as a bargaining chip in the US trade talks.

But Bonnie Glaser, a senior adviser at the

Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the timing of the North Korean leader's arrival could be coincidental.

"I don't see any linkage with the trade talks," said Glaser. "China's ability to use (North Korea) as leverage has diminished considerably since Trump opened his own channel to Kim," she said.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said Kim's visit and the trade talks were "two separate matters". "China's position in the China-US trade friction and its solutions to the friction is open, it's transparent," Lu said at a regular press briefing.

"We have shown our sincerity, we have established our stand in this, so we don't need other actions to gain the confidence of the US. The US is very clear about China's stance." Analysts say it may be hard for Washington to win far-reaching changes during the 90-day truce both sides agreed to on December 1. The US team, led by Deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish, included undersecretaries from the Departments of

Agriculture, Commerce, Energy and Treasury, and senior officials from those agencies and the White House.

Trump imposed import tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of Chinese goods last year and threatened more to pressure Beijing to change its practices on issues ranging from industrial subsidies to intellectual property and hacking. China has retaliated with tariffs of its own. Earlier yesterday, China approved five genetically modified (GM) crops for import, a move seen as a "goodwill gesture" by some in the US agriculture industry that could boost China's overseas grains purchases and ease pressure from the United States to open its markets to more farm goods.

The timely approval of GM crops had been an early Trump administration demand in trade talks dating back to 2017. US farmers and global seed companies have long complained about Beijing's slow and unpredictable process for approving GM crops for import, stoking trade tensions between the two sides. — Agencies

Sporadic violence mars nationwide India strike

KOLKATA: Police clashed with stone-throwing protesters in Kolkata yesterday, authorities said, as tens of millions of Indians staged a 48-hour nationwide strike months before Prime Minister Narendra Modi runs for re-election.

Unions said that some 200 million workers took part in what they called the biggest show of force since Modi's right-wing government took office in 2014, accusing it of neglecting workers and farmers. The stoppage called by 10 unions hit India's vast black economy as well as public services, banks and the insurance sector, with West Bengal in the east and Kerala and Karnataka in the south the most affected.

West Bengal's capital Kolkata, home to five million people, saw sporadic violence as protesters squatted on train tracks, clashed with police, set fire to effigies of Modi and staged marches waving red flags. "Security forces fought pitched battles with stone-throwing protesters on roads," West Bengal's Transport Minister Subhendu Adhikari said.

"At least 10 buses have been damaged after protesters threw stones and set fire

to vehicles," he said. More than 100 people were arrested, police said. "Police are detaining our people like foxes catching chickens," Subhash Mukherjee, president of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions told AFP, adding that the government was showing its "fascist face".

In Kerala, thousands of protesters blocked trains, causing major delays, while buses were off the roads, leaving thousands of commuters stuck. Local media reports said protesters also stopped employees from reporting to work at several places in the coastal state, which last week was hit by violence related to women entering one of Hinduism's holiest temples.

Similar images from neighboring Karnataka state showed demonstrators blocking trains and staging protests in the state capital Bangalore, India's major information technology hub. In India's financial capital Mumbai, a separate strike by 33,000 bus company employees made for transport misery in the already chaotic metropolis, despite an industrial court declaring the stoppage illegal. The left-leaning unions have put



BANGALORE: Members of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) gather as they protest during a nationwide strike in Bangalore yesterday. Unions said that some 200 million workers took part in what they called the biggest show of force since Modi's right-wing government took office in 2014, accusing it of neglecting workers and farmers. — AFP

forward a 12-point charter of demands before the government aimed, they say, at reviving Asia's third-biggest economy and improving worker rights. They are

also unhappy about an amendment in India's labor laws that the government has said is aimed at bringing transparency and ameliorating conditions. — AFP

Drop in oil exports pushes up Canada trade deficit

OTTAWA: Canada's trade deficit with the world widened to Can\$2.1 billion (US\$1.6 billion) in November, as exports fell for a fourth consecutive month, according to government data released yesterday.

"As was the case in October, energy products contributed the most to the decline" in exports, Statistics Canada said in a statement. The deficit came in slightly higher than the Can\$1.9 billion economists had forecast, following a Can\$851 million shortfall the previous month.

Total exports, according to the government statistical agency, fell 2.9 percent to Can\$48.3 billion. Crude oil exports led the decrease, down 17.7 percent in large part due to lower prices. The drop was partially offset by higher exports of coal to South Korea, China and Vietnam. A 26.4 percent plunge in exports of lubricants and other petroleum refinery products also contributed to the decline, mostly on lower exports of motor gasoline blending stock to the northeastern United States.

Exports of pulp and paper fell too. Total imports, meanwhile, fell 0.5 percent to Can\$50.4 billion, led by motor vehicles and parts. — AFP

Business

KAMCO Report

GCC fixed income market takes a breather in 2018

Bonds and sukuk issuances declined 14.1% in 2018 to reach \$105.9 billion

KUWAIT: After three consecutive years of growth and record issuances in 2017, the GCC fixed income primary market took a breather, as bonds and sukuk issuances declined 14.1 percent in 2018 to reach \$105.9 billion.

Government issuance during the year declined almost a third but was partially offset by almost 20 percent increase in corporate issuances. Issuances in the broader MENA region also declined during the year by 16 percent to \$145 billion as compared to \$173 billion during 2017 primarily due to lower bond issuances in non-GCC MENA countries.

The trends in the oil market had a visible impact on both government and corporate issuances in the region. The y-o-y increase in average oil prices in 2018 vs. 2017 supported state coffers, resulting in minimal external finance requirement to support the largely unaffected state spending plans, although the steep decline towards the end of the year prompted a more cautious and conservative outlook for the near term.

According to KAMCO Research calculations and IMF data, deficits for the GCC region in 2018 are now forecasted to reduce to \$14 billion (-0.9 percent of GDP), an 82 percent reduction from 2017 budget deficits (\$79 billion), based on our analysis of IMF's general government fiscal balance estimates. Corporate issuers in the region remained upbeat with higher bonds and sukuk issuances during the year. GCC corporates raised \$47.2 billion during the year via bonds and sukuk as compared to \$39.5 billion during 2017 with majority of them boasting a 'Stable' outlook from rating agencies. In addition, the volatility in the regional equity markets also favored higher issuances in the debt market. Firms took advantage of lower rates as the US Fed raised rates four times during 2018 and most of these rates were passed on by GCC regulators due to the pegged currencies for five out of the six GCC economies.

On the other hand, the rising interest rates environment globally also resulted in lower returns for bond investors although the impact was blunted for the GCC instruments after GCC countries became a part of the JP Morgan Bond indexes during the year. The inclusion increased the demand for regional instruments by foreign investors.

In terms of sovereign ratings, majority of the GCC countries continued to boast an investment grade rating by the end of year with Abu Dhabi and Kuwait leading the pack. Recently, Oman's sovereign rating was downgraded by Fitch to a non-investment grade reflecting a widening of fiscal deficit to 10 percent of GDP in 2019 at an expected oil price of \$65 per barrel, while the outlook for Bahrain was changed to Stable from negative.

US and MENA rate hikes

After a three rate hikes in 2017, the US Fed raised benchmark interest rates four times in 2018 and raised the rate by 100 basis points in four 25 bps steps to a higher range of 2.25 percent - 2.5 percent. Continued strong economic fundamentals in the US with expectations of a faster economic growth further backed by supportive employment and inflation data backed the rates hikes during 2018. However, expectations for 2019

was toned down while announcing the latest rate hikes with the committee now expecting two rate hikes in 2019 instead of a previous expectation of 3 hikes. The long-run funds rate expectations were also lowered from 3 percent in the September-18 forecast to 2.8 percent in the latest forecast. Expectations for 2019 were lowered to 2.9 percent from 3.1 percent while 2020 and 2021 estimates were lowered to 3.1 percent from 3.4 percent in the previous forecast.

Rate hikes within the GCC were more differentiated with central banks using different tools in response to US rate hikes. Kuwait's central bank kept its discount rate on hold after raising it in Q1-18 to 3.0 percent from 2.75 percent after holding it for a year. In response to the latest US rate hike, UAE central bank raised interest rates on certificates of deposit and repo rate for borrowing short-term liquidity by 25 bps. Bahrain's central bank also raised its one-week deposit facility rate, the overnight deposit rate and lending rate by 25 bps to 2.75 percent, 2.5 percent and 4.5 percent, respectively. Saudi Arabia also raised repo rate and reverse repo rates to by 25 bps to 300 bps and 250 bps, respectively.

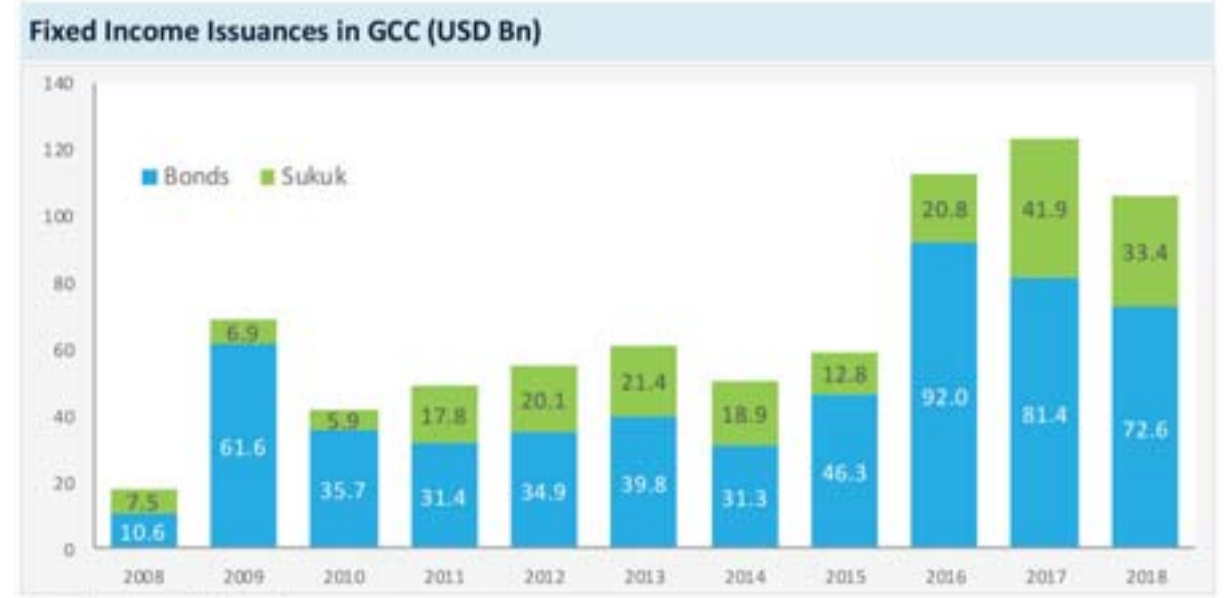
Regional fixed income indices mostly had a positive trend during the year while global fixed income indices declined in 2018. Although marginal, the MENA Bonds and Sukuk index gained 0.4 percent during 2018 while the benchmarks for the Global Investment Grade Debt and Global Sukuk declined by 1.2 percent and 4.1 percent, respectively.

2018 performance

Bond issuances in the MENA region declined for the second consecutive year during 2018 led by a decline in issuances in both GCC and non-GCC MENA countries. In terms of type of issuer, government issuances declined by a quarter to reach \$76.1 billion in 2018 while corporate issuances increased by 19.8 percent to \$35.5 billion. Total bond issuance by GCC countries stood at \$72.6 billion, down 10.9 percent as compared to \$81.4 billion in 2017.

Qatar was the biggest issuer during the year with total issuances increasing by almost 300 percent to \$26 billion in 2018 as compared to \$6.8 billion during 2017. The increase came primarily on the back of higher government issuances that jumped by almost 400 percent to reach \$16.6 billion in 2018 as compared to \$3.5 billion in 2017. Corporate issuances in Qatar also increased by 180 percent to \$9.4 billion in 2018, as compared to \$3.4 billion in 2017. UAE was the second biggest issuer with \$19.6 billion in total issuance during 2018, a steep decline from \$31.3 billion in 2017. The decline in UAE came primarily as the government almost completely pulled out of the primary market with merely \$0.3 billion in issuances during the year as compared to \$10.0 billion during the previous year.

Corporates, on the other hand, remained active, but issuance declined by 9.5 percent to \$19.3 billion in 2018 as compared to \$21.3 billion during 2017. Saudi Arabia was the third biggest issuer in the GCC with \$13.8 billion in new issuances in 2018 a marginal increase of 2.9 percent from 2017. Issuances from Oman increased by 40 percent y-o-y as both the government and corpo-



Source: Bloomberg, KAMCO Research
Note: Bond and sukuk issuances in the report includes instruments with original maturity >1 year and Country of Domicile/Country of Risk is for the specified region.

rates took the fixed income route to fund investments. On the non-GCC side, Lebanon was the third biggest issuer in the MENA region with issuances totaling \$15.5 billion in 2018 a decline of almost a third as compared to \$23.4 billion during 2017. Issuances by Egypt increased 7.2 percent to 13.5 billion, while Morocco issued \$4.5 billion in bonds, a decline of 17.4 percent as compared to 2017.

The forecast for bond issuances in the GCC remains upbeat, given the budget requirements of governments in the region, as they continue to spend on infrastructure while oil prices remain below historical levels. Saudi Arabia has indicated that it would issue \$32 billion in debt during 2019 in the international market to finance its budgeted deficits. Given the volatile equity markets and with oil price forecasted to remain subdued, we expect oil exporters in the GCC to increase bond issuances in 2019.

Corporate issuances have increased for three consecutive years and with the project market and economic activity in the region expected to pick up, we expect higher corporate issuances from the region.

After two consecutive years of growth in 2016 and 2017, global sukuk issuances declined by 21.6 percent during 2018 to reach \$73.7 billion as compared to \$93.7 billion during 2017. The steep decline came primarily on the back of a 20.8 percent decline in issuances from Malaysia recorded at \$27.7 billion in 2018 as compared to \$34.9 billion in 2017. The decline in sukuk issuances by Saudi Arabia was even higher at 35.1 percent or \$10 billion, which drove the total lower to \$8.6 billion in 2018 as compared to \$28.6 billion in 2017. UAE was the only Islamic issuer to see more than doubling of sukuk issuances in 2018 that reached \$8.6 billion as compared to \$3.9 billion during the previous year.

Issuances within the GCC totaled \$33.4 billion during 2018 as compared to \$41.9 billion during 2017, a

decline of 20.3 percent. In terms of type of issuers, global sovereigns continued to remain the biggest issuers of sukuk in 2018. However, sovereign issuances took a big hit in 2018 declining by almost a third to reach \$45.2 billion as compared to \$66.3 billion in 2017 led once again by relatively higher

oil prices until Sept-18 that lowered funding requirements. On the other hand, corporates issuers once again remained strong during the year with an increase of 4.2 percent in sukuk issuances that reached \$28.5 billion in 2018 as compared to \$27.4 billion in 2017. Also, as seen in the case of bond issuance, GCC corporates remained active in the market increasing total issuance by 21.4 percent in 2018 to \$12.0 billion while GCC government sukuk issuances declined by 33.2 percent to \$21.4 billion. On the sectoral front, Financials continued to grab the lion's share of total global sukuk issuances at \$14.7 billion, flat as compared to the previous year. Utilities and Industrial companies were next issuing \$5.9 billion and \$3.8 billion in sukuk during 2018, respectively. Sukuk issuances in the MENA region is expected to pick-up in the near term given the increasing popularity of Islamic instruments with an evolving and strengthening regulatory oversight and standardization. Moreover, regulators are also broadening the reach of sukuk to individual investors. For instance, Malaysia Securities Commission made it easier for retail investors to buy bonds and sukuk issued in the local market and has eased documentation requirements for issuers.

Similarly, Nasdaq Dubai is also planning to allow retail investors to invest in sukuk market in 2019 and introduce retail sukuk instruments with minimal investment limit and Shariah compliant interest rate. In addition, the inclusion of GCC economies in the global bond index would be positive for the sukuk market and would attract capital from international investors looking at taking exposure to higher rated sovereign sukuk.

Bayt.com weekly report

Overqualified for the job?

One of the most surprising reasons qualified candidates do not hear back from an employer is that they are overqualified. One might think that the more qualified a candidate is, the better. But, that's not always the case, for there are a few reasons why employers are reluctant to hire someone who is overqualified for a position.

The thing about overqualified applicants is that hiring managers can usually spot them right away. And, when a hiring manager receives an application from someone whose qualifications go way beyond the requirements of the position, it raises a red flag in their mind. The manager may wonder, "Why does this person want this job?" or "Can we afford to hire them?"

The issue is that when employers see an overqualified candidate, they have the impression that the applicant is using this job opportunity as a temporary gig until a better paying, more senior position opens up elsewhere. They might also figure that the candidate will request a huge sum of money.

However, looking too good on paper to a hiring manager is not the end of the world. Whether you are an intern or a senior-level director, having abundant experience should be an advantage to the employer instead of a negative point. What you need to do is tell the right story and convince the employer that you are not settling for a job below your experience level just to kill time.

With the below tactics, you can overcome your 'overqualified' status, find and get that job.

1. Tweak Your CV

At the first glance, an employer will think a candidate with your level of experience might consider some of the tasks associated with the position to be beneath them. If you are in a supervisory role, a subtle way to tackle this preconception is to take on tasks

you might otherwise assign to others and list them on your CV. By doing that, prospective employers will see that those responsibilities are not 'beneath you' as they previously may have thought. Of course, you should also be honest with yourself about why you want this role and whether or not you really will be able to do these tasks without complaint. If not, you might want to consider holding out for a job more at your level or look for one with responsibilities you would not be as reluctant to handle.

2. Make Your Cover Letter Your Mouthpiece

In order to get the job, you will have to convince the employer that you are here for the long run. Whether you actually are or not is irrelevant. You will still need to persuasively assert that your interest in the job is not solely for its potential as a temporary fix to an unemployment situation. Use your cover letter to express your reasons for wanting this particular job and make a case for how this role will give you experience and put you in a favorable position in the progression of your career.

3. Be Flexible

This is probably one of the most difficult tactics to commit to, but sometimes in order to get a position you are overqualified for, you will have to be willing to make some sacrifices. One can question the fairness of it all, but the reality of it is that you will be going up against other candidates. Candidates who may be less qualified than you are, but will settle for lower pay. You need to be flexible with your salary as it might encourage the employer to overlook your over-qualification and consider you for the role. Without doubt, you can always check Bayt.com Salaries and get a clearer idea of what compensation to expect for each different position.

4. Be Humble

Humility is royalty without a crown. When someone says you are overqualified, it is a

compliment. Be careful not to unintentionally exude arrogance or self-importance and resist the temptation to flaunt your extra degrees. The qualifications you might think make you more than qualified for the role may be irrelevant to that particular hiring manager. At the end of the day, the company wants someone who is a good fit for the role. If the hiring manager happens to point to your over-qualification, be humble and sincere. Acknowledge that you might have more experience than what they are looking for, but express how excited you are about the company and the role. You should also mention that you are looking forward to contributing to the best of your abilities.

Make it unquestionably clear that you have their best interests in mind. You should aim to outline in full what you intend to bring to the table and how that will benefit the organization, while being careful not to give off a condescending impression. Do your research on the company, demonstrate that you understand the problems they might be facing and present solutions. When applying for a job below your career level, you want to exude the wide-eyed curiosity of a lower level employee with the seasoned skills of someone who has been in the business for a while.

5. Sell the Advantages

Think about what your years of experience can bring to the position you are applying for, even if employers do not explicitly ask you to discuss it. Instead of viewing yourself as "overqualified", start seeing yourself as a highly qualified professional whose experience will bring something extra to offer the company. Assert that you are perfectly capable of handling the job in question and that your extra qualifications and skills means that you will be able to assume additional responsibilities in less time than it would take them to hire someone else for the role.

Lastly, keep faith. A positive attitude brings about positive outcomes. Continue trying your best and waste no time in applying to as many jobs as possible.

Vietnam start-up Bamboo Airways secures license

HANOI: Vietnam's start-up Bamboo Airways has secured a license from the local authorities, the company said, opening the way for its maiden flight in January after a string of delays.

Bamboo, owned by hotel and leisure firm FLC Group will operate 37 routes connecting major cities and tourist destinations in Vietnam to "reduce pressure on aviation infrastructure", the airline said in a statement. "In 2019, Bamboo Airways will also launch international air flights to Asian countries, starting with Japan, Korea and Singapore," it said, adding that it also intended to operate flights to Europe, without elaborating.

Vietnam's fifth airline signed a provisional deal in July to buy 20 Boeing 787-9 wide-body jets worth \$5.6 billion at list prices, and a memorandum of understanding in March with Airbus for up to 24 A320neo narrow-bodied air-

craft. Vietnam, one of Asia's fastest growing economies, has recorded double-digit expansion in domestic and inbound passenger numbers. The government aims to spur on tourism with visa exemptions and by promoting investment in the industry.

The granting of an Air Operator Certificate (AOC) from the Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam marks the end of a series of stalled launches for Bamboo.

Bamboo Chairman Trinh Van Quyet, also head of FLC, told Reuters in November he aimed to launch the first domestic flight in December after a delay from October. But that date was pushed back due a further delay in the issuing an AOC. The airline said in December it planned its first flight in mid-January. Yesterday's statement did not mention a more specific date. — Reuters



Business

WB chief's exit could give Trump lever over development lending

Trump seeks to influence how countries access concessional lending

WASHINGTON: The surprise early departure of World Bank President Jim Yong Kim potentially hands US leader Donald Trump a key lever over development lenders with whom his administration has been at odds.

After reshaping the US presidency, traditional alliances, trade relations and the US Supreme Court, Trump now could have a chance to influence how countries like China access concessional lending. But if Trump wants an American in the post, he will need to pick a candidate who can win the support of most shareholders, and will likely face many challengers.

As the biggest shareholder, the United States has sway over the selection of the new World Bank president, a post for 75 years always filled by an American, with the backing of European nations.

But having uprooted those alliances in his two years in office, Trump will find it difficult to simply submit a nominee for acclamation, especially as there have been growing calls for the institution to be guided by someone from the countries it serves. "This White House has a pretty challenging path ahead if they think they want to install a candidate," said Scott Morris, a former US Treasury official who worked with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

The unspoken agreement to have an American lead the World Bank and a European at the IMF has come under fire in recent years, and both institutions have

seen candidates from Nigeria and Mexico challenge the current leaders. And given a "very unpopular" American president, there are certain to be challengers in the process to replace Kim, said Morris, of the Center for Global Development.

Kim, who became the bank's president in 2012, announced Monday he would step down February 1, not even halfway through his second five-year term, to accept an "unexpected" opportunity in the private sector, he told bank staff.

Leadership challenge

With the US attitude toward the bank's goals of reducing global poverty ranging from neglect to active attacks, Kim may find working with a private organization will allow him to effect change more quickly than at a major multilateral institution. In a note to staff, Kim said "it's time for me to take on new challenges and fully focus my efforts on leveraging private finance for the benefit of people around the world." As Trump and his trade team have focused on aggressive trade negotiations, especially with China, the US Treasury Department has regularly, though with less fanfare, criticized the World Bank, for allowing relatively well-off countries like China to borrow from the development lender.

In one of Kim's signature achievements he led nego-

tiations to convince shareholders—especially Washington—to agree early last year to a "historic" \$13 billion increase in the bank's lending capacity.

That deal, reached under the specter of a US veto, included an reform agreement that middle income economies like China would graduate and pay more to borrow from the bank.

But since the US has not even named a representative to sit on the World Bank board, it remains to be seen whether Trump will want to fight for the leadership. Paul Cadario, who spent his career at the World Bank until he retired and joined the University of Toronto, said the bank is not on Trump's radar.

"There's no executive director. And the American executive director has always been a leader of the board and the one who conveys the views of the American government," Cadario told AFP.

Morris, the former Treasury official, said the importance of the post to the White House has been exaggerated, but it could be the kind of fight Trump relishes.

"Frankly in the scheme of things I don't think it matters that much," he said. But for Trump, "these are the kinds of things that seem to matter more to him than actual policy. You could imagine that they would end up breaking a lot of eggs over it." World Bank CEO Kristalina Georgieva will serve as interim president upon Kim's February 1 departure. — AFP



NUSA DUA: In this file photo World Bank president Jim Yong Kim speaks at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank annual meetings in Nusa Dua, on Indonesia's resort island of Bali. World Bank President Jim Yong Kim announced on Monday he would step down next month. — AFP

Brexit stockpiling 'good news' for UK warehousing

CRICK, UK: Fears of a chaotic Brexit are "good news" for Neil Powell, a British warehouse business manager who has seen a boom in orders from companies stockpiling to avoid supply problems. "Usual capacity would be about 85 percent to 90 percent, it is 94 percent at the moment," Powell, general manager of the NX Group in Crick in central England, told AFP.

Brexit "is good news for us," he said, as handlers shifted pallets in one of the company's three warehouses. "Customers are demanding a lot more space," he said. The secure warehouse is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and is packed to its 13-metre (43-foot) high ceiling with cosmetics, food and computer products. The company has a total storage capacity of around 9,300 square metres in this warehouse-filled area of the Midlands known as the "golden triangle" of logistics, due to its proximity to several road networks.

Eighty people work for the NX group, five of whom have been recruited in recent months due to the demand. Powell said he receives constant requests from customers making sure they have enough space and new inquiries "on a daily basis", especially from food companies.

"It's really, really interesting times... We are very positive about what Brexit will bring," he said.

One customer last month requested "double the amount of space... because they believe there's going to be a hard Brexit and they need the space," he said.



CRICK: An employee works in the e-commerce section of a depot of The NX Group, a company offering secure warehousing, UK distribution & same day courier services, in Crick near Rugby, central England on Monday. — AFP

Labor shortage

With less than three months to go before Britain leaves the European Union on 29 March 2019, all scenarios remain open, from a negotiated exit with the EU to a total rupture which would threaten turbulence in supply chains. "Whatever the result of Brexit, whether it is hard, soft deal or no deal we do expect some form of interruption in the supply chain," said Peter Ward, president of the UK Warehousing Association, which brings together more than 750 companies in the sector.

"In an overall sense, this is good news for the sector because more warehousing is going to be needed." But the British vote in June 2016 to leave the EU has also had negative consequences for the warehouse business.

Rising fuel prices because of the fall in the

value of the pound and the departure of East European workers on whom the industry relied "really heavily" have hit the sector hard, Ward said.

East European workers represented around 35 percent of the low-skilled labour in the industry before the referendum, but now only make up around a quarter after many returned home or tried their luck in another country, he explained.

The "Brexit factor" has thus accentuated the existing problem of manpower shortage, he said. In the Midlands, the NX group employs 15 Moldovans and 10 Poles, working as handlers, drivers and office workers. "Excellent workers. I'd like to keep the same employees on the same contracts," said Powell, adding of Brexit as a whole: "I don't think it will be so easy". — AFP

US services sector growth hits 5-month low in Dec

NEW YORK: US services sector activity slowed to a five-month low in December, but remained above a level consistent with solid economic growth in the fourth quarter.

The Institute for Supply Management said on Monday its non-manufacturing activity index fell to 57.6 last month, the lowest reading since July, from 60.7 in November.

Still the index stayed well above the 50 mark, suggesting expansion of the vast services sector. Analysts polled by Reuters had forecast a reading of 59.0.

Economists said while the drop in the services industries measure echoed recent declines in other business surveys, including the ISM's manufacturing survey published last week, the reading was still strong by historic standards. "We have seen a range of different indicators lately that point to some softening in the economy as well as rising recession risks, but we think that the economy will continue to expand at a decent pace despite some moderation in growth," said Daniel Silver, an economist at JPMorgan in

New York. Growth estimates for the fourth quarter are around a 2.6 percent annualized rate. The economy grew at a 3.4 percent pace in the third quarter.

The dollar fell against a basket of currencies, pressured by growing expectations the Federal Reserve will either pause or halt its interest rate hike cycle. Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher while US Treasury prices were lower. The ISM described growth as having "cooled," noting that trade tensions between the United States and China remained a major concern for businesses. It also said that while capacity constraints had eased, finding workers was still a challenge.

A measure of services industries employment fell to a reading of 56.3 last month, the lowest since July, from 58.4 in November. While industries reported a modest increase in new orders amid strong exports, order backlogs declined sharply.

Companies in the wholesale trade industry said they were anticipating "a pullback year in demand for 2019," citing several factors, including the trade dispute with China, a stock market sell-off, higher mortgage rates as well as labor shortages and higher material costs.

There were concerns in the company management and support services industries about the trade war with China, with companies saying they were expecting "lower profit margins and reduced sales for 2019 until our suppliers can source product from other countries." — Reuters

Austria's Post Office rejects criticism over data sharing

VIENNA: Austria's national post office yesterday defended its policy of collecting and selling information about customers' assumed political allegiances, as privacy campaigners drew comparisons to the Facebook data-sharing scandal. The Austrian Post said in a statement that the gathering of marketing data was "not a new business area" for the group and had been "well-established practice for many years".

The company, which is publicly listed but still majority-owned by the government, has come under fire for compiling a database of the likely political allegiances of around 2.2 million Austrians—a quarter of the population—and selling that information on to political parties.

According to the investigative journalism website Addendum, the group sold the names, addresses, age and gender of around three million customers to other companies.

And it also made assumptions about users' likely political allegiances and sold that data to political parties so that they can better target potential supporters in election campaigns, Addendum reported.

The website drew comparisons to the series of scandals concerning data protection and privacy that have engulfed Facebook, the world's largest social network, in a number of countries after user data were hijacked in the 2016 US election campaign.

The Austrian Post insisted it had done nothing wrong as it was allowed to gather and use



BRUSSELS: EU Commissioner of digital economy and society Gunther Oettinger (left) and Roumanian Deputy of European Affairs Georges Ciamba give a joint press after a General Affairs Council meeting yesterday at the EU headquarters. — AFP

such data under Austrian law. "We calculate data, such as affinity to a political party, in the same way that exit polls are calculated when voting closes on election day," it said.

"But these are statistical data from which it is impossible to extrapolate the behavior of individual people," it argued. The Austrian Post's assumptions about its customers' political allegiances were based on opinion polls and voting statistics in specific geographical areas, the group explained.

"The calculation of such data is intended solely to reduce mailings wastage. Its sole purpose is to increase the likelihood that people will receive the mailings of those political parties most likely to interest them."

And it insisted that the data were collected "exclusively for marketing purposes. The use of

such data is strictly limited to this purpose only." Nevertheless, the privacy campaign group, Epicenter Works, argues that such a practice runs contrary to EU data protection rules. It was a "scandal" that the Austrian Post was collecting and selling assumptions about customers' party political allegiances without their knowledge and permission, said Wolfie Christl, a campaigner at Epicenter Works. The consumer protection group VKI was also skeptical about the legality of the practice. In the wake of the controversy, the Austrian Data Protection Authority announced yesterday that it would look into the affair.

The Austrian Post would have two or three weeks to respond to the allegations, the head of the authority, Andrea Jelinek, said on Oe1 public radio. — AFP

Global stocks rally again as US-China trade hopes build

LONDON: A strong day for Europe and a jump in Wall Street futures kept world stocks at a three-week high yesterday, after Asia was knocked back by a shock profit warning from tech giant Samsung.

Hopes that Washington and Beijing may be moving towards a trade deal helped the mood again and also gave the dollar a lift in the currency markets after its shaky start to the year.

That rise, along with the alarm from South Korea's Samsung that it would badly miss its earnings forecasts, caused a slip in emerging markets, but Europe held its nerve—unlike last week after a similar warning from Apple. The pan-European STOXX 600 rose 1.5 percent despite some wobbles in Italy as Rome stepped in to support another of its struggling lenders. Britain's FTSE was up 1.2 percent too as its retailers cheered rare good news about Christmas trading.

"I think the market has been quite extreme in pricing recession risks, so I think we have value now in both the equity and bond markets," SEB investment management's global head of asset allocation Hans Peterson said. "The dis-

cussions between the US and China will take some time but I think the markets are prepared to move in the right direction on positive signals."

US President Donald Trump tweeted ahead of the start of Wall Street trading that talks with China, which were going into a second day, were going "very well". US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross had predicted on Monday that Beijing and Washington could reach a trade deal that "we can live with".

S&P 500 futures gained 0.8 percent following a near four percent surge on Wall Street since Friday, led by Amazon and Netflix which have been recovering some of the ground they lost during a brutal end to 2018. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares ended down 0.2 percent, however. It was dragged lower by falls in South Korea due to Samsung and in China where government bond yields also saw their biggest daily gain in nine months.

China's Foreign Ministry said Beijing had "good faith" to work with the United States to resolve trade friction, but many analysts doubt the two sides can reach a comprehensive agreement on all of the issues before a March deadline.

"Various concerns markets had earlier are receding for now. Still, there's no denying that US (company) earnings momentum is slowing," said Hirokazu Kabeya, chief global strategist at Daiwa Securities.

"Ultimately we need to see whether upcoming earnings reports can dispel market concerns." — Reuters

Business



KAICO offers the best deals on the Geely Emgrand X7 Sport

Full insurance, free service, replacement and fast delivery among offers

KUWAIT: Geely has successfully established its name as a pioneer and a trend-setter in the regional automotive market. The trust given to Geely cars is a result of years of successful strategy and product development that started in 1986. Since then Geely Automotive has entered the top 10 automaker list in China, became a fortune 500 company placed in 267th position, acquired both Volvo Car Group and 10 percent stake in Daimler to become its single largest shareholder. Peter Horbury, the ex-Vice president of design at Volvo is leading their innovative design department.

Kuwait Automotive Imports Company (KAICO), Al Shaya & Al Sagar, has announced their latest offers on their wide range of vehicles. The new competitive offer helps clients, both nationals and expats, to own the well-known Chinese brand. The offer includes full insurance, free service package, a replacement car and immediate delivery. Also, clients will need no guarantor and will get immediate finance approval. It is definitely the happiest deal in town.

Ashish Tandon, general manager of Kaico, stated "Geely group has a clear vision to continue its transformation into a global leadership. As partners of Geely we have found an excellent partnership to expand our services in Kuwait. Their advanced technology research & development will play an important role in their global presence and it will enhance our strong position in the automotive market.

Mohammad Othman, Geely sales divisional manager added "this offer is the perfect chance for clients to own Geely cars which are considered one of the most improved vehicles in the automotive industry and this great opportunity should be seized since it



is for a limited period." The X7 Sport is contemporary and graceful with a high level of refinement both inside and out. It was designed from the outset to be a segment leading SUV, a vehicle developed around its core consumer market - young individuals that strive for technology, connectivity, and superior aesthetics.

Technology

The HD TFT display delivers clear pictures and bright colors with various display modes and gives you access to comprehensive information regarding the vehicle and your surroundings. The water ripple design resembles the subtle flowing water, showing unique charm. The high-tech instrument cluster is completed with a high end soft to touch material. The integrated layout of the center console is elegant in its appearance and execution.

Exterior

The X7 Sports exterior is sculptured with the same dynamic lines inspired by the



road unfold before your eyes.

Interior

The central infotainment panel was inspired by the terraced fields of South Western China, protruding slightly to give the drivers the feeling of being in control. The X7 Sports steering wheel is covered in Nappa leather, giving the driver a feeling of luxury in his or her hands whilst a full moon roof brings unbelievable levels of light into the vehicle. Luxury seating can be had in the front or the rear of the vehicle, bringing comfort no matter where you are. Eight-way adjustable electric seats complete with heating function, easy to operate and with multiple functions. Seats are created from high quality genuine Nappa leather, furthering that feeling of luxury. The Emgrand X7 and whole range of Geely vehicles can be seen and test driven in the Geely showroom located in Al-Rai area. All Geely vehicles are covered with a 10-year warranty service.



muscular forms of a powerful leopard in motion and the gracefulness of one at rest. The face of the X7 Sports demonstrates a robust quality; with a high mounted front upper grill that acts as a shield for the muscular forms on the hood and then run into the shoulder and into the bodyline.

This muscular curvature continues directly into the unique bellline, and into tail lamps that wrap into the body side to give the X7 a truly unique design. The Emgrand X7 Sport is equipped with a panoramic sunroof that offers occupants a broader view, making the scenery along the

Gulf Bank to host 11th Al-Danah millionaire draw tomorrow

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is hosting its 11th annual Al-Danah Account draw for the 'One Million Kuwaiti Dinar' prize tomorrow (Thursday, 10th January 2019). We invite you to join us and enjoy the live entertainment, which will take place from 4pm to 8.00pm, at The Avenues.

In the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the event will be broadcast live on FM 88.8 Q8 Pulse Radio Station and feature a special musical performance from a traditional Kuwaiti band. The event will kick-off at 4 PM with family focused activities entertaining children, and registration will open for the popular 'Catch the Cash' game, exclusive to Gulf Bank.

Gulf Bank invites everyone and especially those with the name 'Dana' to join as at the "Al-Danah hour" designated booth, in which they will be offered instant gifts, as well as an entry to a draw offering 10 lucky winners KD 200, simply for being named Dana.

Commenting on the event, Ahmed Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communication, Gulf Bank, said: "Gulf Bank is honored to actualize the dreams of many individuals with its coveted Al-Danah millionaire draw. Our

flagship offering, Al-Danah draws remain the biggest total prize pool in Kuwait. We look forward to celebrating this year's KD 1 million winner."

Al-Danah Event Schedule
4 - 6:30 pm - Kids' activities and Al-Danah hour—
6:30 - 7:00 pm special performance by a Kuwaiti traditional band,
7:00 - 8:00 pm —
Catch the Cash Game, prizes, announcement of the KD 1 million Al-Danah winner.

Al-Danah is Gulf Bank's flagship account, open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws.

To take part in the upcoming Al-Danah weekly, quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw. Al-Danah chances are added on a daily basis, the more customers save and the longer they save for, the higher their chances of winning. Furthermore, the Al-Danah account is the only account in which loyal customers are rewarded by adding their total chances gained at the end of the year onto the next year.

Winner of Malabar Gold & Diamonds festival campaign felicitated

KUWAIT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the largest jewelry retailers globally, recently awarded the winner of its ongoing 'Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival' promotional campaign. The winner, B. Vinoth Kumar received the prize of 100gm gold from Shahil, Branch Head in the presence of management of Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

The 8th edition of the 'Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival' campaign was recently launched with a variety of exciting promotions that is slated to end on 26 January, 2019. During the promotional period, customers at any Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlet are entitled to a ticket on their jewelry purchases that enters them into a raffle draw to win up to 2 kilos of gold. In another promotion, with every purchase of gold and diamond jewelry worth KD 40 allows buyers a chance to win a 100 gram of gold bar each in 10 raffle draws. Buyers of diamond and precious gem jewelry purchases worth KD 250 will each receive a



1gm free gold coin. Customers also get free gold coins on every purchase of 18k gold jewelry worth KD 80.

The Malabar Gold & Diamonds Festival is a true shopper's delight with an assortment of eye-catching designs in gold, diamonds, platinum, and precious gems from different parts of the world. There is also the latest and most vibrant collection of jewelry to suit the tastes of the brand's multicultural and multinational

customers. Malabar Gold & Diamonds also features a range of designs namely Ethnic - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine - Indian Heritage Jewelry and Precia - Gem Jewelry

This season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds showcases its latest collection of gold, diamond and precious gems jewelry at their outlets to celebrate this festive period.

ECB rate hike now unlikely before mid-2020, money markets bet

LONDON: The European Central Bank not only will fail to raise interest rates this year but won't move until mid-2020, well beyond the timing suggested by the bank's policy guidance, money market pricing implies. The ECB, which ended quantitative easing last month, has said rates will remain unchanged through the summer of 2019, to support the euro zone economy and increase inflation.

But a deteriorating economic outlook has led to aggressive repricing of market expectations in recent weeks. Investors now bet the ECB's minus 0.40 percent deposit rate will be on hold for much longer than expected.

Data yesterday showed German industrial output unexpectedly fell in November, raising concern that Europe's powerhouse economy may have slipped into a technical recession in the fourth quarter of 2018 after contracting in the third. The difference between the overnight and forward Eonia interest rates-bank-to-bank interest rates for the euro area that provide some indication of how investors view the ECB rate trajectory-imply a 10-basis-point rate hike is now only fully priced in around the middle of 2020.

So investors have not only scaled back bets on a rate rise this year-current pricing suggests a roughly 45 percent chance of a hike by year-end-they have also pushed back the expected date of a first move by the ECB by months rather than the usual month or two.

Other money market futures, such as Euribor, point to a move even later in 2020. That coincides with a pricing out of US rate increases this year, with markets in fact seeing a small probability of a cut in 2020. "The rate hike trajectory in the euro area has essentially

been pushed back by 12 months, and that reflects the massive repricing in rate expectations in the US and Europe," said Mathias van der Jeugt, head of market research at KBC in Brussels. The ECB last raised interest rates in 2011, then cut them to record lows in 2016 to fight deflation. Investors once expected an increase before Mario Draghi's term as ECB chief ended this October. Those expectations are now being pushed back.

"Current pricing suggests the ECB will struggle to hike rates when it wants to," Lyn Graham-Taylor, a fixed income strategist at Rabobank said, pointing to the shift in language from even some of the more hawkish ECB officials. Executive board member Sabine Lautenschlaeger, a German who has long called for the ECB to tighten its policy, said in December she still expects a rate hike in 2019. But she concedes that would depend on inflation data in the first half of the year. Inflation in the euro area rose 1.6 percent in December, slowing from 1.9 percent in November. The ECB targets inflation at around 2 percent. — Reuters

TOMORROW

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IS THE AL DANAH MILLIONAIRE DRAW

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Health

Profit-hungry tiger breeders behind the push to lift China's trading ban

Captive tiger numbers in China have grown to estimated 6,500

HONG KONG/HARBIN: At the Siberia Tiger Park in the frigid Chinese city of Harbin, visitors can learn about the facility's successful breeding program and buy chicken carcasses to toss to around 20 tigers pacing the snow flecked ground of their enclosure. At the park gates, a shop sells liquor soaked with tiger bones for up to \$1,000 a bottle.

China has made significant strides in wildlife protection in recent years, including a total ban on ivory and plans to open one of the world's largest reserves for wild tigers in northeast China in 2020. But it also has formidable, profit-driven wildlife business interests that risk undermining progress on protecting the endangered big cats, conservationists say.

"The industry occupies a strategic position which concentrates in the country's less developed regions where poverty reduction remains a top priority of the local authorities," said Houston-based Peter Li, a China Policy Specialist at Humane Society International. Operators of tiger breeding farms have told state media that without the ability to sell bones, skins and meat they are not able to cover the high costs of running their parks and carry out key conservation plans endorsed by the national government.

After pressure from some breeders, China's State Council said in October it would replace a 1993 ban on the trade of tiger bones and rhino horn, opening up exceptions under "special circumstances", including medical research. But in November, Beijing postponed the move following widespread protests from conservation groups who worry any resumption in the legal trade of tiger parts will be a death knell for the species by enabling the laundering of wild animal parts into farmed supplies.

Conservationists also argue that no captive Chinese bred tigers have been released into the wild and there is no scientific or medical need to use rhino horn and tiger bone in traditional Chinese medicine. Still, lifting the ban is backed by China's powerful State Forestry and Grassland Administration. "If rhino horns and tiger bones can be used for medicinal purposes, and their use causes zero harm to the two endangered species in the wild, why should we oppose it?" Tang Xiaoping, an executive at the administration was quoted in the state-run China Daily newspaper. The Forestry and Grasslands administration did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Profit-driven business

At the Siberia Tiger Park, tiger bone wine is sold openly and is recognized by the Forestry Bureau and Commerce Ministry, according to a sales representative in the store. However, the park is not allowed to publicly promote it due to the sensitivity of the situation, the sales rep said. Officials at the park declined to comment on the record. The wine, which ranges in price from 280 yuan-6,888 yuan, (\$40-\$1,003) is

displayed in large glass cabinets and also sold on China's Twitter-like WeChat.

Park executives, officials and conservation experts say tiger parks have been accumulating stocks of animal skin and bone in freezers, with the aim of selling it for medicinal use in the future. Conservation groups estimate there are now over 6,500 farmed tigers at some 200 facilities in China and around 40 farmed rhinos. Chinese media say tiger bone can fetch 5,000-9,000 yuan (\$727-\$1,308) per kg - tens of thousands of dollars per animal.

The World Wildlife Fund believes there are only around 40-50 wild tigers left in China out of around 3,900 globally. Debate over lifting the ban on tiger trade comes as China seeks to develop its traditional medicine industry, worth some \$50 billion annually, and position it as a key pillar of its 'One Belt One Road' strategy. The World Health Organisation is set to recognize traditional Chinese medicine for the first time next year in its global medical compendium according to Nature International Journal of Science, citing the governing body.

Cash strapped

The Siberian Tiger Park has more than 1,300 tigers spread across three locations. Selling tiger bone wine is a way to subsidize the daily expenses of the park, said one of the park's tour guides. Currently, visitor fees are the parks' main source of income, along with government subsidies. Ticket prices are 100 yuan and visitors can pay extra to feed the tigers. A menu of meat displays prices for a live chicken at 120 yuan while a raw cutlet is 10 yuan.

In a CCTV documentary shown in November, Liu Dan, the chief engineer of the Northeast Tiger Forest park, near China's border with Russia, says his 1,000-plus tigers each eat around 3,000 yuan (\$435) worth of chicken per month. Liu, who has raised tigers for over 30 years and has repeatedly called for the ban on trading tiger parts to be lifted, told state media that government tax breaks are not enough for the park to be financially viable. Currently, parks make most of their money from visitors. Liu and the park declined to comment for this article.

Chinese medicine experts say there is no need to use tiger bone and rhino horn in treatments as substitutes are readily available. Tiger bone, for example, is often used to treat arthritis and joint pain, but there are dozens of other herbs with similar properties, said Eric Karchmer, chief medicine officer at Dao Labs. Lixin Huang, the president of the American College of Traditional Medicine, said a reversal of the ban would create a huge challenge for the Chinese medicine community. "We stopped using it 25 years ago. We don't understand. I don't think the Chinese medicine community and medical professionals would understand." — Reuters



Local plants could ease malnutrition in E Timor

PHNOM PENH: The Australian owners of a restaurant in East Timor are hoping to use their passion for the local cuisine to combat malnutrition in the tiny Southeast Asian nation. East Timor has Asia's worst rates of child malnutrition, with more than 50 percent of children suffering from stunting - a condition that permanently affects their mental and physical development - according to the United Nations.

But this is not primarily due to a shortage of food - instead, the UN children's agency UNICEF blames a lack of education and knowledge about local foods. Development worker turned restaurateur Mark Notaras said traditional dishes like batar da'an - a kind of corn stew served at his Agora Food Studio restaurant in the capital Dili - were looked down on as "poor people's food." "If you came to visit Timor, you could eat at 150 restaurants and never find it on a menu," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Notaras and his wife, Alva Lim, launched the non-profit Timor-Leste Food Innovators Exchange (TLFIX) last year to educate people across the country about cooking with

healthy and local ingredients. They hope to persuade them to supplement diets of white rice and instant noodles - which provide cheap calories but little nutrition - with the indigenous plants that grow there. "We encourage people to eat a wider array of foods they already have around them in order to improve their nutrition," said Notaras.

Food innovation

UNICEF already trains mothers in East Timor to provide more nutritious meals, showing them how to incorporate locally grown carrots and leafy greens into the rice that children are traditionally fed. Lim and Notaras take a more innovative approach. "We use food storytelling and food innovation to promote better livelihoods, including through nutrition," said Notaras. In doing so, they are joining a worldwide movement to return to local produce as populations have shifted away from traditional diets to increasingly consume imported foods that tend to be cheaper but less nutritious. Organizations like the Rome-based non-profit Biodiversity International are trying to reverse that trend by promoting indigenous crops, such as "Mayan spinach" in Central America. That requires governments to introduce policies that encourage local crops rather than imports, and individual behaviors may need to change too, said Ronnie Vermooy of Biodiversity International. — Reuters

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CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
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Technology

Samsung Electronics flags 30% slump in Q4 operating profit

Firm paints a grim outlook over mounting competition, falling chip prices

SEOUL: Samsung Electronics yesterday flagged its first quarterly profit drop in two years and painted a grim outlook owing to mounting competition from Chinese smartphone makers and declining chip prices. The shock warning added to concerns about the broader tech sector after Apple sent shudders through world markets last week by slashing its revenue forecast blaming weak sales in China and citing the trade war.

Samsung—the world's top maker of smartphones and memory chips—has enjoyed record profits in recent years despite a series of setbacks, including a humiliating recall and the jailing of its de facto chief.

But operating profit during the October to December period was expected to be around 10.8 trillion won (\$9.8 billion), down 28.7 percent from a year earlier, Samsung said in an earnings estimate.

The figure was below market consensus of about 13.5 trillion won, according to market researcher FnGuide. Sales dropped more than 10 percent to 59 trillion won in the period, Samsung said.

It cited "lackluster demand in the memory business and intensifying competition in the smartphone business" for the dismal outlook. "Memory earnings fell significantly... due to weaker-than-expected demand amid inventory adjustments at data-center customers," which led to a "greater-than-expected" drop in chip prices, it said. "We expect earnings to remain subdued in the first quarter of 2019 due to difficult conditions for the memory business but strengthen in the second half."

Alarm bells

But analyst Kim Sun-woo of Meritz Securities said worsening supply and demand for semiconductors and the structural challenges facing Samsung's smartphone business will hit profits throughout 2019. Demand for DRAM memory chips "will hit a low in the fourth quarter of 2019", he added.

Samsung withholds net profit and sector-by-sector business performance data until it releases its final earnings report, which is expected later this month. For 2018,

the firm expects operating profit of 58.9 trillion won, up nearly 10 percent on-year, and sales to inch up 1.6 percent to 243.5 trillion won.

Shares in Samsung Electronics, the flagship subsidiary of the Samsung Group that dominates South Korea's economy, were down 1.68 percent at the close.

Last week Apple said it expected to earn \$84 billion in October-December, well down from the \$89-\$93 billion previously forecast as it blamed a steeper-than-expected "economic deceleration" in China and emerging markets. The news battered world equities, with observers saying problems at the usually reliable US titan could point to broader demand weakness and the China-US trade war cited as a key factor.

"When Apple sounded the alarm bells for last quarter results, there was some thought the drops in China sales was an anti-Apple backlash due to escalating US-China tensions," said Stephen Innes, head of Asia-Pacific trade at OANDA. "But these Samsung results are quite damning suggesting there... (is) a broader-based retail and manufacturer slowdown afoot."

Losing ground

While Samsung leads the global smartphone market with a 20 percent share, it faces mounting competition from Chinese rivals like Huawei—which surpassed Apple to take second place last year—offering quality devices at lower prices. "Samsung is losing ground to Huawei, Xiaomi and other Chinese rivals in the huge China and India markets," Neil Mawston, executive director at market researcher Strategy Analytics, said in a report.

Samsung once also had a 20 percent market share in China but has seen its sales tumble to less than one percent of the world's largest smartphone market in the third quarter, and last month announced the closure of its factory in Tianjin. It will reportedly roll out a new line-up of its flagship Galaxy handsets at next month's World Mobile Congress in Barcelona as it seeks to regain a competitive edge in a market segment it once dominated.



LAS VEGAS: Senior Vice President of Samsung Electronics America Alanna Cotton showcases the Notebook Odyssey computer and Notebook 9 Pen at the Samsung press conference at the Mandalay Bay Convention Center during CES 2019 in Las Vegas on Monday. — AFP

Samsung is also set to introduce the world's first bendable smartphone in the first half.

Its reputation suffered a major blow after a damaging worldwide recall of its Galaxy Note 7 devices over exploding batteries in 2016, which cost the firm billions of dollars and shattered its global brand image.

It also took another hit after the bribery conviction of Lee Jae-yong—the son and heir of the group's ailing

current chairman Lee Kun-hee. The 50-year-old scion was a key figure in the scandal that ousted former South Korean president Park Geun-hye following massive nationwide protests, and was sentenced to five years in jail last year.

But he was released from jail in February last year after several of his convictions were quashed on appeal. — AFP

Say hello to a higher productivity with the HUAWEI Mate 20 Pro

Whether you are an executive, a fitness instructor or a full-time mum, your lined up responsibilities are time-consuming. Let's face it, it is difficult enough to manage a schedule, multitask and stick to a plan - so, when small matters suddenly barge into your daily life unannounced and steal precious time, you're not happy.

Remembering you've forgotten your laptop charger at home and having to drive back to get it when you've almost reached the office, being caught on a phone conversation with a friend that won't stop talking when you badly need to get some work done, or receiving the classic 'low battery' announcement when you need your smartphone the most - these are the kind of situations we don't prepare for, and ironically enough they are deadly time wasters.

While technology can't help with everything, it can certainly can save us in some situations and empower us with the right tools to stay on top of things - and when we say technology, we mean the HUAWEI Mate 20 Pro, our digital knight in shining armor. This incredibly innovative smartphone integrates the kind of features that save you precious time, allowing a much higher productivity.

You need to be up to the task, and so should your battery

With the HUAWEI Mate 20 Pro you can afford to break the ritual of absolutely having to charge your phone during the night, or otherwise having to deal with a dead battery in the morning, when you have no time to wait for your phone to charge. With a huge battery of 4200mAh, you will have the luxu-

ry of using your smartphone intensively for an entire day - and maybe a little more. Sending out emails, tracking your children's activity schedule and sharing folders with colleagues all day without having to worry about your battery letting you down is absolutely crucial when you are on a tight schedule.

The kind of charger that allows you to move fast

You have a workshop to attend, a child to pick up from soccer practice or a client to meet soon but your phone is still plugged and can't possibly be charging any slower. To leave it is not an option, to unplug it knowing its battery is dying soon is unbearable and to wait for it to charge and ending up being late is both frustrating and counterproductive. Besides having the fastest wireless charger in the world, the HUAWEI Mate 20 Pro has your back with its 40W SuperCharge. This adapter can top the battery up to approximately 70 percent in only 30 minutes. So if you have forgotten to charge it overnight, simply do so in the morning and by the time you've gotten ready and had breakfast, you'll be good to go. Fast charging should not worry you, as the HUAWEI Mate 20 Pro is certified by TÜV Rheinland, a German certification organization following some of the world's strictest safety standards. The device is ensured to charge both quickly and safely while maintaining a low temperature - so there is nothing to worry about, you're in good hands.



ry wealth funds connected to Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi-do not share founder Masayoshi Son's enthusiasm for the shared-office sector, the Financial Times said, citing people familiar with their thinking.

The New York-based WeWork has doubled its revenue every year for the past few years, but rapid expansion has led to heavy losses.

SoftBank has also lost considerable market value in the past six months, led mostly by the disappointing performance of its newly listed mobile unit.

"There is more hesitancy and a need to be more cautious on how they (SoftBank) are proceeding," one person briefed on the WeWork deal said, according to the Financial Times.

WeWork and SoftBank declined to comment when contacted by AFP.

An initial deal discussed last year envisioned SoftBank and its so-called Vision Fund paying \$10bn to buy out all outside investors in WeWork, with a further \$6 billion injected directly to fuel expansion in China, Japan, South Korea and elsewhere in Asia.

Despite being one of the most valuable privately held companies launched in the past decade, WeWork has managed to avoid an initial public offering because investors such as SoftBank have bankrolled its expansion. — AFP

SoftBank scaling back WeWork investment

TOKYO: SoftBank is scaling back plans for fresh investment in shared-office provider WeWork, reports said yesterday, slashing a multi-billion-dollar injection in the loss-making company.

The Japanese tech giant is in negotiations to put just \$2 billion into the US firm, the Financial Times reported. The figure is much lower than the \$16 billion discussed at the end of last year, and follows declines in global tech stocks and concern by investors over how SoftBank's \$100bn Vision Fund was being spent. While the deal has not yet been finalized-and could still fall apart-the scaling back underscores dampening enthusiasm for technology shares, which have suffered recently from a major sell-off in global equity markets. SoftBank has already invested \$8 billion in WeWork, which has seen losses balloon as it expands aggressively in Europe and North America.

But SoftBank's major investors-including sover-

2019: The year of the data-driven digital ecosystem

By Mohammed Amin

It's that time of year - our planet has made its trip around the sun and as we close out 2018, we look ahead and think about the possibilities for 2019. And we're closing in on the next decade of innovation that takes us into 2030, where we at Dell Technologies predict we'll realize the next era of Human-Machine Partnerships - where we will be immersed in smart living, intelligent work, and a frictionless economy.

While bold predictions were made last year - some coming to fruition a bit faster than others - there's still much to do in advancing artificial intelligence and machine learning technologies, and autonomous systems are continuing to take shape as organizations build the digital backbone to support them.

So, what's in store for 2019? Read on to see our top predictions for 2019 as we enter the data-driven digital ecosystem.

We'll be more immersed

Virtual assistants continue to be pervasive in consumer technology - smart home technologies, "things" and connected cars - learning your preferences and proactively serving up content and information based on previous interactions. We'll see this machine intelligence merge with augmented and virtual reality in the home to create truly immersive experiences - like a virtual sous chef that can help you whip up an easy meal for the family. And you'll be more connected to your personal health with even more intelligent wellness tracking devices that can capture more information about the body, like heart rate variability (HRV), sleep patterns and more that you can easily share with health care providers for better care.

Immersive intelligence will also follow us to work. Our PCs and devices we use every day will continue to learn from our habits and proactively boot up with the right apps and services at the right time. Advances in natural language processing and voice technologies will create a more productive dialogue with machines, while automation and robotics will create faster, more fluid collaboration with technology to get more done. And, with augmented and virtual reality applications creating on- and off-site immersive experiences - people will have access to the data they need to do work whenever, wherever they are.

Data gold mine

Organizations have been stockpiling big data for years. In fact, it's predicted that by 2020, the data volume will reach 44 Trillion gigabytes, or 44 Zettabytes. That's a lot of data. Soon they'll finally put it to work as Digital transformation takes shape.

As they derive more value from that data - with insights driving new innovations and more efficient business processes - more investments will be born out of the technology sector. New startups will emerge to tackle the bigger challenges that make AI a reality: data management and federated analytics where insights can be driven from virtually everywhere, and data compliance solutions for a safer, smarter way to deliver amazing outcomes.

5G will have us living on the edge

The first 5G devices are slated to hit the market sometime next year with the much-anticipated next-generation network that promises to completely change the data game in terms of speed and accessibility. Low-latency, high-bandwidth networks mean more connected things, cars and systems - and a boat load of AI, Machine Learning and Compute happening at the edge, because that's where all the data will be generated.

It won't be long before we begin to see micro-hubs lining

our streets - mini datacenters if you will - that will also give rise to new "smart" opportunities for real-time insights happening on the corner of your street. Cities and towns will become more connected than ever, paving the way for smart cities and digital infrastructure that we predict will be thriving in 2030. And it'll be a game changer for industries like health-care or manufacturing, where data and information being generated out in the field can be quickly processed and analyzed in real time - versus having to travel back and forth to a cloud - and then readily shared with those who need it.

Data forecast will call for more clouds

Last year we predicted the arrival of the Mega Cloud - a variety of clouds that make up a powerhouse operating model as IT strategies require both public and private clouds. So far that's holding true. The public vs. private cloud debate will continue to wane as organizations realize that they need to effectively manage all the different types of data they'll be processing. A recent IDC survey pointed to more than 80% of respondents repatriating data back to on-premise private clouds - and we can expect that trend to continue, even with projections for public cloud growth.

Multi-cloud environments will drive automation, AI and ML processing into high gear because they give organizations the ability to manage, move and process data where and when they need to. In fact, we'll see more clouds pop up as data becomes increasingly distributed - at the edge in autonomous car environments or in smart factories, in cloud-native apps, in protected on-prem centers to meet a host of new compliance and privacy standards and of course, the public cloud for a variety of apps and services that we use every day.

Move over Millennials, Gen Z will clock into the workplace

Millennials are going to have to make room for the next generation with Gen Z (born after 1995) badging into the workplace over the next year - creating an increasingly diverse workforce spanning five generations! This will create a rich range of experiences in life and technology. 98% of Gen Z will have used technology as part of their formal education, many already understand the basics of software coding and expect the only the best technology to be a part of their work experience.

Gen Z will spark a new evolution in technology innovation for the workplace and create more opportunities for technology literacy and on-site learning for new skills with older generations of workers. AR and VR will become increasingly commonplace and close the skills gap across an aging workforce - while giving Gen Z the speed and productivity they demand.

No more weak links or waste

Believing in the many advantages to running a sustainable business, organizations will follow our lead and begin to accelerate ways to design waste out of their business models through new innovation in recycling and closed loop practices. To help, we at Dell are sharing our blueprint for turning ocean bound plastics into recycled packaging and turning soot from diesel generator exhaust fumes into ink for printing on boxes.

We'll see advances in supply chain traceability, by scrutinizing and harnessing emerging technologies to identify precise opportunities to course correct. Blockchain will likely play a role as well, to ensure trust and safety in sourcing, while also securing information and data about goods and services along the way.

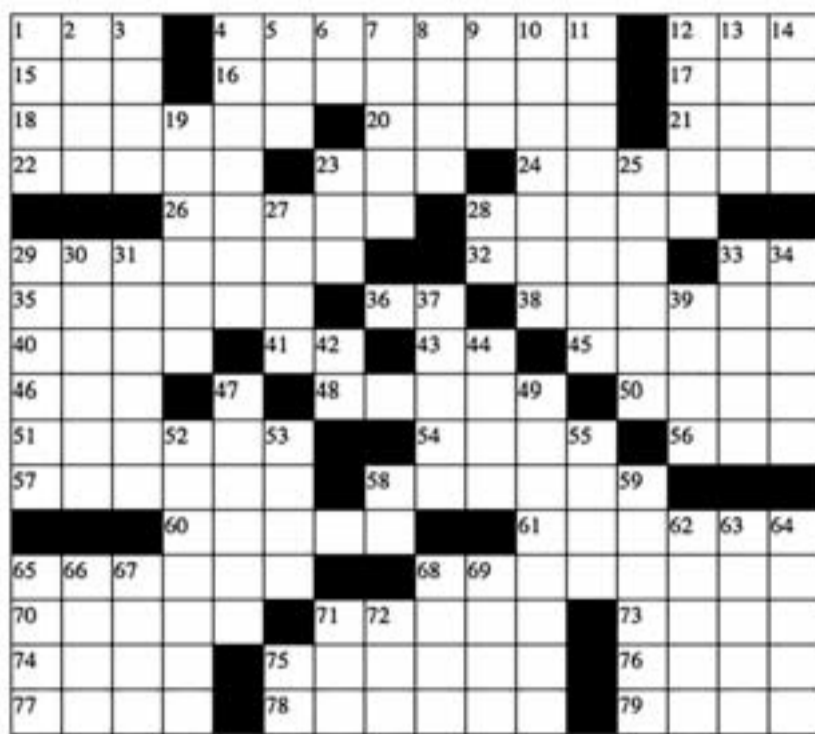
There's never been a better time for technology - with innovation in 5G, AI and Machine Learning, cloud and blockchain throttling full steam ahead. I'm willing to bet that we'll make great use of those 44 zettabytes of data in 2020. Riding full speed into the Data Era in 2019, we'll unlock the power of data in ways never imagined before, transforming everyday business and everyday life. Note: Mohammed Amin is Senior Vice President, Middle East, Turkey and Africa at Dell EMC.



Mohammed Amin

Stars

CROSSWORD 2105



ACROSS

1. The part of the alimentary canal between the stomach and the anus.
4. Growing on or living among rocks.
12. Electronic equipment that provides visual images of varying electrical quantities.
15. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
16. An instrument for measuring the distance between two points.
17. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
18. Axis of a compound leaf or compound inflorescence.
20. The basic unit of money in Sierra Leone.
21. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
22. Genus of East Indian trees or shrubs.
24. A hostel for pilgrims in Turkey.
26. The limits within which something can be effective.
29. (psychology) An urge to accept or approach a situation or an object.
32. (prefix) In front of or before in space.
35. East Indian tart yellow berry-like fruit.
36. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
38. Departing or being caused to depart from the true vertical or horizontal.
40. (informal) Being satisfactory or in satisfactory condition.
41. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
43. A unit of information equal to 1024 bytes.
45. (Greek mythology) A sorceress who detained Odysseus on her island and turned his men into swine.
46. (prefix) Reverse of or absence of.
48. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
50. Type genus of the Anatidae.
51. In the Arabian Nights a hero who tells of the fantastic adventures he had in his voyages.
54. An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
56. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
57. Type genus of the Otaridae.
60. A unit of dry measure used in Egypt.
61. An African amulet.
65. The 11th letter of the Greek alphabet.
70. (Philippine) A dish of marinated vegetables and meat or fish.
73. A Hindu prince or king in India.
74. Any small compartment.
76. (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
77. Hinge joint in the human leg connecting the tibia and fibula with the femur and protected in front by the patella.
78. An Anatolian language.
79. A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

1. Clothing of a distinctive style or for a particular occasion.
2. Relatively small fast-moving sloth.
3. Consideration in dealing with others and avoiding giving offence.
4. Type genus of the Sciaenidae.
5. An associate degree in applied science.
6. Being ten more than thirty.
7. Muslim name for God.
8. A relative position or degree of value in a graded group.
9. A corporation's first offer to sell stock to the public.
10. Tolerant or lenient.
11. Of or relating to or befitting hermits or their practices of hermitic living.
12. Green algae common in freshwater lakes of limestone districts.
13. A rapid series of short loud sounds (as might be heard with a stethoscope in some types of respiratory disorders).
14. Prevent from being included or considered or accepted.
19. Any opinions or doctrines at variance with the official or orthodox position.
23. (informal) Of the highest quality.
25. Any of various deciduous or evergreen ornamental shrubs of the genus Abelia having opposite simple leaves and cymes of small white or pink or purple flowers.
27. A hormone produced by the anterior pituitary gland that stimulates the adrenal cortex.
28. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
30. (in India and Burma) A member of an armed gang of robbers.
31. (Sumerian) Consort of Dumuzi (Tammuz).
33. Of or like a cecum.
34. A port city of south central Ukraine on an arm of the Black Sea.
37. Jordan's port.
39. The form of RNA that attaches the correct amino acid to the protein chain that is being synthesized at the ribosome of the cell (according to directions coded in the mRNA).
42. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
44. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
47. The arrangement of the hair (especially a woman's hair).
49. A climber of vertical rock faces.
52. Argue over petty things.
53. An informal term for a father.
55. Capital city of the Apulia region on the Adriatic coast.
58. A metallic element having four allotropic forms.
59. The vein in the center of a leaf.
62. Tropical tree of Central America and West Indies and Puerto Rico having spikes of white flowers.
63. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
64. Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinged fruit.
66. Chief port of Yemen.
67. The molecular weight of a substance expressed in grams.
68. (the feminine of raja) A Hindu princess or the wife of a raja.
69. English essayist (1775-1834).
71. A column of light (as from a beacon).
72. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
75. A soft gray malleable metallic element that resembles tin but discolors on exposure to air.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Are you happy? If not ask yourself what is missing. What needs to change to bring happiness into your world? Make a plan and set the wheels in motion. There comes a time we all need to assess our situation and make necessary changes. This is a great time for you to do some soul-searching. Make sure your feet are planted firmly on the ground. Reach out to those you respect the most and surround yourself with those who possess the wisdom and knowledge necessary to point you in the right direction. Set your goals and make it happen. There is no time like the present.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are one of a kind. Relationships take on greater meaning in your life. You want everything in your world in its place and everything running smoothly. One thing out of place will cause stress and tension in for you. You have a talent for bringing those around you into harmony and this makes you a wonderful leader. You are placing great focus on your marriage or a close relationship with someone dear to you. This is a great move and will result in a strong bond you have been craving. Taurus, all is well in your world and the steps you are taking will develop feed the deep roots needed for lasting love and support from many close to you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This seems to be a time of great focus on your relationship. You may find yourself searching for and discovery all of the beauty this world has to offer. You find beauty in your surroundings each today, but today you seem to have a greater appreciation for it. This is a very satisfying experience for you. Peace and harmony are great desires in your world and you are entering a phase where you will feel this way often. You may find that your relationships are the key to your emotional success. You may find yourself surrounded with love and support today. Focus on your loved one today and you may find this is where your needs will be fed.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Bury the hatchet and let by gones be by gones. You crave peace and this is the path you must take to obtain just that. You have no room for tension in your life. It is a time you can work on being more sensitive to the needs of others. Keep your focus more on the wants of those around you rather than your own. To accomplish the peace you crave you will have to throw your selfishness out of the window. If a peaceful world is what you truly crave, you will have to create it.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

It seems as if you are a rock to many. Others turn to you for advice. You are admired and respected. You have needs and desires to be cared for as well. The combination of you feeling of you caring for others, and others caring for you should make for a perfect combination. This is a great time for you to get your point across to others. Your timing should be perfect now. Others will find you spontaneous and alive.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Out with the old and in with the new. Your focus is on ambition, security, and responsibility are areas in your life where you have placed major focus. There are big decisions in your life concerning these areas that need to be made. Knowing you have fallen short of goals in the past has you extremely determined at this point in your life. The easy way is not always the best way. You may reap great reward from your determination. Remember, you can only count on yourself to accomplish your goals. We live in a "what's in it for me" kind of world.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may be faced with an opportunity that could bring major success into your life. This may be a road to success you are not willing to take. The problem is this may go against your sense of values. The easy way isn't always the right way.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

All eyes are on you today and that is just what you crave. You have a great desire to be the center of attention. You crave appreciation for your gifts and talents. This will be a time you are able to look back on with pride. You are drawn to romance. This is a great time to spend with a special someone. Share your passion, whether it be cooking a meal together or painting a picture. Involve the one you love in a project tonight. This may bring you closer and the results good be amazing.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You are clever and creative. This is a combination that will leave you as the center of attention in your world. You may find the best way of self expression for you is through your art. Not only expressing yourself, but expressing yourself with flair seems to excite you. Your creations may lead to a profitable business venture. This is a win-win situation in your world. You may find someone close to you, perhaps a lover or a child, play a big role in this venture.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today finds you all about? YOU?! Your hard work and dedication seem to have finally paid off and you are on top of the world. You are admired by your peers and it seems as if the world is raining sunshine directly on you. You are on fire and seem to find sharing the spotlight with others and showering them with kindness, appreciation, and gratitude is extremely rewarding to you. You want to share this feeling and make sure others around you feel your gratitude and love. You feel as if you want everyone to feel this feeling. You are full of love of life and love of those all around you. A sense of pride and accomplishment will fill your world for days to come.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Kindness is contagious. Pay it forward. When you are happy, everyone around you is happy. They say you become what you surround yourself with. In your case you have chosen to keep only like-minded positive individuals in your world. Your circle may be small, but quality is much preferred over quantity any day. Others will be drawn to you today. Share your wealth and wisdom freely. You may have just the words to help someone who is going through a rough time, Aquarius. Be an inspiration to someone today.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may feel as if you are the center of attention today. All eyes are on you. You have begun to excel in the workplace and your superiors have taken notice to this. You may find that this is the job you actually enjoy and that is the driving force behind your work performance. You are at your best creatively and able to excel on projects and thinking outside of the box is bringing much attention your way. Mysteries are easily solved, and problems easily conquered for your today. You may find much support from someone close to you that has much admiration for the eccentric approach you are taking in the workplace. Know that you are admired and looked to as a role model.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Public Library

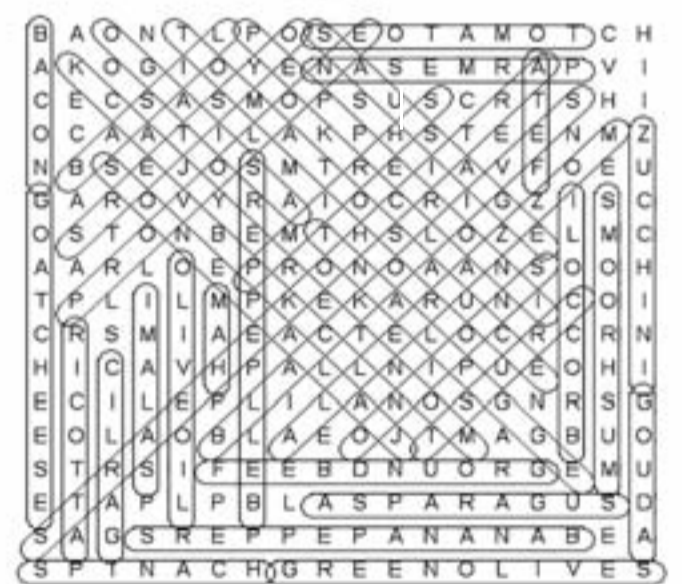
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message - a Henry Ward Beecher quotation.



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|-----------------|--------------|-------------|-----------------|
| APPLIED SCIENCE | ENCYCLOPEDIA | MAGAZINES | QUIET |
| ARTS | FICTION | MATHEMATICS | READ |
| BIOGRAPHY | FINES | MOVIES | RECREATION |
| BOOKS | GEOGRAPHY | MUSIC | RELIGION |
| BORROW | HARDCOVER | NEWSPAPERS | RENEW |
| BRANCH | HISTORY | NOVELS | RESEARCH |
| CATALOG | INFORMATION | OVERDUE | RESERVE |
| CHAIRS | INTERNET | PAFEBACK | SHELVES |
| CHECKOUT | LANGUAGES | PERIODICALS | SOCIAL SCIENCES |
| COMPUTERS | LIBRARIAN | PHILOSOPHY | TABLES |
| DICTIONARY | LIBRARY CARD | PHOTOCOPIER | TECHNOLOGY |
| DUE DATE | LITERATURE | PSYCHOLOGY | |

Yesterday's Solution

Pizza



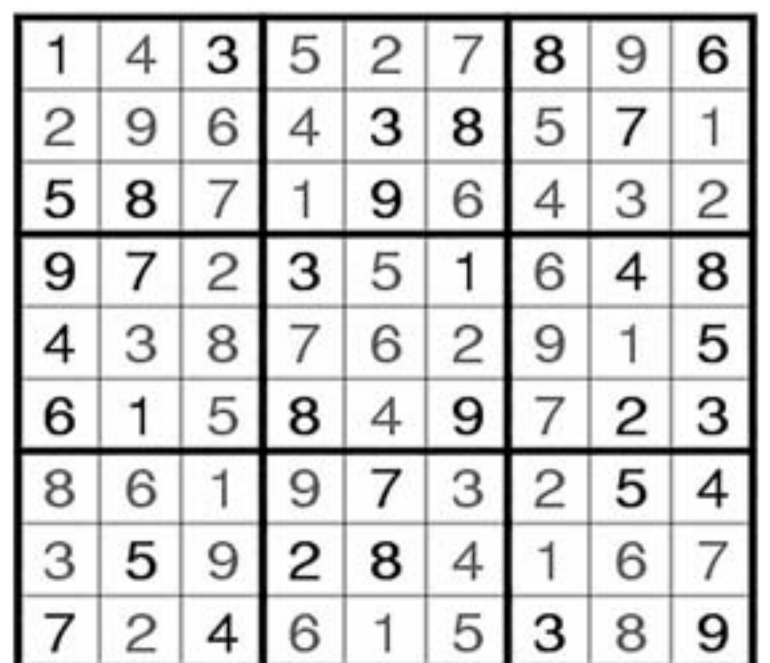
- | | | | |
|------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|
| ARTICHOKE HEARTS | CRUST | JALAPENOS | PROVOLONE |
| ASPARAGUS | EGGPLANT | MONTEREY JACK | RICOTTA |
| BACON | FETA | MOZZARELLA | SALAMI |
| BANANA PEPPERS | GARLIC | MUSHROOMS | SAUSAGE |
| BASIL | GOAT CHEESE | OLIVE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

The hidden words are: ANCHOVIES CHICKEN MEATBALLS PINEAPPLE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 9, 2019



A woman walks in a park in the Moscow suburb yesterday. The temperature in Russian capital dropped down to -10 degrees Celsius. — AFP

Golden Globe TV audience slightly lower, but bucks awards show trend

The US television audience for the 2019 Golden Globe awards fell about 2 percent, but a slew of popular movies and celebrities among the nominees helped the ceremony buck a trend that has seen much steeper declines for big entertainment events. The 18.6 million audience for Sunday's awards, where Queen biopic "Bohemian Rhapsody" and pop star Lady Gaga were among the winners, was down from the 19.0 million viewers who watched the 2018 show on television, broadcaster Comcast Corp's NBC said on Monday, citing Nielsen ratings data.

The Golden Globes kicked off the Hollywood awards season leading to the Oscars, where nominations for the February ceremony will be announced on Jan 22. The three-hour live ceremony, hosted by actors Sandra Oh and Andy Samberg, was the most watched telecast in primetime, excluding news and sports, since the Oscars in March last year, NBC said. The small audience decline in total viewers bucked a trend that saw declines of 15 percent or more in viewership for the Oscars and the Grammy awards in 2018.

Golden Globe viewers in the 18-49 year-old demographic coveted by advertisers rose 4 percent, the data showed. The Golden Globes nominated a slew of popular and diverse movies for awards, including Walt Disney Co superhero blockbuster "Black Panther," and AT&T Inc's Warner Bros movies "Crazy Rich Asians" and "A Star is Born," starring Lady Gaga in her first major role as a film actress. "A Star is Born," went into Sunday's awards as the favorite for the biggest prizes but in a major upset came out with just one - for Lady Gaga's original song "Shallow" from the movie.—Reuters



Brian May of Queen (left) and Rami Malek, winner of Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture Drama, attend the FOX, FX and Hulu 2019 Golden Globe Awards After Party at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP

New board game asks 'Who's She?' to spotlight famous women in history

Did she win a Nobel Prize? Was she an inventor? Did she make a discovery? These are some of the questions that Polish designer Zuzanna Kozerska-Girard wants more children to ask as they learn about famous women while playing her debut board game Who's She?. "We basically don't know their stories. We don't know enough about women who have done amazing stuff," said Kozerska-Girard, founder of games company Playeress, in a Skype interview. Similar to the classic game Guess Who?, two players are each given a biography card of a famous woman and must ask each other questions until her identity is answered correctly - be it French spy Josephine Baker or Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai.

"The game is for girls as much as it is for boys. They need to see powerful women around them and see them as their heroes," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation from Poland. The game is being sold at a time when the achievements of women - from scientists, politicians, campaigners and artists - are increasingly being recognized online and in public spaces. Featuring watercolor illustrations of 28 female icons, Kozerska said she designed the game, which costs 75 euros (\$86), because she wanted



children to know that women of all nationalities were as capable as men in any profession. "If you're a girl who's three years old and you see men everywhere in positions with more power, you'll just think that that's the way it is," said Kozerska-Girard.

"I think it's important to bring this (gender gap) up with kids - and the simple way to do this is by playing games." Since Who's She? launched in November on crowd fund-

ing site Kickstarter, Kozerska-Girard has sold more than 6,000 units and received some 500,000 euros to produce the game, which she hand-makes out of wood. Volunteers are working to raise the profile of famous women - who make up only 17 percent of Wikipedia's 1.5 million biographies, according to the Wikimedia Foundation, which hosts the online encyclopaedia - by writing more female biographies. In Britain, a statue of 19th century feminist Millicent Fawcett was unveiled last April in London's Parliament Square, the first monument to honor a woman in a space previously occupied by 11 statues of men.

The statue was the result of a campaign by feminist Caroline Criado-Perez, who said there were more statues in Britain of men called John than statues of women. Excluding Queen Victoria, fewer than 3 percent of statues represented women, she said. In August, a group of Belgian activists stuck up unofficial street names in the capital Brussels to commemorate women and also pushed for new public spaces to reflect their role - a phenomenon also seen in the Netherlands. — Reuters

Germany returns Nazi-looted painting to French Jewish collector's heirs

Germany yesterday returned a painting looted by the Nazis to the heirs of French Jewish politician and resistance leader Georges Mandel. The portrait of a seated woman by 19th century French painter Thomas Couture had been on display in a spectacular collection hoarded by Cornelius Gurlitt, the son of a Nazi-era art dealer. German Culture Minister Monika Gruettters presented the work to family members of Mandel, executed by French fascists near Paris in 1944, in a ceremony at the Martin Gropius Bau museum in Berlin.

Experts determined two years ago that the painting had been looted from Mandel, relying on a small hole in the canvas as evidence of its provenance. Mandel's

lover had cited the hole above the seated woman's torso when she reported the painting stolen after the war. Gruettters was joined in the ceremony by a representative of the Kunstmuseum Bern, which inherited Gurlitt's collection when he died in 2014, and an envoy from the French embassy.

About 450 pieces from the collection by masters such as Monet, Gauguin, Renoir, and Picasso have been on display in Bern, the western German city of Bonn, and in Berlin. Gruettters called the Couture painting's return "a moving conclusion to the exhibitions of the Gurlitt trove" and underlined Berlin's commitment to provenance research.

"We have Georges Mandel's family to thank that we could show this work in all three exhibitions," she said. "In this way, we could inform the public about the fate of the Jewish politician Georges Mandel, who was persecuted and imprisoned by the Nazis". More than 1,500 works were discovered in 2012 in the possession of Munich pensioner Cornelius Gurlitt.

His father, Hildebrand Gurlitt, had worked as an art dealer for the Nazis since 1938. The discovery of the stash made headlines around the world and revived an emotional debate about how thoroughly post-war Germany had dealt with art plundered by the Nazi regime.

When Gurlitt died, the Berlin museum accepted the collection, though it left about 500 works in Germany for a government task force to research their often

murky origins. But determining their provenance has been slow, and it is still not clear how many of the works were stolen. The Couture portrait was the fifth work from the collection restituted to heirs, and the sixth definitively classed as having been looted by the Nazis. — AFP



The Federal Government's Commissioner for Culture and the Media Monika Gruettters (right) talks with heirs Maria de las Mercedes Estrada (left) and Wolfgang Kleinertz (center) during the restitution of a painting titled 'Portrait of a seated woman' by artist Thomas Couture, yesterday in Berlin. — AFP

KUWAITI FASHION DESIGNER **MONTAHA AL-AJEEL** PRESENTS **THE MONALIZA ROYAL LOOK COLLECTION**



With each new fashion season, Kuwaiti businesswoman and fashion designer, Montaha Al-Ajeel is always keen on presenting unique designs that reflect international glamour and combine the beauty of both soul and body. For the second time, Al-Ajeel named her unusual 2019 collection "Monaliza", which reflects her full admiration of the legendary 3D painting that combines beauty, professionalism and mystery.

As creative as always in fashion design, Al-Ajeel used traditional British country fabrics known as tweed; a rough woolen fabric, with embroidered roses. This iconic fabric is known to be recreated each season. Al-Ajeel was also keen on photographing her collection in the Lebanese country side where the nature background fully matched the collection.

Monaliza collection is on display at Montaha Couture, the Avenues, Montaha Al-Ajeel and Moon Secret at Telal Shopping Mall. The collection is also on display at Harvey Nichols Kuwait and Doha as well as Bloomingdal's, Kuwait.

Photos show Kuwaiti businesswoman and fashion designer, Montaha Al-Ajeel.



Models showcase designs for the Kuwaiti businesswoman and fashion designer, Montaha Al-Ajeel.



Lifestyle | Feature



Incense sticks kept in a courtyard for drying in the village of Quang Phu Cau.

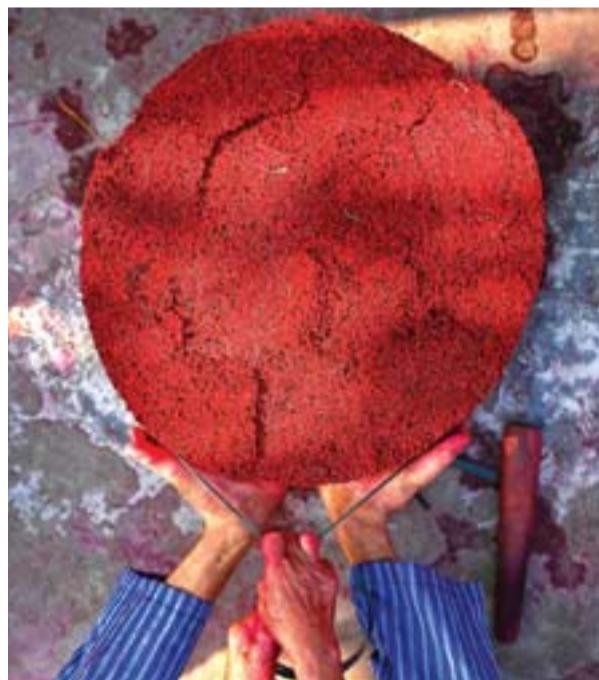


A Vietnamese woman collecting dried incense sticks in a courtyard in the village of Quang Phu Cau on the outskirts of Hanoi.



A Vietnamese woman collecting incense sticks in a courtyard in the village of Quang Phu Cau on the outskirts of Hanoi. — AFP photos

Vietnam's 'incense village' blazes pink ahead of lunar new year



A worker using his feet to tie a huge stack of incense sticks.

In Vietnam's "incense village", dozens are hard at work dyeing, drying and whittling down bamboo bark to make the fragrant sticks ahead of the busy lunar new year holiday. It is the most frantic time of year for workers in the cottage industry in Quang Phu Cau village on the outskirts of Hanoi, where families have been making incense for more than a century—a great source of pride for many.

"It is a traditional and spiritual job making these sticks," Dang Thi Hoa told AFP, sitting amid bundles of bright pink incense sticks drying under the afternoon sun. Her village is among several dotted across Vietnam making the sticks, the scent of each batch tailored to the tastes of regions they will be sold in. Sales tick up every year ahead of and during the Tet lunar new year in February, when throngs of people crowd into temples to light incense during worship, or burn the sticks on the ancestral altar at home.

Hoa's family started making the sticks more than 100 years ago and her mother still pitches in along with her teenage daughter who helps out after school. Selling her sticks to central Vietnam, Hoa can earn up to \$430 a month leading up to Tet, a tidy sum in the country where the average monthly income is \$195. Most households in the alleys of Quang Phu Cau are involved in the ancient trade.

Some hack bamboo planks down to be fed into a whittling machine; others dip the thin strips into buckets of pink dye, leaving hundreds of brightly coloured bushels fanned out like bouquets on the streets to air out. After, women donning cloth face masks coat the dried sticks with aromatic incense paste before redrying them and shipping them off for packaging.

The work offers more than just pride for many in Quang Phu Cau: like Hoa, many earn good money making incense compared to factory work nearby. "This job is hard work, but I am earning enough to raise two of my children to become doctors," said Le Thi Lieu as she laid her incense out to dry. That said, she's happy her two other kids have decided to work with her. "We need at least one to work in the business so they can take over in the future." — AFP



A Vietnamese worker preparing incense sticks.



A Vietnamese worker putting incense sticks to dry inside a temple's courtyard in the village of Quang Phu Cau.



Incense sticks kept in a courtyard for drying in the village of Quang Phu Cau.



A Vietnamese worker putting incense sticks to dry inside a temple's courtyard.



A Vietnamese woman collecting incense sticks.



Incense sticks dry inside a temple's courtyard.

Lifestyle | Features



Ridvan Ayhan, a 58-year-old activist who fights against the Ilisu hydroelectric dam project, looks at the "new Hasankeyf" which is seen on the other side of Tigris river.



Ridvan Ayhan, a 58-year-old activist who fights against the Ilisu hydroelectric dam project, walks at a historical site in Hasankeyf.



Trucks are seen on the banks of the Tigris river.

Turkey's 12,000-year-old town about to be engulfed

From the ancient citadel overlooking the valley, Ridvan Ayhan looks at the Tigris with a furrowed brow. The river that supported his family's town for generations will soon destroy it. "My grandchildren will not see where I grew up, where I lived. They will ask me, 'Grandpa, where do you come from? Where did you live?' What will I do? Show them the lake?" asks Ayhan, readjusting the scarf over his face. The small town of Hasankeyf, in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeast, inhabited for 12,000 years, is doomed to disappear in the coming months.

An artificial lake, part of the Ilisu hydroelectric dam project, will swallow it up. The dam, which will be Turkey's second largest, has been built further downstream the Tigris. Ilisu is a central element of the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP), a land development plan to boost the economy of the long-neglected region, through hydroelectric energy and irrigation. Confronted with the imminent flooding of their town and a hundred villages, the 3,000 inhabitants of Hasankeyf are divided. While some are angry at the sacrifice being imposed on them, others are impatient for the economic benefits promised by Ankara.

Moving the mosque

Ayhan, who is retired, is steadfast in his opposition. He dedicates all his time and energy to fighting against the dam as part of the "Keep Hasankeyf Alive" collective, which brings together campaigning groups and locally elected representatives. Assyrians, Romans, Seljuks... the empires that washed over this region have left an exceptional heritage, not least the thousands of caves that were inhabited as recently as the 1970s and are a major tourist draw.

"There is such history here," says Ayhan. "Every time you dig, you come across something from a different civilisation. Destroying Hasankeyf is to commit a major crime." But the Turkish government dismisses the criticism, arguing that everything has been done to save the monuments. In one lengthy operation last August, the 1,600-tonne Artuklu Hamam bath house was loaded onto a wheeled platform and moved down a specially constructed road to its new home.

Workers also recently moved the remnants of a 14th-century Ayyubid mosque, transporting it three kilometers (1.8 miles) to a site that will become a "cultural park". Such relocation operations have transformed Hasankeyf into a construction site.

Busloads of tourists have been replaced by swarms of dump trucks and a crane that sits at the town's entrance. In what is left of the old bazaar, the butcher, Zeki, sits



One of last residents of historical caves overlooking the Hasankeyf valley sits at his house in Hasankeyf, in Turkey's Kurdish-majority southeast.

among the morose-looking traders. "There are no more tourists," he laments. "Who would like to come to see this? Every step you take you're liable to fall into a hole in the ground," he says.

'Diving into Hasankeyf!'

Not everyone is unhappy. Former shepherd Ahmet Akdeniz prefers to look to the future. He presides over the Hasankeyf cultural association dedicated to promoting what the town has to offer and he cannot wait "to finally start (his) new life". During the inauguration of the Ilisu construction site in 2006, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, then prime minister, promised the dam would bring "the greatest benefit" to local people.

Part of this promise involves building a "new

for," adds Walter Hickey, a data journalist for Insider.

According to his analysis, historically the Golden Globes have had about a fifty percent success rate in predicting the Oscar's best picture. The numbers are a bit better at picking actors and actresses, though not stunningly. A major reason is that, while the Golden Globes gives out two best picture awards—one for drama and the other for musical or comedy—the Oscar's has just one.

Preferential voting system

For Sasha Stone, founder of the Awards Daily website which has reported on ceremonies for the past 20 years, it all boils down to probabilities. "We do not know what the eventual outcome will be in this very unpredictable race," she says. Last year, for example, "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" won best drama at the Globes while "The Shape of Water" took home the best-picture Oscar. The year before, the Golden Globes gong went to "The Revenant" while the Academy Award went to "Spotlight." For experts, a major factor is that the Golden Globes jury isn't made up of cinema professionals.

Instead, it consists of just under a hundred members of the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, who have an inherently different view of the profession. And they are more pliable to favors offered by studios, according to their detractors. The Oscars, on the other hand, depend on members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, who represent all areas of the film industry. This year they are 7,902 people voting in 24 categories. For the most part, they vote within their own categories — directors vote on best director, costume designers vote on best costume, and so on.

Best picture is the lone exception. In 2009, the process was changed to a preferential voting system to ensure the film with the broadest support wins—not necessarily the movie that the majority of voters put as their top one. "Otherwise, you might end up with a movie that, say, 25 percent of the people love and the rest can't stand," said Ric Robertson, who was the motion picture academy's chief operating officer in 2009 when the best picture field was expanded from five to 10 nominees. — AFP

Hasankeyf" on the other side of the river, with spacious flats and an ultra-modern hospital. But the construction work drags on. Currently it is a succession of small buildings separated by muddy roads, most of them unpaved. Akdeniz, originally scheduled to move in December, now thinks it will be summer at the earliest. "Look how we live today," he says, pointing to the cracked walls of his 45-square-metre (484-square-foot) house.

Contacted by AFP, the DSI organization responsible for Turkey's dams declined to give a planned date for completion. Turkish media report that it will be finished this year. But the project has already had a considerable impact on residents, says Suleyman Agalday, owner of a small, makeshift cafe.

Delays and financial issues have plagued the dam's construction—a project first conceived in the 1960s—



Tourists stand next to the Tigris river near Hasankeyf.



A shop owner checks his phone in Hasankeyf. — AFP photos

Heated by just a wood stove, he lives there with six family members. "All we want is to live with dignity," he says. Akdeniz is also convinced that the dam will boost tourism, thanks to the renovation of the citadel and some caves escaping the rising waters. "There will be boats, a cable car. We will have hotels," he says. "Some of our young people are already starting to learn to dive. Diving into Hasankeyf, can you imagine?"

Life in suspense

Engineers are still awaiting the green light from Erdogan to close a third floodgate and complete the retention of the water, a process launched last summer. After that, a three-month countdown will begin for Hasankeyf before it disappears beneath the Tigris.

"causing a lot of uncertainty in our life", he says. In 1981, Hasankeyf was classified as a special conservation zone with a ban on construction that kept investors away. That lack of investment meant fewer jobs and many residents chose to move away for work or larger homes. A few weeks ago, Agalday went to the neighboring province of Sanliurfa to see Halfevi village, submerged for 20 years because of a dam on the Euphrates. "There I saw what my future would look like and it hurt me," he says. "I sat down in a corner and cried." — AFP

Do Golden Globe wins translate into Oscars? Not so much

With the Golden Globes done and dusted, Hollywood moves swiftly along to the crown-jewel of its award season: the Oscars. Members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences began voting Monday and their nominations will be revealed in two weeks' time. But are the Globes really a good predictor of the Oscars, as common wisdom holds? Not so much, say experts. To be sure, there is expected to be some overlap. Many of Sunday night's winners and even some of the nominees could feature at the Oscars in late February, including the likes of "Bohemian Rhapsody," "Green Book," "Roma," "A Star Is Born," "Vice," "Black Panther," and "BlacKkKlansman." "It's reasonable to bet that plenty of Oscar voters still have a stack of screeners sitting on the coffee table as you read this," film critic Alissa Wilkinson told Vox.

"So while they've probably watched the favorites by now, a Golden Globes win for an underdog might push a voter to give the film a look before submitting their ballot," she concluded. Such could be the case, for example, for "Bohemian Rhapsody," the commercially successful but critically panned Freddie Mercury biopic that won best drama at the Globes—its marquee award. Or civil rights dramedy "Green Book," which picked up awards for best comedy movie, best supporting actor in Mahershala Ali and best screenplay. "There is no better marketing hook for films that have been in the marketplace for many weeks than a major win at the Globes," said Paul Dergarabedian, an analyst for industry tracker Comscore.

Overall, though, the numbers are emphatic: the Golden Globes aren't a reliable predictor for the Oscars, cinema's most coveted prize. "It would be foolish to bet big on a perfect alignment of the winners since historically it's usually a crap shoot," said Dergarabedian. "The predictive power of forecasting a winner here isn't really what these awards are

Sam Elliott honored at Hollywood ceremony as Lady Gaga lends support

Veteran actor Sam Elliott imprinted his hands and feet in cement on Hollywood Boulevard on Monday, as "A Star Is Born" co-stars Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper shook off Golden Globes disappointment to join in honoring the 74-year-old's long career. Known for his lanky physique, thick mustache and languid drawl, Elliott reflected on his life's work and the joy of acting, telling reporters: "The people you work with, the community... and feeling like you're doing something that makes a difference to somebody" made it all worthwhile. "A Star is Born" may have struck out at the Golden Globes the night before, picking up



Bradley Cooper, Sam Elliott and Lady Gaga attend Sam Elliott's hand and footprint ceremony at TCL Chinese Theatre.

just one trophy for best song, but Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper were all smiles as they came to show their support for Elliott, who plays Cooper's elder brother in the film.

Dressed in a striking sky-blue trench coat, Gaga, 32, shared an Instagram story as she received a kiss on her forehead from Elliott. "So excited to be here for Sam Elliott's hand & footprint ceremony," she wrote, adding a series of heart emojis. The trio later shared a heart-warming embrace, as Cooper hailed the "iconic mark" Elliott had on films.

Elliott got his start with minor roles in late 60s Westerns such as "The Way West" (1967) and "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," but it wasn't until the 1980s that his career took off in a big way in the "Mask" and "Road House." He received the first of his two Golden Globe nomination for TV film "Conagher," where he played the titular role and starred alongside his wife Katharine Ross. — AFP



Actor Sam Elliott left his prints in the block of cement at his Hand and Footprints ceremony. — AFP photos

Kevin Hart re-considering Oscars hosting role after DeGeneres backing

Kevin Hart, who stepped down as host of the Oscars following criticism over past anti-gay tweets, said he is evaluating his decision after popular comedian Ellen DeGeneres revealed she supported him in the role. In an interview on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," released on Friday, DeGeneres said she recently called the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to advocate for Hart.

DeGeneres, who is openly gay and hosted the Oscars in 2007 and 2014, said the Academy, which organizes the ceremony, had responded that they would be "thrilled" to have him host the Feb 24 awards. "We want him to host, whatever we can do, we'd be thrilled," she quoted Academy officials as telling her. The Academy on Friday did not return a request for comment. "When I leave here

I promise you I'm evaluating this conversation," Hart, known for "Ride Along" and other films, told DeGeneres in the interview, which was taped on Thursday. Just hours earlier, Hart had told Hollywood trade publication Variety that he would not reconsider. "Would I ever do it? No, it's done," Hart said.

In December, Hart said he was stepping down from hosting the Oscars and wanted to "sincerely apologize to the LGBT community for my insensitive words from my past." With less than two months before the ceremony, the most prestigious awards in the movie business, the Academy has not announced a replacement. — Reuters



Kevin Hart



Peter Farrelly, foreground, accepting the award for best comedy film for 'Green Book' during the 76th Annual Golden Globe Awards. — AP

What's On



Lexus Al-Sayer partners with Wejha to present Soul of Art exhibition

Exhibition showcases captivating paintings by Kuwaiti artists



As part of Lexus International's global strategy to support designers and creators, Al-Sayer and Lexus associated with Wejha as strategic partners for Soul of Art exhibition. The event showcased contemporary art by Kuwaiti artists Bader Al-Mutawa and Abdulwahab Al-Hamad hosted at the Wejha Art Center. The event was graced by the presence of Shaikha Dr Suad Al-Sabah, a member of the executive committee of the Worlds Muslim Women Organization for South East Asia and member of the board of trustees and executive committee of the Arab Intellect Forum.

Wejha is the destination for all artists in different fields, and for anyone interested in art. All types of artists, musicians, and art collectors are welcome here. The place includes: Studios for artists, gallery, workshops, coffee bar, and a nice rooftop for events.

According to Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO Al-Sayer Holding "Lexus partnership with Wejha reflects Al-Sayer's commitment to engage with artists and creators to increase the awareness of art and offer exposure for the available potentials within Kuwait society through their events and exhibitions. Further we also wish to explore

further platforms of exhibiting their talents at an international stage."

"Wejha group is a group of new innovative Kuwaiti youngsters, their main purpose is to provide various artists a venue to display their arts such as painting, Arabic fonts, photography and music. we will be their strategic partners through various events that will be conducted during this year," commented Mahmoud Abou-Zahr Lexus Business Director.

Such partnerships reflect the spirit of Design Miami, one of the high points of the global design calendar for which Lexus became the official automotive partner last year. Design Miami attracts the most influential design luminaries from around the world. Held during Miami's Art and Design week-designers, collectors, curators and critics gathered together to celebrate design and design culture.

Lexus has been passionately pushing the boundaries of design with ideas that are bold, innovative and inspiring. Lexus brand's mission to captivate the next generation of luxury consumers with consciousness, products, and services that are visionary, original and exciting.

Kuwait Continental Hotel hosts 2018 annual staff party

The management of Kuwait Continental Hotel held its 21st annual ceremony and dinner party to award its outstanding employees for their efforts in helping it achieve its goals for 2018. The event was held at Darbar Restaurant, where hotel General

Manager Kamal Eldin Hussein welcomed the employees and their families in a family atmosphere.

During the event, General Manager Kamal Eldin Hussein honored Mary Jane from the internal oversight section for her 25 years of service, although she could not be present due to health conditions that kept her at the hospital. Hussein praised Jane's dedication, saying that she has set an example throughout her entire years of service, and urged her colleagues to pay her a visit at the hospital.

Meanwhile, Hussein expressed gratitude to staff for their efforts during 2018, which resulted in increasing sales by 20 percent and average occupancy rate by over 80 percent, despite high competition and the emergence

of many hotels in the area. Hussein then honored a group of staff members from all departments who were selected as 'ideal employees' for 2018.

Hussein also thanked Mahmood Emam for his continued support for the success of the hotel, and expressed gratitude to several companies for their support, including Al-Hazem Company, Company Defeat, Safat Company, First Trading Company, Al-Najm Print Company, Al-Herz Company, Coca-Cola Company, and Heaven Beauty Salon. Several competitions for staff were also held during the ceremony. And at the end of the event, Hussein announced an annual bonus: a month's salary for all staff, which was ordered by Hotel Group CEO Fouad Al-Ghanim.



Lulu Hypermarket launches in-house BLSH stores

Lulu Hypermarket, the region's premier retailer and a destination of choice for lifestyle shopping, launched BLSH, an in-house store concept developed exclusively for retailing international perfumes and cosmetics. The concept store was inaugurated at Lulu Hypermarket's Al-Qurain and Egailla outlet by popular social media influencer Zahra Arafatt on January 7, 2019, in the presence of Lulu management Kuwait and a large gathering of shoppers, well-wishers and local media.

A fashion and cosmetics bloggers meet was also arranged at the Al-Qurain outlet on the occasion of the opening of BLSH. The event brought together Kuwait's leading online opinion-formers to review and comment on the concept

store and its products, while also providing shoppers with an opportunity to interact with the bloggers. Following the Al-Qurain launch, Lulu management in Kuwait also opened Three other BLSH stores at the hypermarket's other branches in Al-Rai, Dajeej, and Al-Jahra.

BLSH is a newly developed and exclusive concept store that offers a wide range of branded international perfumes and cosmetics at very special prices. The store offers high-end perfumes at unbeatable prices from well-known international brands such as Burberry, Versace, Paco Rabanne, Mont Blanc, C.K, and Davidoff, while also retailing the latest makeup selections from leading cosmetic brands such as Maxfactor, Maybelline, L'Oreal, Wet and Wild, Florma and Sally Hansen.

Lulu Hypermarket enjoys an unparalleled brand loyalty with customers, developed over the years from the hypermarket's unwavering commitment to offer shoppers the widest range of high-quality products, from around the world, at very competitive prices, in an ambiance that provides for an enjoyable shopping experience.

Erdogan blasts Bolton over Kurdish militia comments

Father of Saudi teen in Thailand, seeks meeting

BANGKOK: The father of an 18-year-old Saudi woman asylum seeker who fled to Thailand saying she feared her family would kill her, has arrived in Bangkok and wants to meet his daughter, Thailand's immigration chief said yesterday. But Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun's father and brother would have to wait and see whether the UN refugee agency would allow them to see her, immigration chief Surachate Hakpan said. "The father and brother want to go and talk to Rahaf but the UN will need to approve such talk," Surachate told reporters.

The UN refugee agency yesterday said it was investigating Qunun's case after she fled to Thailand saying she feared her family would kill her if she were sent back to Saudi Arabia. Activists are concerned about what Saudi Arabia will do after Thai authorities reversed a decision to expel her and allowed Qunun to enter the country under the care of the UNHCR. "The father is now here in Thailand and that's a source of concern," Phil Robertson, Human Rights Watch's deputy director for Asia, told Reuters. "We have no idea what he is going to do ... whether he will try to find out where she is and go harass her. We don't know whether he is going to try to get the embassy to do that."

Qunun is staying in a Bangkok hotel while the UNHCR processes her application for refugee status, before she can seek asylum in a third country. UNHCR staff were interviewing her yesterday after meeting her the day before. "It could take several days to process the case and determine next steps," UNHCR's Thailand representative Giuseppe de Vincentiis said in a statement. "We are very grateful that the Thai authorities did not send back (Qunun) against her will and are extending protection to her," he said.



BANGKOK: Thai immigration chief Surachate Hakpan speaks to journalists outside the Saudi embassy after a meeting with Saudi officials yesterday. — AFP

The case has drawn new global attention to Saudi Arabia's strict social rules, including a requirement that women have the permission of a male "guardian" to travel, which rights groups say can trap women and girls as prisoners of abusive families. It comes at a time when Riyadh is facing unusually intense scrutiny from its Western allies over the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October and over the humanitarian consequences of its war in Yemen.

Qunun told the world of her dramatic plight on social media, drawing widespread support and concern, which convinced Thai authorities to back down from deporting her back to Saudi Arabia. She was finally allowed to enter Thailand late on Monday after spending 48 hours at Bangkok airport, some of it barricaded in a transit lounge hotel room. Lawmakers and activists in Australia and Britain have urged their governments to grant asylum to Qunun.

The Australian government said it had asked Thailand and the UNHCR to process Qunun's claim quickly, and it would consider her application for a humanitarian visa once the UNHCR had made its decision. Saudi Arabia's embassy in Thailand denied reports that Riyadh had requested her extradition. — Agencies

Ghosh protests innocence in...

Continued from Page 1

approval of the appropriate executives inside the company," stressed Ghosh.

From the moment on Nov 19 that prosecutors stormed his private jet at a Tokyo airport, the twists and turns of the case have gripped Japan and the business world. At one point, the Franco-Lebanese-Brazilian tycoon appeared on the point of release, only for prosecutors to produce further allegations against him to continue his custody. In an indication of the huge interest in the case, more than 1,000 people waited outside the court from the early hours in the hope of getting one of just 14 tickets for the public gallery.

Yesterday's hearing itself caught observers off-guard as Ghosh's lawyers deployed a rarely-used article of the Japanese constitution to force the court to explain the reasons for his detention. Presiding Judge Yuichi Tada said Ghosh was being detained because he was a flight risk and there was a possibility he would conceal evidence. The suspect has "bases in foreign countries" and may "escape", Tada said. Go Kondo, one of Ghosh's lawyers, countered: "There is no risk that he will run away. He's CEO of French company Renault. He's widely known so it's difficult for him to escape."

Ghosh faces a host of allegations of financial impropriety. Prosecutors have formally charged him over sus-

picious he under-declared some five billion yen (\$44 million) from his salary in documents to investors over five fiscal years from 2010 - apparently to avoid accusations he was paid too much. Authorities also suspect he continued this scheme over the next three tax years, seeking to defer another four billion yen of his salary until after retirement.

A third, more complex, accusation is that he sought to shift personal foreign exchange losses onto Nissan's books and then paid a Saudi business contact some \$14.7 million - supposedly from company funds - who allegedly stumped up collateral for him. Ghosh has not been formally charged over the latter two allegations and rebutted all of them in court. "I never received any compensation from Nissan that was not disclosed," he said.

He added that Nissan never incurred any losses from his foreign exchange contracts and that the Saudi partner, Khaled Juffali, was "appropriately compensated" for "critical services that substantially benefited Nissan". A statement issued on behalf of Juffali's company, the first since the allegations emerged, said the compensation was for work done to benefit Nissan, including resolving a local business dispute and lobbying for the approval for a new plant in Saudi Arabia.

A towering figure in the auto industry, Ghosh is credited with turning around a struggling Nissan - also giving him a high profile rare for foreign executives in Japan. He forged an unlikely three-way alliance between Mitsubishi Motors, Renault and Nissan that now outsells any other rival group. Ghosh said that reviving the fortunes of the Japanese firm was "the greatest joy of my life, next to my family". — AFP

with a 5.8 percent decrease of KD 1.1 billion compared to the previous year.

Central Statistics Bureau Director Sami Al-Ali said the survey is a major local and regional statistical requirement that effectively affects building databases and statistical indexes that contribute in executing statistical goals and policies related to development as well as supporting the 2035 vision of turning Kuwait into a commercial and financial hub.

Assistant undersecretary for statistical work Othman Al-Othman said the bureau surveyed direct investment in Kuwait using the best international standards of statistical data quality to help decision makers set proper development plans. Othman added that this survey provides all the needed data about direct investment in Kuwait on an annual basis to review the investment environment and help the national economy attract more foreign investments, which, along with the ability to launch projects capable of creating job opportunities, activate exports and modernize national industries, is a basic indicator of the efficiency of the national economy.

ern Syria will largely consist of the Kurdish community's representatives whilst ensuring that all other groups enjoy fair political representation. Turkish officials with relevant experience will advise them on municipal affairs, education, health care and emergency services.

Turkey intends to cooperate and coordinate our actions with our friends and allies. We have been closely involved in the Geneva and Astana processes, and are the sole stakeholder that can work simultaneously with the United States and Russia. We will build on those partnerships to get the job done in Syria.

It is time for all stakeholders to join forces to end the terror unleashed by the Islamic State, an enemy of Islam and Muslims around the world, and to preserve Syria's territorial integrity. Turkey is volunteering to shoulder this heavy burden at a critical time in history. We are counting on the international community to stand with us.

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday condemned comments by a key US envoy over the future of a US-allied Syrian Kurdish militia as a "grave mistake", as tensions flared over Washington's planned withdrawal from war-torn Syria. Erdogan's comments came shortly after US National Security Adviser John Bolton held talks in the Turkish capital with Erdogan's adviser Ibrahim Kalin, in a key meeting focusing on the surprise US decision to withdraw its troops from Syria.

But it was comments made by Bolton on Sunday in Israel that had already raised hackles in Ankara, when he suggested the retreat was also conditional on the safety of US-backed Kurdish fighters, considered terrorists by Turkey. "John Bolton has made a grave mistake on this issue," Erdogan told his party's lawmakers in parliament. "It is not possible to accept or swallow the message given by Bolton from Israel."

US President Donald Trump caused a political storm last month when he announced the troop pull-out, claiming to have succeeded in the battle against the Islamic State (IS) group. Fighting continues however, with Syrian Observatory for Human Rights saying IS suicide attackers had hit the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in eastern Syria late on Sunday, killing 23 of its fighters. The pullout, which Washington has since stressed will be gradual, was hailed by Erdogan as the "right call" in a column published yesterday in the New York Times. But it has also raised concerns that Kurdish fighters would be exposed to the threat of a cross-border operation by their archfoe Turkey.

'No promises'

US-led coalition forces have provided air power and other support to the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in its operation to flush out IS from the last rump of its now-defunct "caliphate". As part of this, American forces have worked closely with the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia, seen by Ankara as a "terrorist offshoot" of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged an insurgency

Pompeo rallies Mideast allies...

Continued from Page 1

The top US diplomat, in Jordan on the first leg of his longest trip since taking the post last year, said that the US troop pullout would not undermine the battle against the Islamic State group. "The most significant threats to the region are Daesh and the Islamic revolution," Pompeo said at a news conference with Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, referring to IS and Iran.

Sustaining a regional coalition to counter Iran, the main enemy of US allies Saudi Arabia and Israel, is a major focus of Pompeo's tour of eight Arab capitals in as many days. "The counter Iran revolution is a coalition as effective today as it was yesterday and I'm very hopeful that it will continue to be effective and even more effective tomorrow," he said. "You'll see in the coming days and weeks we are redoubling all our diplomatic and commercial efforts to put real pressure on Iran."

Last year, Trump pulled out of an international accord negotiated under his predecessor Barack Obama on ending Iran's nuclear program and has instead reimposed biting sanctions. Pompeo has repeatedly called Iran "the world's largest state sponsor of terror," pointing to its targeting of domestic rivals in Europe and support of militant movements such as Lebanon's Hezbollah. Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif swiftly hit back at the latest US broadsides, tweeting that the "pure obsession with Iran is more and more like the behavior of persistently failing psychotic stalkers".

Pompeo's trip comes weeks after Trump announced that the United States would quickly pull its 2,000 sol-

Assembly delays debate on...

Continued from Page 1

Muwaizri asked Ghanem why he did not include a letter he had sent to the Assembly over the court ruling. The speaker told him that the letter was illegal and could not be included in the Assembly's agenda. The two then exchanged tough language and accused each other of not respecting the law and the National Assembly.

MPs also raised the issue of fake social media accounts which they claimed are being protected and used by influential people. MP Al-Humaidi Al-



ANKARA: Turkish President and leader of Turkey's ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party Recep Tayyip Erdogan makes a speech during his party's parliamentary group meeting at the Grand National Assembly yesterday. — AFP

against the Turkish state since 1984. That US military support for the YPG has shaken relations between Washington and Ankara.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo drew the wrath of the Turkish leadership last week when he said Washington would ensure "the Turks don't slaughter the Kurds" in Syria as American troops withdraw. "That Turkey targets the Kurds is the most vile, the most dishonorable, the ugliest and the cheapest slander," Erdogan said yesterday. But the Turkish leader made it clear that Ankara would not soften its stance against the YPG. "Those who are in the terror corridor in Syria will learn necessary lessons," he said.

After meeting Bolton yesterday, Kalin also urged Washington to take back all the weapons provided to Syrian Kurdish militia forces. He denied comments by Pompeo that Turkey had promised the US not to attack the Kurdish fighters. "Nobody should expect Turkey to provide assurances to a terror organization," he told journalists in Ankara. Bolton's spokesman Garrett Marquis described the talks as "productive" and centered on "the president's decision to withdraw at a proper pace from northeast Syria".

Military win 'first step'

When Trump first announced the pullout of 2,000 ground troops on Dec 19, Ankara was a lonely voice among NATO allies welcoming the decision. Erdogan has promised Trump that Turkey could finish off the remnants of IS in Syria. "A military victory against the terrorist group is a mere first step," he said in the New York Times, warning against premature declarations of victory. Nicholas Heras, an analyst at the Center for a New American Security, said Ankara would need so much support from Washington to completely eradicate IS, that it would be "to the point where the US military would essentially still be inside Syria".

Trump on Monday conceded that the fight against IS was not over. "We will be leaving at a proper pace while at the same time continuing to fight ISIS and doing all else that is prudent and necessary!" he tweeted. Last month, Erdogan threatened to launch a cross-border operation against the YPG, east of the Euphrates River, which he said later would be delayed after Trump's pullout order. Turkish military forces supporting Syrian rebels launched incursions into northern Syria against IS in Aug 2016 and against the YPG in Jan 2018. — AFP

diers out of Syria, declaring that IS - also known as ISIS - had been defeated. His advisers have since been walking back his timeline, and Pompeo reassured Washington's allies in the region that the "battle continues". "The president's decision to withdraw our folks from Syria in no way impacts our capacity to deliver on that," said the secretary of state, who later also met Jordan's King Abdullah II.

In a stark reminder of the lingering threat, IS fighters defending their last bastion killed 23 members of the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in eastern Syria, a war monitor reported. IS was unable to hold on to the positions it attacked in the assault which began late Sunday and also left nine jihadists dead, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Pompeo's tour will also take him to Cairo, Manama, Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh, Muscat, Kuwait City, and possibly Baghdad.

He will deliver an address on Middle East policy in Egypt, whose army chief turned president, Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, has been a key partner of Trump. The Trump administration has cited Iran as a reason for maintaining a strong alliance with Saudi Arabia, despite the murder and dismemberment of dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi inside the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October.

One of the rare US partners to support Washington's withdrawal from Syria has been Turkey, whose president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, spoke to Trump before the US leader's Dec 19 decision. Pompeo, in an interview before his departure, said that Erdogan had "made a commitment" to Trump not to attack Washington's Kurdish allies who have fought IS in Syria. That prompted a denial yesterday from Erdogan's spokesman who said that "nobody should expect Turkey to provide assurances to a terror organization". — AFP

Subaei said a specific Twitter account is being protected and paid for by influential people. Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah said that the government has already filed over 30 cases against the said account, denying any government protection. The Assembly then approved a motion calling on the government to give a statement in the chamber about its actions against fake and manipulated social media accounts.

MPs also criticized the government for not implementing a law allowing it to naturalize up to 4,000 people in 2018, but the interior minister said the government implemented the law and is prepared to cooperate if a new law is passed for 2019. The Assembly then approved the first reading of a law regulating psychiatric health services. MPs later agreed to move the sessions on Feb 19 and 20 because of the national day holidays and also moved the Jan 19 session to Jan 29.

Investment in Kuwait rises...

Continued from Page 1

Relative distribution of direct foreign investment assets in Kuwait as per beneficiary sector by the end of 2017 showed the telecommunication sector had the lion's share of 38.4 percent (KD 1.19 billion), followed investment companies with 27.4 percent (KD 852 million), industrial companies with 12.4 percent (KD 386.2 million) and the banking sector with 9.7 percent (KD 302.2 million).

The survey showed 10 countries invested around 85.8 percent (KD 2.6 billion) in Kuwait in 2017, topped by Qatar with KD 2.1 billion, Saudi Arabia with KD 328.9 million, Bahrain with KD 296.6 million, UAE with KD 288.9 million and Oman with KD 152.8 million. On the other hand, the survey showed Kuwait's investments abroad amounted to KD 18.2 billion by the end of 2017

Trump is right on Syria. Turkey can...

Continued from Page 1

to reunite child soldiers with their families and include all fighters with no links to terrorist organizations in the new stabilization force.

Ensuring adequate political representation for all communities is another priority. Under Turkey's watch, the Syrian territories that are under the control of the YPG or the so-called Islamic State will be governed by popularly elected councils. Individuals with no links to terrorist groups will be eligible to represent their communities in local governments.

Local councils in predominantly Kurdish parts of north-

Sports

Karlsson breaks San Jose Sharks' point-streak record in win over Kings

Gaudreau scores twice to lift Flames past Blackhawks

SAN JOSE: Erik Karlsson had three assists to extend his point streak to 13 games and set a franchise record for the San Jose Sharks in a 3-1 win against the visiting Los Angeles Kings on Monday. Joonas Donskoi, Tomas Hertl and Joe Thornton scored for the Sharks, who have won five of six. Martin Jones made 22 saves and also assisted on Hertl's goal, improving to 11-3-3 in his career against Los Angeles, his first NHL team. Karlsson became the first NHL defenseman since Phil Housley of the Winnipeg Jets in 1992-93 to record at least one assist in 13 consecutive games. He broke the franchise's record for longest point streak, which had been held by Rob Gaudreau (1992-93) and Jonathan Cheechoo (2005-06). Anze Kopitar scored for the Kings, and Jack Campbell made 26 saves.

WILD 1, CANADIENS 0

Minnesota's Devan Dubnyk made 32 saves for his first shutout of the season while continuing a dominant career run against host Montreal. Dubnyk improved to 9-1-1 with a 1.90 goals against average in 11 career games against the Canadiens, with two shutouts. Mikael Granlund scored the game's only goal, breaking the deadlock at 6:58 of the third period. Canadiens goalie Carey Price nearly matched Dubnyk, stopping 24 of 25 shots.

PREDATORS 4, MAPLE LEAFS 0

Mattias Ekholm, P.K. Subban, Colton Sissons and Kevin Fiala each scored a goal. Pekka Rinne earned his third shutout this season, and Nashville won at Toronto.

Fiala, Ekholm and Sissons each added an assist. Rinne stopped 18 shots in picking up his 54th career shutout as the Predators won their second game in a row and the fourth in five games after losing five straight. Toronto has lost three of four games since winning five in a row. The Maple Leafs were shut out for the second time in their past four home games. They lost 4-0 to the New York Islanders on Dec. 29.

BLUES 3, FLYERS 0

St. Louis goaltender Jordan Binnington was terrific in his first career NHL start, stopping all 25 shots while sending host Philadelphia to its seventh consecutive loss. Binnington was recently recalled from the San Antonio Rampage of the AHL. Brayden Schenn, Vladimir Tarasenko and David Perron each scored a goal for the Blues. Ryan O'Reilly had two assists for St. Louis, which had dropped three of four heading into the game.

FLAMES 4, BLACKHAWKS 3

Johnny Gaudreau scored twice and Sean Monahan netted one goal and one assist to boost Calgary to a victory at Chicago. Flames goalie David Rittich made 32 saves. Western Conference-leading Calgary is on a 4-1-0 run entering a five-game homestand, and Gaudreau has collected 13 points in a five-game, goal-scoring streak. Patrick Kane had a goal and an assist for the Blackhawks. He has collected nine goals and 10 assists in his past 11 games.—Reuters



MONTREAL: Goaltender Carey Price #31 makes a pad save on Jordan Greenway #18 of the Minnesota Wild with Victor Mete #53 of the Montreal Canadiens defending during the NHL game at the Bell Centre on Monday in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. — AFP

Kerber through as Stephens avoids shock loss in Sydney

SYDNEY: Defending champion Angelique Kerber cruised into the Sydney International third round yesterday as she targets back-to-back titles, while world number five Sloane Stephens narrowly avoided a shock loss.

The second seeded German was made to work hard in the opening set against Italy's Camila Giorgi, but took control in the second to ease through 7-6 (7/3), 6-2. "It's always tough to play Camila, the way she is hitting the ball. Her second serve is like her first serve," said world number two Kerber, who had a first round bye and is now into the third round.

"It's never easy to play your first tournament match but I am happy to be through. Hopefully I can go back-to-back, but there's still a long way to go." America's Stephens battled back from the brink of a defeat to beat 72nd-ranked qualifier Ekaterina Alexandrova in their first round clash.

Less than a week before the Australian Open—the season's first Grand Slam—she was on the ropes with Alexandrova winning the first set to love and serving for the match in the second set. But Stephens somehow rallied to win 0-6, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/3).

"I was, like, it's not going to get any worse than this," Stephens said of the first set. "So it was like I might as well just play." "Obviously she was playing well. Sometimes when you play a player that's just playing like that, there is not much you can do."

Earlier, two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova avenged her US Open defeat to in-form Aryna Sabalenka. The Czech, who slumped to 29 in the world after being attacked in her home by a knife-wielding man in 2016, has battled back to number eight and was encouraged by her 6-1, 7-5 win over the Belarusian.

Sabalenka is a form player, racing to number 11 in the world after a stellar 2018 and starting the year by winning the Shenzhen Open. "She was definitely (finishing strongly). She came from Shenzhen (last week) where she won the tournament so I knew it would be a tough match," said Kvitova.

"Unfortunately I lost (to her) at the US Open but I'm happy with my performance here in the first round." Kvitova, who is aiming for her second Sydney title after lifting the trophy in 2015, belted 28 winners to Sabalenka's 11 and won an incredible 85 percent of her first-serve points.

There was no such joy for 2017 French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko, whose poor form continued in a 6-3, 6-3 defeat to Australia's Ash Barty, who is rewarded with a second-round clash against world number one Simona Halep. After picking up a thigh injury at the Hopman Cup, Garbine Muguruza—another major winner—safely negotiated her first-round encounter with fellow Spaniard Carla Suarez Navarro 6-3, 6-4.

She later pulled out of the tournament, citing an unspecified illness, giving her next opponent Kiki Bertens a walkover into the third round. Last year Muguruza was the top seed and world number two, but 12 months on she is unseeded and down to 18.

In the men's draw Australian teenager Alex De Minaur, a finalist last year, continued his preparations for the Australian Open with a 6-4 6-3 win over Dusan Lajovic. Towering Americans Sam Querrey and Reilly Opelka are also through to the next round.—AFP



SYDNEY: Angelique Kerber from Germany plays a shot to Camila Giorgi from Italy during their women's second round match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

Tomic warms up for Kyrgios clash, Slam with season-opening win

MELBOURNE: Bernard Tomic won his first competitive outing of the season yesterday, beating American Jack Sock in a pre-Australian Open tune-up that will also see him take on fellow livewire Australian Nick Kyrgios.

In the opening match of the Kooyong Classic in Melbourne, 83rd-ranked Tomic—who bounced back after on-and-off court issues to win his first ATP title since 2015 at Chengdu in September—overcame Sock in three tight sets.

After winning 5-7, 6-4, 10-6, Tomic is looking ahead to his clash today against Kyrgios, who has also been struggling with form and motivation. The pair have never played on the ATP Tour. "Nick and I have played many many times in practice, we're good friends. This will be our last opportunity to practise because in five days it's the Australian Open," Tomic said after putting in what he termed a decent performance against the 106th-ranked Sock.

The formerly troubled Tomic, who failed to qualify a year ago for the Open when he was ranked 142nd and apparently fed up with tennis, now seems to have settled down. The same may not apply to Kyrgios, who finished his season in October through an elbow injury. He has spent recent months at home in Canberra, playing basketball and doing charity work while speaking with mental health professionals in hopes of regaining the competitive spirit which once took him to 13th in the world.

On Monday, he played in a Fast4 exhibition event in Sydney along with Rafael Nadal. "I'm looking forward to playing Nick, for practice it's unbelievable. I've had some stuff I've had to work on during the last couple of weeks," Tomic said.

"Tomorrow's my last chance to do that—hopefully Nick will take it (match) seriously." Sock, who was ranked eighth in the world last January prior to a collapse in form, lost to Tomic on a drop shot gone wrong. "I landed 24 hours ago so I didn't have a lot of expectations," he said. "It's the first outdoor match for me in a long time. Last season's singles was absolutely terrible, in doubles I had some fun. But that's 2018, it's 2019 now. I'm not stressing about it a lot. I know how well I can play and what I can get back to. I don't care what (ranking) number is in front of my name."

Serb Janko Tipsarevic, meanwhile, returned to tennis after 15 months away following hamstring surgery, celebrating by beating Australian Jason Kubler 6-4 3-6, 12-10. "I'm 90 percent pain-free," the 35-year-old Tipsarevic said. "But I'm lacking that spring in my step which only comes from matches."

In the women's draw, American teenager Amanda Anisimova fell victim to a leg injury, retiring to hand Britain's Katie Boulter a 6-4 win.—AFP



Caroline Wozniacki

develop Kerber as a teenager. "In general, it's about her offensive game." Rittner told Deutsche Welle of the three-time Grand Slam champion who lost an agonising, breathless semi-final 9-7 in the final set to Halep in Melbourne last year. "She is unbelievably good with the volley—in this more aggressive, more daring game. I'm sure they'll work on it."

NAOMI OSAKA

The popular 21-year-old's US Open triumph was overshadowed by Serena Williams' tantrum in the final at Flushing Meadows but Osaka has the opportunity in Melbourne to demonstrate she can withstand the spotlight of being the new standard bearer for tennis in Japan. Asia and the next generation of women. She arrives as second favourite with the bookies behind Williams, and seems unfazed both by her stratospheric rise and by the prospect of the huge support she could receive at the Australian Open, often dubbed the Asia-Pacific Grand Slam. "I never feel pressure to perform. I enjoy Grand Slams the most," she said. "There is a certain degree of pressure, but it's from myself."

SERENA WILLIAMS

Despite being ranked outside the top 10, few would be brave enough to count Williams out of the equation as she aims to equal Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam singles titles.—AFP



Bernard Tomic

Ferrer wins as Statham stuns Chung in Auckland

WELLINGTON: Four-time champion David Ferrer cruised through the opening round of the Auckland Classic yesterday but South Korea's Chung Hyeon suffered a stunning loss to local underdog Rubin "Jose" Statham.

Ferrer, 36, has retired from Grand Slams but the former world number three is making a few appearances at his favourite ATP tournaments in 2019, with Auckland first on the list. The Spaniard brushed aside Dutchman Robin Haase 6-2, 6-1 to ease into the second round and must be regarded as a real chance of winning a record fifth title in this year's depleted Auckland field.

Defending champion Roberto Bautista Agut has pulled out of the event along with Tomas Berdych and Gael Monfils, leaving top seeded American John Isner as the main drawcard. Ferrer said it felt special to contest a tournament that had meant a lot to him over the years.

"It's very exciting because it's the last one," he said. "The support of the people for me, it's very nice to play one more time again. These are going to be my last tournaments and I want to finish as late in them as possible."

Ferrer may have a rival as the Auckland crowd's sentimental favourite if Statham can maintain the form that saw him shock Chung. A 31-year-old journeyman ranked 310 the world, Statham is only in the tournament because organisers threw him a late wildcard due to the high number of player withdrawals.

He was expected to be cannon fodder for Chung, the world number 25, who beat Novak Djokovic on the way to the semi-finals of last year's Australian Open. But he came back from 5-1 down in the opening set to win 7-5, 6-3, rating it the biggest singles victory of his career.—AFP

Five women to watch at Australian Open

MELBOURNE: Will Serena Williams make a triumphant return to the scene of her last Grand Slam win, can Caroline Wozniacki defend her crown or is Naomi Osaka capable of back-to-back majors?

CAROLINE WOZNIACKI

The Dane finally broke her Grand Slam hoodoo in Melbourne 12 months ago after 12 years of trying, and is determined to prove she remains a force at the top level after dropping the bombshell that she is suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. Wozniacki, 28, says the debilitating auto-immune condition is so bad that on some days "I wake up and can't lift my hands over my head". The shock diagnosis came after Wozniacki had returned to number one and taken her WTA tour title tally to 30 with victories not only in Melbourne, but also Eastbourne and Beijing. She arrives ranked three believing she can control her condition. "I've been feeling well. I've learned to cope after matches."

SIMONA HALEP

The Romanian bounced back from losing to Wozniacki in an epic Melbourne final 12 months ago to claim her own maiden Slam at Roland Garros and climb back to number one despite a nagging back injury that forced the 27-year-old to miss the WTA Finals in Singapore. Top-seeded Halep is without a coach after long-time Australian mentor Darren Cahill stepped down for family reasons, and described 2018 as "very emotional" but insisted it had made her mentally stronger. "When you have a target on your back it's not easy because everyone wants to play their best against you and beat you," she said. "But being number one is something you should embrace and be proud of."

ANGELIQUE KERBER

The Wimbledon champion and world number two will turn 31 on January 18 and is tipped to unveil a more aggressive approach under new coach Rainer Schuttler, who reached the Australian Open final in 2003 where he lost to Andre Agassi. Schuttler will add more "daring" to the 2016 Australian Open champion's game, said the German Tennis Association's Barbara Rittner, who helped

Sports

Tons for Taylor, Nicholls as NZ sweep S Lanka ODI series

Beat Sri Lanka by 115 runs to complete a 3-0 series whitewash

SCOREBOARD

Completed scoreboard in the third and final one-day international between New Zealand and Sri Lanka in Nelson yesterday:

New Zealand	
M. Guptill c Mendis b Malinga	2
C. Munro b Malinga	21
K. Williamson c de Silva b Sandakan	55
R. Taylor c de Silva b Malinga	137
H. Nicholls not out	124
J. Neesham not out	12
Extras: (b1, lb5, nb1, w6)	13
Total: (for 4 wickets; 50 overs)	364
Fall of wickets: 1-16 (Guptill), 2-31 (Munro), 3-147 (Williamson), 4-301 (Taylor)	
Bowling: Malinga 10-1-93-3 (1w), Chameera 8-0-55-0, Pradeep 9-1-77-0 (5w, 1nb), Perera 2-0-8-0, Sandakan 10-0-54-1, Shanaka 6-0-36-0, de Silva 5-0-35-0.	

Sri Lanka	
N. Dickwella c Ferguson b Neesham	46
D. de Silva lbw Southee	36
K. Perera c Seifert b Ferguson	43
K. Mendis run out (Williamson/Seifert)	0
D. Shanaka lbw Sodhi	2
T. Perera c Guptill b Ferguson	80
M. Gunathilaka b Ferguson	31
P. Chameera c Southee b Ferguson	1
L. Malinga stumped (Seifert/Sodhi)	0
L. Sandakan not out	0
N. Pradeep b Sodhi	0
Extras: (lb4, w7)	10
Total: (all out; 41.4 overs)	249
Fall of wickets: 1-66 (de Silva), 2-107 (Dickwella), 3-107 (K. Mendis), 4-117 (Shanaka), 5-143 (M. Perera), 6-244 (T. Perera), 7-249 (Chameera), 8-249 (Gunathilaka), 9-249 (Malinga), 10-249 (Pradeep)	
Bowling: Southee 7-0-46-1 (4w), Henry 8-0-62-0 (2w), Ferguson 8-0-40-0 (1w), Neesham 5-0-34-1, Williamson 5-0-24-0, Sodhi 8.4-0-40-3.	
Result: New Zealand win by 115 runs	
Series: New Zealand 3-0	

NELSON: Veteran Ross Taylor and rising star Henry Nicholls both smashed centuries as New Zealand beat Sri Lanka by 115 runs in the third one-day international in Nelson yesterday to complete a 3-0 series whitewash. Taylor top-scored with 137, and Nicholls was unbeaten on 124 off just 80 balls, lifting the hosts to 364 for four after they lost the toss and were sent in to bat. It was a record ODI score at Nelson's Saxton Oval, where the average is just 275, and Sri Lanka never looked like reaching the mammoth total.

They were all out for 249 in the 42nd over, throwing away their final four wickets without scoring a run as the series ended with a whimper. Thisara Perera, who scored a blistering 140 in the second ODI, was again the tourists' standout performer, racing to 80 in 63 balls. With the series already decided, Nicholls and Taylor used the dead rubber to send a message to New Zealand selectors ahead of this year's World Cup. It was Nicholls' maiden ODI ton and the 27-year-old will hope his strong Test form is finally transferring to the limited overs format.

Taylor's 20th ODI century tightened the 34-year-old's grip on the New Zealand record he already holds for one-day centuries. "I'm getting old and hopefully I've got a few more left in me," he said.

Tail-end collapse

In his last 11 ODI innings Taylor has scored three centuries and six half centuries. He came to the crease with New Zealand struggling at 31 for two but combined with skipper Kane Williamson for a 116-run partnership to steady the innings.

When Williamson departed on 55, Taylor and Nicholls plundered the Sri Lanka attack with an aggressive 154-run stand. Sri Lanka captain Lasith Malinga had ousted openers Martin Guptill and Colin Munro cheaply but was expensive in the long run, leaking 93 runs from his 10 overs.



NELSON: New Zealand's players pose for a photo after winning the ODI series against Sri Lanka after their third ODI cricket match at Saxton Field in Nelson yesterday. —AFP

Sri Lanka's senior bowlers were all wayward, particularly at the death, as the tourists conceded 57 runs in the final three overs. Sri Lanka made a bright start to the run chase, scoring freely before Tim Southee trapped Dhananjaya de Silva lbw on 36.

The run rate then slowed to a crawl when the tourists lost three wickets for 10 runs to slump to 117 for four, with Niroshan Dickwella and Kusal Mendis departing within the space of two balls.

Worse was to come after Perera fell to a spectacular one-handed catch from Guptill, triggering a tail-end collapse. Dushantha Chameera went with Sri Lanka on 249, only for Danushka Gunathilaka, Malinga and Nuwan Pradeep to all depart without furthering the score. Sri Lanka, who lost a two-Test series against New Zealand 1-0, wrap up their tour with a one-off Twenty20 match against the Black Caps in Auckland on Friday. —AFP

Cash bonuses for India heroes

NEW DELHI: India yesterday awarded cash bonuses of up to \$85,000 for Virat Kohli and his players who secured a historic first Test series triumph in Australia.

India clinched the four-match series 2-1 in Sydney on Monday, sparking national celebrations. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) congratulated the team and announced a bonus of \$21,400 per match for each player while the reserves will get \$10,700 per match. That means that Kohli and others who took part in all four Tests will get more than \$85,000, doubling their match fees. Coach Ravi Shastri and his assistants will get \$35,650 each. The BCCI routinely gives bonuses for multi-nation tournaments like the World Cup or Champions Trophy but extra payments for a bilateral series is rare. —AFP

Qatar's beIN pulls plug on Egyptian cable network

DOHA: Qatar broadcasting giant beIN said yesterday it will stop broadcasting programmes on its only cable network in Egypt, CNE, a move that could affect hundreds of thousands of viewers.

The move comes amid a 19-month diplomatic regional crisis between Qatar and regional powers including Egypt, which has also seen the Doha-based sports broadcaster pitted on the frontline during the dispute.

"beIN SPORTS announces that after lengthy negotiations and having tirelessly tried to agree reasonable commercial terms with Cable Network Egypt (CNE) — including acting in considerable good faith by granting the network multiple extensions to conclude the renewal process—CNE steadfastly refuses to agree such terms," said beIN in a statement.

"As such we are unable to provide our services on CNE as of January 8th, 2019 until such time that CNE agrees reasonable terms." beIN provided several sports via CNE including English Premier League football games, Champions League, major tennis tournaments, NBA and Formula One.

It is thought up to as many as 300,000 viewers used the service. One source said talks on new commercial terms had been ongoing for two months. Since June 2017, a group of countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt have led a political and economic boycott of Qatar.

The countries accuse Doha of supporting "terrorist groups", including the Muslim Brotherhood, which the current leadership in Egypt deposed, and of seeking improved relations with Saudi's arch regional rival Iran.

During the dispute beIN has launched a \$1-billion compensation claim against Saudi broadcasters who it accuses of playing a central part in a vast piracy operation by illegally showing hundreds of live sports programmes.

Last January, an Egyptian court imposed a \$22-million fine on beIN for "violating anti-trust regulations". beIN's CEO Nasser al-Khelaifi, who is also president of Paris Saint-Germain football club, was also fined 400 million Egyptian pounds as part of the ruling. —AFP

IPL 2019 to be held in India

NEW DELHI: The Indian Premier League will be held in India, the cricket board said yesterday, quelling speculation that the Twenty20 extravaganza could be held elsewhere owing to a clash with a general election.

The money-spinning competition that lasts two months would be held from March 23 with a detailed schedule to be announced later, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said. The announcement comes amid widespread reports that the IPL could be moved out of the country due to security concerns as India is to hold general elections by May. "Based on

preliminary discussions with the appropriate central and state authorities, it was decided that the 12th edition of the world's most popular and competitive T20 tournament will be played in India," BCCI said in a statement.

In 2014 when the country last held national polls, the UAE hosted the first two weeks of the IPL. The entire 2009 edition took place in South Africa, again to avoid a clash with elections. State governments say providing security for the IPL is a challenge at a time when they are preoccupied with election duty in the country of 1.25 billion people.

Top international stars, huge pay cheques and Bollywood stars have made the IPL the biggest franchise-based Twenty20 competition in the world. Last month, little-known Indian mystery spinner Varun Chakravarthy hit the jackpot at the IPL auction, being snared for \$1.2 million by Kings XI Punjab. —AFP



SYDNEY: India's captain Virat Kohli (C) applauds as the India team celebrates their series win on the fifth day of the fourth and final cricket Test against Australia at the Sydney Cricket Ground in Sydney on Monday. —AFP

India asks 'Is King Kohli better than Tendulkar?'

NEW DELHI: While Virat Kohli's historic success in Australia has been greeted with jubilation in India, it has also sparked a feverish debate: is he even better than the nation's cricket god Sachin Tendulkar?

Kohli, the world's top-ranked batsman in all three formats of the game, on Monday led India to their first-ever Test series win in Australia, after seven decades of trying. Already known as "King Kohli" before the tour, there are those who say the Indian captain deserves promotion.

But his Test teammates Hardik Pandya and Lokesh Rahul were mercilessly trolled on Indian social media after saying on a TV chat show that Kohli was a better batsman than Tendulkar. The pair were blasted for being "pathetic" and "cringeworthy" by Twitter users in a mass tirade. While Tendulkar has maintained a god-like status in the Indian public's eye since his retirement in 2013, he never managed to guide India to a Test series win in Australia. Kohli, 30, was born a year before Tendulkar made his India debut in 1989. He is the run machine of modern cricket with more 19,000 runs in Test, one-day and T20 games. He last year became the fastest to reach 10,000 runs in 50-over internationals-beating Tendulkar's record.

Kohli's biographer Vijay Lokapally said there should not be a comparison between players of different generations, but hailed Kohli's achievements. "As a captain he sets an example with his fitness, his batting and his leadership,"

Lokapally told AFP. "His batting is absolutely top class. He doesn't need a certificate from anyone. And there is no better person to lead the Indian team in any format." He added: "As far as comparisons go, I think it's unfair to disregard the efforts of former players like Vijay Hazare or Sunil Gavaskar and compare eras.

"Gavaskar was a star of his times, Tendulkar ruled his era and Kohli is the new generation star. So they are all champions in their own place." Pandya and Rahul set off hostilities with Tendulkar fans in their off-the-cuff comments on Indian television aired Sunday.

Tendulkar had been named as the best batsmen by a string of luminaries including Don Bradman, Viv Richards and Sunil Gavaskar, one Twitter user noted in response. "Every true cricket fan knows who is best!"

Few doubt however that Kohli has given the world's number one Test nation an even stronger dominance by completing the 2-1 series win in Australia. World Cup-winning Kohli rated the triumph his "best achievement" so far, and Indian papers hailed the captain for his "Thunder Down Under".

The Times of India newspaper headlined its report "The Reign Men", while the Hindustan Times said "This win will make India invincible", headlining the opinion of their columnist Ian Chappell. Even Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan congratulated India on their historic achievement. "Congratulations to Virat Kohli and the Indian cricket team for the first ever win by a subcontinent team in a Test series in Australia," the former cricketer wrote on his party's Twitter account. India coach Ravi Shastri said Kohli's leadership skills had "made all the difference" but sought to shoot down all references to deities. "This is not a team of gods and demigods, seniors or juniors. This is an Indian cricket team that will readily jump off a cliff to win a match for the country," said Shastri. —AFP

Rattled Australia pick through rubble of 'lost summer' against India

SYDNEY: Australia's humbling series defeat to India left selectors to pick through the rubble yesterday as they face tough decisions with two Tests looming against Sri Lanka and then an Ashes tour of England.

Their 2-1 capitulation—the first time India has won a series Down Under in 70 years of trying—stemmed from batting failures and a bowling attack that struggled to tame some of the world's top players.

The squad to play Sri Lanka in the first Test later this month in Brisbane is expected to be announced today, with few standout performances to offer much encouragement. With the banned Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft all missing for the India series, it had opened the door to a host of fringe Test cricketers including Aaron Finch, Travis Head, Marnus Labuschagne and Marcus Harris.

Harris, handed his debut in Adelaide, was the only one to categorically demand future consideration. Senior players like Usman Khawaja failed to consistently stand up while the Marsh brothers, Shaun and Mitchell, again disappointed.

There are also question marks over Mitchell Starc, long Australia's main strike bowler but who didn't perform as expected. The Australian broadsheet lamented a "summer of lost opportunities" after the curtain came down on a rain-affected Sydney Test, where Australia was forced to follow on at home for the first time in 30 years.

Despite the doom and gloom, skipper Tim Paine said selectors' options were limited, with few people knocking on the door. "In an ideal world, yes (there would be more players coming through), but that's nothing we as a playing group can control," he said. "All we can control is how hard we are working. We've said numerous times we are trying our absolute backsides off. We've got what we've got and our playing group are working as hard as we can to improve."

Paine and coach Justin Langer have often spoken of the need to pick and stick to try and build a settled team, but the pressure is mounting. Names being touted in the media as possible contenders include Matthew Wade, Joe Burns, Matt Renshaw and even Bancroft, who has only just returned from his ball-tampering ban.

There has also been a push by several former top players to hand allrounder Marcus Stoinis a chance. Paine insisted there has been something to gain from the loss to India. "It's the experience at this level that those guys have got now that they wouldn't have got," he said.

"If we get to the Ashes and Marcus, Travis and Marnus are playing they understand now the pressure and magnitude of the situation on them. "You don't experience that anywhere but when you walk out in Test cricket. For them to have the experience they now go away, train and know what to expect and know where they need to improve." Former England captain Mike Atherton, writing in The Australian, laid much of the blame for the batting woes on a degrading of the importance of the four-day domestic Sheffield Shield competition, once the envy of the world.—AFP

Sports

Klopp defends changes as Wolves dump Liverpool out of FA Cup

Klopp's team selection will now be seriously questioned

WOLVERHAMPTON: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp believes an early injury to defender Dejan Lovren highlighted why he chose to name a second-string side in bowing out of the FA Cup 2-1 to Wolves on Monday.

Klopp made nine changes to the side that lost narrowly for the first time in the Premier League this season to Manchester City on Thursday, with Lovren one of only two players to retain their place.

However, the Croatian pulled up with a hamstring injury after just six minutes and was replaced by 16-year-old Ki-Jana Hoever. "Hamstring, is what I heard - without any signs before," said Klopp on what forced Lovren off. "I asked everybody, no signs, nothing, just out of the blue, so that's the decision you have to make."

"I am not sure what you all would have said if immediately from the beginning if our centre-half situation was Fabinho and Ki-Jana: then probably a few very smart people would tell me that I don't respect the competition or whatever."

Goals from Raul Jimenez and Ruben Neves either side of half-time sent the hosts into round four, where they will face Shrewsbury or Stoke City, despite Divock Origi's fine strike briefly bringing Liverpool level after the break.

Hoever's introduction meant Liverpool fielded three teenagers for the majority of the match with Rafael Camacho and Curtis Jones also handed debuts. However it was the visitors' most experienced player, Milner, who was at fault for the opening goal when Diogo Jota caught the former England international in possession in midfield and put Jimenez clean through for the Mexican to score

his seventh goal of the season.

Without Mohamed Salah, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane, Liverpool were struggling to get any momentum going forward. But the visitors were level out of nothing when Origi collected a loose ball on the edge of the area six minutes into the second period and smashed the ball high past John Ruddy.

Wolves, though, have made a habit of upsetting the Premier League's established top six in their first season back in the top flight. After beating Chelsea and Tottenham and holding City, Manchester United and Arsenal in the Premier League, Liverpool can now be added to the list of scalps for Nuno Espirito Santo's side thanks to a wonder strike from Neves.

"He has talent, he has done it before and we encourage him to shoot from range," said Wolves boss Nuno Espirito Santo. "It was a good strike." Only a brilliant save from Ruddy denied Xherdan Shaqiri a stunning equaliser and Liverpool a replay as the Swiss's free-kick was touched onto the inside of the post by the Wolves goalkeeper.

Klopp had a final roll of the dice by throwing on Salah and Firmino for the final 20 minutes, but even their firepower failed to spark a fightback and Klopp's team selection will now be seriously questioned as he is still to deliver a trophy in his four seasons in charge.

However, with Liverpool still in pole position to deliver a first league title in 29 years, the German coach defended his selection to minimise the chance of his stars suffering injuries. "We played a similar line-up and had three tough games in the last couple of weeks, so it was clear we had to change," Klopp added after a run of four Premier League games in 13 days over the



WOLVERHAMPTON : Wolverhampton Wanderers' Irish defender Matt Doherty (L) vies with Liverpool's Belgium striker Divock Origi during the English FA Cup third round football match between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Liverpool at the Molineux stadium in Wolverhampton, central England on Monday. — AFP

festive period.

"The intensity of the last few games gave me the information it was not possible to start with these three

up front. Only Dejan played a lot of games in the last three or four weeks, pretty much all the games...He played today and was injured." — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ASIAN NATIONS CUP

Japan v Turkmenistan beIN SPORTS	14:00
Uzbekistan v Oman beIN SPORTS	16:30
Qatar v Lebanon beIN SPORTS	19:00

Fergie delivers rousing call to arms to Man United players

LONDON: Manchester United's legendary former manager Alex Ferguson delivered a rousing call to arms to the players, insisting they could make the club successful again, a source close to the Premier League team told The Sun.

The 77-year-old Scot-who guided United to numerous trophies including two Champions League titles during his 27-year reign-has played an increasingly prominent role since former striker Ole Gunnar Solskjaer became interim manager following the sacking of Jose Mourinho.

The latest intervention from Ferguson, who has made a remarkable recovery from the brain haemorrhage he suffered last May, came at the behest of Solskjaer and took place at the training ground. The squad are presently in Dubai for a training camp ahead of Sunday's clash with Tottenham Hotspur which represents a real test for Solskjaer to maintain his perfect record of five wins in five matches.

"He (Ferguson) told the lads that this group will make United dominant and successful again," the source told The Sun. "He said that he believes in them and he wants them to enjoy themselves and to fight hard for each other and leave everything on the pitch."

Ferguson told the players that in Solskjaer-who has put a smile back on the players faces since the departure of the volatile Mourinho-they could look forward to happier times. Solskjaer and Ferguson know each other well as the Norwegian played under him for 11 years, accruing many trophies including six Premier League titles and the 1999 Champions League trophy. "He also told them that the club is in good hands and he promised them that it will become bigger and better in the years to come and they will be part of this success," the source said. "The players believe that there are some good times ahead."

Although Solskjaer has been appointed as a stop gap till the end of the season-Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino remains the bookmakers favourite for the full-time post-the players are keen according to the Daily Mirror he gets the job. Solskjaer could do himself no end of good in pursuit of the job by landing a trophy this term with United still involved in the Champions League and the FA Cup, though, they were drawn away to Premier League rivals Arsenal in Monday's fourth round draw.

"The players want to repay Sir Alex for his support and kind words and are determined to win something for him and Ole Gunnar Solskjaer this season," the source said. — AFP

Gascoigne faces assault trial for kissing incident

LONDON: Former England footballer Paul Gascoigne will stand trial for sexual assault in October after allegedly kissing a woman without consent on a train, a judge ruled yesterday. The 51-year-old ex-Tottenham and Lazio player was arrested on a train between York and Newcastle in August. He appeared at Teesside Crown Court in Middlesbrough in northeast England yesterday to formally enter a not guilty plea, the Press Association news agency reported. His lawyer Michelle Heeley told the court that a number of character witnesses will give evidence "about his propensity to kiss people in a non-sexual manner".

Gascoigne, who has struggled with alcoholism since he retired from top-flight football, wore a blue suit and an open-neck shirt and spoke out during the hearing. "I'm worried to bits. I'm scared," Gascoigne told judge Simon Bourne-Arton, who granted him unconditional bail.

When told he would have to turn up for the trial, Gascoigne said: "I cannot wait. I have done nothing wrong". The trial on one charge of "sexual assault by touching" is set to be held on October 14.

Gascoigne-known as "Gazza"-made his name with Newcastle before going on to play for Tottenham, Italian giants Lazio and several other teams including Rangers.

Popovich ties for 3rd on wins list

DETROIT: DeMar DeRozan had 26 points, nine assists and seven rebounds and Gregg Popovich continued his climb up the NBA's career wins list as the visiting San Antonio Spurs defeated the Detroit Pistons 119-107 on Monday. Popovich earned the 1,221st victory of his career, tying him with Jerry Sloan for third on the NBA's all-time list among coaches. The 23rd-year Spurs coach trails only Don Nelson (1,335) and Lenny Wilkens (1,332). San Antonio dominated the last three quarters after falling behind early. Just as they did against the Utah Jazz on Saturday, the Pistons got off to a good start, jumping out to a 21-9 lead with 4:55 remaining in the first quarter. LaMarcus Aldridge scored 25 points on 9-of-12 shooting for the Spurs, who have won five straight and six of their last seven. Blake Griffin had 34 points and eight assists, and Andre Drummond had 19 points and 14 rebounds in defeat for the Pistons, who have lost five of six.

ROCKETS 125, NUGGETS 113

James Harden produced another sparkling double-double but this time received plenty of help as Houston extended its home-court winning streak to 10 games with a victory over Western Conference-leading Denver. Harden paired 32 points with 14 assists. The Rockets also received a career-high 31 points from center Clint Capela (plus nine rebounds) and 21 points apiece from P.J. Tucker and Gerald Green. The Rockets bounced back after having their six-game win streak end Saturday against the Trail Blazers. Houston finished 22 of 47 from behind the arc to outflank the Nuggets, who had a five-game winning streak snapped and lost to the Rockets for the second time this season. Nikola Jokic paced Denver with 24 points and 13 rebounds.

CELTICS 116, NETS 95

Marcus Smart drained 3-pointers on consecutive possessions in the first quarter to begin a game-changing run by host Boston, which went on to beat Brooklyn. The Celtics have won three straight and four of five. The Nets, who were trying to reach .500 beyond the midway point of the season for the first time since the 2013-14 campaign, had a three-game winning streak snapped and lost for just the fourth time in the last 16 games. Kylie Irving, who returned after missing two games with a left eye injury, scored 17 points to lead a balanced Celtics attack. Seven other players scored in double figures for Boston. Rookie Rodions Kurucs scored 24 points and drained five 3-pointers for the Nets.



Paul Gascoigne

The midfielder, widely regarded as one of the most talented players of his generation, was also a key member of the England side that reached the semi-finals of the 1990 World Cup in Italy. He won 57 caps in total.

Gascoigne was one of the first big-name footballers to arrive in China when he made the shock decision to be a player-coach of second division Gansu Tianma in 2003 but he lasted just a handful of games.

In an interview published on Tottenham's website last year he said: "Sometimes when I look back and people say to me 'do you regret anything in your career?' 'Perhaps I left Spurs too early. I loved it there. The players, the staff, everyone was class and the team spirit was phenomenal, absolute class. We had a great team.' — AFP



DETROIT: Blake Griffin #23 of the Detroit Pistons shoots the ball against the San Antonio Spurs on Monday at Little Caesars Arena in Detroit, Michigan. — AFOP

BUCKS 114, JAZZ 102

Giannis Antetokounmpo recorded 30 points and 10 rebounds to help Milwaukee register a win over visiting Utah. Malcolm Brogdon added 21 points for the Bucks, who won for the 10th time in their past 12 games. Brook Lopez contributed 15 points and eight rebounds, Thon Maker also scored 15 and Khris Middleton had 14 points and seven rebounds. Donovan Mitchell scored 26 points for the Jazz but missed all five shots while going scoreless in the fourth quarter. Rudy Gobert added 14 points and 15 rebounds.

LAKERS 107, MAVERICKS 97

Los Angeles put together a dominant third quarter to rally from a 15-point deficit and win at Dallas. Brandon Ingram scored a season-high 29 points, Lonzo Ball had 21 and Michael Beasley, with 13 points, was key contributor in a third quarter the Lakers won 32-13. Los Angeles earned just its second victory in seven games playing without injured star LeBron James. Mavs rookie Luka Doncic finished with a team-high 27 points and grabbed eight rebounds.

PELICANS 114, GRIZZLIES 95

Anthony Davis had 36 points and 13 rebounds as host New Orleans defeated Memphis. The Pelicans, who handed the Cavaliers their ninth consecutive loss on Saturday in Cleveland, gave the Grizzlies their sixth consecutive loss. The Pelicans last won consecutive games during a three-game winning streak from Nov. 16-19. Memphis dropped to 3-13 since a 107-103 victory against the host Pelicans on Dec 7. Frank Jackson came off the bench to add 17 points for the Pelicans. Mike Conley led Memphis with 22 points and 10 assists, JaMychal Green came off the Grizzlies' bench to score 16. — Reuters

Egypt to host 2019 Africa Cup of Nations

DAKAR: Egypt will host the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations between June 15 and July 13, Confederation of African Football (CAF) president Ahmad Ahmad announced in Dakar yesterday. The CAF executive committee preferred Egypt to South Africa as replacements for original hosts Cameroon, who were dropped due to delays in preparations and concerns over security.

"I am pleased to announce that Egypt will host CAN (Cup of Nations) 2019," Malagasy Ahmad told reporters. "I want to thank the two countries- they came to the rescue of the CAF when we saw that the evolution of the work in Cameroon was not developed."

A CAF official told AFP that Egypt received 16 votes from the executive committee, South Africa one and there was one abstention. Ahmad made the announcement just hours after CAF said it would not disclose the winner until Wednesday to allow the media to concentrate on the annual awards ceremony in Dakar later.

It will be the fifth time Egypt stage the biennial showpiece of African football after 1959, when the country was called the United Arab Republic, 1974, 1986 and 2006. Egypt only entered the running to host the Cup of Nations when fellow north African country Morocco announced they would not bid to do so.

Morocco were the hot media favourites to replace Cameroon as hosts and Egypt said they "did not want to compete against a fellow Arab nation". Egypt boast many international-standard venues with the Cairo International Stadium (72,000) and Borg El Arab Stadium in Alexandria (87,000) boasting the largest capacities.

Ismailia, Port Said and Suez are other possible venues for tournament matches as the Cup of Nations returns to north Africa after a 13-year absence.

The choice of Egypt will immediately make them favourites to win a record-extending eighth Cup of Nations title this year. They won three of the four previous tournaments they hosted, failing only in 1974 when they were beaten by Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) in the semi-finals.

The star of the current team, Liverpool attacker Mohamed Salah, is favourite to retain the African Player of the Year award in Dakar. Security and weather will be two challenges facing Egypt in the first Cup of Nations to feature 24 teams, up from 16 in Gabon two years ago.

Egypt faces a constant terror threat in the volatile Middle East region and the weather during the tournament is expected to be hot and humid. Djamel Belmadi, coach of 2019 qualifiers Algeria, said recently that he would prefer South Africa to host the tournament because of the cooler weather conditions there.

"It is almost impossible to play (in Egypt) given the heat and humidity," he told the Algerian media. "The weather conditions in South Africa are more pleasant." Egyptian football official Karam Kordi responded: "It would be better if Belmadi said he was afraid of the enthusiastic Egyptian supporters."

Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Tunisia and Uganda have qualified for the 2019 tournament. The other 10 places will be filled after the final qualifiers between March 18 and 26. — AFP

25 Kerber through as Stephens avoids shock loss in Sydney



26 Tons for Taylor, Nicholls as NZ sweep S Lanka ODI series



27 Klopp defends changes as Wolves dump Liverpool out of FA Cup



Saudis open in style at Asian Cup

Late Iraqi free-kick breaks Vietnamese hearts at Asian Cup



DUBAI: North Korea's midfielder Il Gwan Jong (C) fights for the ball against Saudi Arabia's defender Hamdan Alshamrani (1st-L) during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup group E football match between Saudi Arabia and North Korea at the Maktoum Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Stadium in Dubai yesterday. — AFP

DUBAI: Three-time winners Saudi Arabia laid down a marker as they ruthlessly dismissed 10-man North Korea at the Asian Cup yesterday, while Iraq overcame stage fright to edge past Vietnam.

The Saudis, humbled at last year's World Cup in Russia, looked far more at home in neighbouring United Arab Emirates as they tore North Korea apart 4-0 in their opening Group E game.

It was a performance that tagged Saudi Arabia as one of the teams to beat at the continental showpiece along with Iran, who thrashed Yemen 5-0 on Monday. The Green Falcons attacked relentlessly in the opening stages and Hatan Bahbri put them in front in the 28th minute, turning defender Ri Il Jin inside-out and firing into the far corner.

They were 2-0 up nine minutes later, when Hussain Almoqahwi's free-kick glanced off the outstretched boot of Mohammed Al-Fatih and past Ri Myong Guk in the North Korean goal.

North Korea already had a mountain to climb but their plight worsened just before half-time, when Han Kwang Song received his second yellow card for bringing down Almoqahwi.

Salem Al-Dawsari made it 3-0 with a smart finish on 69 minutes before Fahad Al-Muwallad bagged a soft fourth goal against an exhausted Korean defence three minutes from time.

'FIRST-GAME EMOTIONS'

Earlier, Iraq's Ali Adnan swept home a brilliant, last-minute free-kick as the former champions twice hit back to beat Vietnam 3-2. It was a heart-breaking way for Vietnam to lose in Abu Dhabi, but no more than Iraq deserved for going for the jugular after Humam Tareq had hauled them level on the hourmark. "The first half was horrible," said Iraq coach Srecko Katanec. "We showed nothing that we did in training—no power, no personality at all. Maybe it was

first-game emotions, the players felt the pressure a little bit." "I knew it would be a tough game," added the Slovenian. "But the most important thing was the three points."

Vietnam's Golden Dragons took a shock lead after 24 minutes in the Group D clash in Abu Dhabi, defender Ali Faez panicking under pressure from Nguyen Cong Phuong and clumsily backheeling the ball past goalkeeper Jalal Hassan Hachim.

Iraq, who defied the odds to win an emotional Asian Cup title in 2007, levelled 10 minutes later through striker Mohamad Ali, who profited from a defensive error to rifle home from the edge of the box. Cong Phuong restored Vietnam's lead three minutes before the break, stabbing in from close range after Nguyen Trong Huang's shot had been parried by Hachim.

But Tareq lashed home a second equaliser following more horrific defending from the Vietnamese, who

by that point looked to be running out of steam.

A lazy foul on the edge of the penalty area subsequently presented Adnan with the chance to take all three points and he did not disappoint, curling a left-foot shot into the top corner, prompting several Vietnamese players to slump to the turf in despair.

Iraq join Iran on three points after their bitter rivals thrashed Yemen 5-0 on Monday. "If we want to go deep into the tournament we will have to improve," shrugged Katanec. "But I have a clearer picture now of our overall condition and we will grow into the tournament."

Vietnam coach Park Hang-seo, who steered his side to the southeast Asian title last December, insisted he had no regrets.

"I'm proud of my players," said the South Korean. "At the end they were exhausted and lost a bit of concentration but we were a little unlucky too." — AFP

Loeb wins Dakar second stage in Peru, De Villiers leads

LIMA: Nine times world champion Sebastien Loeb won the second stage of the Dakar Rally in the Peruvian desert yesterday, with South African Giniel De Villiers taking the overall lead for his Toyota team.

De Villiers, the 2009 Dakar champion, leads team mate Bernhard ten Brinke by 28 seconds with Spaniard Nani Roma third in a Mini, 42 seconds off the pace after the 342km timed stage from Pisco to San Juan

de Marcona.

Loeb had started the day 13th and ended it in fifth place, one minute and 56 seconds off the lead but with his 11th career stage win on the Dakar—even if he was almost reeled in by Roma at the finish.

"In the end, it was a good strategy, because it was advantageous for us to start behind the leaders, even if we were a bit further back than we would have liked," said the Frenchman.

"It was a good special (stage) with no major mistakes. I thought the pace was good. I'm getting a good feeling back, because I've only done about 100km of testing since the Dakar last year.

"I'm not quite at the same level as last year, but it's working well for the moment". Qatar's overnight leader Nasser Al-Attiyah, who is driving a Toyota, opened the road for the rest and dropped back to eighth place, nearly three and a half minutes adrift of De

Villiers. Spaniard Carlos Sainz, the defending champion, was sixth overall and lost time with two punctures. Argentine driver Orlando Terranova, driving a Mini 4x4, retired after crashing out halfway through the stage. The former stage winner was taken to hospital for checks after suffering back pain.

Stephane Peterhansel, a record 13 times Dakar winner, lost some 15 minutes after a lengthy stop in the dunes during the stage before Mini team mate Cyril Despres came to the rescue.

"We started with some electrical problems inside the car: no microphones, no air-conditioning, no wipers, nothing was OK. I lost my concentration a little bit, and after I got stuck in a really bad place," said the Frenchman. The endurance rally, staged in South America since being switched from Africa in 2009 for security reasons, ends in Lima on Jan. 17. — Reuters



LIMA: Peugeot's French driver Sebastien Loeb and co-driver Daniel Elena compete during the Stage 2 of the Dakar 2019 between Pisco and San Juan de Marcona, Peru, yesterday. — AFP