



## 3 Arab Robotics Championship kicks off at Kuwait University



## 28 Japan survive scare as Qatar get welcome win



# Abdulsamad defends expats as Hashem denies insulting them

Kuwait eyeing taxation system • Muwaizri likens Assembly to KGB

## Interior ministry warns against illegal rallies

KUWAIT: The interior ministry has warned against gathering or marching in violation of the laws without obtaining permission from competent authorities. This came in a press statement by the general directorate of relations and security information at the ministry yesterday after reports were circulated on social media about plans by some individuals to march in Taima in Jahra tomorrow.

The ministry stressed the security establishment's keenness on the security and safety of citizens and residents in order to preserve peace and order in the country. It appealed to citizens and residents to cooperate with the ministry in order for it to perform its duties fully. Although the statement did not provide additional details, protests have been held in Taima by bedoons (stateless residents) demanding citizenship and other rights in 2011 and 2014, with security forces responding with tear gas. — KUNA

By B Izzak and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Prominent lawmaker Adnan Abdulsamad yesterday strongly defended expatriates living and working in the country and rejected a campaign targeting them, insisting that they are here because Kuwaiti companies brought them to serve the country. Speaking during a debate on the Amiri speech in the Assembly, the lawmaker said it was strange to see a campaign targeting expatriates, adding that "they only came here at the wish of those who recruited them - citizens, the government and companies". He added that there are jobs that "only expatriates can do" and called on all to respect them.

MP Safaa Al-Hashem, who has been highly critical of expatriates, said she has never undermined the dignity of expatriates but always aimed at rectifying the huge imbalance in the demographic structure. She said that there are many "marginal" expatriate laborers in the country who have "exhausted" public services and infrastructure.



Adnan Abdulsamad

Responding to Hashem, Abdulsamad said that he did not mean to target her, but was referring to what is being said at diwanias against expatriates and some instances of harassment against them.

The two lawmakers called on authorities to fight against the so-called visa traders who exploit expatriate workers by taking large fees from them to issue visas but without giving them any work. Kuwait is home to over three million expatriates and around 1.4 million citizens, prompting some MPs and activists to call for the Kuwaitization of jobs in the government.

During the session, several lawmakers clashed over a decision by the legal and legislative committee to lift the immunity of Islamist MP Mohammad Hayef over comments on Twitter. Several MPs accused the committee of not being neutral because in the tweet, Hayef did not mention any names. The Assembly then voted to reject the recommendation to lift his immunity.

MP Riyadh Al-Adasani criticized the government for hiking the prices of petrol and other services, saying such increases negatively impact both citizens and expatriates. He said MPs will oppose any government move to impose taxes or increase the cost of public services because the burden of such measures will fall on the

people. He said he will oppose the privatization of health, education and the oil sectors.

Notably, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Khaled Mahdi yesterday said state revenues come from natural resources and investments, adding that Kuwait is on the verge of imposing a taxation system with the aim of improving public services. Mahdi added that a number of the development plan projects have been completed, while others are still under construction. "Finished projects were launched in 2018 include Jaber Hospital, Terminal 4 and Jahra Hospital," he explained, noting that some projects have been rescheduled.

After the session, leading opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri, who on Tuesday clashed with Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, criticized the way the speaker manages sessions. Muwaizri claimed that the Assembly has become like the Soviet KGB and alleged some MPs were being spied on. The next Assembly session will be held on Jan 30.

## News in brief

### New visit visa rules

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's residency affairs directorate announced new regulations for issuing various types of visit visas, said informed sources, noting that the residency affairs director directed various department managers to set a minimum salary of KD 500 for sponsors applying for visit visas for their parents or in-laws. The instructions also authorized various immigration managers to set the visit period for parents and in-laws at 30 days for family visit visas and 90 days for tourist visit visas according to the sponsors' jobs, circumstances and the reason for the visit. The new instructions limit siblings' visit visas to 30 days and reaffirmed the suspension of all visit visa extensions. — Al-Anbaa

### Needle-free blood type analyzer

KUWAIT: A team from the technological department of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) has developed a needle-free device able to analyze blood types, said a statement yesterday. Head of the team Dr Ibrahim Sultan said the device uses light beam-based technology which targets blood vessels and determines the blood type of any individual. He revealed that the device was documented in December in a magazine published by the Dove Medical Press. The development of the device comes in line with PAAET's efforts to develop technology within the medical field, Sultan affirmed. — KUNA

### 6 killed in Qatif raid

RIYADH: Six suspects wanted over unrest in Saudi Arabia's Shiite minority stronghold of Qatif were killed in a police raid this week, the kingdom's secret service said yesterday. One person was lightly wounded and arrested in the "preemptive" raid on "terrorists" holed up in a house in the eastern town of Jish on Monday, a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency said. Five officers were wounded in the operation, which the statement said had foiled a planned attack on infrastructure development in the Eastern Province, which includes Qatif. — AFP

### Amazon's Bezos to divorce

NEW YORK: Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, rated the world's wealthiest person with a fortune estimated at around \$137 billion, announced yesterday on Twitter that he and his wife Mackenzie Bezos were divorcing after a long separation. "As our family and close friends know, after a long period of loving exploration and trial separation, we have decided to divorce and continue our shared lives as friends," Jeff Bezos, 54, and MacKenzie Bezos, 48, said in joint statement posted to Bezos' Twitter feed. — AFP

## Social security institution sues British company

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS) has filed a libel suit with the supreme court of the United Kingdom against asset management company Man Group PLC and its subsidiaries. PIFSS said in a press release yesterday it is seeking tentative

compensation amounting to \$156 million, charging the company with making clandestine deals with a former official of the institution between 1996 and 2013. The institution said it filed the libel suit in November, but abstained from revealing the legal move pending official approval.

The press release quoted Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf as saying that instructions by HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah with respect to combating corruption and taking legal action were implemented this year. Hajraf, as cited by the press release, said PIFSS had taken legal measures against officials of Abraj Holding Group, and now these

## 73 stranded Indian nurses to start work next week

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Starting next week, 73 Indian nurses who have been stranded in Kuwait without a job for the past two years will finally begin regular duties at Kuwait's public hospitals and clinics. This was confirmed by a representative of the group, who spoke to Kuwait

Times on the condition of anonymity. "We are very happy about this. We've waited so long; our families suffered enough because of this ordeal. Now the job we were waiting for is in our hands. We want to make sure we will be performing our duties as per the health ministry's contract. We fought for this for long, so we really want to express our gratitude to those who stood by us during the darkest times of our ordeal," the group's spokesperson said.

"The Indian Embassy did a lot to make this MoH employment possible. We had several fallouts during the past two years with them, but it turned out they were the ultimate agency that helped us resolve our problem. Thank God all problems were sorted out and all issues surrounding our employment and legality

## Cornered Trump running out of options to end govt shutdown

WASHINGTON: A cornered US President Donald Trump held talks with congressional leaders yesterday over his demand for a US-Mexico border wall, with his options running out for ending a prolonged partial government shutdown over the impasse. Trump gave a nine-

minute primetime address Tuesday night to make the case for his signature domestic policy idea, but made no concessions to opposition Democrats, who have rejected funding for the project. The impasse has left 800,000 federal employees without pay, and the partial shutdown that started December 22 is now approaching the longest on record.

"We MUST fix our Southern Border!" Trump tweeted yesterday morning, ahead of planned meetings with lawmakers later in the day. But there were few signs of a breakthrough. "Neither side feel they can cave and not pay a terrible political price," Republican Senator Marco Rubio said on Fox News.

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WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump delivers a televised address to the nation on funding for a border wall from the Oval Office of the White House on Tuesday. — AFP



BAGHDAD: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (left) holds talks with Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi yesterday. — AFP

## Pompeo makes reassurance mission to Iraq

BAGHDAD: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said yesterday Turkey had committed to protecting Washington's Kurdish allies fighting militants during a surprise visit to Iraq to soothe concerns over the US troop withdrawal from Syria. The remarks by US President Donald Trump's top diplomat, on a whistle-stop tour of the Middle East, follow tensions between Washington and Ankara over

the Kurds' fate. Turkey reacted angrily to suggestions that Trump's plan to pull troops from Syria was conditional on the safety of US-backed Kurdish fighters who it considers terrorists.

But Pompeo, speaking in the Iraqi Kurdish regional capital Arbil, said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had given assurances over the Syrian Kurds and the US withdrawal plan was intact. "It's important that we do everything we can to make sure that those folks that fought with us are protected and Erdogan has made commitments, he understands that," Pompeo told reporters. "He (Erdogan) talked about terrorists being an existential threat, we

Continued on Page 24



# Amir receives Oman's Foreign Minister, GCC Secretary General

Kuwait praises Oman's role in promoting GCC; Kuwait's support acknowledged



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs in Oman Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



**His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Armenia to Kuwait Sarmen Baghdasaryan.**

**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, accompanied with Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs in Oman Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Dr Abdullah bin Rashed Al-Zayani on the occasion of their visit to the country. The meeting was attended by Minister of Amiri

Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled later met with his Omani counterpart, with the attendance of Zayani. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled praised Oman's role in promoting the GCC and affirmed Kuwait's support for the Sultanate during its presidency of the current session of the GCC. Meanwhile, the Omani minister lauded the role of Kuwait in various fields during its presidency of the GCC last year. The meeting was also attended by Kuwaiti

Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah and Foreign Ministry senior officials.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, while His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-

Mubarak, as well as Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf then received the newly-appointed Ambassador of Armenia to Kuwait Sarmen Baghdasaryan on the occasion of assuming his new post in Kuwait. He later received newly-appointed Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Irani on the occasion of assuming his new post in Kuwait. The audiences were attended by head of the proto-

cols of Diwan of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, His Highness the Prime Minister received Deputy Chairman of the Kuwaiti-Saudi Parliamentary Friendship Committee Dr Ahmad bin Mohammad Al-Ghamdi and delegation accompanying him on the occasion of their visit to the country. The meeting was attended by head of the accompanying honorary mission MP Rakan Yousef Al-Nisf. — KUNA



**His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Irani.**



**Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Oman's Foreign Minister Yousef bin Alawi bin Abdullah.**



**His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Chairman of the Kuwaiti-Saudi Parliamentary Friendship Committee Dr Ahmad bin Mohammad Al-Ghamdi.**



**VATICAN CITY:** Pope Francis receives the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Switzerland and non-resident Ambassador to the Vatican Bader Al-Tanaib. — KUNA

## Pope sends best New Year's wishes to Kuwait

**VATICAN CITY:** Vatican Pope Francis expressed best wishes for a prosperous and peaceful New Year to the Kuwaiti leadership, headed by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and the people of Kuwait. This salutation came during Pope Francis's reception of Kuwaiti Ambassador to Switzerland and the non-resident Ambassador to the Vatican Bader Al-Tanaib.

Ambassador Tanaib was among other diplomats and Ambassadors visiting the Vatican to meet the Pope during an annual reception. During the event, Pope Francis called for spreading peace and goodwill throughout the world and avoid any action that would lead to hate and conflicts. The Pope also called on the international community to find means to end various global crises and focus on welfare and development to all mankind.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Tanaib said that he would convey special greetings from the Pope to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Kuwaiti diplomat also wished the Kuwaiti leadership and people ever more progress and success during the New Year. — KUNA



## Red Crescent Society marks 53rd anniversary

**KUWAIT:** Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer confirmed yesterday the pioneering role of the KRCS in humanitarian and charitable field, and efforts made in responding to rescue calls from all over the world. On the occasion of celebrating the 53rd anniversary of establishing Kuwait Red Crescent Society, which falls today, Dr Sayer said that the charity has taken the pardon of delivering the needed help for all people around the world who suffer from harsh conditions.

In a statement to the press, he noted that the society took the responsibility of enhancing Volunteer work and encouraging humanitarian initiatives, which had a profound impact on human development in weak societies and marginalized areas. He expressed the appreciation of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the honorary president of KRCS, who played a major role in making Kuwait Red Crescent Society one of the top international humanitarian organizations.

Kuwait Red Crescent Society has won many records in responding to humanitarian relief of the Rohingya, Bangladesh, Philippines, Syria, Palestine, Yemen, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, India, and Indonesia, he noted. KRCS worked on too many quality projects resulted in positive impacts on people in the field of education, medicine, and society.

Locally, Dr Sayer praised efforts done by KRCS in activating its role to support the different State bodies and administrations in dealing with crises and natural disasters, pointing to the help presented to Kuwait's citizens and residents during heavy rains witnessed in Kuwait last November. The society also offered medical help for resident patients in need, as well as helping needy families inside Kuwait, connecting with social



care institutions, and visiting patients in hospitals. He pointed out that the KRCS is always in a continuous development and progress that contributed to raising the name of Kuwait and its reputation in various regional and international forums. — KUNA

## Kuwait plays special regional role: Euro MP

**BRUSSELS:** A leading Member of the European Parliament has underlined the significant role of Kuwait in mediating and resolving the crisis in the Gulf. "We need Kuwait. We need the actions of Kuwait. Kuwait has a special role to play especially to resolve the Gulf crisis," Michele Alliot-Marie, Chair of the Delegation on Relations with the Arab Peninsula in the European Parliament, said in an interview in Brussels yesterday. "We want Kuwait to find solutions. We cannot be the mediator in the crisis but Kuwait can do it. We are here to help Kuwait and assist and guarantee the solution when it will be found," said the French MEP who has served as France's defense and foreign minister in the past. She described her visit to Kuwait at the head of an EP delegation in December as 'very interesting'. Alliot-Marie noted that she met His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other top officials of the government during her four-day visit to Kuwait. "It was a very warm welcome and interesting visit. The European Parliament has very good relationship with Kuwait," she added. — KUNA



**Michele Alliot-Marie**





KUWAIT: A group photo of participants during the opening ceremony of the 12th Arab Robotics Championship (ARC). — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# 12th Arab Robotics Championship kicked off at Kuwait University

125 teams representing 10 Arab countries compete in major event

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of Education Minister Hamed Al-Azmi, the 12th Arab Robotics Championship (ARC) kicked off on Tuesday at Kuwait University. The Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Talent and Creativity, which is affiliated to the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), is hosting the championship in cooperation with the Arab Robotics Society from January 8 to 10, 2019.

Abeer Al-Amiri, head of the championship, told Kuwait Times that this championship started in Kuwait and is considered as the strongest technological championship that features 125 teams representing 10 Arab countries. The teams include about 350 competitors. "Educational computers and robots have become key modern methods used in education that helped teachers be innovative. Keeping pace with the latest

scientific developments and functioning technology are the most important features of the ministry's policy," she pointed out.

During the opening ceremony of ARC, representing Education Minister Hamed Al-Azmi, the ministry's undersecretary for educational development and activity sector Faisal Al-Meqseed said the education ministry has been eager to implement the latest technologies in the educational process, mainly robotics. "Robotics is a development in the artificial intelligence technology field that has become a key part of education curricula in most developed countries," he said.

Robotics is widespread in many educational processes across the globe, as it provides several potentials for the education sector, Azmi said. Hosting this event is a source of pride and gives a positive message on Kuwait's status in such fields, he added. Kuwait is a leading country in terms



Abeer Al-Amiri



Faisal Al-Meqseed



Adnan Shehab El-Din.

of hosting and organizing such championships, which serve the educational process, he affirmed. He said that the ministry has paid much attention to scientific aspects which lead to further development.

Director General of the Kuwait

Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS) Adnan Shehab El-Din said in a speech during the ceremony that the hosting of this event is part of Kuwait's keenness on disseminating scientific awareness and the culture of innovation to all

segments of the society. "This also shows Kuwait's faith that AI has become one of the most developed technological fields," he said, adding that it could be increasingly used in the auto industry as well as medical and military domains.



Children prepare their robots.



Participants from Lebanon examine their robot.



Participants from Jordan.



A robot is being examined during the competition.



Two participants prepare their robots for a competition.



Robots are being prepared for a competition.



Participants react during a competition.



A participant operates his robot during a competition.



A participant carries her robot.



## Local

# Minister lauds achievements of state award laureates

## 25th Qurain Cultural Festival inaugurated at Abdul-Hussein Abdul-Redha Theater

**KUWAIT:** Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri said a galaxy of Kuwaitis have won the state orders of merit and incentive awards for 2018. Jabri, also president of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), said the winners are eminent cultural celebrities who deserve appreciation and support from the state. He was speaking on behalf of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah during the award ceremony which was held as part of the inauguration of the 25th Qurain Cultural Festival. The ceremony was held at Abdul-Hussein Abdul-Redha Theater on Tuesday.

The minister took pride in the care attached to all forms of cultural activities by the state's political leaders on top of who are His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister. "The winners are a group of Kuwaiti intellectuals who have made trailblazing and creative works and contributed to the cultural and artistic movement in the country and the march of enlightenment in the Arab region," he said. "Today's awards reflect the care attached by the state to the cultural movement and the role of the new generation in the development and progress of the country," the minister pointed out. He appreciated the efforts made by members of the jury of the festival and their contributions to the cultural movement over the last 25 years, which made the festival one of the leading cultural events on the regional and international scales. He added that the organizers of the festival have always been keen on fostering the new generation of creative youth out of recognition of their roles in the future of the nation.

Meanwhile, Waleed Al-Rujaib, a novelist and one of the

winners of the state orders of merit, said the offering of the state awards has become one of the main annual activities of the NCCAL and a source of pride for all Kuwaitis. Speaking on behalf of the laureates, Rujaib said that the Qurain festival plays a central role in the cultural movement and materializes commitment to Article 14 of the Constitution that stipulates the state care for arts, letters



**Awards  
'source of  
pride' for all  
Kuwaitis**

and sciences. "In its Article 36, the constitution also provides for freedom of opinion which is key to cultural enlightenment and thriving scientific research," the eminent writer pointed out. "Today's state awards put the winners in front of a great responsibility and a challenge to continue their innovative roles in serving the society and contributing to the progress of the country," Rujaib added.

The other winners of the state orders of merit are Abdullatif Al-Bannay - a musician, and Khaled Al-Shaiji who the state award for cultural services. The incentive awards were given to artist Jaber Mukhtar for his painting 'victims of poverty and starvation,' actor Hussein Hameed



**KUWAIT:** A group photo of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri with winners of Kuwait state orders of merit and incentive awards for 2018. — KUNA

for his role in 'immortal memories' TV series. Stage director Faisal Al-Amiri won an award for 'echo of silence' play, composer Mishal Jomaa and poet Mison Al-Suwaidan were also awarded while novelists Mona Al-Shimmeri and Bassam Al-Musallam shared the novel award. The award of

literary, critical and linguistic studies was given to Dr Soad Al-Daas while Sabah Al-Rayyes and Aisha Al-Adsani shared the social and humanitarian studies award. The education award was given to Dr Mohammad Al-Qaderi and that of geography to Dr Ali Al-Dosari. — KUNA

## Kuwaiti Proteins Company joins Horeca 2019

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Proteins Company recently announced participating as a Golden sponsor in the Horeca Kuwait 2019 exhibition, which is set to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Company at Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref in the period of January 14-16, 2019. In this regard, the company's



**Saud Al-Fauzan**

deputy board chairman Saud Fauzan Al-Fauzan indicated that taking part in Horeca 2019 reflects the company's keenness on searching for the latest in hospitality, food, and hotel equipment industries which it had been active in since its establishment in 1982. He added that Kuwait Proteins Company provides the world's best trademark products, adding that it is always seeks customers' satisfaction by adding new brands.

Fauzan stressed that Kuwait Proteins Company always works on improving its display methods and introduces its products on all possible occasions including Horeca Kuwait, which would witness several surprises this year. Notably Kuwait Proteins company opened its own kitchen in 2018 to serve clients and those interested in catering and hospitality through holding special training courses. The company was also awarded the ISO-22000 quality award.

## DGCA signs agreement with IATA to promote aviation standards

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) signed yesterday a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to strengthen cooperation and consolidate efforts to enhance levels of civil aviation. DGCA Chairman Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah told reporters that the DGCA strives to consolidate its joint cooperation with international organizations specializing in civil aviation and air transport to benefit from their expertise and to boost the national cadres.

Meanwhile, DGCA's Director General Yousef Al-Fawzan and IATA's Vice President for Africa and the Middle East Mohammed Al-Bakri signed the agreement. The ceremony was attended by DGCA's President Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and IATA President Alexandre de Juniac. Fawzan said on the sidelines of the signing of the memorandum at the headquarters of the Kuwait International Airport that the signing of this memorandum is a continuation and activation of the comprehensive memorandum of understanding signed between the two parties at the headquarters of the Executive Office of (IATA) in Geneva last October.

He explained that the new agreement aims to exchange information, experiences and best practices in the field of aviation safety, including the adoption of two evaluation programs for IATA.

The first program was an Operational Safety Audit program that is an internationally recognized and accepted evaluation system designed to assess the operational management and control systems of an air-



**KUWAIT:** DGCA's Director General Yousef Al-Fawzan (right) and IATA's Vice President for Africa and the Middle East Mohammed Al-Bakri sign the agreement. — KUNA

line. The second program is IATA's Safety Audit for Ground Operations (ISAGO) which has been built upon a "backbone" of audit standards applicable to all

ground handling companies worldwide, coupled with a uniform set of standards relevant for the specific activities of any ground handler. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Taking advantage of the unusually moderate weather conditions at this time of the year, an increasing number of people are opting to buy roses and other decorative plants to use them in decorating their gardens, chalets and camps, to create a beautiful and aesthetic atmosphere. Common species of plants such as marigolds, geraniums, Euphorbia and Bougainvillea are among the most popular items for buyers. — KUNA photos



## Local

# Work hours exemptions open door for similar demands in govt: Insiders

‘Exemption lead to indifference, lack of commitment to attendance’

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** The Civil Service Commission (CSC) is the only state department supervising the implementation of the official seven-hour workday in the public sector with no exceptions for any government body, government insiders said. Any exemptions made due to certain circumstances or job nature will open the doors for more exemptions in other government bodies, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. This would take things back to square one and lead to indifference and lack of commitment to attendance and work in government bodies, especially since the process directly affects annual performance evaluation and the payment of excellent performance bonuses, the sources remarked. Commenting on the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) yielding to protests and deciding not to comply with the official seven-hour workday, the sources stressed that CSC had not received any letters from MEW requesting exemption of its employees from the new system. The sources added that once such a letter is received, it would be reviewed by the Civil Service Council for its opinion, and not to approve the exemption. The sources said that biometric

access control systems in 22 out of a total of 48 state departments have been linked with CSC's integrated systems program, adding that not being linked does not mean exempting the unlinked bodies from official working hours.

#### Labor regulations

Well-informed sources said that Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel will soon meet with the Public Authority for Manpower's deputy directors to review their sectors' work plans for this year as well as labor market regulations due to be announced soon. The sources added that new resolutions will be reviewed by the minister prior to approval and issuance, noting that the new resolutions will help counter visa traffickers, fake companies and those recruiting expats and leaving them as marginal laborers in the local market.

#### Article 17 passports

The directorate general of citizenship and passports announced suspending the issue of article 17 passports for two weeks with exceptions for those needed to travel for study or medical treatment. In this regard, security sources justified the suspension by the need to find a working team

that is more capable on dealing with accumulating applications to accelerate the issuance process.

#### Cold wave

Meteorologist Essa Ramadan forecast a temporary cold wave to start today and last through the weekend, adding that temperatures would be 1-4 degrees centigrade in desert areas and 6-9 degrees centigrade in urban areas at dawn. He also expected maximum temperatures to be 12-16 degrees before going back to normal by midweek.

#### Mutlaa city

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri urged the Cabinet to approve contracting the second lowest bidder in the tender of constructing, developing and maintaining roads and intersections serving Mutlaa city. Bushehri send a letter to the Cabinet Secretary General Abdullatif Al-Roudhan about the disagreement between the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation (PART) and the State Audit Bureau concerning this particular tender. Meanwhile, informed sources said many committees had been formed to investigate various roads tenders and projects, including gravel problems.



The Civil Service Commission.

## KD 32,500 thieves arrested

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** Farwaniya detectives arrested three Arabs only four hours after they robbed a money exchange and stole KD 32,500, the relations and security information department at the interior ministry said. Interior Ministry operations received a call about a robbery in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. The man who made the call said that he was robbed while taking the money from the exchange to his vehicle. Detectives worked on the case and identified one of the suspects and arrested him at his home. He confessed to committing the robbery with two others, who were also arrested and the clothes used during the robbery were found at their residence. The money was found buried in a nearby yard. Two of the suspects were also found wanted on other cases.

#### Co-op Society fire

Fahaheel fire station men led by Lt Col Ahmad Al-Ali

responded after a vehicle flipped over on Fahaheel road. An injured person was removed from the vehicle and handed to paramedics. Meanwhile, fire broke out in a restaurant at Shuhada Co-op Society. Teams from Mishref and Subhan fire stations responded, led by Major Ibrahim Al-Mahasna, putting out the fire before it spread to nearby installations.

#### False claims

The interior ministry said social media claims about approving a new form for driving licenses that will be launched in a week are inaccurate, and an announcement will be made when they are ready.

#### Police museum

Kuwait police museum statistics show that 3,462 persons visited the museum during 2018, while the number of students received was 1,879. The police museum is an historical site located in Bneid Al-Gar. It is open all days except Sunday from 9 am to noon, and from 4 pm to 8 pm.

#### Municipality campaign

Farwaniya municipality's Jleeb cleanliness center removed four truckloads of vegetables and fruits and issued citations to 16 roaming vendors, who were sent to



**KUWAIT:** This photo released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows cash found with three suspects who were arrested for stealing KD 32,500 from a money exchange.

concerned authorities. Twenty cleanliness citations were issued and the site was cleaned, director of the department Saad Al-Khrajne said.

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Dubai	64	250
Mumbai	67	243
Istanbul	80	515
Bangkok	113	543
Barcelona	141	986
Frankfurt	143	700
Amsterdam	145	1,023
Phuket	153	668
London	163	700
New York	235	1,030

FLY BETTER

Emirates





N Korea's Kim ends  
Beijing visit as  
Trump summit looms

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## Setbacks for May as MPs debate Brexit deal before historic vote



**KHARTOUM:** Supporters of Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir shout slogans as they gather during a rally for him in the Green Square in the capital Khartoum. — AFP

# Crowds back Bashir at Sudan rally

## Police fire tear gas at rival anti-govt demonstration

**KHARTOUM:** Hundreds of people gathered in Sudan's capital yesterday in a show of support for President Omar al-Bashir's embattled regime, as riot police fired tear gas at protesters at a rival anti-government demonstration. Hundreds of riot policemen, soldiers and security agents, some carrying machine guns, were deployed around the site of the pro-Bashir rally in the capital's Green Yard, a large open ground in the city, an AFP correspondent reported.

Men, women and children carrying banners supporting Bashir arrived in buses from early in the morning. The rally was the first held in Khartoum in support of Bashir since protests erupted. "This gathering sends a message to those who think that Sudan will become like other countries that have been destroyed," Bashir told a cheering crowd. "We will stop anyone who destroys our properties."

In the initial protests that erupted on December 19 in towns and villages before spreading to Khartoum, several buildings of Bashir's ruling National Congress Party were torched. Angry demonstrators have taken to the

streets after a government decision to triple the price of bread at a time when the country has been hit by an acute shortage of foreign currency and inflation of 70 percent. Analysts have described the protests as the biggest threat yet to Bashir's regime.

Authorities say at least 19 people including two security personnel have been killed during the demonstrations, but human rights group Human Rights Watch has put the death toll at 40 that included children. Crowds chanting "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest) and "Yes, Yes Bashir we will follow you" welcomed the president at the rally accompanied by his wife and a group of ministers. As soon as Bashir arrived, mobile phone networks and the internet were shut down in and around the rally site.

"Those who tried to destroy Sudan ...put conditions on us to solve our problems, but our dignity is more than the price of dollars," Bashir said in an apparent dig at Washington that had imposed a trade embargo on Khartoum in 1997. The embargo was lifted in October 2017. Sudanese officials including Bashir have regularly

blamed Washington's embargo for the country's economic woes.

Dressed in a khaki shirt and trousers and waving his trademark cane, a smiling Bashir greeted the cheering crowd as men and women whistled and waved flags. Bashir, who has ordered the police to use "less force" on demonstrators, has blamed the violence during protests on conspirators without naming them.

"Those who conspired against us and planted traitors amongst us are those who carried out arson attacks and caused damage," he told a group of soldiers on Tuesday at an army base in the town of Atbara where the first protest erupted last month. "Some people are saying that the army is taking power," Bashir said, slamming some political groups who previously were with the government but have now called for his resignation.

"I have no problem with that, because the army always guards the security of our homeland," he said without offering further details. Soon after the pro-Bashir rally ended, groups of protesters took to the street in Omdurman, the twin city of Khartoum, for a

yet another anti-government demonstration. About 300 protesters chanting "Freedom, Peace and Justice" blocked a key road in Omdurman, but were quickly confronted with tear gas as riot police moved in to disperse them.

More than 800 protesters have been arrested since the unrest began, officials say, insisting that the situation has now stabilized even as protests rumble on. Opposition leaders, activists and journalists have been detained as part of a crackdown to prevent protests spreading. Britain, Canada, Norway and the United States reiterated their concern over the situation in Sudan in a joint statement issued Tuesday.

"We urge the government of Sudan to ensure that a fully transparent and independent investigation into the deaths of protesters takes place as soon as possible, and that those responsible are held to account," the statement said. It also called on Khartoum to release all those detained without charge, warning that the government's action in the issue "will have an impact" on engagements with the governments of the four countries. —AFP

## India parliament to OK jobs quota for less well-off

**NEW DELHI:** India's parliament will pass a landmark bill reserving 10 percent of government jobs for the less well-off, a move criticized by some political analysts as a pre-election "gimmick" amid high unemployment rates in the country. Joblessness in the world's second most populous country shot up to a 15-month high last month, data from independent think-tank the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) showed, underlining the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's bid to retain power in a general election due by May.

The data also showed that India lost as many as 11 million jobs last year with around 83 percent in rural areas, as operational costs surged for small businesses since the launch of a national sales tax in 2017 and an earlier ban on high value cur-

rency notes. Under the bill to amend the constitution, floated by Modi's party days after losing power in three heartland states and ahead of a national election, recipients must be classed as "economically weak". Only people with an annual income below 800,000 rupees (\$11,354) and owning fewer than five acres of land will be eligible.

The lower house of parliament has already passed the bill while almost all political parties have voiced their support for it in the upper house, meaning its approval was a formality. India already has job and education quotas for socially backward classes but this is the first time upper caste Hindus and people from other religions will benefit from any affirmative action.

"There is no food but every hungry man is handed an empty plate, that's what Modi government is doing with the youth of India," Shahid Siddiqui, a political analyst and a former lawmaker, said on Twitter. "There are no jobs, but 10 percent reservation in the line of unemployed."

Derek O'Brien, a lawmaker from the opposition All India Trinamool Congress, said the bill was "an acknowledgement of guilt, that we haven't created any jobs in last four and a half years". But Modi said the bill "sets into motion the process to achieve an effective measure that ensures justice for all sections of society". — Reuters

## Macedonia kicks off fraught debate on controversial name change

**SKOPJE:** Macedonian lawmakers prepared yesterday to debate a motion to change their country's name to settle a decades-long dispute with Greece and open the way to NATO and EU membership. The switch to "the Republic of North Macedonia" is far from assured as it entails four constitutional amendments and requires the support of two-thirds of the 120-member parliament.

The Social Democrat-led ruling coalition does not itself have those numbers, but a top party official said they had "secured 80 or more of the votes" needed to approve the name change. "We expect that vote will take place Friday," Aleksandar Kiracovski told journalists. If the change does go through, Athens has promised to lift its veto on Skopje's attempts to join NATO and the European Union.

Greece has blocked that path since Macedonia broke away from the former Yugoslavia in 1991 because, it says, the name Macedonia should apply solely to its own northern province. For the Greeks, Macedonia evokes national pride as the cradle of Alexander the Great's ancient empire, a heritage that they guard jealously. The start of the parliamentary session was delayed to Wednesday afternoon for procedural reasons.

Some 200 Macedonian nationalists opposed to the name change as a surrender to Greek pressure staged a peaceful protest outside parliament, rallied by a nationalist group calling itself "Tvrdokorni", or the "Hardliners". Leading figures in the opposition rightwing VMRO-DPMNE party, which was in power until 2017, are fighting the change in parliament and at street rallies.

### An amnesty sweetener

Although Macedonia's consultative referendum in September backed the name change with 90 percent of the vote, critics dismissed the results as invalid given a voter turnout of under one-third of the electorate. "It is MPs' turn now to voice their views, but I believe there will be a two-thirds majority in order to complete the process," Prime Minister Zoran Zaev said earlier Wednesday. Zaev does not have the required two-thirds parliamentary majority even with the support of his allies in the ethnic-Albanian parties.

They need some deputies from the VMRO-DPMNE to break ranks and back them, as happened at the parliamentary vote that launched the process in November. On that occasion, they released three nationalist deputies jailed for their role in an April 2017 brawl in parliament, when several deputies, including Zaev, were assaulted. In December, the government sweetened the deal further, passing an amnesty law over the protests. Of the 25 people to benefit so far, four have been VMRO-DPMNE deputies. But even if Macedonia approves the name change, it must still be cleared by the Greek parliament.

Zaev brokered the deal with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, but Tsipras too enjoys only a fragile parliamentary majority, with 153 deputies in the 300-seat parliament. To complicate matters further, coalition partner Defense Minister Panos Kammenos, the leader of a smaller party, opposes the deal and is threatening to resign.

### The Hardliners' curse

While most deputies in Macedonia's VMRO-DPMNE are dead-set against the name change, the party was shaken by the defections of some of their members in the November vote. And they are still recovering from the dramatic fall of their former leader, Nikola Gruevski, a vocal opponent of Zaev's deal with Greece. Former prime minister Gruevski fled Macedonia in November to escape a two-year prison sentence for abuse of power, winning asylum in Hungary. —AFP



## International

# Israel ex-minister to get 11 years for spying for Iran

## Segev to plead guilty to espionage, transfer of information to enemy

**JERUSALEM:** An Israeli ex-minister charged with spying for the country's arch-foe Iran has reached a plea bargain with prosecutors that will see him serve 11 years in prison, the justice ministry said yesterday. As part of the agreement, Gonen Segev will plead guilty to serious espionage and transfer of information to the enemy, the ministry said in a statement. Segev's lawyers, Eli Zohar and Moshe Mazor, said in a statement that as part of the deal a charge of treason was dropped.

"Indeed Mr. Segev had contacts with Iranians, but his motive was not 'to aid the enemy in time of war' - treason. That is why that offence was removed, inter alia, from the amended indictment. "The amended charge sheet filed today and the plea bargain that was reached, returns this case to its natural and proper proportions," the Hebrew-language statement said. A sentencing hearing was set for February 11.

### Closed-door trial

The trial of Segev, who served as energy and infrastructure minister from 1995 to 1996, opened in July but was held behind closed doors in the Jerusalem district court, with few details of the accusations publicly released. The original

charges, as published by the justice ministry, were aiding an enemy in wartime, serious espionage, attempted serious espionage and passing information to the enemy.

The Shin Bet internal security service accused him in a statement at the time of providing Iran with "information related to the energy market, security sites in Israel, buildings and officials in political and security bodies, and more" while he was living in Nigeria between 2012 and his arrest at Israel's Ben Gurion airport in May 2018.

The Shin Bet said Segev had been in contact with Iranian embassy officials in Nigeria and later he visited the Islamic republic for meetings with his intelligence "handlers". Segev served in the Labour government of prime minister Yitzhak Rabin after defecting from the far right to cast the decisive vote in favour of the Oslo II peace agreement with the Palestinians. He has previously served prison time on criminal charges.

In 2004, he was charged with trying to smuggle 30,000 ecstasy pills into Israel from the Netherlands using a diplomatic passport with a falsified expiry date. The following year, he admitted the charges as part of a plea bargain. He has also been convicted of attempted credit card fraud.—AFP



**JERUSALEM:** In this file photo Gonen Segev, center, a former Israeli cabinet minister indicted on suspicion of spying for Iran, is seen in court in Jerusalem. —AFP

## Dozens of 'hostages' evacuated from Syria

**ALMATY, Kazakhstan:** Kazakhstan yesterday said dozens of its citizens, including children, had been evacuated from Syria after being held "hostage" in the country. Hundreds of Kazakhs have left the Muslim-majority country to join up with militant groups in Syria since 2011, according to Kazakhstan's security services. "On January 6 this year... 47 citizens of Kazakhstan, including 30 children, were evacuated from Syria," Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev said.

"They were deceived into going to this country in crisis where they were held hostage by terrorists," Nazarbayev said. "We will continue to work on the return of children who (were taken to) a combat zone against their will," he added, without providing details of the operation. In 2014, authorities reacted to an official Islamic State (IS) group propaganda video showing Kazakh child soldiers training by blocking media outlets that shared the footage. —AFP

## EU hits Iran with sanctions after murder plots

**THE HAGUE:** The EU hit Iran's intelligence services with sanctions Tuesday after accusing Tehran of being behind plots to assassinate regime opponents on Dutch, Danish and French soil. The move by the 28-nation bloc was announced as the Dutch government said it believed Iran was behind the murders of two dissidents in 2015 and 2017. "Very encouraging that (the) EU has just agreed on new targeted sanctions against Iran in response to hostile activities and plots being planned and perpetrated in Europe, including Denmark," Danish Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen said.

The "EU stands united—such actions are unacceptable and must have consequences," he tweeted. Sanctions include the freezing of funds and other financial assets of the Iranian intelligence ministry and individuals, officials said. But Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif pointed the finger at European nations he said were harboring terrorists. "Accusing Iran does not release Europe from its responsibility for hosting terrorists," he said in a tweet.

### More sanctions not ruled out

Denmark led efforts for sanctions after allegations that Tehran tried to kill three Iranian dissidents on Danish soil. A manhunt related to the alleged plot against three Iranians suspected of belonging to the Arab Struggle Movement for the Liberation of Ahvaz (ASMLA) led to the shutdown of bridges to Sweden, as well as ferries, on September 28. France last year imposed sanctions on two suspected

Iranian agents and others from Iran's intelligence and security ministry.

The French security services concluded that the head of operations at the Iranian intelligence ministry had ordered a plot to bomb a rally of the People's Mujahedeen of Iran (MEK) opposition group in a suburb of Paris in June last year—which Tehran strongly denied. "When the sanctions were announced, the Netherlands, together with the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Denmark and Belgium, met Iranian authorities," Dutch Foreign Minister Stef Blok said.

The meeting conveyed "serious concerns regarding Iran's probable involvement in these hostile acts on EU territory," Blok said in a letter to parliament in The Hague, also signed by Interior Minister Kajsa Ollongren. "Iran is expected to cooperate fully in removing the present concerns and, where necessary, aiding in criminal investigations," the letter said. "If such cooperation is not forthcoming, further sanctions cannot be ruled out," it added.

### Nuclear deal

The EU has previously trodden cautiously on Iran as it sought to save a beleaguered nuclear deal with Tehran after the US withdrew last year and imposed new sanctions. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who has made pressure on Iran a top priority, hailed the EU move as "a clear message that terrorism will not be tolerated." "The US strongly supports the new sanctions and stands with our European allies as we counter this common threat," Pompeo tweeted.

But Dutch ministers said that at a meeting with Iranian officials "it was emphasised that the measures were not linked" to the Iran nuclear deal. "Nevertheless, Iran will be held to account for all matters that affect EU and international security interests" including the 2015 and 2017 assassinations in the Netherlands, the letter said. Tehran blames the ASMLA for an attack on a military parade in



**THE HAGUE:** Dutch minister of Foreign Affairs Stef Blok stands as he talks to journalists in the parliament in The Hague. —AFP

the Iranian city of Ahvaz on September 22, when militants sprayed the crowd with gunfire and killed 24 people. The MEK, which has a history of attacks inside the Islamic republic, was considered a terrorist group until 2009 by European authorities and until 2012 by the United States, where members of President Donald Trump's administration have had close ties with the movement. The MEK-linked National Council of Resistance of Iran called the EU sanctions "a positive, necessary but insufficient step" and called for the bloc to expel all of Tehran's "agents" on European soil.

"Three decades of experience show that the mullahs only understand the language of firmness," it said in a statement. Last June, the Netherlands expelled two Iranian embassy workers in connection with the murders. Tehran at the time protested the expulsion as an "unfriendly and destructive move" and threatened to retaliate.—AFP

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## Stranded migrants to disembark in Malta after EU deal reached

**VALLETTA:** Nearly 50 migrants stranded at sea for weeks aboard two rescue ships were headed for Malta yesterday after the island nation reached a deal with other EU member states, ending a standoff that rights groups branded "shameful". "An ad hoc agreement has been reached," Malta Prime Minister Joseph Muscat told journalists, adding that the deal also included a decision on the fate of 249 rescued migrants already on the island.

The 49 migrants, including a baby and several children, were rescued by two boats on December 22 and 29 while attempting the dangerous Mediterranean crossing from North Africa to Europe. But with no country allowing them to dock, they were left stranded off the coast of Malta, suffering sea sickness and dehydration, with some briefly refusing food and an onboard doctor warning of psychological stress.

There were ecstatic cheers on board the Sea-Watch 3 when a crew member told them "we have a safe port, it's over", according to a video tweeted by the German NGO Sea Watch International. The migrants were expected to arrive in Malta later Wednesday after being transferred from the Sea-Watch 3 and Dutch-flagged Albrecht Penck ships to Maltese coastguard vessels.

Muscat said that of the total of 298 migrants, 176 would be sent to Germany, France, Portugal, Ireland, Romania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Italy. Another 78 will be allowed to stay in Malta, and 44 Bangladeshi migrants will be sent back to their country.

### 'Not Europe's finest hour'

Those pulled to safety by the two rescue ships had been unable to disembark

because of a diplomatic deadlock among EU member states, despite an appeal by Pope Francis on Sunday. "The past weeks have not been Europe's finest hour... If human values and solidarity are not upheld, then it is not Europe," said EU migration commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos. Amnesty International's Southern Europe researcher Elisa De Pieri said the time taken to reach a decision on the migrants' fate was "shameful".

"The dangerous, unseemly spectacle of politicians bickering whilst women, men and children are stranded in a sea of cruel indifference, must not be repeated," she said. "The Italian and Maltese authorities have brazenly undermined the search and rescue system and used people as pawns to negotiate migration policies." Muscat, who has previously complained that his country has to bear an unfair share of migrant numbers, insisted Malta had "never closed its ports and it is still a safe port".

"We wanted to send a strong political message that the burden must be shared because it is a European issue... Every hour that passed without a solution was not an hour I was proud of," he said.

### 'Confession of state failure'

Sea Watch International welcomed that "the EU decided to release their 49 hostages. After 19 days at sea, our guests will finally reach a safe port." "This represents a confession of state failure, policy must not be made at the expense of people in distress," the NGO said. "We want to express our gratitude to... all cities, federal states and provinces that declared their ports open and their willingness to welcome people."

But Muscat issued a warning to future rescuers: "I reiterate, as I did before, that this case shall not act as a precedent." Migrants rescued by ships have frequently been left in limbo since Italy's populist anti-immigration government began turning them away last summer. Since coming to power more than six months ago, the Italian government has also been demanding greater solidarity from reluctant fellow EU states.—AFP

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<b>Sales</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sales Manager</li> <li>• Female Secretary (Sales)</li> <li>• Indoor Sales Man</li> <li>• Outdoor Sales Man</li> </ul>
<b>Workshop &amp; Service Center</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager (Marine)</li> <li>• Workshop Coordinator</li> <li>• Warranty Administrator (Marine)</li> <li>• Marine Engineer</li> <li>• Marine A/C Technician</li> <li>• Ass't A/C Technician</li> <li>• Hydraulic Technician</li> <li>• Ass't Hydraulic Technician</li> <li>• Marine Fitter</li> <li>• Ass't Marine Fitter</li> <li>• Fiber Technician</li> <li>• Marine Carpenter</li> <li>• Marine Electrician</li> <li>• Ass't Marine Electrician</li> <li>• Marine Underwater Technician</li> <li>• Marine Painter</li> <li>• Ass't Marine Painter</li> <li>• Marine Professional Painter</li> <li>• Mechatronics Technician</li> <li>• Driver</li> <li>• General Worker</li> <li>• Workshop Supervisor</li> <li>• Spare parts sales man</li> <li>• Car Mechanic</li> <li>• Bike Mechanic</li> <li>• ATV/GRV Mechanic</li> </ul>

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## International

# Setbacks for May as MPs debate Brexit deal before historic vote

## May's attempts to win over Northern Ireland's DUP MPs

**LONDON:** British MPs yesterday began five days of debate ahead of a historic delayed vote on Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deal, a day after giving her a stinging blow aimed at preventing the country from crashing out of the EU with no agreement. May's attempts to win over MPs from Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which props up her government in parliament but is firmly opposed to the Brexit deal, were also rebuffed yesterday.

The government said it would grant local lawmakers in Northern Ireland greater powers to block legislation if their province ever found itself in a contentious "backstop" arrangement to avoid a hard border in Ireland. But DUP Brexit spokesman Sammy Wilson told Sky News that the proposals were "window dressing" and that there would still have to be checks between Northern Ireland and mainland Britain in the event the backstop is enacted.

May faced another possible setback later yesterday as rebel Conservative MPs pushed for a vote that would force the government to reveal its plans within three days if the Brexit deal is not approved next Tuesday. Lawmakers next week will be voting on the agreement that May has negotiated with the EU over the last 18 months, which faces daunting opposition as the clock ticks down before Britain leaves the European Union on March 29.

The prime minister has warned rebels in her own party that defeat will lead to a no-deal Brexit, or no departure from the bloc at all. But in a vote on Tuesday that raised the chances of a defeat in next week's historic vote, MPs including former ministers approved an amendment that will curtail the government's tax powers in case of a no-deal Brexit.

### Brexit fantasies

David Lidington, May's effective deputy, called the House of Commons defeat "inconvenient" yet ineffectual and insisted the government remained focused on winning approval for the prime minister's plan. "We are focused on getting any possible vote in favor of the PM's deal," he told BBC radio. "I don't think the British public is served by fantasies about magical alternative deals. "The choice the people have is this deal or no deal, or-as some MPs advocate-to reverse the 2016 referendum entirely."

The prime minister has already pulled the vote once with defeat looming, and has said a loss for the government would plunge Britain into "uncharted territory". She is still seeking assurances from the EU on the most controversial elements of the Brexit deal relating to Northern Ireland, in a bid to convince critics to back the agreement. These assurances are set to be delivered to lawmakers before they vote, although not before they start their debate yesterday. "The work to secure those assurances is ongoing. I think what's important is that if we are to secure assurances, MPs are aware of what they are before the vote takes place," a Downing Street spokesman said Tuesday.

### Brexit delayed?

Some MPs would be in favor of a second referendum but such a move would likely cause outrage among Brexit voters and raise the issue of the framing of the question. The battle has reached fever pitch as the deadline looms, with second referendum campaigners setting up stalls at markets nationwide and Brexiters touring the country to persuade Britons they have nothing to fear from a clean break.

May insists Britain will leave the EU in March what-



**LONDON:** A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May as she stands and speaks during the weekly Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons in London. —AFP

ever happens, but there is growing talk of delaying the two-year Article 50 exit process to give her some breathing space to get her deal agreed. An EU diplomat told AFP on Tuesday that "we are convinced that Theresa May will request a postponement after the agreement is rejected in the British parliament."

Brexit Secretary Stephen Barclay denied reports about a possible delay, saying "there are people in the

European Union who are discussing this issue, but that is not the position of the UK government." The prime minister survived a half-hearted attempt by her party to oust her before Christmas, but the level of rebellion has left her weakened. The main opposition Labor Party on Wednesday confirmed it will seek a no confidence vote in the government if MPs reject May's Brexit deal next week.—AFP

## Suspect packages sent to diplomatic missions in Australia



**MELBOURNE:** Victoria Police forensic officers remove a bag from the Italian consulate in Melbourne. —AFP

**MELBOURNE:** Suspicious packages were sent to more than a dozen foreign embassies and consulates in major Australian cities yesterday in a seemingly orchestrated but scattershot campaign. Emergency services raced to a string of diplomatic facilities which had received packages containing suspected hazardous material, all within the space of a few hours. There was no obvious pattern to countries targeted, with consulates of the United States, China, Italy, India, Japan and New Zealand suffering scares.

The packages were not believed to be dangerous, but police, fire crews and forensic teams were urged to use breathing apparatus as they documented and double- or triple-bagged the materials for further testing. Victoria Police said there was no threat to the public: "At this time we believe the matter is targeted and not impacting the general community." Most of the sites-also including locations near the Spanish, Swiss, Egyptian and Pakistani consulates-were evacuated as a precaution but have since been declared safe.

A British High Commission spokesperson said its consulate general in Melbourne had been targeted, but "all our staff are safe and accounted for". The US consulate in the city said it had also received a "suspicious" package, which a spokesperson said was handled in coordination with police and the fire service.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs said it had sent a note to all diplomatic missions in the capital on Tuesday, "alerting them to the possibility of suspicious packages being delivered by mail". That warning was triggered after three earlier incidents at offices in Sydney and Canberra. Local media on Monday reported that the Argentine consulate in Sydney had received a package containing white powder. It did not test positive for toxins. —AFP

## Guatemala shuts down UN anti-corruption probe

**GUATEMALA CITY:** Guatemala brushed aside protests from the United Nations and pressed ahead Tuesday with shutting down a UN anti-corruption mission in the Central American country after it began investigating President Jimmy Morales. The move, communicated on Monday to the world body in New York by Guatemalan Foreign Minister Sandra Jovel, has racked up tensions in the country, where civil organizations have threatened anti-government protests.

Jovel gave UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres 24 hours' notice on Monday that Morales was terminating the mandate of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). The UN chief said he "strongly" rejected the decision, insisting the government abide by an international agreement in place since 2007. Staff of the mission had begun implementing a contingency plan to leave the country, a Commission spokesman said.

## US Dems introduce gun background check bill

**WASHINGTON:** Democrats unveiled landmark gun safety legislation Tuesday five days after regaining the US House majority, seeking swift action on a measure to expand background checks on firearm sales. A similar bill was introduced last year by Democrats, but Republican leaders declined to bring it to a vote. The new bill—which has the backing of former congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who survived being shot in the head eight years ago to the day and is now one of the nation's leading gun control advocates—has a handful of Republican co-sponsors, and is likely to pass the chamber.

But it is not expected to advance in the Senate, which is under Republican control. Giffords joined House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and congressman Mike Thompson, who heads a Democratic task force on gun violence, in introducing the bill, calling for "courage" among lawmakers. "Now is the time to come together, be responsible. Democrats, Republicans, everyone," she said. "We must never stop fighting."

"We've launched a contingency plan and international personnel have been asked to leave the country until further notice," said spokesman Matias Ponce. Images on social media showed vehicles entering the Commission's headquarters in the capital and leaving with materials and office furniture, while a crowd waved Guatemalan flags and set off firecrackers in celebration.

Army spokesman Oscar Perez said security guards at the headquarters would be asked to hand over their firearms from Wednesday. Business leaders and right-wing groups backed Morales's decision in a statement, slamming the UN mission for "a serious lack of due process" and insisting the move was constitutional. However, outraged humanitarian, indigenous and university organizations called on the government to reverse the decision. US Senator Mike Lee, a Republican from Ohio, also came out in support of the decision and slammed "violations" by the CICIG. "A nation's sovereignty is the core of its freedom," Lee said in a tweet. "Guatemala has every right to speak up and defend violations of sovereignty and abuses committed by the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala."

The Guatemala Immortal group urged the population to support Morales's decision, saying the CICIG had been "taking over the justice system." Rigoberta

Pelosi said that by introducing the legislation early in the new congressional session, Democrats are saying "enough is enough, by finally bringing commonsense bipartisan background check legislation to the floor." Thompson said nearly 250,000 Americans have died from gun violence, including suicides, since the Giffords shooting in 2011, "all the time while Congress stood by and did nothing." "But today is a new day," he said, adding that the vast majority of Americans support the measures.

The bill would expand background checks to all gun sales, closing loopholes in federal law requiring criminal background checks when firearms are sold by licensed dealers but allowing private citizens to sell and transfer guns to one another without any background check. Democrats have savaged congressional Republicans for repeatedly failing to take action to prevent gun violence after tragedies like the Sandy Hook elementary school shooting in Connecticut in 2012, or the massacre at a Las Vegas concert in October 2017.

After a murderous rampage at a Florida high school last February left 17 students and staff dead, some Democratic congressional candidates campaigned on pledges to enact gun safety reform. One of them, Georgia's Lucy McBath, whose son was

expected to cost at least \$100 million a year when it achieves its full scale. "Health care is a right, not a privilege reserved for those who can afford it," said the mayor, who has tracked hard to the left following the election of President Donald Trump.

"While the federal government works to gut health care for millions of Americans, New York City is leading the way by guaranteeing that every New Yorker has access to quality, comprehensive access to care." Trump made reversing former president Barack Obama's health care law a key

pledge of his campaign, and his Republican party successfully repealed in 2017 a key provision intended to keep overall costs down by ensuring healthy individuals bought insurance.

De Blasio's office credited the law, informally known as Obamacare, with bringing the number of uninsured Americans down to nearly half of what it was in 2013. In his inaugural speech on Monday, California's new Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom announced plans to establish a similar program to the one unveiled by New York.—AFP



**GUATEMALA CITY:** People protest against the United Nations International Commission Against Impunity, CICIG, in Guatemala City. —AFP

Menchu, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, said Morales's unilateral decision was "one more sign of progressive institutional breakdown," as well as of the rule of law. Menchu praised the work of the UN mission, saying it had "contributed significantly to the fight against corruption and impunity and strengthened the system of justice and democracy in Guatemala."

Guatemalan officials sought to bar a

Colombian investigator for the mission from entering the country over the weekend, and had a lengthy confrontation with the mission leader, Colombian prosecutor Ivan Velasquez, who Morales has repeatedly tried to expel from the country. The commission has typically gone after high-level officials and corporate executives, including Morales's son and brother, who were charged with tax evasion and money laundering in 2016.—AFP



**WASHINGTON:** Former US Representative Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot in the head in 2011, speaks at a press conference to introduce legislation on expanding background checks for gun sales at the Capitol in Washington, DC. —AFP

murdered in 2012, won a congressional seat in November's election. "By closing these loopholes and expanding background checks, we will make our communities safer," she said.

"States that have already expanded background checks have lowered their

homicide rates, their murder rates and their gun trafficking." Last month, President Donald Trump's administration moved to ban bump stocks, devices that allow semi-automatic weapons to fire like machine guns and that were used in the Las Vegas shooting.—AFP

## New York announces \$100 million universal health care plan

**NEW YORK:** New York Mayor Bill de Blasio announced Tuesday the city would spend \$100 million to guarantee health care to all its residents regardless of their immigration status or their ability

to pay, bringing coverage to 600,000 uninsured people. The plan will strengthen the city's existing public health insurance option, MetroPlus, and create a new program called NYC Care that guarantees those who are ineligible for insurance have access to services, including primary care and specialist doctors, pharmacies, mental health and substance abuse programs.

NYC Care is set to launch later this year in the Bronx borough, becoming available across the entire city by 2021, according to a statement. The project is



## International

# N Korea's Kim ends Beijing visit as Trump summit looms

## Kim tours factory operated by medicine firm Tongrentang

**BEIJING:** Kim Jong Un's train left Beijing yesterday after the North Korean leader visited his key ally on a trip seen as a strategy session ahead of his expected summit with Donald Trump. Kim arrived in Beijing on Tuesday for his fourth visit to Pyongyang's sole major diplomatic friend, meeting President Xi Jinping and reportedly visiting a factory. The North Korean leader's motorcade was spotted entering the Beijing central railway station yesterday afternoon, and the train departed shortly after on a day-long ride back to the northeast border, according to AFP journalists.

The unannounced trip was largely shrouded in secrecy. Beyond confirming his presence in Beijing, no details have been provided by either North Korea or China on his schedule, with no coverage in state media even in the nightly news broadcast hours after the train's departure. Kim met for one hour with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday—believed to be the North Korean leader's birthday—and the two later dined with their wives at Beijing's Great Hall of the People, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

"Chairman Kim Jong Un's visit to China was at the invitation of President Xi Jinping, of course President Xi would hold meetings and talks with him," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said at a regular press briefing, adding that more details would be released later. Tuesday's meeting focused on Kim's expected meeting with Trump, according to Yonhap. In a New Year speech, Kim warned that Pyongyang may change its approach to nuclear talks if Washington persists with sanctions.

Relations between China and North Korea had deteriorated in recent years over Pyongyang's nuclear activities, but Kim has made sure to keep Xi informed about his dealings with the United States and South Korea as ties appear to have warmed. "In order to resist the high pressure of the US, he must communicate with Xi in advance to see what steps he can take to deal with Trump," Beijing-based independent political commentator Hua Po said.

"Kim needs the support of Xi so as to ask the US to

make substantial steps, such as providing assistance to North Korea and normalizing relations with North Korea." Kim chose China for his maiden official trip abroad last year before holding meetings with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Trump. The American leader said Sunday that the United States and North Korea are negotiating the location of their next summit.

Discussions between the US and North Korea over Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal have stalled since Kim and Trump's high-profile summit in Singapore in June where they issued a vaguely worded declaration about denuclearization. The US insists that UN sanctions must remain in place until North Korea gives up its weapons, while Pyongyang wants them immediately eased. China also wants the sanctions to be relaxed.

### Turning point

But Chinese officials also likely want to impress on Kim—who has so far pursued only limited reforms to his statist economy—the benefits the giant Communist country has enjoyed in its transformation from impoverished nation to economic powerhouse. Yonhap, citing unidentified sources, reported that Kim toured a factory operated by medicine firm Tongrentang for about half an hour in an economic zone in the Chinese capital.

He then went to the Beijing Hotel, where he was expected to have lunch with Xi before his departure. "For North Korea itself, 2019 is his strategic turning point. If he wants to shift his focus to the development of the economy, he needs China's cooperation," said Lu Chao, a North Korea expert at China's Liaoning Academy of Social Sciences.

In the New Year speech, Kim focused on North Korea's moribund economy, saying that improving people's lives was his top priority and tackling energy shortages was an urgent task. Beijing-based analyst Hua said changes in the economic model will affect politics, "which poses new challenges to his control over the country." "For this point, he must ask for advice from China." The visit coincided with negotiations between US and Chinese officials in



BEIJING: A vehicle in the motorcade of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is seen in Beijing. — AFP

Beijing to resolve a bruising trade war between the world's two biggest economies. Some analysts say China could use its cooperation on the North Korean issue as a bargaining chip in the US trade talks. But Hua said Kim's visit would

have a "limited" effect on the trade negotiations. "The Sino-US trade negotiations are a matter between China and the US," he said. "The weight of North Korea is limited and cannot play a decisive role." — AFP

## Diplomatic envoys from 12 countries visit Xinjiang

**URUMQI:** Diplomatic envoys from 12 countries witnessed the social and economic progress in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on a tour from Dec. 28 to 30 in 2018. The regional government invited diplomatic envoys as well as representatives of diplomatic envoys from Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Thailand, and Kuwait.

The diplomatic envoys visited local markets, farmers, educational institutes, mosques, factories, as well as vocational education and training centers. Throughout the trip, they interacted with local vendors, students, and workers in Xinjiang and learned about the region's progress in maintaining social stability, improving people's livelihood and developing local economy. They said they expected to cooperate with China's Xinjiang in the fields of culture, tourism, economy and trade.

At the Grand Bazaar in the regional capital Urumqi, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, Charge d'Affaires of the Pakistani Embassy in China, said Xinjiang's cultural vitality and people's hospitality had impressed her deeply. A Pakistani businessman at the Bazaar told

Baloch that he married a local Uygur woman and is happy with his life and work in Urumqi.

At the Xinjiang Islamic Institute, which offers three-year bachelor programs and religious training, Ambassador of Kuwait to China Sameeh Johar Hayat encouraged the students to learn more and contribute what they learn to the development of their country.

In Kashgar, the diplomatic envoys also visited a local economic development zone.

Upon seeing the wide variety of imported products from Europe, Central Asia, and Southeast Asia in the zone, Piriya Khempon, ambassador of Thailand to China, said the trip had deepened his understanding of the Belt and Road Initiative, which he said is very important to Kashgar's development.

Khempon said he believed the city is bound to become a lot better in the coming years thanks to its geographical advantage. The diplomatic envoys also visited Id Kah Mosque in Kashgar, the largest mosque in Xinjiang, and were briefed on the mosque and its facility improvements. Mohammed Hosnie Shahiran Ismail, Counselor of the Malaysian Embassy in China, said, through the tour, he sees that the Chinese government attaches great importance to religious freedom, and religious activities are protected by the state.

The trip refreshed his understanding of Xinjiang, he said, adding the region is different from what Western media has portrayed. At a vocational education and training center in Kashgar, students study ethnic instruments, calligraphy, painting, law, and many other skills. The envoys asked in detail about the

students' life in the center and played ping pong and basketball with them.

Ambassador of Indonesia to China Djauhari Oratmangun said the school had left a great impression on him and that students learn not only about law and skills, but also their own culture. At another vocational training center in Hotan, Kabaziyev Manarbek, Counselor of the Kazakhstan Embassy in China, received an oil painting created by a student who has studied art for half a year in the center, as a New Year gift.

Manarbek said students master vocational skills here through training and make a living with these skills later in life; it shows that the Chinese government truly cares about these trainees. The envoys also visited a clothing factory in Hotan, where villagers who have received training work on the assembly lines. According to the factory owner, they receive a monthly salary of more than 3,000 yuan.

People are busy studying and working here, very different from the past when people were often seen idling around without much to do, said Sayed Habiburrahman Husinpur, Charge d'Affaires of the Afghanistan Embassy in China who has visited Xinjiang many times.

The vocational education and training program is a suitable arrangement that has improved the lives of many people as well as their families, Husinpur said.

Many countries face issues such as "solving unemployment and de-extremism," but the programs in Xinjiang are reaping good results and can provide reference for other countries. — Xinhua

## New Myanmar unrest panics Rohingya in border limbo

**BANDARBAN, Bangladesh:** Panic is gripping thousands of Rohingya Muslim refugees living in no-man's land on the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, with daily clashes between Myanmar security forces and ethnic Rakhine insurgents. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled Myanmar since a military crackdown started in 2017 — most to sprawling refugee camps in Bangladesh—but many have been living in limbo on the border, unwilling to enter the camps or return home.

They are now caught on the sidelines of fighting between Myanmar troops and the Arakan Army, a militant group seeking more autonomy for western Rakhine state's Buddhist-majority population. "Heavy fighting is going on between the government troops and Arakan Army inside Myanmar," Rohingya leader Dil Mohammad told AFP. "The situation is very tense," he said, adding the security build-up and daily gunfire had created

"panic". Myanmar troops last week set up security camps and bunkers along the border after fighting saw 13 police killed. Some of the fortifications are directly adjacent to a border fence running alongside a stream, and overlook shacks erected by an estimated 4,500 displaced Muslims living in the narrow strip of land. Refugee community leader Nur Alam said gunfire could frequently be heard after dark on the other side of the border.

"Every night it is close by. The Myanmar border guard have set up 10 new posts near our camp. It's very intimidating," he told AFP. In a statement issued Wednesday, the United Nations said it was "deeply concerned" about the situation in the area. A Bangladesh official said they were aware of the border tensions. "We will talk to the relevant authorities to discuss what to do," local administrator Kamal Hossain said.

Rohingya in Buddhist-majority Myanmar have suffered decades of persecution. Impoverished western Rakhine state in particular is scarred by deep ethnic and religious hatred. Refugees pouring into Bangladesh have detailed mass killings, arson and rape at the hands of Myanmar troops and Buddhist mobs. Myanmar has denied any wrongdoing, saying it was defending itself against Rohingya militants who attacked police posts. The United Nations has called for a genocide investigation into the crackdown.—AFP

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## Escape casts new focus on women's rights

A Saudi teen's live-tweeted asylum plea has cast a renewed spotlight on women's rights just months after women won the right to drive, and sparked rare criticism of restrictive "guardianship" laws - from men. Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun, 18, arrived in Thailand at the weekend after fleeing what she called an abusive family in the deeply conservative kingdom and staved off deportation after her tweets drew global attention. Qunun's impassioned cry for help set off a media frenzy, prompting angry denunciations and death threats from many in a kingdom where guardianship laws are still widely supported.

But the incident sparked a rare online debate as several young Saudis - including men - implored authorities to dismantle the guardianship system. Seen as a form of gender apartheid, the system means Saudi women are often only as free as their male "guardians" - husband, father and other male relatives - allow them to be. The men in their lives have to give formal permission for the women to study, get married or even renew their passports.

"Guardianship gives men the ultimate authority over women," a young Saudi medical student named Bandar said in a video monologue posted on Twitter. "He can control her, slap her, beat her, do whatever he wants and no (government) agency can stop him. This is causing women to dream about living elsewhere, away from where they were born and raised. Why? Because living here suffocates them."

As tweets by Qunun, now in the care of a UN refugee agency in Thailand, went viral, a new hashtag gained traction in Saudi Arabia: "Drop guardianship or all of us will migrate". "Saudi society, in general, has utterly failed to come to terms with the reality that women have an equal desire for self-actualization," tweeted another Saudi man, Ahmad Nasser Al-Shathri. "The notion that a woman's innate desire is to be a homemaker is crippling our societal growth."

### 'Repressive' system

The backlash follows a wide-ranging liberalization drive spearheaded by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman that is aimed at transforming the conservative petro-state, long criticized for its treatment of women. His reforms include the much-celebrated decision overturning the world's only ban on female motorists last June, allowing women to attend football games alongside men and take on jobs that once fell outside the narrow confines of traditional gender roles.

Catalysed in large measure by what experts call economic pain owing to a drop in oil prices, the reforms have introduced a series of firsts in the Saudi labor market, where women have a minuscule presence. In recent months, Saudi media has championed the first woman restaurant chef, first woman news anchor and even the first woman racing driver. For the first time, women are seen alongside men in music concerts and social gatherings, amid the waning influence of the once-feared religious police, which strictly segregated the genders.

But while transforming the lives of many women, this reform drive will be cosmetic for many others until the kingdom abolishes a system that gives men arbitrary authority over their female relatives, critics say. "The social reforms in Saudi Arabia are very much real and they will improve the everyday lives of women," Bessma Momani, a professor at Canada's University of Waterloo, told AFP. "But the guardianship system remains repressive and hinders women's rights and mobility."

### Lightning rod

Women's empowerment is a potential social lightning rod in the deeply traditional society of Saudi Arabia. Officials close to the government say they are seeking to dismantle the system piecemeal to prevent any backlash from arch-conservatives. Meanwhile, horror stories regularly surface. Women inmates are often reported to be stuck in prisons after completing their terms because they were not claimed by their guardians. One Saudi woman told AFP how she was stuck in limbo, unable to even renew her passport, when her father, her only male guardian, slipped into a coma after an accident.

Many Saudis condemned Qunun for what they described as dishonoring her family. But as she galvanized international support in a Twitter-led campaign, many others voiced solidarity - especially after the Saudi charge d'affaires in Bangkok was caught on tape telling Thai authorities they should have confiscated Qunun's cellphone. "It is challenging for the crown prince to completely dismantle guardianship laws because of religious conservatives who have a vested political interest to remain relevant in a changing Saudi Arabia," said Momani. "That said, social pressure from young people like Rahaf, who find the reforms glacially slow ... may prove more of a political challenge than the religious conservatives." — AFP



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (left) meets Nechirvan Barzani, outgoing Prime Minister of Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), in the province's capital Erbil during a Middle East tour yesterday. — AFP

# US should review its approach to Assad

By James Dobbins

The Trump administration has begun to roll back the president's announced pullout from Syria. On Dec 19 Trump said Islamic State had been defeated; his officials now acknowledge not entirely. Trump originally ordered a withdrawal within 30 days, then administration officials said it would take four months, and more recently they announced that there is as yet no fixed timetable. The departure was originally unconditioned, now it is explicitly conditioned on receiving assurances from Turkey regarding their treatment of the Syrian Kurds - a demand that caused Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to snub National Security Adviser John Bolton during Bolton's Tuesday visit to Ankara.

Despite tension with Ankara, these evolutions are all in the right direction, recognizing that the anti-IS campaign is not entirely over and that the United States has residual obligations to its main partners in that fight, the Syrian Kurds. The change in strategy is also evidence of serious disarray within the administration, as officials at all levels struggle to carry out what appear to be ill-prepared instructions and unrealistic policies.

Confusion over Syrian policy preceded the president's withdrawal announcement. Trump has said that he had earlier given the Pentagon a firm deadline for withdrawal

and had refused to extend it. Yet in the weeks leading up to his December announcement, Bolton and his top Syrian envoy, James Jeffrey, publicly maintained that American forces would remain in Syria as long as Iranian forces and proxies did, which is to say indefinitely. So either the president had not given clear instructions, or his principal advisers did not take his guidance seriously. Either explanation would be cause for concern.

In their Dec 14 phone call that preceded the withdrawal announcement, Trump and Erdogan agreed that Turkey would take over the fight against residual IS elements in Syria. A glance at the map would indicate how improbable this is. IS is holed up in isolated pockets of resistance on the Iraqi border, not the Turkish border, and thousands of Kurdish fighters occupy the territory in between. Geography makes clear that any future anti-IS campaign in the Euphrates River valley would likely be conducted by the Kurds, or the Damascus regime and its Russian and Iranian allies.

The Kurds can conduct this fight only if they are not attacked by the Turks and if they continue to benefit from American equipment and air support, which probably requires at least a few American forward observers on the ground. Having the Syrian government occupy this area would be a lot less desirable, but better than leaving IS undisturbed.

Washington's attitude toward the regime in Damascus also warrants review. Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad is a serial war criminal, but the United States has previously talked with other leaders in that category, such as Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. Iran will never leave Syria entirely, but its presence will diminish as the civil war winds down. Ending that war and offering the prospect of international reconstruction assistance could provide the best means of eventually reducing Iranian influence.

America's Gulf allies are beginning to make their peace with Assad in order to better compete with Iran for influence there. European governments are also becoming restive and in the wake of the most recent shifts in US policy, less likely to follow Washington's lead. Washington's strategy, under Obama as well as Trump, has been to "impose costs" on the government in Damascus by diplomatic ostracism and economic sanctions. This punitive approach is morally satisfying and politically expedient, but as a practical matter it just helps perpetuate the conflict and sustain Assad's dependency on Iran.

NOTE: James Dobbins is a senior fellow at the non-profit, nonpartisan RAND Corporation and a former US assistant secretary of state. The opinions expressed are his own. — Reuters

## World body hit hard after US pullback

The year 2019 started off at the United Nations with Somalia brazenly kicking out the UN envoy, followed soon after by Guatemala ditching a UN-sponsored anti-corruption commission. After a tough year that saw the United States, the UN's top financial backer, cut funding, pull out of the Human Rights Council and scrap UN-backed agreements, the United Nations is taking more hard hits. Some UN watchers are questioning whether the global organization created at the end of World War II to safeguard world peace is facing a slow demise, increasingly under attack by governments with nationalist agendas.

Nearing the half-way mark in his five-year tenure, UN chief Antonio Guterres has warned that multilateralism is under fire at a time when the world needs it most. Leading the anti-UN charge is President Donald Trump whose America-First approach to foreign policy has emboldened other governments to thumb their noses at the United Nations, analysts say. "The UN is having a nerve-racking start to 2019," said Richard Gowan, senior policy fellow at UN University. While the United Nations may not be on the brink of total collapse, "the Trump administration's attitude encourages others to defy the UN," he said.

On Monday, the new envoy for Syria, Geir Petersen of Norway, took up his post as the UN's fourth peace broker, but the United Nations has been sidelined by Russia and Iran in its efforts to end nearly eight years of war. Peacekeeping - at the heart of the UN's security approach - is under serious financial strain after the United States announced plans in late December to further cut back its budget contribution.

Meanwhile, the Security Council is divided over how to respond to the elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Both Somalia and Guatemala have cited UN inter-

ference to justify their decisions. UN envoy to Somalia Nicholas Haysom was declared persona non grata last week after he questioned the Mogadishu government's decision to arrest an Al-Shabaab defector who ran for election. Guatemala announced it was unilaterally ending the mandate of a UN-backed anti-corruption commission that had been looking into President Jimmy Morales' election campaign finances.

### US abandons UN

Jeffrey Feltman, the UN's former political chief who stepped down last year, worries that the United States and European powers no longer have the UN's back when disagreements like those with Guatemala or Somalia arise. "What concerns me is that there no longer seems to be effective push-back against such decisions," said Feltman, now a fellow at the Brookings Institution.

Member states who would normally be expected to defend the principles have "abandoned traditional positions," he said, citing the United States, or been consumed with political turmoil such as Britain with Brexit and EU countries with populism. "The UN secretariat, fearful of losing essential member state support, will not speak out forcefully, in the absence of sufficient member state backing," he added.

A potential bright spot is Yemen, where the United Nations has succeeded in bringing the warring sides to the table for negotiations on ending a horrific war - but UN diplomats caution that peace process is fragile. "The UN is being tested like perhaps never before," said Louis Charbonneau, UN director for Human Rights Watch, who argues that stronger UN leadership is needed to help the world body survive this difficult moment. "The secretary-general should use his bully pulpit to call out abusers by name, no matter how powerful. We need him to be more of a general than a secretary."

Faced with setbacks, Guterres counters that people continue to see the UN as the best platform to address global problems, such as climate change. A major UN climate summit planned for September is shaping up as a key test of the UN's relevance. — AFP

## Shutdown keeps US experts away from conferences

This week, the American Astronomical Society is meeting in Seattle, but no one from NASA is attending. In Phoenix, thousands of meteorologists are presenting research on climate change and extreme weather, but hundreds of representatives from the National Weather Service and other US agencies canceled at the 11th hour. The US government shutdown, now well into its third week, may be focused on a budget dispute between President Donald Trump and Congress over border security, but it is having a ripple effect on the scientific community.

Keith Seitter, the executive director of the American Meteorological Society, told AFP that the absence of about 700 US government employees at his group's annual meeting will mean the loss of about 800 presentations. It slashed total attendance at the five-day meeting in Arizona from 4,400 to about 3,700, he said. Many of the absentees work for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), which is focused on the state of America's oceans and the atmosphere.

It is also the umbrella agency for the National Weather Service, whose personnel still work on weather alerts and forecasts, but without pay. NOAA researchers who are not as involved in day-to-day operations but who take care of quality control and the development of forecast models have been furloughed until the wider budget dispute is resolved.

The US space agency NASA and the National Science Foundation, one of the main sources of research funding in the country, have also grounded their experts from attending any conferences until further notice. A large part of NASA's budget is earmarked for observation of the Earth. "This is a real loss in many ways, from agencies not having access to the most recent research coming out of the academic community, to loss of interactions with the private sector, who are innovating new techniques," Seitter said.

"And of course, all of us are also missing an opportunity to learn more about what the government scientists are doing," he

added, making special mention of improvements to weather forecasting models, now on hold. "The ripple effects and the lingering impact of this are going to be significant and noticeable."

### NASA absence felt

At the American Astronomical Society's 233rd meeting, which runs through today in Seattle, 10 to 15 percent of the registered participants did not show up in the end, according to organizers - 300-450 people out of 3,200. The society, which meets twice a year, is a must for researchers in the field. Hundreds of presentations, press conferences and other events are on the agenda. Many astronomers announce key discoveries at the conferences - on black holes, galaxies or, you know, the formation of the universe.

But 96 percent of NASA staff are considered non-essential, according to Democratic lawmakers. That means 16,700 agency employees have been furloughed until the agency's new budget is approved. They cannot even attend the winter meeting as a representative via videolink - even if they pay for their travel out of their own pockets. "Usually, the director of astrophysics at NASA will come and make a little presentation and then take questions for an hour," says AAS spokesman Rick Fienberg. "So sessions like that - that involve government officials who are currently on furlough - obviously, those couldn't happen."

The Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy, or SOFIA - an aircraft largely funded by NASA, in concert with the German Aerospace Center - was meant to welcome visitors onboard in Seattle. No deal. "That had to be canceled because SOFIA is NASA-funded and it's currently grounded," Fienberg said. The spokesman took pains not to overstate the consequences of the government, saying that the conference sessions were well attended, even if there was an "undercurrent of disappointment."

At NASA's booths, subcontractors are holding the reins. An exception was made for co-authors of major studies, who were allowed to make their presentations if the lead authors were absent. But that doesn't mean the shutdown is pain-free for the society. "A lot of what people come for is to interact with their colleagues and peers and friends and to explore new opportunities in research," he said. "And some fraction of those conversations aren't happening, and it's a shame." — AFP



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**14** The new Mercedes-Benz CLA Coupe: Icon of automotive intelligence



QINGDAO, China: An employee watching over cranes as he talks on his interphone at a port in Qingdao, east China's Shandong province. — AFP

# US-China trade talks end on positive note

## Hopes of a deal build despite a looming March deadline

**BEIJING:** Chinese and US teams ended trade talks in Beijing yesterday that lasted longer than expected and officials said details will be released soon, raising hopes an all-out trade war that could badly disrupt the global economy can be avoided. The talks were extended into an unscheduled third day, showing both sides were “serious”, China’s foreign ministry said.

Share prices jumped in Asia and markets in Europe and the United States were expected to follow suit as the longer talks fuelled optimism that the world’s largest economies were inching towards an agreement. Ted McKinney, US undersecretary of agriculture for trade and foreign agricultural affairs, said the US trade delegation would return to the United States later on Wednesday after a “good few days”.

“I think they went just fine,” McKinney said of the talks.

“It’s been a good one for us,” he told reporters at the delegation’s hotel, without elaborating. Speaking at a daily news briefing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang confirmed both sides had agreed to extend the talks beyond Monday and Tuesday as originally scheduled. Asked if that meant the talks had been difficult, Lu said: “I can only say that extending the consultations shows that the two sides were indeed very serious in conducting the consultations.”

This week’s meetings are the first face-to-face talks since US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping agreed in December to a 90-day truce in a trade war that has roiled global financial markets. The editor of a state-run Chinese newspaper said in a social media post he expected China and the United States to release statements early today.

“From what I know, the trade talks, though arduous, were conducted in a pleasant and candid atmosphere. Neither side has made a briefing, because the US delegation is on the plane now,” wrote Hu Xijin, editor of the Global Times, published by the ruling Communist Party’s official People’s Daily. “The two sides will release messages at the same time on Thursday morning Beijing time,” Hu said.

**Looming deadline**

The extra day of talks came amid signs of progress on issues including purchases of US farm and energy commodities and increased access to China’s markets.

However, people familiar with the negotiations told Reuters that the two sides were further apart on Chinese structural reforms that the Trump administration is demanding in order to stop alleged theft and forced

transfer of US technology, and on how China will be held to its promises.

If no deal is reached by March 2, Trump has said he will proceed with raising tariffs to 25 percent from 10 percent on \$200 billion worth of Chinese imports, at a time when China’s economy is slowing significantly. Beijing has retaliated in turn to US tariffs.

But as meetings wound down in Beijing on Tuesday evening, Trump tweeted: “Talks with China are going very well!” The US team is led by Deputy US Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish, and includes undersecretaries from the US Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Energy and Treasury, as well as senior officials from the White House.

Vice Commerce Minister Wang Shouwen heads the vice ministerial level talks for China, though Vice Premier Liu He,

a top economic adviser to Xi, made an appearance at a meeting on Monday.

China is keen to put an end to its trade dispute with the United States but will not make any “unreasonable concessions” and any agreement must involve compromise on both sides, state newspaper the China Daily said yesterday.

The paper said in an editorial that Beijing’s stance remained firm that the dispute harms both countries and disrupts the international trade order and supply chains. In what was widely seen as a goodwill gesture, China on Tuesday issued long-awaited approvals for the import of five genetically modified crops, which could boost its purchases of US grains as farmers decide which crops to plant in the spring. On Monday, Chinese importers made another large purchase of US soybeans, their third in the past month. — Reuters

## Saudi private jet industry stalls after corruption crackdown

**DUBAI:** A crackdown on corruption in Saudi Arabia has severely dented the kingdom’s private jet industry in a sign of the impact the campaign has had on private enterprise and the wealthy elite. Dozens of planes, owned by individuals and charter companies and worth hundreds of millions of dollars, are stranded at airports across the kingdom including Riyadh and Jeddah, four people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Some were handed over to the state in settlements reached after the crackdown was launched in late 2017, when dozens of princes, businessmen and government officials were detained, they said.

Others belong to Saudis who either face travel bans or are reluctant to fly the planes because they are wary of displays of wealth that might be seen as taunting the government over the anti-corruption campaign, two of the sources said.

The government media office did not respond to requests for comment. The General Authority of Civil Aviation said questions on the impact of the anti-corruption drive on the private jet industry were outside its mandate, adding that its relationship with private aviation covers operations, safety and regulations. The crackdown’s impact on the business community and private enterprise, which are already reeling from low oil prices and weakened consumer confidence, has shattered investor confidence.

The idle aircraft, which one of the sources estimated at up to about 70, include Bombardier and Gulfstream jets, the sources said. There are also larger Airbus and Boeing aircraft that are more commonly associated with commercial airlines but are often used in the Middle East as private jets. A Boeing 737 MAX or Airbus A320neo can cost up to \$130 million, though the final cost depends on how the jet is fitted out with technology and amenities, including private bedrooms, meeting rooms, and even gym equipment.

The number of registered private jets in Saudi Arabia stood at 129 as of December 2018 compared with 136 a year earlier, according to FlightAscend Consultancy data. Private jets offer users flexibility as, unlike commercial airliners, they are not constrained by arrival and departure time

slots. They also enable users to travel more discreetly.

**Under the radar**

Saudi Arabia’s finance minister, Mohammed Al-Jadaan, said last month the state had collected more than 50 billion riyals (\$13.33 billion) from settlements reached under the crackdown. Most of the detainees held at Riyadh’s Ritz-Carlton Hotel last November were released after being exonerated or reaching financial settlements with the government, which said it aims to seize more than \$100 billion in total in either cash or assets. It is unclear how the government would transfer ownership of the jets grounded across Saudi Arabia as many are owned through offshore firms or are mortgaged, two of the sources familiar with the matter said.

Three of the sources said it was likely that the jets were still registered in the kingdom. Two of the sources said the government could absorb the aircraft into existing fleets used by ministries and state-owned corporations. A third source said the government had been looking to set up its own private jet company made up entirely of seized aircraft.

The anti-corruption campaign launched by Prince Mohammed has won widespread approval among ordinary Saudis, partly



RIYADH: Dozens of planes, owned by individuals and charter companies and worth hundreds of millions of dollars, are stranded at airports across the kingdom including Riyadh and Jeddah.

because the government has said it will use some of the funds to finance social benefits. Critics have said the purge was a power play by the prince as he moved to consolidate power in his hands. There have been few private jet flights in Saudi Arabia over the past year, largely because there are fewer planes readily available, including for charter, three of the sources familiar with the matter said.

VistaJet Chief Commercial Officer Ian Moore compared it to the situation in China where an anti-corruption crackdown has

also weakened the private jet market.

“It’s not really politically great to be seen flying privately at the moment, particularly owning your own aircraft,” he told Reuters.

Some wealthy Saudi elite are taking commercial airlines to the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and other destinations and then chartering private jets to avoid government scrutiny, two of the sources said. Plane manufacturers said the appetite for business jet sales in Saudi Arabia has dropped since the anti-corruption crackdown was launched in November 2017. — Reuters



## Business

# Ooredoo Kuwait receives latest PCI-DSS 3.2.1 compliance certification and ISO 27001:2013

## The only Ooredoo OpCo and the first telecom operator in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Ooredoo Kuwait announced that it has officially been re-certified with the Payment Card Industry (PCI)-Data Security Standards (DSS) 3.2.1 Compliance International Certification and ISO 27001:2013, making it the only Ooredoo OpCo and the first telecom provider in Kuwait to be certified with the latest version of the certification for the third year in a row.

### International standards

PCI-DSS is the global industry standard for compliance and security for personal payment card data, to which vendors and businesses must conform to in order to protect cardholders' personal data and prevention from credit card fraud.

Ooredoo's PCI-DSS compliance was first validated in December 2016, after an extensive audit conducted by ControlCase, a qualified security assessor. Ooredoo Kuwait was the first company in Kuwait to take that step, further solidifying its position in the local market. This step helps customers make safe transactions Ooredoo's web payment portal, in addition to using Ooredoo's payment kiosks, conveniently located in 90 locations across Kuwait for customers' satisfaction.

The ISO 27001:2013 International Certification ISO 27001 certification shows Ooredoo's proactive approach towards cyber security threats and its dedication to adopt the best practices in order to minimize these threats. This certification also improves the company's credibility especially within the B2B segment.

Ooredoo is the only telecom operator in Kuwait to achieve the latest version of the PCI-DSS 3.2.1 Re-Certification Compliance International Certification for the third year in row and it is a major milestone for the company. This certification is an internationally recognized certification for customer's data security, and is a standard adapted for securely processing, transmitting and storing different payment card's data.

Obtaining this certification is a very big step for Ooredoo due to its importance in preventing, detecting and responding to cyberattacks that can lead to breaches. This certificate helps the organization to strengthen all payment channels including the Ooredoo digital platform. Furthermore, PCI-DSS International Certification is a step ahead to prove to customers the



Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Thani receives the certification

company's dedication to build and maintain a safe and trusted environment to protect all of Ooredoo Kuwait's customer information.

### Ongoing commitment

Commenting on this announcement, Chief Executive Officer at Ooredoo Kuwait, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al-Thani stated "This accomplishment reinforces our commitment to ensure the best services to our customers, with safe online transactions to protect them against fraud and other privacy breaches. This step is reflective of the company's core values of caring and connecting. Ooredoo strives to provide its customers with the best services, while ensuring the safety of their privacy and information." Al-Thani further added, this

standard helps the organization to strengthen all payment channels including Ooredoo's digital platform. Furthermore, PCI-DSS International Certification is a step ahead to prove to our customers our dedication to build and maintain a safe and trusted environment to protect all of Ooredoo Kuwait's customer information.

### Tight security measures

PCI security standards are technical and operational requirements set by the Payment Card Industry Security Standards Council to protect cardholder data. The standards globally govern all merchants and organizations that store, process or transmit this data - with new requirements for software developers and manufacturers of applications and devices used in those transactions.

Compliance with the PCI set of standards is mandatory for their respective stakeholders, and is enforced by the major payment card brands.

### Commendable efforts

Commenting on Ooredoo's achievement, ControlCase COO Suresh Dadlani said Ooredoo's efforts to ensure customers' privacy of payment information are truly commendable. He added, "We're always happy to see companies and organizations such as Ooredoo Kuwait working to ensure that their clients' information are protected, especially during times like this when cyberattacks and customers' credit card privacy information are under threat. We wish Ooredoo the best of luck in their future endeavors."

## Business Year interviews Dr Khaled Mahdi

**KUWAIT:** The Business Year had the pleasure to interview Dr Khaled Mahdi, Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (SCPD), as part of the upcoming edition of 'The Business Year: Kuwait 2019. Kuwait's Vision 2035' envisioned by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah maps out an entire economic transformation of the country. The vast national plan represents the attempt of transforming Kuwait into a regional financial and commercial hub. For this reason, TBY interviewed Dr Khaled Mahdi, Secretary-General of the SCPD, the entity in charge of promoting and monitoring the implementation of the Vision 2035.

During the interview conducted by Kevin Delaplace Haro, Country Editor for TBY Kuwait, Dr. Mahdi explained how Kuwait "uses a custom-made system for the preparation and monitoring of the national plan progress that allows the manager of each project to update us with their individual status, which adds responsibility and accountability to the role of the SCPD".

In addition, he insisted on the importance of "pushing the government to support more PPP projects in light of the success of the Az Zour plant". He also stated that "the government needs to give more freedom to private companies by letting them run and conduct their own business operations." He believes this will further develop trust in the private sector and produce sustainable economic results.

The SCPD also launched a program aiming to foment women inclusion in the economic and political spheres. To this end, Dr Mahdi is collaborating with UN Women, Kuwaiti universities, and the Women Studies Center. Finally, Dr Mahdi told TBY that "in 2019, the SCPD will present a voluntary national report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), a substantial project, led by the SCPD, that will engage with all government entities, the private sector, NGOs, the World Bank, and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce". Dr Khaled Mahdi was appointed Secretary-General of the SCPD in early 2016. The Business Year: Kuwait 2019 will be launched on June 13th in London.

## Eurozone jobless rate falls to decade-low

**BRUSSELS:** Unemployment in the eurozone fell in November, data showed yesterday, as joblessness in Europe neared pre-crisis levels. Eurostat said the jobless rate in the single currency area fell to 7.9 percent in November, a 10-year low and down from a revised 8.0 percent for the previous month.

Unemployment in the euro area has been falling steadily since it fell below the symbolic threshold of 10 percent in September 2016. With the latest data, unemployment nears the average rate before the 2007-08 financial crisis, when it stood at 7.5 percent. At the worst of the ensuing debt crisis in 2013, unemployment reached a record 12.1 percent in the euro area. Among the 19 single currency countries, the lowest unemployment rate in November was recorded in Germany at 3.3 percent, according to Eurostat.

The highest rate was in Greece with 18.6 percent in September, the latest available figure. Spain was on 14.7 percent. In the full 28 countries of the European Union, the unemployment rate stood at 6.7 percent in November, stable compared to a month earlier, Eurostat said. —AFP

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al Danah Weekly Draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on January 6, 2019 announcing the names of its winners for the week from the Dec 30, 2018 till Jan 3, 2019, in which five winners received KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are Nour Hasan Ali Albroushi, Afrah Abbas Yaqoub Almuheem, Anoud Fadel Ibrahim Alhathraan, Ameen Esam Ameen Abu Hani and Samar Abdullah Alsaad Alshareedah.

The final Al Danah draw for 1 Million Kuwaiti Dinars will be held today, where the Al Danah Millionaire will be announced at a live event at The Avenues, Phase 3. Join us from 4 pm onwards and enjoy a number of activities and games before we announce this year's Al Danah Millionaire!

Experience a special musical performance from a traditional Kuwaiti band and register for the popular 'Catch the Cash' game, exclusive to Gulf Bank. The bank will also be introducing the 'Danah Hour',

## Microsoft reveals ME organizations' 2019 'manifesto' on digital transformation

**KUWAIT:** Almost three in four Middle East organizations that have not yet moved their digital estates and IT environments to the cloud, plan to do so in 2019, a Microsoft survey has revealed. The finding was one of many found by Microsoft in the company's construction of the "2019 Middle East Digital Transformation Manifesto" - covering experiences, attitudes and intentions of the region's businesses and government agencies regarding technological change.

More than 1,300 technology and digital decision makers from across the Middle East took part in the survey. Nearly half of all respondents (48 percent) said that their organization had yet to move some or any of its IT infrastructure to a third-party cloud. But more than 73 percent plan to do so in the coming year. The recent finding reflects previous, similar discoveries made by Microsoft and independent global research firms, suggesting region-wide accelerated engagement with cloud computing and related technologies.

Artificial intelligence is one such example. Almost two in five Middle East organizations (39 percent) have already adopted AI solutions and more than one third (37 percent) are planning to adopt in 2019. Companies are getting bolder with their budgets in embracing AI. Some 72 percent are planning to spend on AI this year, suggesting that most previous adopters are planning further investments. Around one in three (34 percent) plan a spend of greater than 5 percent of their budget on AI, and 9 percent are setting aside more than 10 percent.

Attitudes towards the security of third-party data centers have also progressed. Findings on cyber security reveal a troubling threat landscape from which migrating organizations appear eager to escape. Some 63 percent of respondents said their company lost either productivity or data to a cyber incident in 2018; 46 percent of these victims were

offering instant gifts to those named 'Danah', as well as entry to a draw offering 10 lucky winners KD200.

Gulf Bank's Al Danah 1st quarterly draw for KD200,000 prize was held on March 28, and the 2nd Al Danah quarterly draw, for the prize of KD250,000 was held on June 27 and the 3rd quarterly draw for the prize of KD500,000 was held on September 26.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

Gulf Bank's Al Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below

affected more than once; and almost one in 10 victims reported incidents "once a week or more".

"The overarching lesson from these findings is that the region's need for a trusted, secure, intelligent cloud has never been greater," said Ihsan Anabtawi, Chief Operating and Marketing Officer for Microsoft Gulf. "Concerns over security and escalating IT budgets, as well as the desire to develop intelligent digital ecosystems that serve business needs in real time, are driving more and more organizations to the cloud. Microsoft's commitment to regional economic development - demonstrated by our contribution to infrastructure development, entrepreneurial mentorship and job creation - will take another huge step forward, when we open our first Middle East hyperscale cloud datacenters in Abu Dhabi and Dubai this year". A recent IDC report shows that the cloud and the Microsoft ecosystem will bring over 520,000 jobs to the Middle East & Africa region over the next five years. More importantly, the World Bank recently concluded that for every technology job created worldwide, 4.3 more are generated across sectors and income groups.

While creating new job opportunities across the ecosystem, the new UAE datacenters will adhere to Microsoft's trusted-cloud principles of security, privacy, compliance and transparency, helping organizations meet customers' needs while also delivering data residency, low latency, security and local certification requirements. In addition to its commitment to the region, Microsoft's decision to establish the datacenters emerged from multiple market-research programs and discussions with customers and partners throughout the Middle East.

"We called this study the 'Middle East Digital Transformation Manifesto' because it is the clearest indication yet of the business community's ambitions and intentions with regards to digital transformation. Microsoft's mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. It is our obligation and privilege to move forward with our customers - to help them engage citizens and consumers, empower employees, optimize operations and reinvent business models. We will continue to play our part in spurring entrepreneurship, accelerating innovation and fuelling growth," added Anabtawi.



KD200 at any given time, a KD2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al Danah 2019 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

Customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 58 branches, transfer online, place queries through the official Gulf Bank WhatsApp service on 65805805 or call the customer contact center on 1805805 for assistance and guidance. Customers can visit the website to find out more about Al Danah and its winners.

## KIB offers non-profit medical financing up to KD 15,000

**KUWAIT:** As part of its ongoing commitment to providing the best banking products and services to its customers, KIB is currently offering non-profit medical financing for up to KD 15,000, in cooperation with Maidan Clinic for dental services. With this offer, the Bank provides customers with the best medical services through flexible financing solutions for a maximum of 36 months - all in line with Islamic sharia principles.

On this occasion, General Manager of the Retail Banking Department, Othman Tawfiqi, said: "This financing solution reaffirms KIB's dedication to providing the best and latest products and services to its customers, making the Bank a true partner in all aspects of people's lives. As part of this solution, the Bank provides the necessary financing to customers interested in medical treatment services, which includes access to various treatments across diverse medical areas at a reasonable price and without any interest."

Tawfiqi added that this financing solution will facilitate a healthier, more flexible lifestyle for KIB customers. The Bank offers customers who are interested in medical treatment and services access to short-term, easy payment terms with utmost flexibility, reflecting its commitment as a leading Islamic banking institution.



Othman Tawfiqi



## Business

# Global markets enjoy rally as China-US trade hopes rise

## Brent crude oil rises back to \$60 per barrel

**LONDON:** Global markets rallied yesterday on renewed optimism over talks on the China-US trade war, while oil prices were energized by fading supply and demand concerns. Europe's major stock markets rose strongly, with Frankfurt, Paris and London each adding about one percent. That followed strong gains across Asia and overnight on Wall Street.

Brent crude oil briefly spiked back above \$60 per barrel, hitting a three-and-a-half week high, with OPEC cutting output and concerns easing over weak demand growth.

Upbeat sentiment has this week sent investors back into equities, which are traditionally regarded as a riskier bet. "There's been further gains seen in risk assets... with stocks building on their recent gains while Brent crude has notched a three-week high back above the \$60 a barrel level," said analyst David Cheetham at brokerage XTB.

"A third day of US-China talks has provided greater hope of a de-escalation in the trade tensions between the world's two largest economies-with people close to (US President) Donald Trump suggesting he is getting more keen to strike a deal in order to boost the stock market." After taking a battering in December and suffering a shaky start to 2019, confidence is slowly returning to equity trading floors. Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell provided the platform for a rally last week when he said the US central bank had no "pre-set" plan for lifting interest rates and was "listening" to markets, signalling that the pace of hikes could slow this year.

Fear of higher borrowing rates was a major cause of last year's stocks losses. The mood among dealers

held this week as officials from China and the US hunkered down for trade negotiations in Beijing that were extended into a third day. Trump on Tuesday described them as going "very well". Bloomberg also reported White House sources as saying Trump is keen to get a deal done in order to boost stock markets, which he regards as a gauge of his success. The Wall Street Journal said the two sides were moving in the right direction, with China ready to buy more US goods and services, while further talks at cabinet level were being lined up next week.

### Oil rebounds from lows

Benchmark oil contract Brent North Sea crude climbed back to \$60 per barrel yesterday, with OPEC cutting output and on easing concerns over weak demand growth. Around 0940 GMT, Brent crude for delivery in March hit \$60 for the first time in 3.5 weeks and was up 20 percent compared with two weeks ago, prior to an oil production cut by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and non-cartel producers from January 1.

After reaching \$60.05, Brent cooled slightly to \$59.79, up \$1.07 from Tuesday's close. Brent and the world's other key contract, WTI, slumped late last year, hitting 18-month low points at \$49.93 and \$42.36 per barrel respectively. WTI for February delivery was up \$1.23 Wednesday to \$51.01 per barrel. OPEC-a cartel of producer countries that has long manipulated output of the commodity, to influence global prices in members' favor - and non-OPEC members, notably Russia, in December agreed to trim production by 1.2 million barrels a day from



**TOKYO:** A pedestrian walks past a stock indicator board displaying share prices of the Tokyo Stock Exchange in Tokyo. —AFP

the start of this year to shore up sagging prices.

OPEC and its partners, which together account for around half of global output, have presided over a

glut in the market which had led to oil prices tumbling by more than 30 percent between October and December. —Agencies

## Pakistan's PM sacks heads of gas utilities over energy crisis

**ISLAMABAD:** Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday sacked the chiefs of Sui Natural Gas Pipeline Limited (SNGPL) and Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGC) over a severe winter energy crisis that has seen repeated supply outages. Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry, the government's main spokesman, said Khan took the decision after an inquiry committee found that the two companies were responsible for the crisis.

Since the start of the winter, Pakistanis using natural gas for cooking and heating, as well as factories and power plants that rely on the fuel, have experienced significant inconvenience due to low gas pressure or no supply at all. Factories and business in the port city of Karachi, Pakistan's commercial

hub, have been badly affected, threatening jobs and the livelihoods of workers.

"Recently, people have faced a severe gas supply crisis," Chaudhry said in a statement...The prime minister has announced the immediate sacking of the heads Sui Southern and Sui Northern," the statement said. Pakistan has suffered from chronic energy supply problems for years, with regular power blackouts and gas outages caused by a mix of poorly maintained distribution networks, inefficient regulation and poor governance. The country has significant natural gas reserves that can fill almost half its energy requirements but supply constraints have led to increasing demand for LNG imports.

Khan's critics say the natural gas companies are not solely responsible for the recent energy crisis, pointing to decisions made by his government which have discouraged the importing of LNG.

In October, the new government announced it would renegotiate agreements for two liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminals as part of a wider investigation into deals struck by the previous government. The rapid adoption of LNG infrastructure made Pakistan one of the industry's fastest-



**KARACHI:** A Pakistani laborer works on a motorbike petrol tank at a workshop in Karachi yesterday. —AFP

growing markets in Asia, sparking interest from the world's major energy producers and traders.

As part of moves to increase energy generation, Pakistan and the World

Bank yesterday signed a financing agreement worth \$100 million for a solar energy project in the southern part of the country, a finance ministry statement said. —Reuters

## Savings but no title deed? Loans help Kenyan women turn idle land into gold

**TULUROBA, Kenya:** For the women of Tuluroba village's self-help group, the goal was simple: use their combined savings to buy cattle, fatten them and sell them to the beef industry for slaughter. But there was a problem. "We had no land to graze the cattle. Nor could we obtain a loan from a bank to buy land, because as women we do not own title deeds," said Fatuma Wario, who chairs the 13-strong group.

That is common. Few women in Kenya have land title documents, and few are getting them: since 2013, less than 2 percent of issued titles have gone to women, the Kenya Land Alliance, a non-profit, said in March 2018. And because getting a loan from a mainstream bank requires collateral - typically in the form of a land title document - most women are locked out of the chance to start a business.

In the end, the women of the HoriJabesa group borrowed money from an institution that loans money to women's groups without requiring land title. Instead, the cash from their savings underwrites the loan.

In Wario's case, that meant switching their savings account to the bank that was prepared to extend a \$1,000 loan. Using that money and some of their savings, "we bought cattle and hired land to graze our stock". That was in 2017. Doing so meant the group could rent 10 acres (4 hectares) of pasture at a cost of 30,000 Kenyan shillings (\$300) annually. Interest on the loan is 12 percent per year. In their first year they earned \$10,000 from their investment - with each fattened head of cattle bringing in a \$30 profit.

### Thousands benefit

The first step for Wario's group was to become a partner with the Program for Rural Outreach of Financial Innovations and Technologies (PROFIT), which is funded by the U.N International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA).

David Kanda, an adviser at the SNV Netherlands Development Organization who has seen the impact PROFIT has had on women like Wario, said about 60 women's groups in eastern Kenya alone were benefiting



**Fatuma Wario and a colleague work at her kitchen garden in Tuluroba village, eastern Kenya. —Reuters**

from the PROFIT program. "Apart from livestock enterprises, the program also supports women to do poultry and bee-keeping on hired land."

The program began in December 2010 and is scheduled to run until June this year. After that, it will be evaluated with an eye to continuing it, an official from AGRA said.

Getting a loan requires that the person be an active member of an agribusiness network. She can then apply to a farmer-lending institution for a loan as an individual - in which case her share in the agribusiness network is her collateral - or with her group, as Wario's collective did.

The Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), a government agency, is one such lending institution.

To date, said Millicent Omukaga, AFC's head of operations, more than 40,000 women in Kenya have benefited from non-collateralized loans. None of those loans has gone bad.

"Our aim is to double the number ... of women beneficiaries. But the overall aim is to see them financially empowered so that they can fight for their land rights."

### Grass bounty

That has proven the case for Mabel Katindi, a widow who lives in Kathiani village in Machakos county, 195 kilometers south of Wario's village. The 42-year-old lost her husband a decade ago. Since then she has had to fight off relatives trying to chase her and her three children from the one-acre plot she inherited.

The problem is that her late husband did not have a title deed. As it is ancestral land, it fell under one title deed held by the eldest member of his family, she said.

And without title, Katindi could not get a loan to finance money-earning ventures on her acre.

"Our land is not very good for growing food crops because the rains are not enough. Feeding my children alone has been the most difficult task," she said.

But after joining the local women's organization in 2017, Katindi learned that, as an active member of the agribusiness group, she could use her share to apply for a loan. In March of that year she borrowed 50,000 shillings from a savings and credit cooperative, and used that to plant drought-resistant brachiaria grass on half an acre of her land. —Reuters

## World Bank's Kim to join Global Infrastructure Partners

**WASHINGTON:** World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim will join Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), a private equity fund that invests in projects in wealthy and developing countries, the firm said on Tuesday, a day after Kim's shock resignation from the bank.

Kim, who joins New York-based GIP on Feb. 1 as a partner and vice chairman, has accepted a one-year ban from dealings with any World Bank units, including its private sector lending arm, the International Finance Corp, a person familiar with his departure arrangements said.

A major part of the lender's work is lending to build infrastructure such as power, water and transportation projects in developing countries. Kim resigned more than three years before his term ends in 2022 amid differences with the Trump administration over climate change and the need for more development resources. Discussions between Kim and GIP about the new job came together about six weeks ago at the G20 summit in Buenos Aires, the person said. Kim has emphasized that harnessing private sector investment funds was the key to building badly needed infrastructure amid constrained public budgets. After securing a \$13 billion capital increase last year and replenishments of the World Bank's donor fund for the poorest countries, Kim said on Monday in a note to staff that the opportunity "is the path through which I will be able to make the largest impact on major global issues like climate change and the infrastructure deficit in emerging markets."

## Zimbabwe public workers threaten to join pay strike

**HARARE:** Zimbabwe's public sector workers will join a growing strike if the government does not agree to pay them in US dollars, the main civil service union said yesterday. Doctors, the same teachers have already staged walk-outs, saying they need the hard cash payments to protect them against inflation and a currency crunch - piling pressure on Emmerson Mnangagwa less than five months into his contested presidency.

The Apex Council, which represents 16 public sector unions, said it gave the government the required two-week notice of industrial action on Tuesday.

"If they do not pay us in US dollars or an equivalent, we are going on a fully fledged strike," Apex deputy chairman Thomas Muzondo said. Cash shortages have plunged Zimbabwe's financial system into disarray, threatening social unrest and undermining Mnangagwa's efforts to win back foreign investors sidelined under his predecessor Robert Mugabe.

With not enough hard currency to back up funds showing in bank accounts, the value of electronic money has plummeted, prompting businesses and civil servants to demand payment in US dollars they can withdraw. Vincent Hungwe, the chairman of the Public Service Commission that employs civil servants, said the government planned to meet unions and make an offer by today. Late on Tuesday, he said the state would expand cost-of-living payments and propose a new pension scheme. —Reuters



## Business

# The new Mercedes-Benz CLA Coupé

## Automotive intelligence can be this beautiful



**DUBAI:** With MBUX, Mercedes-Benz has been revolutionizing how to operate a car and communicate with it since the launch of the A-Class. "Now we go to the next level with an intelligent interior assistance system for the compact class. By recognizing gestures it facilitates natural operation," says Ola Kallenius, Member of the Board of Management of Daimler AG, responsible for Group Research and Mercedes-Benz Cars Development. "This is not the only new feature by which the CLA offers a great deal of automotive intelligence."

"With the first CLA we celebrated a huge success by selling some 750,000 vehicles and created a totally new segment with a four-door coupé," adds Britta Seeger, Member of the Board of Management of Daimler AG, responsible for Mercedes-Benz Cars Marketing & Sales. "The new edition of the CLA has been developed further in an intelligent way and is even more emotional and sportier than its predecessor. Coupled with new operating systems, it sets new benchmarks for the entire class."

The new generation of compacts has made a key contribution to the rejuvenation and image change of the Mercedes-Benz brand and the CLA is important for winning and retaining new customers in particular.

In its first year, the new CLA will also be available as an Edition 1. In terms of both the exterior and the interior, this limited edition special model has numerous visual accents which underline its exclusivity. The new CLA will be manufactured at the Kecskemet plant (Hungary) and will be launched in the region in October 2019.

### Design: Pure emotion

"As a four-door coupé, the new CLA intrigues with its puristic, seductive design and sets new standards in the design DNA of 'sensual purity'. It impresses with its perfect proportions reflecting the first design sketch: a long, stretched bonnet, a compact greenhouse, a wide track with exposed wheel arches and our typical GT rear end with a strong distinctive 'Coke-bottle shoulder'," says Gordon Wagener, Chief Design Officer of Daimler AG. "In short - the CLA coupé has the potential to become a modern design icon."

The combination of the long, stretched entry line above the windows and frameless doors give the CLA coupé its unmistakable sporty and elegant character. Forming the front end is the striking front section which is raked forwards like a shark nose with a long, stretched bonnet featuring powerdome.

Flat headlamps together with the low slung bonnet and the diamond radiator grille with central star create the vehicle's sporty face. The two-piece, narrow tail lamps and the number plate housed in the bumper

make the rear of the CLA look especially wide.

With the greenhouse moved back, the sporty GT rear achieves a balance between elegance and sportiness. Featuring pared-down lines, the precisely modelled side profile provides an interesting interplay of light and shade. Dispensing with the upper shaped edge of the side wall permits extremely muscular and athletic shoulder shaping, stretching from the front wheel arch through to the sculptured rear. Flush with the outer edge of the body, the wheels with their flared wheel arches and wide track epitomize dynamism and give the vehicle a sporty presence.

In the interior, all elements are arranged according to the overarching design themes of 'high tech' and 'youthful avant-garde' - be that the steering wheel, the door handle operating module, the center console or the seats. As in the A-Class, the unique interior architecture is shaped in particular by the avantgarde design of the dashboard: The designers completely dispensed with a cowl above the cockpit. As a result, the wing-shaped main body of the dashboard extends from one front door to the other with no visual discontinuity. The widescreen display is completely free-standing. The lower section is visually separated from the main body of the instrument cluster by a 'trench', and it appears to float in front of the instrument cluster. The ambient lighting enhances this effect. The air vents in a sporty turbine-look are another highlight.

### One year since the premiere: MBUX keeps on learning

One year ago, MBUX - the Mercedes-Benz User Experience - created a furor at its world premiere at CES in Las Vegas. A powerful computer, brilliant screens and graphics, customizable display, full color Head-up Display, navigation with augmented reality, software that can learn and "Hey Mercedes" - the keyword for voice control that explodes conventional automotive standards. This is how Mercedes-Benz is revolutionizing car operation and communication with it. Now the company is igniting the next level. MBUX Interior Assist facilitates natural operation. The voice control feature now recognizes topical answers in a growing number of domains. Due to ongoing development of the system, it is also possible to take into consideration country-specific content providers.

### MBUX Interior Assist: An even greater experience

By recognizing movements MBUX Interior Assist brings added intelligence to the interior. Thanks to innovative technology, MBUX now supports the occupants by making various comfort and MBUX functions even simpler and more intuitive. Interior Assist operates in non-contact mode and functions both in sun-



light and in complete darkness.

It enables the adaptation of screen content as soon as a hand approaches the touchscreen in the dashboard or the touchpad on the center console, for example. Individual elements are highlighted according to the currently active menu. In addition, the system is able to distinguish between the driver's and front passenger's wishes and thus knows for whose seat the massage function is to be activated, for example.

A special feature of Interior Assist is the personal favorites function. It is accessed by holding a hand over the center console with the index and middle finger spread in a V-shape. In this way, any command which is controllable via MBUX can be stored for simple access. One typical favorite command is 'navigate me home'. As the system is able to reliably recognize who is operating it, the driver and front passenger respectively can even assign different favorites to the same hand position.

### "Hey Mercedes": Better understanding

State-of-the-art of voice control can also be experienced in the CLA. Here too seat recognition has been implemented. The voice assistance only responds to the commands of the person who last said 'Hey Mercedes' to activate the system. There is also a growing number of domains for which MBUX can understand complex questions and quickly reply: these include sport ('Hey Mercedes, how did the UAE play in the Asian Cup?'), the stock exchange ('Compare the share price of Apple Incorporated to Microsoft'), calculations ('What is the square root of 3?') or general knowledge ('How tall is the Burj Khalifa', 'What is the population of the UAE').

ENERGIZING comfort control links various comfort systems in the vehicle. The intelligent recommendations from the ENERGIZING COACH in the ENERGIZING Package Plus are completely new. In general, the ENERGIZING comfort control systematically uses the functions of the air conditioning system and the seats (heater, ventilation, massage) as well as lighting and musical moods, and enables a specific wellness set-up tailored to the mood and need of the customer.

### Aerodynamics: Intelligent solutions

On the way to series production, the aerodynamics of the new CLA underwent a considerably longer phase of optimization than its predecessor in the form of simulations, before the first measurements of models were carried out in the wind tunnel.

Work on optimization was in close collaboration with the designers and was particularly intensive on the rear apron, radiator grille, the fog lamp recesses

(the relief-like diamond-shaped pattern of which was reduced to the edge on the CLA for aerodynamic reasons) and the height of the diffuser. Totally new are the wheel-arch spoilers with their fins in the longitudinal direction; they help air to flow around the wheels with minimal losses. Aerodynamic finessing was also performed on the wheels and tires - both for the regular wheel-tyre combinations and for what are known as aero wheels, which have been completely redesigned to achieve the best possible aerodynamic values and which also look attractive. Integrated as standard at the front of the vehicle is a two-piece shutter system behind the radiator grille, which regulates air flow through the engine compartment. The almost complete underbody panelling encompasses the engine compartment, the main floor, parts of the rear axle and the diffuser.

### Intelligent Drive: Functions from the S-Class

The CLA has the very latest driving assistance systems with cooperative driver support, and thus provides the highest level of active safety in this segment with functions adopted from the S-Class. For the first time, the CLA is able to drive semi-autonomously in certain situations. To do this, it keeps a close eye on the traffic situation. Improved camera and radar systems allow it to see up to 500 meters ahead. The CLA also uses map and navigation data for assistance functions. For example, Active Distance Assist DISTRONIC as part of the optional Driving Assistance Package is able to provide route-based support to the driver in numerous situations, and to predictively and conveniently adjust the speed, e.g. when approaching bends, junctions or roundabouts. Also on board are e.g. Active Emergency Stop Assist and intuitively understandable Active Lane Change Assist.

The new CLA comes with enhanced Active Brake Assist as standard. Depending on the situation, it can effectively help to mitigate the consequences of rear-end collisions with slower-moving, stopping or stationary vehicles ahead, and even with crossing pedestrians and cyclists, or to prevent them altogether.

### Drive system: start with the most powerful engine

At the trade show presentation in Las Vegas, the CLA on display is the CLA 250 with the powerful four-cylinder petrol engine (165 kW/225 hp, 350 Nm) with 7G-DCT dual-clutch transmission (combined fuel consumption 6.3-6.1 l/100 km, combined CO2 emissions 143-140 g/km<sup>2</sup>). By the market launch in May, there will be a broad range of diesel and petrol engines available featuring manual or dual-clutch transmissions and 4MATIC all-wheel drive.

## Emirates Holiday offers ABK cardholders an extra 20% Skyward Miles on air tickets

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), recently launched a number of travel promotions for ABK credit and prepaid cardholders. Designed to complement Kuwait's growing community of frequent flyers, the promotion allows ABK cardholders to avail a seven percent discount on Emirates Holiday packages and earn an extra 20 percent Skywards Miles when purchasing Emirates Airlines flight tickets.

In order to benefit from the offer, ABK cardholders must book the holiday packages at the Emirates Holiday offices. In addition, flight bookings made using the ABK Credit or Prepaid card during the promotion will grant the cardholder an additional 20 percent of Skywards Miles. Although the offer is only valid until 31st March 2019, customers can book future travel dates in 2019 to enjoy the maximum benefits of the discount.

The Skywards Miles will be credited to the customer's Emirates Skywards membership account (EK number), which can be redeemed for reward flights, upgrades on Emirates and a variety of other activities globally. Furthermore, customers holding an ABK EK Co-Brand Card (Visa Infinite/Signature/Gold PP) are automatically Skywards members and can enjoy 20 percent bonus miles on bookings with Emirates Holiday packages with a minimum duration of three nights.

## VIVA opens its flagship store at Avenues Mall Phase 4

**KUWAIT:** VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, has inaugurated its flagship store at Avenues Mall - phase 4, in addition to its branch and booth at phase 1.

Commenting on this occasion, Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA, said: "VIVA aims through its stores to serve a large segment of customers, to provide them convenience and satisfy their needs and requirements. This new branch opening at a crowded Mall, will bring VIVA and its customers closer and keep them posted regularly with the latest products and plans."

He added: "The increase in customer base requires strengthening and renewing of our stores, to provide the best services and products according to the latest and best standards in the world of technology to our customers. In addition to our stores' services, VIVA's customer care line at 102 is ready round the clock and up to public holidays, to provide outstanding service to our valued customers through team of specialists."

## 26 new winners in Al-Hassad Islamic account

**KUWAIT:** Ahli United Bank recently conducted its Al-Hassad Islamic account weekly draw, Kuwait's leading sharia-compliant rewards program that offers a broad range of prizes to the largest number of winners, on the 2nd of January 2019. The account provides 26 weekly prizes that are comprised of KD 25,000 as a grand prize and 25 other prizes valued at KD 1,000 each. AUB also offers four quarterly prizes that are valued at KD 250,000 to each winner allowing them to achieve their dreams of



travelling, studying abroad, or owning their dream home or car. On this occasion Ahli United Bank announced, "With this draw, we are adding 26 new winners and prizes to the Al-Hassad Islamic account whereby, the total number of winners annually will include more than 1300."

The weekly grand prize winner of KD 25,000 Safiya Hasan Al-Janabi. 25 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Jana Jaber Al-Ibrahim, Hussain Mahmoud Abdulla, Thaivalath Vasudevan, Fahad Khaled Al-Khurainel, hashim Mohammad Abdllmoez, Abeer Mahmoud Almaraghi, Abdulmajeed Zayed Al-Enezi, Mohammad AYMAN Allayah, Falah eid Alazmi, Imtiaz Ali Kagzi, Hashem Sayed Mohammad, Mariam Sabeeh Aleidan, Lama Sabri Helall, Zaabi Hussain Al-Zaabi,

Yousef N A Al-Muaili, Fahad Hadi Al-Khaldi, Mansour Ali Husain, Altaf A Y Alghanem, Mahmood Khamis Al-SabbaghH, Esmat Ahmed Abdullah, Latifa Khalifa Mubarak, Ayman Ahmed Haroon, Ali Abdulla Isa, Zainab Ali Malkki, and Aqeel Ahmed Rashed.

Al-Hassad Islamic account's customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in the draw in line with the program's terms and conditions. Ahli United Bank added, "There are increased opportunities that await our current customers and those who are interested in opening an Al-Hassad Islamic account to benefit from the wide range of prizes and opportunities offered this year." Individual customers can open their accounts with a minimum deposit of KD 100, qualifying them to enter the draw.



## Health &amp; Technology

# 'User experience' becomes the key for auto technology at CES

## Carmakers refining systems for self-driving navigation and safety

**LAS VEGAS:** Technology firms tackling the challenge of autonomous driving are focusing on the "user experience" of vehicles that are increasingly becoming an extension of people's digital life. Carmakers and tech firms are refining the systems for self-driving navigation and safety. But with full autonomy still likely years away, there is a growing interest in making cars a place to live, work, communicate and enjoy the ride. At the Consumer Electronics Show this week, exhibitors were showcasing technology for comfort, safety, entertainment and personalization.

Byton, the China-based electric carmaker expected to launch its first vehicles late this year, showed its sedan with a 48-inch display panel, covering the width of the dash, where riders can watch movies, check messages and get other information—although the full array of services won't be offered while someone is driving. The Byton car will use facial recognition to customize the experience for drivers and passengers, with personalized music and recommendations. The car would know who is inside and how long they have been traveling, and in one example cited by the company, make recommendations for restaurants along a particular route.

"The car could become the most important device in your digital life," said Carsten Breitfeld, co-founder and chief executive of Byton. Byton will offer the potential for partial autonomy, allowing riders to focus on other things such as watching movies, shopping with a voice assistant or browsing the internet. The vehicle will work through voice, touch, gestures or facial recognition.

"It's all about the customer experience," Carsten told a media event at the Las Vegas show, while noting that more of the enhanced features will be used when the car is in autonomous mode or stationary.

### Empathy and emotion

Gawain Morrison, co-founder of the British-based artificial intelligence startup Sensum, said the human factor is becoming more important in the automobile sector. "A lot

of the technology up to now has been about moving from point A to point B," he said. "The next generation is about how to interact with the humans. They need an understanding about the human state at any point in the journey." Sensum and its auto-supplier partner Valeo showed what it called "empathic mobility tech" which can measure occupants' emotional state and physiological comfort, and adjust its environmental settings accordingly. The South Korean automaker Kia dubbed its system "Real-time Emotion Adaptive Driving," or READ with an emotional AI-based cabin which analyzes a driver's emotional state by monitoring facial expressions, heart rate and electrodermal activity.

"The system enables continuous communication between driver and vehicle through the unspoken language of 'feeling', thereby providing an optimal, human-sense oriented space for the driver in real-time," said Albert Biermann, president and head of research for Kia parent Hyundai.

### Warnings for drowsiness

German auto equipment maker Continental was showing its monitoring system which can detect if a driver is distracted or drowsy, in line with recommendations from the European Union. "You may get a visual warning, or the seat will vibrate, or the steering wheel will vibrate," said Continental executive Heinz Abel. "This is part of an effort to guide your attention back to the road."

Several equipment makers were showcasing what they called the "cockpit of the future" which could be available for conventional vehicles and adapted for autonomous mode. Visteon, a former Ford unit which makes automotive equipment, displayed its electronic control unit which integrates the driving and manages other system such as information and entertainment.

Upton Bowden, the head of new technology for Visteon, said equipment makers will be offering a "transitional cockpit" which helps people understand what is happen-



LAS VEGAS: People sit in a SPACe—L Autonomous Cabin vehicle at the Panasonic exhibit during CES 2019 in Las Vegas, Nevada on Tuesday. — AFP

ing in autonomous mode. "You want the occupants to trust the system," Bowden said. "When you get into an automated vehicle you have no knowledge of that system, so you have some level of discomfort." The key to overcoming mistrust, he said, is to offer more transparency: "We can give you a real-time digital picture of what's going on by taking the data and transforming it into a graphical user

experience." Bowden said these systems can be especially useful for autonomous rideshare vehicles, allowing personalization of the experience through cloud-based technology. "It would recognize who you were and handle payment through facial recognition," he said. "It can instantly pair to your cloud account and bring in your favorite radio stations and other information." — AFP

## 'Mosquito birth control' drug could be ready in 5 years

**LONDON:** Scientists in the United States said on Tuesday they had taken a major step toward developing a "mosquito birth control" drug to curb the spread of malaria and other killer diseases blamed for hundreds of thousands of deaths a year. Researchers at the University of Arizona said they had discovered a protein unique to female mosquitoes which is critical for their young to hatch. When the scientists blocked the protein, the females laid eggs with defective shells

causing the embryos inside to die. The team said developing drugs which targeted the protein could provide a way to reduce mosquito populations without harming beneficial insects such as bees.

"It's an important discovery," Roger Miesfeld, head of the university's department of chemistry and biochemistry, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone.

"We're certainly excited about it ... This gets around mosquito resistance and also has a much better chance of being bio-safe (than other methods)." Mosquitoes are one of the world's deadliest animals, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) which has warned that global progress against malaria is stalling. The disease infected around 216 million people in 2016, killing 445,000 of them, predominantly babies and young children in sub-Saharan Africa. Other diseases spread by mosquitoes

include Zika, Chikungunya, yellow fever, West Nile virus and dengue, which has risen 30-fold in recent decades, according to the WHO.

Miesfeld said current methods of controlling mosquitoes had been used for so long that the insects were becoming resistant. Miesfeld said the research team was surprised to find that treated females could no longer reproduce for the rest of their two- to three-week life span.

"Once we knock down this protein she (the mosquito) no longer makes viable eggs even after multiple blood feedings so ... birth control is a great way to describe it."

He said he hoped the discovery could lead to the development of a new generation of insecticides in five years. These could be applied to bed nets and other areas in the same way as current sprays and would be absorbed by the mosquito through her legs and body. — Reuters

## London remains top destination for European tech funding

**LONDON:** London remained the top destination in Europe for technology investment in 2018, with nearly double the amount being ploughed into companies in the British capital than nearest rival Berlin, data showed yesterday.

Technology companies in London attracted 1.8 billion pounds (\$2.3 billion) in venture capital funding, 72 percent of the total 2.5 billion pounds raised by UK tech businesses, according to data from funding database PitchBook on behalf of the Mayor of London. Eileen Burbidge, a partner at venture capital firm Passion Capital, said London was the leading hub for financial technology thanks to its position as one of the world's biggest financial centers, while its universities helped to create companies offering artificial intelligence (AI). "We get a lot of calls and inquiries from investors in the US and Asia looking for fintech opportunities," she told Reuters. — Reuters

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

**Scope of clinical Practice.**

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

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# The road to Valhalla: Viking adventures in northeast Canada

It's the sort of morning that carries the threat of biblical rain, the Atlantic fog rolling in so fast it could be described as witchcraft. It arrives in a thick swirl to the north of Bonne Bay around Lobster Cove Head Lighthouse, causing it to disappear within the murk. For Mother Nature's next trick, the sea mist swallows the towns of Rocky Harbor and Woody Point to the south, before changing course to let the sun break through with an almighty, absorbing glow. It's an act worthy of the Norse storm god Thor, revealing the orange-topped tablelands of Gros Morne National Park in all their natural splendor.

## Welcome to the Viking Trail

This is as fitting an introduction to Newfoundland's wind-whipped west coast as one could hope for. I'm motoring north on the little-known Viking Trail, a lonely 489km road through fjords and forests, squinting through the foggy windshield while mentally preparing for what lies ahead.

Bookended by Deer Lake, home to Western Newfoundland's largest airport, and L'Anse aux Meadows, the best-preserved Norse settlement in North America, the route builds towards a grand finale, packing in a compendium of craggy headlands, geological marvels and cultural oddities that experts still can't quite figure out.

Almost all accounts of Canada's eastern frontier mention its Viking past, but Route 430, as it's also known, has an extra dimension: this end-of-the-world road is also a territory for dramatic sightings. Blink and you may miss a breaching whale or cluster of moose grazing by the roadside.

Even if many people would struggle to pinpoint it on a map today, Newfoundland has long loomed large in the imagination of explorers, fishermen and sailors. It's anchored south of Greenland at the entrance to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the world's largest estuary, and buffeted by the Labrador Sea. Politically it is governed by Canada and its capital Ottawa, some 1500km to the west.

But geographical isolation has fashioned Newfoundland in a distinctive, inimitable way. Cod stocks lured fishermen from Europe and 70 years ago,

from 1907 to 1949, the province was a British dominion, while Basque whalers hunted off the coast during the 16th century. Before that, around the year 1000, it was the turn of Viking explorer Leif Erikson, who arrived some 500 years before Christopher Columbus crossed the Atlantic. For those interested in derring-do and conquest, this is a road trip restless with history.

## Unpredictable canyons and forests

As the skies begin to clear, I stop at Gros Morne National Park's headquarters north of Rocky Harbor. The scenery ranks among the most beautiful on the Atlantic seaboard and chiseled green hills rise over Western Brook Pond, a dramatic freshwater inlet where hikers follow a boardwalk trail into tuckamore forest.

Where the trail ends, a boat ferries them deeper into the post-glacial fjord's wilderness for overnight hikes in the shadow of 700m cliffs formed 1,500 million years ago. Locals call it the Grand Canyon of Newfoundland, but in an era of overtourism, it is a place to slide effortlessly into the meditative rhythm of forest life. There are no Viking raiders, just the odd herd of roaming woodland caribou, so I proceed north with caution: a road trip never felt so unpredictable.

By afternoon, the Viking Trail begins to shadow the Long Range Mountains, the northernmost reaches of the Appalachians, who's contours slope off into a landscape of gentle ridges topped with dwarf birch. Between the hills are headlands for whale watching and expansive views of Labrador across the Strait of Belle Isle. Here, in summer, locals wake to the sound of migrating icebergs pulling up in the bays. It is a constant display of wild aesthetics, from windswept sea to boreal forest to eye-popping Arctic theater.

## A step back into history

At Old Ferolle Harbor, where British explorer Captain James Cook moored in 1763 while on expedition, I stop at Plum Point motel for that ancient Viking delicacy - fried cod tongues, brazenly pulled from the underside of the fish's chin. In season around every April, harp seal flipper pie is a common specialty along the trail, while seal jerky isn't unheard of. As with many things along the route, there's the sense it has one foot



in the present, but one firmly rooted in the past. Here, the usual norms don't apply.

The Viking Trail is known as the cradle of Norse culture in North America, but it only really shifts up a gear when the road veers inland, crossing the interior to the town of St. Anthony on the eastern coast. By this time, gaudy Viking souvenir shops and pastiche houses with longboat-shaped porches crowd the roadside. Guest summerhouses like the Valhalla Lodge B&B, Viking RV Park, and Snorri Cabins complete the picture.

Away from the sparsely-populated hamlets around the fringe of St. Anthony, L'Anse aux Meadows comes into view. Discovered in 1960, the remains of the 1000-year-old Viking-age colony marks the site of the first known European settlement in North America. Here Leif Erikson, son of Erik the Red, and around 70-odd Vikings built timber and sod longhouses, introduced the continent's first iron works and explored as far south as New Brunswick.

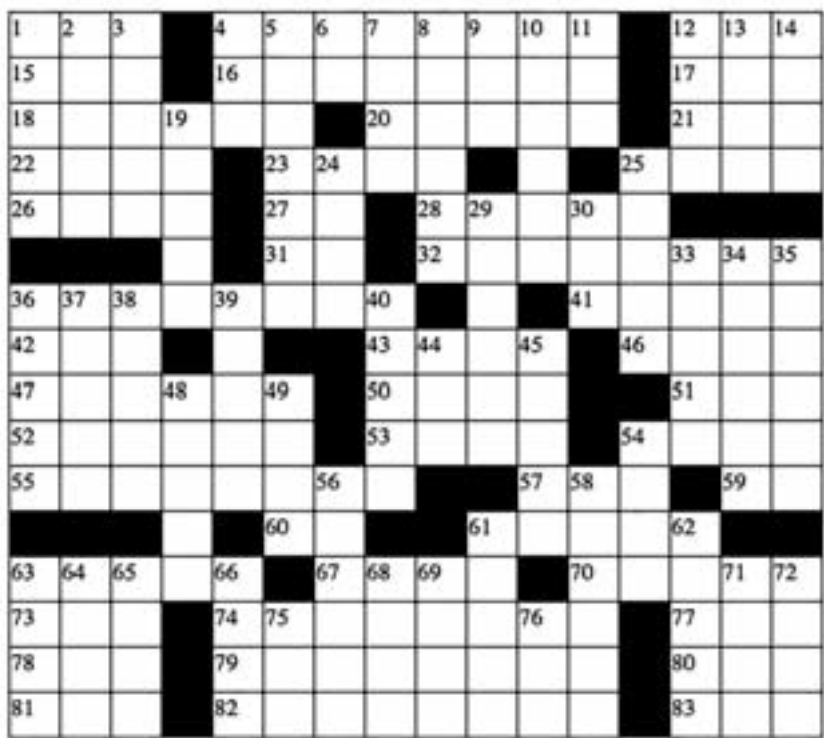
According to the Viking Sagas, it's also where the first European baby was born on North American soil. "You're standing in what would have been the chieftain's room," Parks Canada interpretative team leader Matthias Brennan tells me, while walking around the Unesco-listed World Heritage Site. "Faint impressions in the pasture lands were excavated to reveal Viking artifacts, but excavations are still ongoing. There are so many unanswered questions."

As we continue to explore the grassy knolls, Brennan explains the exact nature of life at the winter camp isn't known. Another mystery is why the Viking farmers left after only 30-odd years. But one stone-cold certainty is how productive they were during their stay: excavations have unearthed hundreds of artifacts made of wood, iron, stone, bronze and bone. Such finds include a copper alloy dress pin, birch-bark containers, carved wood finials and a spindle whorl. Around us, the site is dotted with evidence of fire pits and tool-making workshops. —www.lonelyplanet.com





CROSSWORD 2106



- ACROSS
1. (informal) Of the highest quality.  
4. The bone in the ankle that articulates with the leg bones to form the ankle joint.  
12. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.  
15. (British) A linear measure of 16.5 feet.  
16. Shrubby lichens of the family Usneaceae having a flattened thallus.  
17. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.  
18. An inhabitant of ancient Thebes.  
20. Easy to reach.  
21. Extremely pleasing.  
22. Leafless East Indian vine.  
23. A doctor's degree in music.  
26. Made of fir or pine.  
27. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.  
28. British filmmaker (born in Hungary) (1893-1956).  
31. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.  
32. A genus of herbs and shrubs belonging to the family Euphorbiaceae.  
36. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.  
41. A republic in southeastern Europe on the southern part of the Balkan peninsula.  
42. Committee formed by a special-interest group to raise money for their favorite political candidates.  
43. An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.  
46. Make a raucous noise.  
47. Socially disoriented.  
50. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).  
51. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.  
52. A step in walking or running.  
53. Designer drug designed to have the effects of amphetamines (it floods the brain with serotonin) but to avoid the drug laws.  
55. A town in western California south of San Francisco on a peninsula at the southern end of Monterey Bay.  
57. The compass point that is one point east of due south.  
59. That is to say.  
60. (combining form) Former.  
63. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.  
67. A set of tags and rules (conforming to SGML) for using them in developing hypertext documents.  
70. Bottle that has a narrow neck.  
73. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).  
74. A city in the northern panhandle of Texas.  
77. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.  
78. Being one more than six.  
79. Linear with respect to each of two variables or positions.  
80. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.  
81. The sign language used in the United States.  
82. A quality of refined gracefulness and good taste.  
83. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- DOWN
1. An honorary arts degree.  
2. Fatty pinkish flesh of small salmon caught in the Pacific and Great Lakes.  
3. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.  
4. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.  
5. A bar of sand.  
6. A soft silvery metallic element of the rare earth group.  
7. A demon who swallows the sun causing eclipses.  
8. A state in northwestern North America.  
9. Strong liquor flavored with juniper berries.  
10. Small genus of evergreen trees of tropical America and western Africa.  
11. Concerning those not members of the clergy.  
12. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.  
13. Divulge information or secrets.  
14. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.  
19. (Norse mythology) God of light and peace and noted for his beauty and sweet nature.  
24. (New Testament) The sages who visited Jesus and Mary and Joseph shortly after Jesus was born.  
25. In a joyous manner.  
29. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).  
30. A chronic skin disease occurring primarily in women between the ages of 20 and 40.  
33. A sheet of metal or wood or glass or plastic.  
34. A state in the United States in the central Pacific on the Hawaiian Islands.  
35. Have an ambitious plan or a lofty goal.  
37. (British) An abbreviation of pantomime.  
38. Fruit of the oak tree.  
39. Leave or strike out, as of vowels.  
40. Broad in the beam.  
44. An American doctorate usually based on at least 3 years graduate study and a dissertation.  
45. Cause to be embarrassed.  
48. God of justice.  
49. Wrap us in a cecrecloth, as of a corpse.  
54. Heal or recover.  
56. Expel air.  
58. Earlier in time.  
61. American filmmaker and comic actor (1935- ).  
62. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.  
64. Armor plate that protects the chest.  
65. (criminal law) Money that must be forfeited by the bondsman if an accused person fails to appear in court for trial.  
66. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.  
68. (of persons) Neat and smart in appearance.  
69. Tropical Asian starlings.  
71. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.  
72. God of love and erotic desire.  
75. A unit of length equal to one thousandth of an inch.  
76. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

If you have been debating on a new business approach, today is the day to make it happen. Much success will come your way. Make the pitch, present the proposal. Today is a day you will get the results you have been dreaming of. You are convincing and have a way with your words today. You will be able to make others see things your way. By the time you are through, those involved will see things your way and have the exact desires you do. Stay on top of news about money matters. This is a very profitable time for you.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

A time of major change in your life is upon you. It will be strange and unusual in many ways. Everything new, unusual, and revolutionary seems to appeal to you now. A more eccentric side of you emerges. Thinking outside of the box may lead to a very profitable and creative invention. Let your thoughts lead you. You may find those close to you may be a bit uncomfortable with this unusual side of you. Taurus. Don't worry. They will grow to love the new you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may be feeling drawn and even turned on by that which is taboo. Sex, power, and the pursuit of wealth are beginning to be a driving force behind your emotions. You are fascinated by people. What makes the do the things they do? What makes them tick? You desire a fresh start in your life and major changes. You know this may only be accomplished by turning your back on all you believed and starting over with an open mind and a new outlook on life in general.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

All that is mysterious and taboo seem to draw you in. Curiosity may have killed the cat but that is a chance you are willing to take. You are craving excitement and long to experience something new. This is a great time of creativity for you. A change of scenery or a change of style are coming your way. You may be drawn to the unusual and avant garde. Out with the old and in with the new. Watch out world! Expect to turn some heads today.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

This is a day you will crave all eyes to be on you. You crave attention. From the way you dress, to the way you carry yourself, the center of attention is what you can expect to be. All eyes are on you. You will shine today. It seems as if everything conspires to bring out your more unique and unusual qualities. It may seem as if things work in your favor today. Solutions to old problems will come easy. This is a great day to spend some time working on a new invention.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may feel a need for change is long overdue. You may want to break old habits and set out on a new path. You may find yourself drawn to a different lifestyle and find yourself going against the grain. You desire to be a part of a new and different crowd and feel as if something is pulling you in a direction beyond any comfort zone you have known. Today may find you lacking direction and this may lead to conflict in the work place as you appear lost with no focus. This is an internal conflict and there is no need to try to explain this to others close to you as it may cause frustration when your ideas are not met with acceptance by others.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

The sky is the limit for you today. You are optimistic and can accomplish anything you set your mind to. You have faith and are willing to take chances on an emotional level that may bring great reward and happiness your way. You may be deep within your feelings and have a desire to experience something new. An emotional wanderlust, if you will, is the desire of your heart. Today you are all about you. Your wants, needs, and desires, take over and all you can do is pursue what your heart wants. This is a very productive day for you physically and emotionally.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may be feeling drawn and even turned on by that which is taboo. Sex, power, and the pursuit of wealth are beginning to be a driving force behind your emotions. You are fascinated by people. What makes the do the things they do? What makes them tick? You desire a fresh start in your life and major changes. You know this may only be accomplished by turning your back on all you believed and starting over with an open mind and a new outlook on life in general.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Stress plays a bigger role in your life than usual. Under pressure is not the best position to be in to make decisions. When tensions are high like you may experience today, it is best to but off any decisions for later. Hit the road, take a drive, or just do what it takes to add a bit of relaxation into your world. You may find someone turning to you for advice or as a shoulder to cry on. Pouring your time into helping someone may seem to relieve your stress and minimize your own problems. Helping others could be the best way to help yourself.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may find yourself wanting to broaden your horizons. You know this is a big world and your life is contained in a tiny square of it. It may be time to take a step out of that box and find what the world has to offer you. You could find it difficult to communicate with others today because you find your mind is a million miles away. Curiosity has taken a hold on you and you can't seem to stay focused on the here and now. You may find this evening that a good book may be just what you need to find this escape you have been searching for. A good time for rest and relaxation is in order for you.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You tend to bore easily. This is a time where you crave something different, something out of the ordinary. The only way to bring about change in your world is for you, yourself to make changes. Think outside of the box. Dare to dream the impossible. Reach for the stars. One day you just may be one. You crave excitement and something that will set your soul on fire. Trying new things and surrounding yourself with new friends may be in order. Let no one set limits on your life. You are in control and you have the power to acquire everything your heart desires.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You're into the organic diet and toxic free lifestyle; this is reflected in the contents of your garden and kitchen. You're focused like a laser on reaching certain financial goals and anything that threatens this rattles you; take a deep breath and conquer! You're in a position to caretake someone who's unable to take care of themselves in some way; you happily attend to this. You go the extra mile to help someone at work and this opens your eyes to the plight of someone else. A melancholy energy could infuse your environment; realizing that we live on a sometimes harsh planet is a downer until you take a look at the wonderful life you lead.

Wordsearch Puzzle

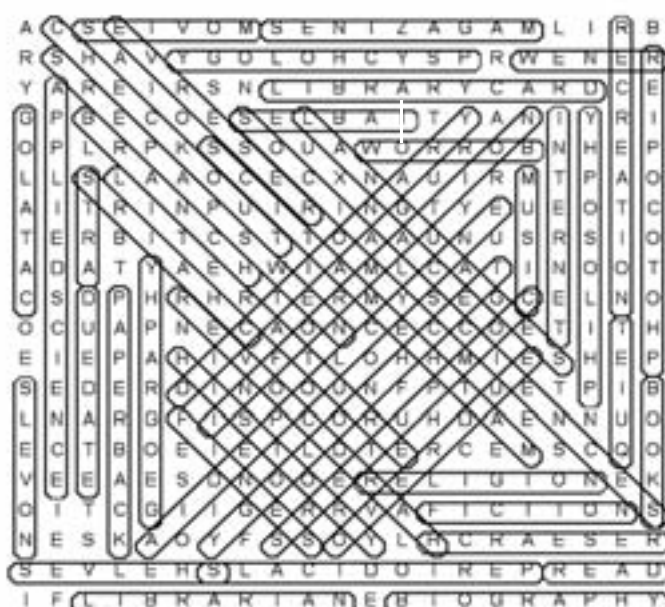
Radiohead Songs

Find and circle all of the Radiohead songs that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional song by Radiohead.



- AIRBAG  
ALL I NEED  
BLACK STAR  
BLOW OUT  
BODYSNATCHERS  
BONES  
CREEP  
ELECTIONEERING  
FAUST ARP  
FITTER HAPPIER
- HIGH AND DRY  
HUNTING BEARS  
IN LIMBO  
JUST  
KARMA POLICE  
KID A  
KNIVES OUT  
LET DOWN  
LUCKY  
LURGEE
- MORNING BELL  
MY IRON LUNG  
NICE DREAM  
NO SURPRISES  
NUDE  
OPTIMISTIC  
PARANOID ANDROID  
PLANET TEXEL  
PROVE YOURSELF
- PYRAMID SONG  
RECKONER  
REPCORD  
SULK  
THE BENDS  
THE TOURIST  
TREEFINGERS  
VEGETABLE  
VIDEOTAPE

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MOVIES  
MUSIC  
NEWSPAPERS  
NOVELS  
OVERDUE  
PAPERBACK  
PERIODICALS  
PHILOSOPHY  
PHOTOCOPIER  
PSYCHOLOGY
- QUIET  
READ  
RECREATION  
RELIGION  
REVIEW  
RESEARCH  
RESERVE  
SHELVES  
SOCIAL SCIENCES  
TABLES  
TECHNOLOGY

The hidden message is: A LIBRARY IS NOT A LUXURY BUT ONE OF THE NECESSITIES OF LIFE

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Yesterday's Solution

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



# Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JANUARY 10, 2019



This combination of pictures created shows Vietnamese motorists riding under the rain along a street in Hanoi yesterday. — AFP photos

## Varanasi's temple corridor destroys old neighborhood

India's ancient city of Varanasi is clearing the way for a grand temple corridor by razing hundreds of houses, wiping away its oldest neighborhood and upsetting locals. The aim is to improve accessibility for pilgrims by providing a direct pathway from the Ganges river to the 18th-century shrine of Lord Shiva, the Kashi Vishwanath temple. For centuries Hindus have visited Varanasi to cremate their dead but it has often required navigating crowded alleyways to reach the city's ghats, or riverside steps, where the caretakers of the cremation grounds pass flaming torches to the bereaved families to ignite wooden pyres dotting the banks.

Some 300 homes have been earmarked for demolition but locals, whose families have lived in the area for generations, say some of the properties being destroyed are as old as the temple itself. Local resident Ajay Kapoor hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose constituency is Varanasi. "Why should he care? By demolishing 300 houses, he will lose not even 10,000 votes," Kapoor told the Hindu daily. "But Banaras (Varanasi) is defined by its galis (narrow lanes), and by creating this corridor, he is robbing Banaras of its very identity." The report added that residents have been offered compensation and relocation options but said that some residents feel it is not adequate reimbursement for losing homes in an area of prime real estate. The \$85,000 demolition project has also unearthed several ancient temples, statues, and historic buildings, prompting debate on how best to preserve these whilst constructing the corridor. — AFP



A view of buildings undergoing demolition near Manikarnika Ghat in the Lahori Tola area of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh state.



In this picture Indian workers gather next to the remains of a Hindu temple before carrying on with demolition work in the Lahori Tola area of Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh state. — AFP photos



Indian schoolgirls walk over the rubble of a demolished house along an alleyway near Meer Ghat in Lahori Tola area of Varanasi, in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

## Margot Robbie to portray Barbie in first live-action film

Australian actress Margot Robbie will play the role of Mattel's iconic Barbie doll in the toy's first live-action film, Mattel and Warner Bros said Tuesday. Barbie, who will celebrate her 60th birthday this year, has already been the subject of dozens of animated movies, though none were ever distributed in theaters. The feature film will be the first from the toy manufacturer's new studio Mattel Films, and co-produced with Robbie's production company LuckyChap Entertainment.

"Over the brand's almost 60 years, Barbie has empowered kids to imagine themselves in aspirational roles from a princess to president," Robbie said, according to a statement. Launched in March 1959, the character of Barbara Millicent Roberts is from the fictional town of Willow, Wisconsin. Her boyfriend, Ken, was introduced by Mattel in 1961 and her sister, Skipper, in 1964. The company has released hundreds of fashion and lifestyle accessories for the brand.

Despite Mattel's release of different versions of Barbie with varying of eye colors, hairstyles and skin tones and, more recently, more diverse body types, the actress portraying Barbie for her big-screen debut will resemble the doll's original blonde, blue-eyed iteration.

"I'm so honored to take on this role and produce a film that I believe will have a tremendously positive impact on children and audiences worldwide," Robbie said. Robbie, 28, has starred in films including "Suicide Squad" in 2016 and "I, Tonya" in 2017, for which she was nominated for a best actress Oscar.

The new project shows the ambitions of Mattel's new CEO, Ynon Kreiz, who took the top spot at the company in April 2018. Kreiz is working to revive a company that has suffered from the twin blows of video games and screens in general, which have taken children's attention away from traditional toys. But 2018 was a good year for Barbie, as sales increased 15 percent over the first nine months of the year to \$698 million. In total, more than a billion Barbie dolls have been sold in the 60 years since she first went for sale in New York. — AFP



In this file photo actress Margot Robbie attends the New York premiere of 'Mary Queen Of Scots.' — AFP







Models present creations by fashion house Raeburn during their catwalk show of the Autumn/Winter 2019 London Fashion Week Men's fashion event in London. — AFP



# Pikachu and provocation at London's Fashion Week for men



Pokemon prints, khaki, flowing cuts and a raft of young talent were among the standout features of London's Fashion Week Men's, which ended on Monday after three days of catwalk shows.

With the big names of British fashion, most notably Burberry, abandoning the men's version of Fashion Week in favor of presenting mixed collections during the main event, the path was clear for young designers to make their mark with their Autumn/Winter 2019 wardrobes. Nigerian-born designer Mowalola Ogunlesi, who graduated in 2017 from the prestigious Central Saint Martins, was one of those to grasp the opportunity.

Ogunlesi, stylist on a recent video for rapper Skepta, has been earmarked as one of London's rising fashion stars, displaying his collection under the banner of the Fashion East talent incubator. On the menu, a sexy and inventive wardrobe celebrating African culture with tawny patterns and tight trousers with low waists in khaki, blue and grey.

Christopher Raeburn presented his eco-fashion wardrobe, marked by sophisticated canvas pants and winter parkas worn with Cuban caps. Green gave way to olive at Hussein Chalayan's show and his minimalist, geometric wardrobe that included trousers made of removable parts to adapt to the weather. The Turkish-British designer's muted camouflage palette was broken by bold flashes of fluorescent yellow.

Also playing on contrasts, Danish designer Astrid Andersen matched traditional autumn brown with vibrant blue azure, as though welcoming the season's first flakes of snow. Fluidity was the watchword for young British designer Craig Green, with his collection of lightweight and comfortable raincoats with oversized hoods like bridal gowns. Compatriot Edward Crutchley showed off his more High Street friendly collection, revealing his Japanese influence with long, kimono-style jackets.

He described the collection as representing "a sartorial, no-frills attitude" where "signature roomy silhouettes have been slimmed down in homage to the no-nonsense tailoring of mid-1980s Japanese and American" ready-to-wear. British designer Bobby Abley cemented his reputation for playfulness by mining Japanese cartoon phenomenon Pokemon for inspiration. Pikachu, Charmander and Squirtle, three creatures from the famous franchise, adorned sweatshirts and jogging pants, worn with Docs Martens and stetsons.



Events took a darker turn with Chinese designer Xander Zhou, who drew on his own "fears" with intriguing combinations of faux fur in a yeti style, complete with shark fins and wolf masks. Bulgarian Kiko Kostadinov took an even more unsettling path with his collection inspired by cult horror film "Ring" (1998).

Like the ghost that haunts Hideo Nakata's feature film, his models marched with their faces hidden by long black hair. Unisex label "Art School" surprised the London public by parading men in dresses and miniskirts for its very first solo show at Fashion Week.—AFP



Models present creations during the Xander Zhou.



Models present creations by fashion house Chalayan.







Models present a creation by British designer Edward Crutchley.







# Cooper, Cuaron among Directors Guild nominees

First-time director Bradley Cooper and Mexican filmmaker Alfonso Cuaron on Tuesday topped the list of nominees for the Directors Guild of America (DGA) award—a strong indicator of Oscar hopes. Cooper was nominated for the popular music romance reboot “A Star Is Born”—the story of an aging rocker (Cooper himself) who discovers a struggling singer-songwriter (Lady Gaga) and propels her to stardom. But Cuaron will be a tough competitor, after winning best director honors at the Golden Globes for “Roma,” his ode to his own childhood in 1970s Mexico City. It is his second DGA nomination after winning for “Gravity.” Both “Star” and “Roma” are seen as top contenders for Academy Awards glory on February 24.

At the Globes on Sunday, “Roma” also scooped up the award for best foreign language film, while “Star” was largely shut out, only winning for best original song. Rounding out the DGA field for outstanding achievement in feature film directing are the veteran Spike Lee for “BlacKkKlansman,” Peter Farrelly for “Green Book” and Adam McKay for Dick Cheney biopic “Vice.” “Each of these directors has demonstrated an exceptional command of the medium, creating excellence for the screen,” said DGA president Thomas Schlamme in announcing the nominees. The DGA awards are to be handed out on February

2. The DGA short list is considered a Oscars bellwether. Last year’s DGA winner, Guillermo del Toro (“The Shape of Water”), went on to win the same prize at the Oscars and the film took best picture honors. The Academy Award nominations will be announced on January 22. — AFP



In this file photo actor and director Bradley Cooper arrives for the 76th annual Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills, California. — AFP photos



A woman walks past a bus featuring an advertising of the upcoming Bollywood film ‘The Accidental Prime Minister’ in Mumbai, India. — Reuters

## Bollywood film on former PM stirs controversy before Indian election

A film that casts opposition leader Rahul Gandhi and his family in an unflattering light ahead of a national election later this year has kicked up a controversy ahead of its release on Friday. Commentators on social media and television news programs have taken swipes at the makers of “The Accidental Prime Minister” for pursuing a political agenda, while a spokesman for the Gandhi’s Congress Party has derided it as “propaganda”. Based on a 2014 book of the same name, the Bollywood movie is billed as a chronicle of Manmohan Singh’s ten-year premiership, as narrated by his former media advisor Sanjaya Baru. Singh, a distinguished economist often credited for the country’s liberalization push in the 1990’s, became prime minister in 2004, after Congress President Sonia Gandhi, Rahul’s mother, led her party to a surprise election victory, but then stunned the country by nominating Singh for the premiership. Trailers for the movie include scenes showing the Gandhis telling the mild-mannered Singh what to do, providing political ammunition for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party as it girds for a harder than expected battle to win a second term at an election that must be called by May. The BJP’s official Twitter handle tweeted a link to

the trailer, calling the film “a riveting tale of how a family held the country to ransom for 10 long years.” Rahul Gandhi’s father, grandmother and great-grandfather were all prime ministers of India, and the BJP habitually targets the dynasty. The trailer has garnered more than 63 million views on YouTube. In one scene, Singh’s wife is shown asking her forlorn husband: “How much more will the party insult you? Why can’t you say something?” Singh, now 86 years old, could not be reached immediately by Reuters for comment. Anupam Kher, the actor who plays Singh, has been an ardent Modi supporter and his wife is a national lawmaker for the BJP. Akshaye Khanna, who plays Baru’s character in the film, is the son of Vinod Khanna, a film actor who was also a BJP lawmaker. Kher told Reuters that he didn’t want to discuss political views “because whatever I say will not satisfy those who raise objections.” But the coming elections left suspicions over the timing of the film’s release. Fellow Bollywood actor Mohammed Zeeshan Ayyub tweeted “why don’t you just postpone the release till July, if it is just a pure piece of cinema and nothing more?” — Reuters

## ‘Aquaman’ makes waves to stay atop N American box office

“Aquaman” left other movies in its wake in North American box offices this weekend, taking in \$31 million, final figures by industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Monday. The DC super-hero film, in its third week out, has now taken in a global total of \$941 million. That makes it the biggest Warner Bros. comic-book film since “The Dark Knight Rises” earned more than \$1 billion in 2012, according to Variety’s entertainment news website. Jason Momoa stars as the heavily tattooed half human/half-Atlantean hero who struggles against evil forces to gain control of the powerful Trident of Atlan. James Wan, known for horror films like “Saw,” directed. In second place was new Sony thriller “Escape Room,” with \$18.2 million for the three-day weekend—a strong start for a film that cost just \$9 million to produce. Third place went to Disney’s family-friendly musical “Mary Poppins Returns,” at \$15.9 million. The sequel to the beloved 1964 film stars Emily Blunt in the title role and Lin-Manuel Miranda as a limber and lovable lamp-lighter. In fourth was “Bumblebee,” from Paramount, at \$13.2 million. The prequel to the “Transformers” movies stars Hailee Steinfeld and John Cena. Sony’s “Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse” dropped to the fifth spot, with a take of \$13.1 million for its fourth week in theaters. The film won a best animated picture award at the Golden Globes on Sunday, with director Peter Ramsay hailing the message of inclusivity behind the film. “We were trying to make a movie that spoke to the idea that anyone could be behind the mask,” he said during his acceptance speech. Rounding out the weekend’s top 10 were: “The Mule” (\$9.1 million) “Vice” (\$5.7 million) “Second Act” (\$4.8 million) “Ralph Breaks the Internet” (\$4.7 million) “Holmes & Watson” (\$3.3 million)—AFP



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

## Star Whitaker more scared of playing Desmond Tutu than Idi Amin

Hollywood star Forest Whitaker has played hitmen, gangsters, and bloodthirsty dictator Idi Amin. But nothing scared him more than portraying South African Nobel peace prize laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the new film “The Forgiveness”. “I was very intimidated, really afraid,” the legendary actor told AFP as the film opened in Europe. “I asked myself: ‘Can I do this?’ A number of times I thought maybe I should just withdraw. “I wanted to (play him) but I wanted to make sure that he’d be happy with whatever I did.” But how could the towering, bear-like Whitaker be convincing as the diminutive anti-apartheid campaigner, now 87? “My voice is very different from his, and then there’s the accent—there was a lot of things that made me be concerned. All caused me great fear,” said the actor who won an Oscar for his portrayal of Amin in “The Last King of Scotland”. “So all I could do was to try to portray the spirit and the soul of this man that was so important to South Africa, and in so many ways to the world.” Whitaker made a name playing Charlie Parker in Clint Eastwood’s jazz biopic, “Bird”, which earned him a best actor award at the Cannes film festival in 1988.



**‘Forgiveness is complicated’** The 57-year-old Texan, who has thrown himself into charity and conflict resolution work in Africa since playing Amin in 2006, said he has long been an admirer of Tutu, an Anglican cleric who headed South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). The body was set up to get to the truth of murders and other crimes committed under the former whites-only government, and could provide amnesty for repenting perpetrators who revealed all they knew. “The Forgiveness”, which was adapted by Roland Joffe, the maker of the “The Killing Fields” and “The Mission”, turns on the way Tutu was forced to deal with people who would once happily have killed him—including a former member of a government death squad seeking clemency before the TRC. Meeting and studying Tutu for the film was inspirational, said Whitaker, who is a peace and reconciliation ambassador for UNESCO. “The things he had to do has even more entrenched my belief that we have to understand each other and at times forgive each other,” said the actor whose charity, the Whitaker Peace & Development Initiative, works in South Sudan, Uganda, Mexico, and South Africa, as well as with gangs in the US. “Forgiveness is a very complicated thing,” Whitaker insisted. “Sometimes you have to forgive yourself for forgiving someone for doing horrible things to your family, to yourself and your friends.” In the film, Tutu’s capacity for compassion is put to the test by fictional character Piet Blomfield, played by Eric Bana.

**‘Africa changed my life’** “Africa has changed my life,” Whitaker told AFP, after first discovering the continent when he was shooting “The Last King of Scotland” in Uganda. “When we finished one of my colleagues asked me if I would go to an orphanage he was trying to build. I went and started to help him building dormitories and meeting the first child soldiers that I got to know. And that was a kind of a spark,” said the actor and activist. The Hope North boarding school in the north of the country, which he still supports, gives vocational training to former child soldiers. “I had been involved with some form of conflict resolution with gang members back in Los Angeles,” Whitaker recounted. “When I got to Africa I saw inside the eyes of the child soldiers the same look I saw in the gang members.” So he asked himself: “What could I offer to bring about some sort of solution?” The answer was to combine “conflict resolution with training for computer technology, life and leadership skills, and social entrepreneurship.” As for Tutu, known for his easy laugh, Whitaker’s fears were unwarranted. “He loved the film, which was a great relief for me. He had joked with me before we made it about how we were going to do his nose,” a favorite with cartoonists. “We decided not to do very much. We used a fake one,” said the actor, who has also played recent blockbusters such as “Black Panther” and “Rogue One: A Star Wars Story.” — AFP

## Credits roll for Moscow’s Soviet-era cinemas

Scattered throughout the city’s outlying neighborhoods, Moscow’s Soviet-era cinemas have for decades served as the center of communities. With names like “Mars” and “The Diamond”, the cinemas were mostly built in the 1960s and 70s during a Soviet film boom and were popular even after the collapse of the USSR, offering cheaper tickets than their counterparts in shopping centers. Now—as part of a wider plan changing the face of the Russian capital—almost 40 of them are being turned into modern glass complexes. Developers say the project will brighten up dreary suburbs and bring more life to dormant residential districts. But it has faced a backlash from activists and residents, who say it will deprive locals of community focal points and destroy important architectural heritage. The plan is part of a major city redevelopment program led by Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin that has included the construction of a multi-billion-dollar park and the demolition of Soviet-era pre-fab apartments. Real estate company ADG Group bought 39 Soviet-built cinemas from the government and plans to turn them into what it calls “neighborhood centers”.

**‘There is nothing there’** Grigory Pechersky, ADG Group’s founder and co-director, said the majority of the cinemas were in “extremely poor” condition when his company bought them in 2014. “Around half of them were closed since the 1990s,” he told AFP in the group’s central Moscow office. Pechersky said

the project aims to “recreate the historical function of the cinemas, which is for residents to spend their free time comfortably.” Moscow’s infrastructure in residential areas is limited, he said, and Muscovites tend to travel to the huge city’s center for quality entertainment and shopping. “Those areas are very densely populated but in many cases there is nothing there,” he said, adding that around 10 million people live between Moscow’s two main beltways where the cinemas are located. All but three of the cinemas will be completely torn down and rebuilt. One of those surviving is the 1938 Rodina (Motherland) cinema, a Stalinist landmark in northeastern Moscow with huge pillars and Soviet mosaics, where ADG Group plans to reopen the building’s original rooftop terrace. **‘Little architectural value’** The rest of the cinemas were built in the brutalist style—a utilitarian form of architecture popular in the Soviet Union in the second half of the 20th century. Built in the shape of simple squares, some are on local high streets such as Almaz (The Diamond), a 1964 cinema painted turquoise in southern Moscow’s leafy Shabolovka district. Others—like the Angara, which is named after a Siberian river and already under reconstruction—are surrounded by typical late-Soviet housing blocks. According to ADG Group, they have “little architectural value”. The company hired the British architectural firm run by Amanda Levete—who has worked on London’s V&A Museum and Lisbon’s MAAT contemporary art cen-

ter—to design a concept for the new cinemas. The group’s main architect Alexei Belyakov said the cinemas will be reconstructed in a similar style, to form a recognizable “network” across the far-flung districts. In drawings seen by AFP, they will all have a glass front and will be considerably larger, to make room for retail space and cafes. All they will retain is the logos of their original names—taken from cities and rivers of the Soviet Union, planets, mountains and precious stones. Belyakov said that while the cinemas “were built in the spirit of the time, they are not practical anymore.”

**‘Our favorite cinema’** But many Moscow architects disagree. Ruben Arakelyan, who runs a Moscow-based architectural bureau, said that while it’s “right” to revive the cinemas, the brutalist buildings could have been preserved. He said some of the cinemas began “dying out” when people increasingly started to travel to the city center for work after the fall of the Soviet Union. Local activists worry the cinemas will be turned into regular shopping malls—of which Moscow already has an abundance. “They tell us that these are depressing places that need to be torn down,” said Klim Likhachev, the head of a residents’ group to save the Almaz cinema. “But this is our favorite cinema. Nobody asked the residents,” Likhachev said. “By reconstruction they actually mean demolition. They are calling it a ‘neighborhood center’, but it will in fact be another banal shopping center.” Activist Pyotr Ivanov said the problem with the plan was that it assumed each neighborhood where the cinemas are based had the same needs. “All of them are different. You could only make universal decisions like that in a command economy like the Soviet Union,” he said. Two Metro stations away from Almaz, residents have also been fighting to preserve the Ulaanbaatar, named after the capital of once Soviet-friendly Mongolia. Another of the movie theatres, the Baku Cinema in northwestern Moscow, has served as a community center for the Azerbaijani diaspora since the Soviet era. ADG Group’s Belyakov brushed aside criticism, saying it was important for the Russian capital to look to the future. “Moscow is moving forward,” he said. — AFP



A picture shows a view of the 1938 Rodina (‘Motherland’) cinema, a Stalinist landmark in northern Moscow with huge pillars decorated with Soviet mosaics. — AFP



# Classifieds

Thursday, January 10, 2019

STATE OF KUWAIT  
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION  
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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



## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Partly cloudy with light to moderate freshening over costal areas variable wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h .

**BY NIGHT:** Partly cloudy to cloudy with moderate to fresh over costal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 45 km/h .

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	<div>SFC. CHART09/01/2019 0000 UTC</div>	
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	15 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	20 °C	13 °C		
ABDALY	21 °C	12 °C		
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C		
JAHRA	21 °C	14 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	18 °C	15 °C		
SALMIYAH	18 °C	15 °C		
AHMADI	18 °C	16 °C		
NUWAISIB	19 °C	14 °C		
WAFRA	20 °C	11 °C		
SALMY	18 °C	10 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	01/10	Partly cloudy to cloudy	16 °C	08 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Friday	01/11	Cool	16 °C	07 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Saturday	01/12	Partly cloudy to cloudy	17 °C	06 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 26 km/h
Sunday	01/13	Partly cloudy to cloudy	22 °C	10 °C	SE	20 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:44
Zuhr	11:55
Asr	14:48
Sunset	17:07
Isha	18:29

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	18 °C
MIN. Temp.	11 °C
MAX. RH	88 %
MIN. RH	37 %
MAX. Wind	N 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## Hospitals

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

## Clinics

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

### ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation two bed room two bathroom flat big hall fully furnished all facilities available, single couple or executive bachelor or working ladies, Abbassiya near Vigy studio, Hitec computer. Please contact 97470947 after 3:30 pm. (C 5441) 6-1-2019

### LOST

I Zakir Mansoori lost my Indian Passport no. S 9921621, issued on 31/10/2018, Kuwait. If anyone finds please call on 94947880, 97421645. 10-1-2019

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL  
**HOTLINE 128**

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is

**1889988**

## EMERGENCY



**112**

## Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22087426
FlyDubai	22924455
Qatar Airways	22414400
KLM	22423888
Royal Jordanian	22425747
British Airways	22418064/5/6
Air France	22425635
Emirates	22430224
Air India	22921555
Sri Lanka Airlines	22438184
Egypt Air	22424444
Swiss Air	22421578
Saudia	22421516
Middle East Airlines	22426306
Lufthansa	22423073
PIA	22422493
Bangladesh Airlines	22421044
Indian Airlines	22452977/8
Oman Air	22456700
Turkish Airlines	22958787
Aeroflot	22453820/1
	22404838/9



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

## DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 10/1/2019							
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	KAC	204	Lahore	14:05
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	IRA	667	Esfahan	14:10
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	JZR	602	Baku	14:10
SAI	441	Lahore	00:50	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	FDB	8065	Dubai	14:40
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	KAC	618	Doha	14:40
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KAC	412	Bangkok	15:00
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:05
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:15	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	JZR	222	Riyadh	15:30
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC	562	Amman	15:35
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	304	Mumbai	15:40
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	SAW	705	Damascus	16:00
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	118	New York	16:05
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:05
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	JZR	212	Jeddah	16:25
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	502	Beirut	16:30
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	KAC	542	Cairo	16:30
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35
JZR	406	Kochi	04:45	FDB	051	Dubai	16:40
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	FEQ	341	Sohag	16:55
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	JZR	114	Doha	17:10
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	JZR	104	Bahrain	17:45
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:35	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	JZR	124	Dubai	18:20
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30
KAC	362	Colombo	06:10	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	RJA	640	Amman	19:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25
BAW	157	London	07:05	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:25
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	NIA	161	Cairo	19:30
KAC	206	Islamabad	07:35	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	19:35
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	JZR	776	Riyadh	19:50
MSC	411	Asyut	09:00	JZR	126	Dubai	19:55
QTR	8511	Doha	09:00	KNE	381	Taif	20:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	620	Doha	20:15
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	DHX	172	Bahrain	20:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	QTR	1088	Doha	20:35
IAW	157	Al Najaf	09:55	KAC	674	Dubai	20:35
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:45
SYR	341	Damascus	10:00	KAC	174	Munich	21:15
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20
IRA	675	Lar	10:50	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
JZR	122	Dubai	11:20	KAC	164	MXP	21:25
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KAC	168	Paris	21:30
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	UAE	859	Dubai	21:35
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	RBG	551	Alexandria	21:40
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
JZR	252	Amman	12:30	KAC	676	Dubai	21:45
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	564	Amman	21:55
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	JAI	574	Mumbai	22:00
ABY	121	Sharjah	12:55	MSC	405	Sohag	22:00
KIS	6032	Mashhad	13:00	ETD	1082	Doha	22:05
MSR	610	Kozhikode	13:10	QTR	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15
KNE	531	Jeddah	13:20	AIC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	RBG	213	Sohag	22:30
IAW	157B	Al Najaf	13:55	KAC	622	Doha	22:30
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	13:55	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:45
KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	KAC	692	Muscat	22:55
KAC	792	Madinah	14:05	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00
				MSC	501	Alexandria	23:05
				GEC	8456	Frankfurt	23:10
				JZR	128	Dubai	23:15
				FDB	071	Dubai	23:45

Departure Flights on Thursday 10/1/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
JZR	409	Delhi	00:50
JZR	707	Luxor	01:00
JAI	571	Mumbai	01:15
JZR	111	Doha	01:45
KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
SAI	442	Lahore	01:50
KAC	417	Manila	02:20
DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:25
THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
PGT	859	Istanbul	02:55
IGO	1758	Kochi	02:55
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
UAE	854	Dubai	03:40
KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55
OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
QTR	1087	Doha	04:00
KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:00
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
KAC	203	Lahore	05:10
IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
DHX	173	Bahrain	05:30
QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
FDB	070	Dubai	05:50
JZR	215	Jeddah	06:00
KAC	303	Mumbai	06:10
JZR	713	Sohag	06:15
JZR	121	Dubai	06:35
THY	771	Istanbul	06:40
JZR	251	Amman	07:05
KAC	167	Paris	07:10
RJA	643	Amman	07:15
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	413	Bangkok	07:20
KAC	173	Munich	08:20
JZR	601	Baku	08:30
KAC	163	MXP	08:40
FDB	054	Dubai	08:50
KAC	501	Beirut	09:00
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05
KAC	613	Bahrain	09:05
KAC	791	Madinah	09:10
JZR	731	Cairo	09:10
BAW	156	London	09:10
KAC	117	Shannon/New York	09:15
KAC	541	Cairo	09:30
KAC	561	Amman	09:40
KAC	101	London	09:45
KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
KAC	741	Dammam	09:45
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
MSC	412	Asyut	10:00
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
KAC	617	Doha	10:35
JZR	211	Jeddah	10:40
QTR	8512	Doha	10:45
QTR	1071	Doha	10:45
KAC	155	Istanbul	10:45
IAW	158	Al Najaf	10:55
SYR	342	Damascus	11:00
SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
IRA	668	Mashhad	11:50
JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00
JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00
MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
QTR	1075	Doha	13:00
JZR	113	Doha	13:30
ABY	122	Sharjah	13:35
JZR	123	Dubai	13:40
KIS	6033	Mashhad	14:00



# Saudi Arabia says vast oil reserves bigger than thought

## Kingdom to slash oil exports after price slide: Minister

RIYADH: OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia said yesterday that its huge oil reserves, already the second largest in the world behind only Venezuela, are even bigger than previously thought. The energy ministry said proven oil reserves stood at 263.2 billion barrels at the end of last year, up from the figure of 261 billion barrels that has been used for almost three decades. The kingdom has another 2.9 billion barrels of crude in a border zone shared with neighboring Kuwait, bringing total oil reserves to 266.1 billion barrels, the ministry said.

Natural gas reserves also grew from 8.56 trillion cu m to 9.2 trillion cu m, the ministry said. It said the new figures have been backed by an independent third-party certification by leading consultants DeGolyer and MacNaughton (D&M). Saudi Arabia is the world's top oil exporter. It is the third biggest producer after the United States and Russia with around 10.6 million barrels per day. Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said Saudi oil remains among the cheapest in the world to extract, at only \$4 a barrel.

Falih also said Saudi Arabia will slash its oil exports in January by 10 percent compared to November as producers move to shore up tumbling prices. Falih said the kingdom, the world's top crude supplier, would cut its exports to 7.2 million barrels per day in January, down from 8.0 million bpd in November. He also announced a further

100,000 bpd cut in February. OPEC and its allies decided last month to cut their overall output by 1.2 million bpd starting in January, to boost prices hit by a supply glut and fears demand could plummet.

Falih said Saudi production had fallen to 10.2 million bpd, down from the roughly 11 million bpd it was pumping when oil producers decided to end a production cut deal in May. "We are serious about restoring balance to the market," Falih told a press conference in Riyadh held to announce that the kingdom's vast oil reserves are even bigger than previously thought. "We are concerned about volatility in the oil market," he said. "We have seen peaks and drops in prices (that are) completely unjustified by the fundamentals."

After Brent crude hit \$85 a barrel in early October, prices dived more than 40 percent over the following two months due to oversupply and fears of a trade war between the United States and China that could slash energy demand. But prices have partially rebounded in the past few days after a new deal, in which OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers agreed to trim output by 1.2 million bpd, came into effect in January. That figure is "more than sufficient to bring balance to the market," said Falih, adding that the production cut would trim excess supply from the market. — AFP



RIYADH: Saudi Energy Minister Khaled Al-Falih speaks at a press conference at the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center yesterday. — AFP

## Ransom demand for Norway millionaire's missing wife: Police

OSLO: Police say a ransom demand has been received for the missing wife of a Norwegian multi-millionaire 10 weeks after she disappeared on Halloween, a senior officer said yesterday. Anne-Elisabeth Falkevik Hagen, 68, married to a real estate and energy magnate, disappeared on October 31, police said. Detectives had been investigating the case discreetly for several weeks but decided to make it public yesterday in the hope that someone would come forward with information. "A ransom demand and serious threats have been issued," Inspector Tommy Broske told reporters.

"Our main theory is that the victim was kidnapped by unidentified perpetrators at her home" in Lorenskog, about 20 km from Oslo, he said. The authorities had received no sign of life from the woman, "but we haven't received any indication that she isn't alive either", Broske said. Investigators said they had no suspects at this stage.

According to daily Verdens Gang, the ransom demand was for nine million euros (\$10.3 million) in the cryptocurrency Monero. Cryptocurrencies are hard to trace. Police refused to confirm the sum but said they

had advised the family not to pay. Such incidents are extremely rare in the wealthy Scandinavian country, which enjoys a generally low crime rate. Broske said investigators had had "very limited" contacts with the self-described kidnappers online, but refused to disclose the date of the most recent contact.

A housewife, Hagen is married to Tom Hagen, also 68 and Norway's 172nd richest man, according to the magazine Kapital, with an estimated fortune of 1.7 billion kroner (\$200 million). The real estate investor owns 70 percent of electricity company Elkraft, which he co-founded in 1992, Norwegian media reported. The parents of three adult children, the couple lived a quiet, retiring life in an elegant but understated home, now blocked off by police tape.

While he keeps a low profile, Tom Hagen has been the subject of news articles about his business success. A lawyer for the family said they had not paid the ransom. "The family decided to follow the police advice," Svein Holden told reporters. "There's no doubt that for the family, Anne-Elisabeth's kidnapping is a horrible and inhumane act," he said, expressing hopes that news of her disappearance would lead to some kind of sign that she is alive.

According to VG, a note written in poor Norwegian was left at Hagen's home warning that she would die if police were involved in her disappearance. Investigators refused to comment on that report, but said international police were cooperating on the case. — AFP

## UN asks Australia to consider teen for 'resettlement'

BANGKOK: The UN has said an 18-year-old Saudi woman who fled her family is a legitimate refugee and has asked Australia to resettle her, Canberra said yesterday, as the Twitter-led campaign to grant her asylum edged towards resolution. Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun was stopped by authorities at Bangkok's main airport as she arrived on a flight from Kuwait at the weekend after running away from her family, who she says subjected her to physical and psychological abuse.

Thailand initially said it would deport her at the request of Saudi embassy officials, barring her from travelling on to Australia where Qunun said she had intended to claim asylum. But armed with a phone, she barricaded herself into an airside hotel room and fought back - live-tweeting her fears of deportation in a campaign that swiftly galvanized international support and prompted a sharp U-turn by Thai officials.

Qunun is now in the care of the UN's refugee agency in Bangkok, which is processing her case. "The UNHCR has referred Ms Rahaf Mohammed Al-Qunun to Australia for consideration for refugee resettlement," Australia's Department of Home Affairs confirmed in a statement. The department said it would "consider this referral in the usual way, as it does with all UNHCR referrals". Australian officials have strongly hinted that Qunun's request will be accepted. "If she is found to be a refugee, then we will give very, very serious consideration to a humanitarian visa," health minister Greg Hunt had said before the UN determination was public.

Qunun's desperate tweets ricocheted across social media with the #SaveRahaf hashtag drawing an outpouring of support but also the bile of some hardliners in her native country. She only joined the social media site at the start of this month but has quickly racked up more than 100,000 followers. Phil Robertson of Human Rights Watch said Qunun had renounced Islam, which puts her at "serious risk" of prosecution in Saudi Arabia.

Her father and brother arrived in Bangkok on Tuesday, but Qunun "refused to see" them, according

to Thai immigration police chief Surachate Hakpam, who has been caught up in the international firestorm since Qunun's arrival. The father met with the UNHCR yesterday morning and spoke with Surachate in the afternoon for an hour, the immigration head said at a press conference. He denied abusing or threatening her, and told Surachate that Qunun had "freedom".

"He wants to take his daughter back home, her mother fell sick after hearing her daughter ran away," Surachate said. Qunun's father told the UNHCR about his objections to her fleeing and would remain in Thailand until a decision was made, Surachate said, adding that this might come today. A UNHCR representative told AFP "the process is still ongoing". On Sunday Qunun told AFP her family was "abusive" and once locked her in a room for six months just for cutting her hair.

Fleeing them while travelling in Kuwait throws her into conflict with Saudi Arabia's "guardianship" system, which allows male family members to make decisions on behalf of female relatives, she said. That makes it "100 percent" certain she would be killed by her family if she was returned to Saudi, she added. Footage released by Thai immigration showed Abdulilah Al-Shouaibi, Saudi embassy charge d'affaires in Bangkok, complaining in a meeting Tuesday with Surachate that Qunun's smartphone should have been confiscated.

"When she arrived, she opened a new (Twitter) account and her followers grew to 45,000 in one day," he said in Arabic. "It would have been better if they had confiscated her mobile instead of her passport." The Saudi embassy in Bangkok said it "did not demand her deportation" and that the case was "a family affair".

By yesterday afternoon, Qunun had returned to posting updates on Twitter, promising to "broadcast continuously to assure" the public of her condition. "I have prepared my strength and will continue my journey to reach a safe country," she tweeted in Arabic. "Don't let anyone break your wings, you're free," she tweeted in English. "fight and get your RIGHTS!"

Amnesty International's Middle East director of campaigns Samah Hadid said Rahaf's story "became an inspiration to millions worldwide", but added that Thailand has often "breached their responsibilities" to asylum seekers and refugees. "The humanity shown to Rahaf must not be a one-off," said Hadid. Ultraconservative Saudi Arabia has come under fire since the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the country's consulate in Istanbul last year. — AFP

## Cornered Trump running out of...

Continued from Page 1

"Unfortunately, two things caught in the middle are securing our borders, and the men and women in federal government," he added.

One possible if temporary solution is individually funding parts of the government that are currently without money - action that James Clyburn, a top House Democrat, said would get underway yesterday in the Democratic-controlled chamber. But there was no indication the legislation would be brought to a vote in the Republican-held Senate, much less signed by the president.

In his Oval Office address, Trump, apparently hoping to claim the moral high ground, said he wanted to bridge the political divide in what could be the defining power struggle of his turbulent presidency. "I have invited congressional leadership to the White House tomorrow to get this done. Hopefully, we can rise above partisan politics in order to support national security," he said. Despite the softer tone, Trump also spent much of the speech doubling down on his controversial message - popular among his right-wing base - that illegal immigration at the US-Mexican border puts American lives in danger.

"How much more American blood must we shed before Congress does its job? For those who refuse to compromise in the name of border security, I would ask to imagine if it was your child, your husband, or your wife whose life was so cruelly shattered and totally broken," he said. In an instant rebuttal, Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi said the real problem was Trump's

"cruel and counter-productive policies" that have made the border ever more dangerous for vulnerable migrants, including young families.

Fact-checking teams at US media outlets quickly took issue with a number of Trump's assertions - for instance, his vastly overstated claim that every day US agents at the border with Mexico "encounter thousands of illegal immigrants trying to enter our country." Also wrong were Trump's assertions that 90 percent of the heroin entering the US crosses over from Mexico and that Mexico, indirectly, via a new trade agreement with the US and Canada, would end up paying for a wall, the Times said.

Salaries for large numbers of employees were put on hold when Trump refused to sign government spending bills as a way of trying to strongarm the Democrats into funding his wall. Pelosi, who is speaker of the House, accused Trump of "holding the American people hostage". Chuck Schumer, the Democratic leader in the Senate, accused Trump of governing "by temper tantrum" and using government workers "for leverage".

There had been speculation that Trump might give way in parts of his speech, for example lowering the sticker price for the wall, or offering Democrats flexibility on other areas of immigration policy. He didn't. However, it was also significant that he did not announce a national emergency, on the theory he could then use military construction money to build the wall, circumventing the Congress. Democrats and some Republicans warned that this would be seen as a dangerous escalation of the row and would be challenged in court.

Trump will follow up his speech with a rare trip to the Mexico border today, but showed little enthusiasm for either the Oval Office speech or the border trip during an off-the-record lunch Tuesday with television anchors, The New York Times reported. "It's not going to change a damn thing, but I'm still doing it," Trump said of the border visit, according to the Times. — AFP

## Pompeo makes reassurance...

Continued from Page 1

acknowledged that there is a threat to Turkey from terrorists and we will be very supportive."

Before meeting officials in Iraqi Kurdistan - whose forces have also been key allies in the fight against IS - Pompeo visited Baghdad where he sought to reassure Iraqi officials that Washington remained committed to fighting the Islamic State group. Pompeo's unannounced visit comes less than two weeks after Trump drew criticism for failing to meet a single Iraqi official during a surprise Christmas trip to US troops at an air base in western Iraq.

The US top diplomat is in the Middle East to urge allies to continue to confront the "significant threats" posed by Iran and militants despite Trump's shock decision last month to pull all US troops from Syria. In Baghdad, Pompeo met a raft of senior officials including Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi and President Barham Saleh. He underlined "US support for the new Iraqi government's efforts to deliver stability, security and prosperity to all Iraqis," a US official said. Pompeo also "discussed the recent territorial defeat of ISIS in Syria and the continuation of our cooperation with Iraqi Security Forces to ensure ISIS's lasting defeat throughout the region".

Saleh said that Baghdad wanted Washington to remain engaged. "We will need the support of the US," he said, expressing "gratitude to the US for support over the years". "ISIS is defeated militarily, but (the) mission is not accomplished," Saleh added, using an alternative acronym for IS. Pompeo later headed to Cairo on the next leg of his longest trip since taking office last year, with further stops planned in Manama,

Abu Dhabi, Doha, Riyadh, Muscat and Kuwait City.

Trump used his lightning Dec 26 visit to Iraq - his first to US troops in a conflict zone since being elected - to defend his Syria withdrawal plans and declare an end to America's role as the global "policeman". He caused a political storm when he announced the troop pullout, claiming IS had been defeated despite continued deadly fighting between US-backed forces and the militants in eastern Syria.

Trump has since rowed back, vowing the withdrawal will be done in a "prudent" way. Members of his administration have gone further, saying that the timeline of any pullout remains dependent on events on the ground. There are many in Iraq, particularly pro-Iran factions, who would like an accelerated timetable for a US withdrawal from Iraq too. But Trump has stressed that he expects US troops to remain in Iraq, from where they can carry out operations in neighboring Syria if necessary.

Iraq declared victory over IS in Dec 2017, but the militants retain a network of sleeper cells in major cities and continue to conduct hit-and-run attacks from mountain or desert hideouts. On Tuesday, a car bomb killed two people in the city of Tikrit, north of the capital, police said. The Trump administration's insistence on treating Tehran as a threat as big or even bigger than IS also poses major difficulties for Iraq.

Since the 2003 US-led invasion, Tehran has become a political force in Iraq with influence rivaling that of Washington. Iran too provided support for Iraq's fight-back against the militants after they advanced to within striking distance of the capital in 2014. And Iraq has developed a dependency on imports from its eastern neighbor that is difficult to break. Washington has granted Baghdad waivers from the crippling unilateral sanctions it reimposed on Tehran last year after Trump pulled out of the landmark 2015 nuclear deal agreed by his predecessor Barack Obama. Pompeo and the Iraqi prime minister discussed yesterday "US support for Iraq's energy independence," the US official said. — AFP

## 73 stranded Indian nurses...

Continued from Page 1

Asked if they will be granted retroactive salaries for the past two years, she said: "I am sure everyone in the group wants it. But, remember, we've been through a lot, so let us start the job first. It is up to the ministry of health if they are willing to compensate us for the lost years. Our first salary will come in our banks by the end of January. We can now pay our debts and loans which we took from friends and family members."

Out of a total of 80 nurses who were stranded in Kuwait, 73 were officially employed by the ministry of health, while the remaining seven either went back to

India for good or transferred to dependent visas. In Aug 2018, Kuwait Times highlighted the ordeal of these nurses. The nurses applied and got the job in India, and came to Kuwait through legal means. However, after arrival, the ministry questioned their documents. The group of nurses, all with nursing qualifications from India and recruited by health ministry officials, are living in government housing, but were unable to work pending verification of their certifications.

"We were a group of 80 Indian nurses who came directly from India (Bangalore, Cochin, Delhi and Mumbai) and were hired directly by health ministry representatives after they held interviews from February to April 2015," a representative of the group had said. In 2015, the ministry of health conducted interviews and exams in India and around 1,500 nurses were hired and issued temporary visas that allowed them to enter Kuwait. The 80 nurses were part of that batch.



# Halep and Stephens bundled out in Sydney International

## Timea beat Australia’s Sam Stosur to meet Sasnovich in the last eight

**SYDNEY:** World number one Simona Halep’s preparations for next week’s Australian Open suffered a huge setback yesterday when she was bundled out of the Sydney International, along with fourth seed Sloane Stephens.

The Romanian hadn’t played since withdrawing from the WTA Finals in October with a herniated disc, and was no match for fast-rising Australian Ashleigh Barty, who scored the biggest win of her career 6-4, 6-4.

Halep, the reigning French Open champion and 2018 Australian Open runner-up, had a bye through to the second round, meaning she heads to Melbourne Park for the opening Grand Slam of the year with just one game under her belt.

“It was a great match after almost four months (since the last one). I think I played a good level of tennis but I had no inspiration in some important points,” she said. “She played really well and deserved to win. But I was also very close to winning.

“No pain at all, that is a great sign,” she added of her back. “The tennis is good, I just have to believe in myself more.” Barty, who ended a breakthrough 2018 with a WTA title in Zhuhai and is now ranked 15, brought the momentum into the new year and is now in the quarter-finals, where she will meet either Belgian 10th seed Elise Mertens or Estonian Anett Kontaveit.

She had already accounted for another French Open winner, Jelena Ostapenko, in the opening round and had an extra gear against Halep, breaking serve twice to win the first set.

Halep, without a coach after splitting with Darren Cahill who wanted to spend more time with his family, was first to break in the second set and had a chance to

hold for 5-3. But Barty was undaunted, using her signature court craft to break straight back and secure victory two games later.

“It was extremely difficult conditions, very swirly down at court level. So I figured if I’m going to play Sim anytime, and it’s her first match, it was now. I was very happy to make the most of it,” said Barty.

“I had nothing to lose out here so I just came out and played with freedom. I believed I could win.”

Earlier in the week, Halep admitted the back injury that ended her 2018 season early was “very scary”. The early finish to 2018 was a disappointing end to a spectacular season, which saw the 27-year-old secure the year-end number one ranking for the second year running.

American world number five Stephens was another casualty. She narrowly escaped defeat in the first round, and slumped out to Kazak qualifier Yulia Putintseva 3-6, 7-6 (7/4), 6-0, meekly surrendering in the final set.

In other matches yesterday, Switzerland’s Timea Bacsinszky beat Australia’s Sam Stosur 5-7, 6-4, 6-3 and will meet Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus in the last eight.

In the men’s draw, third seeded Argentine Diego Schwartzman booked his place in the quarters by beating Spain’s Guillermo Garcia-Lopez in two sets. He will next face Japanese qualifier Yoshihito Nishioka.

Veteran Italian Andreas Seppi is also through to meet top seed Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece, while fifth seeded Alex De Minaur set up an all-Australian last eight tie with Jordan Thompson. France’s Gilles Simon will take on another Australian, John Millman. — AFP



SYDNEY: Yulia Putintseva of Kazakhstan hits a return to Sloane Stephens of the US in their women’s singles second round match at the Sydney International tennis tournament in Sydney yesterday. — AFP

## Magnificent seven beckons for Federer, Djokovic

**MELBOURNE:** Thirtysomethings Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic share the Australian Open record with six wins, but either could make history with a magnificent seventh when the first Grand Slam of the year begins in Melbourne on Monday.

The pair face a stern challenge from youthful force Alexander Zverev, looking for a first major as the torch-bearer for the next generation. But there are question marks over the fitness of Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray, meaning it remains to be seen if all members of the “Big Four” will again prove a force to be reckoned with.

Twelve months ago Federer rolled back the years once more at the Rod Laver Arena to beat Marin Cilic in five pulsating sets and lift an emotional 20th Grand Slam. It put him on a par with other six-time Australian Open winners Djokovic and Roy Emerson—but the Australian great’s victories all came before the Open era.

By contrast, the 31-year-old Djokovic endured a miserable early Melbourne exit, followed by elbow surgery and a string of disappointing results that saw him drop outside the top 20. But since winning a fourth Wimbledon in July the Serb rose inexorably back to number one by losing only three further matches—one of which was to Zverev at the ATP Finals.

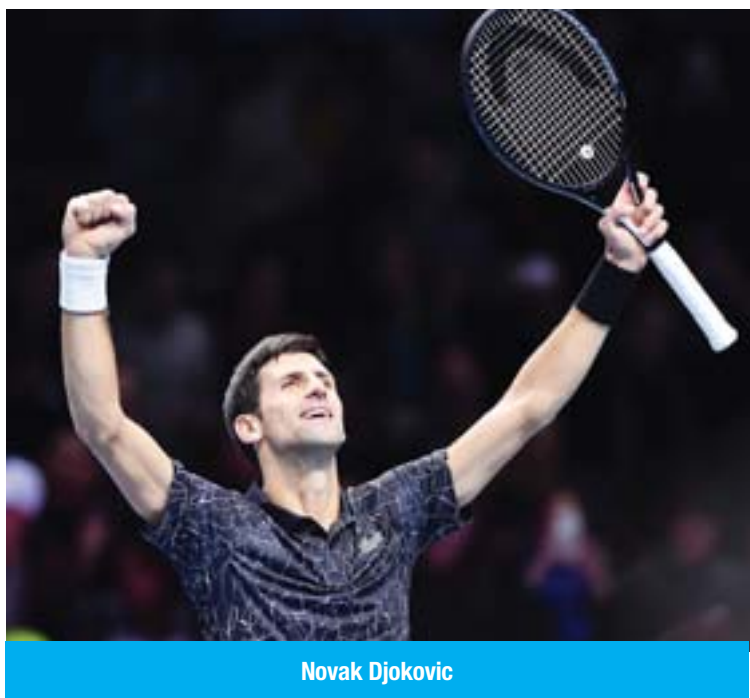
Djokovic won his third US Open in September to put him on 14 Grand Slams—three behind Nadal and six behind Federer. Ageless Swiss master Federer, now 37, will remain a chief threat to the Serb but the other two members of the Big Four look to be struggling after an injury-plagued 2018.

Second-ranked Nadal, 32, pulled out of his Brisbane warm-up tournament with a thigh strain although he returned for an exhibition in Sydney and insisted he was healthy. Murray, 31, looked way below his best in a second-round straight-sets Brisbane defeat to Daniil Medvedev.

“I think if we are healthy and playing well, the four guys still have probably the best chance to always win Slams,” said Djokovic. The Serb warned however that “the next generation is already there” and picked young guns Zverev of Germany, Borna Coric of Croatia, Karen Khachanov of Russia and Greece’s Stefanos Tsitsipas as key threats to the Big Four, who have won a staggering 49 of the last 56 Grand Slams stretching back to 2004.

“It’s just a matter of time when we will see some of them competing in the last stages of Grand Slams,” said Djokovic. Zverev, 21, starts the Australian Open full of confidence after an impressive warm-up in Perth’s mixed teams Hopman Cup, despite his terrible record at Grand Slams.

The German has never got beyond the third round in Melbourne. Last year, seeded four, he crashed out in the last 32 to South Korea’s



Novak Djokovic

Chung Hyeon and has only reached one quarter-final in his 14 major appearances.

Federer seems to thrive at the start of the year and begins his campaign on the back of winning the Hopman Cup. He is hunting a third successive Australian Open after last year becoming the oldest world number one in the 45-year history of the ATP rankings.

“(Pete) Sampras once upon a time said, ‘If you win a Slam, it’s a good season,’” said Federer, now ranked three, who skipped Roland Garros and had disappointing exits at Wimbledon and the US Open.

“I played super well in Australia again. So obviously I can’t wait to go back there. I’m very proud that at 37 I’m still so competitive.” Murray’s hip surgery meant he played just six events in 2018, and Nadal’s truncated 2018 campaign was bookended by injuries that forced to him to retire in both the Australian and US Opens.

But the Spanish king of clay still managed to win five titles including a record-extending 11th French Open. World number five Argentine Juan Martin del Potro, beaten by Djokovic in the US Open final, will miss Melbourne after fracturing his patella in Shanghai in October.

And Cilic, who pushed Federer all the way in the final last year, heads into the tournament after pulling out of a warm-up event in India last week with an injured knee. Home fans will look to Alex de Minaur and Nick Kyrgios, but the latter is searching for form after a troubled 2018 and tumbled out of the Brisbane warm-up, where he was defending champion, in the second round. — AFP

## Unified Korea men’s handball team keep rivals guessing at world champs

**BERLIN:** After a unified Korean women’s ice-hockey team became a feature of last year’s Winter Olympics, a men’s team of North and South Korean players is an unknown factor for today’s opening game of the world handball championships.

A unified Korean team, with four players from the communism-ruled North added to the 16-strong squad of South Korea players, face Germany, the co-hosts alongside Denmark, when the 2019 World Men’s Handball Championships opens in Berlin today.

The unified Korean women’s ice hockey team was a colourful attraction at the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics despite losing all their games and finishing last. Likewise, the men’s handball team is not expected to survive the group stages at the 2019 finals, contested by 24 teams.

However, the significance of a unified team playing in Germany’s capital, which celebrates the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall this November, is not lost on the Koreans. “With the fall of the Wall, one went on the path of peace. We want to show, as a unified team, that we Koreans can also follow a similar

path,” said the team’s coach Cho Young-shin, a South Korean.

This will be Korea’s debut at a men’s world championships and the opening match is a 14,500-seater sell-out in Berlin with millions expected to tune in on television with Germany, a handball powerhouse, among the favourites to win a fourth world title.

“This game is steeped in history and will bring a lot of attention to our sport,” beamed Bob Hanning, vice-president of the German Handball Association (DHB). The Koreans have been granted special permission by the International Handball Federation (IHF) to compete and they are the only team allowed to have 20 in their squad, four more than their rivals.

The idea is the brainchild of IHF president Hassan Moustafa, who invited a unified Korean team after South Korea qualified for the world championships by finishing third at the Asian Cup. The full Korean team first set eyes on each other just before Christmas on 22 December in Berlin.

“At the first meeting, we were a bit out of touch with one another”, admitted team captain Jung Su-young, but his North Korean

team-mate Ri Song Jin said the ice was broken at an evening team-building event, “since then we are connected by friendship”.

At least one North Korean player will feature in each of their five preliminary round games. The Koreans are in Group A, alongside reigning world champions France and European powerhouses Russia, Germany and Serbia.

The team will play under the blue and white flag showing a unified Korea and are an unknown factor for the Germans, who had problems getting video footage of the North Koreans to analyse. “They play a fast ball game and are tactically very disciplined. They will be a hard test for us,” said German head coach Christian Prokop.

Goalkeeper Silvio Heinevetter expects a tough afternoon after Germany struggled to beat South Korea four years ago. “it was extremely unpleasant—these little fast guys are not as bad as you’d think.”

The IHF invited both German Chancellor Angela Merkel and North Korea’s leader Kim Jong Un to the opening match, but neither are expected to attend. Instead, guests of honour will be Germany’s president Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Thomas Bach, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), a keen observer with North and South Korea having agreed to bid for the 2032 Olympic Games. — AFP

## Seeds tumble in Auckland as brave Ferrer limps out

**WELLINGTON:** Top seed John Isner crashed out of the Auckland Classic yesterday while a calf injury dashed four-time champion David Ferrer’s hopes of a fairytale final appearance in New Zealand.

Isner was sent packing after fellow American Taylor Fritz held his nerve in two tie-breaks to win 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/5), while compatriot Tennys Sandgren brushed aside third seed Marco Cecchinato of Italy 6-3, 6-3.

Second seed Fabio Fognini narrowly avoided the same fate, with German’s Peter Gojowczyk taking the match to a third-set tie-break before the Italian prevailed 6-2, 3-6, 7-6 (7/5).

The draw—already weakened by the withdrawal of defending champion Roberto Bautista Agut, Tomas Berdych and Gael Monfils—now has only two seeds remaining in Fognini and Pablo Carreno Busta of Spain.

Carreno Busta had an armchair ride into the quarter-finals when Ferrer succumbed to injury just three games into their match. Former world number three Ferrer has retired from Grand Slams but is making a few appearances at his favourite ATP tournaments in 2019, with Auckland first on the list.

The 36-year-old looked sharp

against his fellow Spaniard and they were one game apiece before Ferrer twisted his leg while hitting a cross-court forehand. He tried to continue with strapping on his calf, managing to win a point on serve before reluctantly calling it quits.

Ferrer received a standing ovation at the tournament he described as “a second home” and said he was sorry his dream of winning a record fifth title was over. “Of course it’s disappointing but don’t worry because I’ve had very good memories here, I’m very proud” he told the crowd.

“Remember, I won the last point,” he joked before limping off centre court. Isner, a two-time champion in Auckland, received a bye into the second round because of his seeding and looked rusty as his booming serve failed to dominate Fritz.

“It feels great. John’s beat me twice before and I really wanted to get the win on him” Fritz said after downing the world number 10. “We had a lot of close points... I like to thing one of the strengths of my game is playing under pressure and handling those big moments well.”

Elsewhere, Germany’s Philipp Kohlschreiber defeated Ugo Humbert of France 6-4, 6-4 to set up a quarter-final against Fognini. Britain’s Cameron Norrie beat Joao Sousa of Portugal 7-6 (7/5), 6-4 and Argentinian Leonardo Meyer came from behind to down Italy’s Matteo Berrettini 5-7, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3.

Hometown hope Rubin “Jose” Statham’s campaign ended when the New Zealander fell to Jan-Lennard Struff of Germany 6-2, 6-1. — AFP

## Trick serve gives Tomic advantage over Kyrgios

**MELBOURNE:** Bernard Tomic won the battle of Australia’s tennis bad boys with a comical trick serve through his legs at the Kooyong Classic yesterday, as he and opponent Nick Kyrgios both talked up their chances at the Australian Open.

The world number 83’s good-natured 6-3, 6-4 victory over his longtime friend Kyrgios ended with a flourish when he sent down the sneaky serve, while bouncing another ball, on match point. It caught the relaxed Kyrgios completely off guard, and left him laughing and shaking his head.

The collegial battle between the two showmen, who have both struggled with motivational difficulties, was a crowd pleaser and they were happy afterwards to talk up their chances at the opening Grand Slam of the year next week.

“We’ve both made deep runs at the Open,” said Kyrgios, pointing to his 2015 quarter-final and Tomic’s three fourth rounds. “It’s looking good for Australia, we have a lot of players, all playing with different style, but looking strong.”

As for his own chances at his home Slam, Kyrgios had limited advice. “I guess it’s not doing what I’ve been doing,” said a player who quit the 2018 season in October with an elbow injury and then played basketball and worked with his charity in the off-season.

“Maybe when I reach the second week of a major, I just play better. I have to raise my game and play better at the end of the day. “I’ve been doing all the right things for next week, ticked all the boxes, got the body right.

“I feel like a veteran at this stage, I just need to make sure the body is right.” Like Kyrgios, now ranked 51, Tomic has fallen in and out of love with the sport. A year ago, he could not even qualify for Melbourne Park, advising media after a loss that he could be found “counting my millions.”

That bad attitude lasted through his aborted three-day run in the South African jungle in an Aussie celebrity survival series a month later. Chastened somewhat, Tomic began to rebuild his game last season, winning his first title since 2015 at Chengdu last September and he appears to be carrying that momentum forward.

“I’m just doing what I need to do. My attitude to tennis is the same whether I won or lose,” he said. “My target is to make another Grand Slam quarter-final, maybe even a semi. I need to be healthy to have a good year. I’m okay now (with tennis).” —AFP



# Vasilevskiy, Lightning blank Jackets, Bruins shut out Wild, win 5th straight

## Knights stay hot, drop struggling Rangers

**TAMPA BAY:** Brayden Point had two goals and an assist Tuesday, and newly named All-Star Andrei Vasilevskiy made 31 saves for his second shutout of the season as the Tampa Bay Lightning started a new points streak with a 4-0 victory against the visiting Columbus Blue Jackets. Mathieu Joseph and Nikita Kucherov also scored for the Lightning, who had their 16-game point streak snapped Saturday with a 5-2 loss at San Jose. Tampa Bay improved to 11-0-0 this season against teams from the Metropolitan Division. Earlier in the day, Vasilevskiy was added to the Atlantic Division roster for the Jan. 26 NHL All-Star Game in San Jose as an injury replacement for Montreal's Carey Price. Vasilevskiy will join Lightning teammates Kucherov and Steven Stamkos on the Atlantic Division squad. Columbus goaltender Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 15 of 19 shots before he was replaced in the third period. Joonas Korpisalo stopped all three shots he faced in relief.

### BRUINS 4, WILD 0

Tuukka Rask made 24 saves for the shutout, and Patrice Bergeron and Brad Marchand each had three points as Boston shut down visiting Minnesota. The Bruins extended their winning streak to a season-high five games, and they won for the 16th time in 21 home games this season. Minnesota's three-game winning streak and four-game unbeaten streak in road games came to an end. Just 24 hours removed from a game in Montreal, the Wild came out flat against the Bruins, particularly in a first period in which the Wild allowed three goals and were outshot 15-6.

### GOLDEN KNIGHTS 4, RANGERS 2

Marc-Andre Fleury stopped 27 shots to pick up his league-leading 25th victory, and Brandon Pirri scored

his seventh goal in eight games to lead host Vegas to its seventh straight victory, a win over New York in Las Vegas. Cody Eakin, Jonathan Marchessault and Ryan Carpenter also scored goals for Vegas, which moved into a tie with idol Calgary for first place in the Pacific Division. Mika Zibanejad scored his 12th goal of the season and Jesper Fast netted his sixth for New York. Alexandar Georgiev had 27 saves for the Rangers, who lost their fourth straight game, getting outscored 22-5 during that span.

### SHARKS 7, OILERS 2

Evander Kane and Joonas Donskoi each scored twice as host San Jose walloped Edmonton. Aaron Dell needed only 20 saves to record the Sharks' fourth consecutive win. San Jose defenseman Erik Karlsson collected three assists to extend his franchise-record point streak to 14 games, during which he has one goal and 24 assists. Brent Burns had a goal and an assist, and Marcus Sorensen and Joe Thornton also scored for the Sharks. Alex Chiasson and Milan Lucic netted the goals for Edmonton, which fell to 2-8-0 in its past 10 games.

### SABRES 5, DEVILS 1

Jeff Skinner recorded his 29th tally in an explosive five-goal second period as host Buffalo defeated New Jersey. The Sabres winger trails only Washington's Alex Ovechkin for the league lead in goals. Skinner tied the game early in the middle period, and C.J. Smith and Casey Mittelstadt made it 3-1 as Buffalo took full control. Jake McCabe scored a short-handed goal, and Lawrence Pilut sniped in a goal to round out the period's scoring. Blake Coleman scored a goal, and Keith Kinkaid made 28 saves for the Devils, who lost their second straight and finished 1-3-0 on a road trip.



WASHINGTON: Nolan Patrick #19 of the Philadelphia Flyers and Travis Boyd #72 of the Washington Capitals go after the puck in the first period at Capital One Arena on Tuesday in Washington. — AFP

### JETS 7, AVALANCHE 4

Blake Wheeler had a goal and three assists, and Mark Scheifele and Jacob Trouba each had a goal and two assists as host Winnipeg beat Colorado. Mathieu Perreault, Kyle Connor, Bryan Little and Andrew Copp also had goals for the Jets, who won their sixth straight home game

against the Avalanche. Connor Hellebuyck stopped 36 shots to improve to 6-1-2 all-time against Colorado. Gabe Landeskog scored twice, Carl Soderberg had a goal and an assist, and Ryan Graves also scored for the Avalanche. Philipp Grubauer made 14 saves for Colorado, which has gone 1-5-2 in its past eight games. — Reuters

## England cricket boss Giles targets World Cup, Ashes double

**LONDON:** England's new director of cricket Ashley Giles said yesterday he believes a World Cup and Ashes double is possible for his side this year. England are currently top of the global 50-over rankings and will head into a home World Cup that starts in May as one of the favourites to win a trophy they have never lifted.

After that tournament, they defend the Ashes in a five-Test series, also on home soil, against arch-rivals Australia. It will be the first time the two events have taken place in the same country in the same year since the inaugural 1975 men's World Cup in England.

Asked which he would rather win, Giles, most recently head of sport at Warwickshire-the county he represented during his career as an England left-arm spinner-told Sky Sports at Lord's: "I'll have both thanks.

"This year represents a great opportunity for us to do something really special but at the moment that's all it is. "The train is moving at a hell of a pace down the tracks for the World Cup but my role is to make sure we stay on track and there's nothing there ahead of us that can derail us.

"We've probably never been in such a strong position to challenge for both," he added, with England second only to India in the Test standings.

Giles is filling a vacancy left by the departure of Andrew Strauss. The former England captain stood down after his wife, Ruth, was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer that eventually led to her death in December.



LONDON: The new Managing Director of England Men's Cricket, at the ECB, Ashley Giles, poses for a photograph at Lords cricket ground in London yesterday. — AFP

### 'FEEL FOR STRAUSSY'

"Obviously, the circumstances of the position becoming available are not great at all. I honestly feel for Strauss and the family," said Giles. "But the opportunity for me was great heading into a really exciting year.

"Straussy has done a lot of good work. He redressed that balance between white ball (limited-overs) and red-ball cricket, which I think was important and of late we've started to see the Test team flourish as well." Giles had an 18-month spell as England limited-overs coach that ended in a humiliating defeat by minnows the Netherlands at the 2014 World Twenty20 in Bangladesh. But he was always confident of a return to the England and Wales Cricket Board set-up.

"I think I actually said at the time, I'd come back and do this job, perhaps a bit flippantly,"

Giles explained. "I've always been driven to work at the highest level and test myself as much as I can. I'm fully aware of the pressure that can come but 2014 was a long time ago."

One of Giles's main tasks will be to find a replacement for current England coach Trevor Bayliss, with the Australian stepping down at the end of the 2019 season. Giles said he remained open to the idea of having specialist Test and one-day coaches despite his own experience when he and Andy Flower split the jobs.

"The benefits of two coaches are clearly (sharing) the workload. The disadvantages are two different voices," he explained. "I think we always imagined when Andy and I took the roles on that we'd see two different squads developing. We are actually seeing those squads come together now." — AFP

## Cricket star Pandya's 'misogynist' comments on women spark anger

**NEW DELHI:** India cricket chiefs yesterday ordered star all-rounder Hardik Pandya to explain sexist comments made on a TV chat show after the remarks sparked social media outrage and prompted the player to apologise.

Pandya said he "got a bit carried away" as he explained his bragging about his prowess with women on the show that aired Sunday. Pandya and batsman Lokesh Rahul, who also took part in the interview, have both been ordered to explain their comments. Both are currently on India's tour of Australia.

"We have sent show cause notices to Hardik Pandya and K.L. Rahul for their comments," Board of Control for Cricket in India administrator Vinod Rai was quoted as saying by the Press Trust of India news agency.

"They have been given 24 hours to give an explanation." The announcement came only a few hours after the 25-year-old Pandya posted his apology on social media. "After reflecting on my comments on Koffee with Karan, I would like to apologise to everyone concerned who I may have hurt in any way," Pandya said on Twitter.

"Honestly, I got a bit carried away with the nature of the show. In no way did I mean to disrespect or hurt anyone's sentiments. Respect," he added. The show hosted by Bollywood producer and director Karan Johar encourages guests to open up on personal matters.

Pandya, who was in the squad that beat Australia for the first time in an away Test series, boasted about his success with multiple women. "You are just watching and observing how they move as I said I am a little from the black side (influenced by West Indies culture) so I have to see how they (women) move first," he said.

Pandya also said he had bragged to his parents after losing his virginity. He was quickly slammed for his views on women. "#KoffeeWithCricketers



AHMEDABAD: In this file photo taken on November 20, 2018 Indian cricketer Hardik Pandya attends the launch of the Gulf Pride motorcycle batteries in Ahmedabad. India all-rounder Hardik Pandya apologised yesterday for making sexist remarks on a TV chat show. — AFP

was just the worst episode. What's up with all the #misogyny. Tired of this boys will be boys attitude," Ekta Chauhan, a Twitter user, wrote.

"To say the least #HardikPandya is horrendous a misogynist," added another user who called for Indian cricket authorities to take action against the "obnoxious" comments. Pandya is still expected to play in three one-day internationals against Australia starting Saturday in Sydney.

Pandya and Rahul also caused a social media stir for comments on the same show when they said current India skipper Virat Kohli was a better batsman than the country's cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar. —AFP

## Pucovski gets shock Australia call-up as Marsh brothers dumped

**SYDNEY:** Young batting prodigy Will Pucovski was parachuted into the Australia squad for two Tests against Sri Lanka in a shock call-up yesterday, with veteran Shaun Marsh and his brother Mitch dumped.

Also axed from the 13-man squad after the humbling 2-1 series defeat to India were underperforming opener Aaron Finch and middle-order batsman Peter Handscomb. In-form Joe Burns was recalled for the first time since the South Africa tour early last year and could open the innings with rookie Marcus Harris, who did enough against India to keep his place.

But they face competition from Matt Renshaw, who has been handed another opportunity despite misfiring in the domestic Sheffield Shield this season. Allrounder Marnus Labuschagne was retained from the team that played the rain-affected drawn Test in Sydney this week, as was Travis Head.

Selectors also kept faith with their pace attack of Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood and Pat Cummins, with veteran Peter Siddle also included. National selector Trevor Hohns said "there is no doubt the India series produced some disappointing results" and change was needed, after four Tests characterised by the failure of any Australian batsmen to score a century.

"Ultimately Aaron, Peter, Shaun and Mitch have not produced the performances expected of them with the bat at the Test level," he said. "They have been given a good opportunity, but have not produced the scores we need."

He added, however, that the door was not closed and they must now prove themselves again in domestic cricket and the one-day series against India this month.

Pucovski was the surprise call-up. The 20-year-old is one of the brightest batting talents in the country, scoring a double century for Victoria last year-the first Australian under 21 to do so since Ricky Ponting.

But he has only played eight first-class matches, and after that double ton took a break from cricket because of a mental health issue. "Will Pucovski is an exciting young player who is making his mark in the Sheffield Shield. He is another player with a track record of making centuries," said Hohns.

Despite his relative inexperience, Pucovski said he was ready to step up. "It is every kid's dream. To think that in two weeks time there is a chance I would play for my country is amazing. I can't use words to describe it," he told reporters.

"I can't wait to get up there and in amongst it." Burns, who has played 14 Tests, has been knocking on the door this season with Queensland, while Renshaw has been unlucky not to get another call-up until now, since his last appearance at Johannesburg in 2018.

"We see him as a long-term prospect as a Test player and have confidence in his ability to bounce back following a string of low scores early in the Shield season," said Hohns of the 22-year-old.

Renshaw, who has a century and three 50s from his 11 Tests, said he wanted to emulate the exploits of India's rock-solid number three Cheteshwar Pujara.

"Everyone talks about (Virat) Kohli and (Ajinkya) Rahane, but Pujara was unbelievable and showed how good he was mentally to bat for so long," he said. Burns, Renshaw and Pucovski will all play for a Cricket Australia XI in a pink-ball match against Sri Lanka ahead of the Tests in preparation for the day-nighter in Brisbane from January 24. The second Test is in Canberra from February 1.

**Australia squad:** Joe Burns, Pat Cummins, Marcus Harris, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Usman Khawaja, Marnus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Tim Paine (capt), Will Pucovski, Matt Renshaw, Mitchell Starc, Peter Siddle

**Cricket Australia XI:** Joe Burns (capt), Kurtis Patterson, Scott Boland, Jake Doran, Jon Holland, Marnus Labuschagne, Michael Nesar, Will Pucovski, Jason Sangha, Matt Renshaw, Chris Tremain. — AFP



Sports

# Wiggins scores 40 as Wolves edge Thunder, Suns stun Kings

## Raptors, Leonard steal win against Hawks

**OKLAHOMA:** Andrew Wiggins scored a season-high 40 points as the visiting Minnesota Timberwolves beat the Oklahoma City Thunder 119-117 on Tuesday night. It was Minnesota's first game under interim coach Ryan Saunders, who replaced Tom Thibodeau on the bench. Thibodeau was fired Sunday after the Timberwolves' home win over the Los Angeles Lakers. A Minnesota turnover with 15.5 seconds left gave the Thunder one last chance, but two Russell Westbrook 3-point attempts missed the mark and Paul George's desperation put-back went wide to give the Timberwolves their third consecutive win. The Timberwolves hit 32 of their 40 free throws, with Oklahoma City making just 19 of 26. Wiggins was 16 of 18 from the free throw line.

### SUNS 115, KINGS 111

Kelly Oubre Jr. scored a game-high 26 points, gave Phoenix the lead with two free throws with 43.5 seconds remaining and added a dunk 32 seconds later in a win over visiting Sacramento after trailing by 19 points at halftime. Ben McLemore matched his season-high point total in the second quarter alone, contributing 11 points to a 40-18 explosion that sent the Kings to a 72-53 halftime advantage. But the Suns outscored the Kings 33-14 in the third quarter to even it up at 86-86, and finished the game on an 11-2 run after falling behind again by five with just 2:25 to play.

### WARRIORS 122, KNICKS 95

Klay Thompson connected on seven 3-pointers in a 43-point performance, helping Golden State send New York home after a shellacking in Oakland, Calif. Kevin Durant had 24 points and Stephen Curry complemented 14 points with a season-high 14 assists, enabling the Warriors to snap a three-game home losing streak. Thompson hit 18 of his 29 shots en route to his second 40-point game of the season. He had a season-best 52 at Chicago in October. Mario Hezonja scored a team-high 19 points for the Knicks, who completed a 14-day, six-game trip with a fifth loss, their second in two nights.

### NUGGETS 103, HEAT 99

Nikola Jokic's fourth triple-double of the season — 29 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists—carried Western Conference-leading Denver to a win over host Miami. Jokic hit the go-ahead shot from the lane with 2.4 seconds left over the arms of backup center Bam Adebayo, who played great defense on the sequence. However, Jokic awkwardly floated his shot over Adebayo and hit nothing but net. Miami still had a chance to tie or go ahead, but Kelly Olynyk's inbound pass was wild, lead-

ing to a turnover—just the Heat's sixth in the game.

### 76ERS 132, WIZARDS 115

Rookie Landry Shamet set career highs with eight 3-pointers and 29 points to carry host Philadelphia past Washington. Shamet, whose previous career high was 17 points, knocked down 8 of 14 shots from 3-point range to set a Sixers rookie record. His lone miss was from inside the arc. Joel Embiid had 20 points and 10 rebounds for his league-leading 35th double-double and ninth in a row. Jimmy Butler added 20 points while Ben Simmons contributed 17 points and nine assists. Furkan Korkmaz scored 16 points.

### RAPTORS 104, HAWKS 101

Kawhi Leonard made a key steal to set up the go-ahead field goal in the final minute and he finished with 31 points as Toronto defeated visiting Atlanta. Kyle Lowry added 16 points for the Raptors, while Pascal Siakam had 13 points and 10 rebounds. OG Anunoby had 14 points and Serge Ibaka 13. John Collins had 21 points and 14 rebounds for the Hawks, and Jeremy Lin added 20 points. Trae Young had 19 points, Dewayne Dedmon 12 points and nine rebounds and DeAndre' Bembry 11 points.

### PACERS 123, CAVALIERS 115

Thaddeus Young matched his season best of 26 points and Bojan Bogdanovic added 23 as Indiana held on for a victory over host Cleveland. Victor Oladipo tallied 17 points as the Pacers won for the 14th time in the past 17 games. Domantas Sabonis added 15 points and nine rebounds and Cory Joseph scored 11 points. Jordan Clarkson scored 26 points and Alec Burks added 19 as the Cavaliers dropped their 10th consecutive game. Tristan Thompson had 15 points and 13 rebounds, Cedi Osman also scored 15, Collin Sexton had 14 and Cameron Payne scored 10.

### CLIPPERS 128, HORNETS 109

Lou Williams had 27 points and 10 assists, and Montrezl Harrell added 23 points as the bench led the way once again for Los Angeles in a victory over visiting Charlotte. The starters did their part, too, as Tobias Harris had 23 points and Danilo Gallinari added 20 to help the Clippers win a third consecutive game for the first time since a four-game winning streak to close out November. Malik Monk had 24 points and Jeremy Lamb scored 16 as the Hornets lost for the third time in their past four games and the sixth time in their past nine games. — Reuters



OKLAHOMA CITY: Andrew Wiggins #22 of the Minnesota Timberwolves shoots the ball against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Tuesday at Chesapeake Energy Arena in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. — AFP

## NBA results/standings

Golden State 122, New York 95; LA Clippers 128, Charlotte 109; Miami 99, Denver 103; Toronto 104, Atlanta 101; Phoenix 115, Sacramento 111; Oklahoma City 117, Minnesota 119; Cleveland 115, Indiana 123; Philadelphia 132, Washington 115.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference			
	W	L	PCT	GB			
Toronto	31	12	0.721	-	Denver	27	12
Milwaukee	28	11	0.718	1	Golden State	27	14
Indiana	27	13	0.675	2.5	Oklahoma City	25	15
Philadelphia	27	14	0.659	3	LA Clippers	24	16
Boston	24	15	0.615	5	Houston	23	16
Miami	19	20	0.487	10	San Antonio	24	17
Brooklyn	20	22	0.476	10.5	Portland	24	17
Charlotte	19	21	0.475	10.5	LA Lakers	22	19
Detroit	17	21	0.447	11.5	Sacramento	20	21
Orlando	17	23	0.425	12.5	Utah	20	21
Washington	16	25	0.390	14	Minnesota	20	21
Atlanta	12	28	0.300	17.5	New Orleans	19	22
Chicago	10	30	0.250	19.5	Memphis	18	22
New York	10	31	0.244	20	Dallas	18	22
Cleveland	8	33	0.195	22	Phoenix	10	32

## Kane spot on as Spurs down Chelsea

**LONDON:** Mauricio Pochettino hailed Tottenham's growing maturity as Harry Kane fired them a step closer to the League Cup final with a 1-0 win over Chelsea in the semi-final first leg on Tuesday. Pochettino's side are chasing their first trophy since winning the 2008 League Cup at the expense of Chelsea.

Kane's first-half spot-kick, awarded via VAR, settled a hard-fought encounter to keep Tottenham on course for a first League Cup final appearance since their 2015 defeat against the Blues. That loss was one of several missed opportunities for Pochettino to win the first silverware of his promising managerial career.

This was an important step towards ending that drought. "We were very competitive. The effort was massive. Whether or not we win titles, I'm so proud to have this squad," Pochettino said.

"We played one of the best teams in Europe. To win this type of game is an amazing experience for us to be more mature," Pochettino challenged Tottenham to finish the job in the second leg at Stamford Bridge on January 24. "Of course it is only half-time in the tie. We have only a little advantage," he said. "It is going to be different in the second leg. We have to show we can beat them there and go to the final." It was another frustrating night for

Chelsea, who recovered from a sluggish start to dominate the second half without turning their possession into goals—a familiar tale of woe for Maurizio Sarri's men.

"We deserved more. We played better than them and were in control of the match," Sarri insisted. "I'm really disappointed with the result but really happy with the performance. It is one of the most important performances of the season for my team."

Kane was making his first League Cup start in 1204 days, dating back to 2015. And he almost announced his return to the competition in spectacular fashion when his overhead kick from Kieran Trippier's cross forced Kepa Arrizabalaga into action. Tottenham were the more vibrant and cohesive force and their impactful start was rewarded with Kane's 27th-minute opener. Kane's well-timed run beat the Chelsea offside trap and Kepa came hurtling off his line and clattered into the striker. After a delay while VAR confirmed Kane was onside, Oliver awarded a spot-kick and the England captain stepped up to smash his shot past Kepa for his 20th club goal this season.

Kane's seventh goal in his last six appearances made him Tottenham's fourth all-time highest scorer with 160. Chelsea went close to levelling when Marcos Alonso's cross reached N'Golo Kante, who volleyed against the near post from an acute angle.

Chelsea's Callum Hudson-Odoi started for the second successive game as Sarri tries to convince the 18-year-old English winger to commit to the Blues amid reports of a bid from Bayern Munich. Hudson-Odoi, who has 18 months remaining on his current contract, showed a flash of his



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (C) vies with Chelsea's Italian midfielder Jorginho (R) during the English League Cup semi-final first-leg football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Chelsea at Wembley Stadium in London, on Tuesday. — AFP

potential on the right flank, cutting inside for a cross that deflected off Danny Rose and had to be tipped onto the woodwork by home goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga.

With Alvaro Morata struggling with an injury and Olivier Giroud also not fully fit, Sarri had resumed his experiment of playing Eden Hazard as his central striker. But Hazard, so influential on the flanks, has expressed some doubts about his suitability for the 'false nine' role and at times he was rendered impotent by Chelsea's failure to get him the ball in dangerous areas.

Kane, a natural centre forward, was far more at home as the focal point of

Tottenham's attacks and he almost doubled their lead soon after half-time with a fierce long-range drive that Kepa pushed away. Kante responded with a powerful effort of his own, but Gazzaniga was equal to the France midfielder's threatening strike.

Showing more poise as Hazard's influence finally grew, Chelsea had the better of the second half. Christensen should have equalised from Ross Barkley's flick, yet the Danish defender somehow prodded wide from close range. Hazard conjured Chelsea's last chance when Gazzaniga spilled his cross, but Alonso's shot was scrambled clear. — AFP

	<h1>Matches on TV</h1> <p>(Local Timings)</p>	
<h2>SPAIN COPA DEL REY</h2>		
Athletic de Bilbao v Sevilla FC		21:30
beIN SPORTS HD 3		
Real Betis v Real Sociedad		22:30
beIN SPORTS HD 5		
Levante v FC Barcelona		23:30
beIN SPORTS HD 3		
<h2>ASIAN NATIONS CUP 2019</h2>		
Bahrain v Thailand		14:00
beIN SPORTS		
Jordan v Syria		16:30
beIN SPORTS		
India v United Arab Emirates		19:00
beIN SPORTS		

## FIFA demands Bahraini refugee player be allowed back to Australia

**BANGKOK:** International football's governing body FIFA says a Bahraini refugee player facing possible deportation from Thailand, should be freed and be allowed to return to Australia to continue his career.

Thai authorities arrested Hakeem Al Araibi, who plays in Australia where he has refugee status, on arrival at a Bangkok airport in November, based on an Interpol notice issued at Bahrain's request.

Al Araibi was convicted of vandalising a police station in Bahrain and sentenced to 10 years in prison in absentia. He has denied any wrongdoing. "Following a renewed exchange with the Australian Football Federation, FIFA is again calling for a humane and speedy resolution of the case concerning the player Hakeem Al Araibi," the organisation said in a statement yesterday.

"This player, a Bahraini national, is currently being detained in prison in Thailand awaiting the outcome of extradition proceedings to Bahrain, where he was previously convicted of a criminal offence, the validity of which he strongly contests," continued the statement.

Al Araibi, who used to play for the Bahrain national team, was granted refugee status in Australia in 2017 and now plays for Melbourne club Pascoe Vale, a second tier club. The player has been a vocal critic of the president of the Asian Football Confederation, Sheikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, who is a cousin of the Bahraini king.

Sheikh Salman is senior vice-president of FIFA and ran for president of the body in 2016, losing to current chief Gianni Infantino. During the campaign Sheikh Salman was strongly criticised by some human rights groups. He denied claims that he had been involved in investigating and prosecuting athletes active in Bahrain's democracy protests in 2011.

"This situation should not have arisen, in particular, since Mr Al-Araibi now lives and works and plays as a professional footballer in Australia, where he has been accorded refugee status," said FIFA. "FIFA is therefore calling on all the relevant authorities (in Bahrain,—Reuters

## Iniesta apologises over blackface photo

**TOKYO:** Barcelona legend Andres Iniesta has apologised after posting a photo on social media with two people in blackface as part of Epiphany celebrations.

The 34-year-old superstar who currently plays at Japan's Vissel Kobe had no intention "to upset anyone by displaying that photo," according to a statement by his agency sent to AFP yesterday.

"He would like to apologise to those people who may have felt offended," the statement said. Iniesta's picture on Twitter and Instagram posted on Sunday showed his family and a group of people in costumes, taking part in the Three Kings Day, an important Christian festive tradition in Spain.

The January 6 holiday commemorates the visit of magi Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar to the newborn baby Jesus. Large parades and other festivities are held across Spain featuring men dressed up as kings, with the role of Balthazar often played by a white man—often

a city councillor—in black makeup.

Madrid's leftist mayor Manuela Carmena ended the tradition in the Spanish capital in 2016 and the city now employs a black man to play the role in its Epiphany parade, which is broadcast live across the country.

Iniesta, who lifted 32 major trophies and made 674 appearances for Catalan giants Barca, joined Vissel Kobe in May, calling his J-League move an "important career challenge". The Spain icon's decision to choose Vissel arguably represents Japanese football's biggest transfer coup, with many top players now moving to cash-rich Chinese clubs in the twilight of their careers.

It also came as a timely boost to the J-League, which used to attract luminaries such as Brazilian great Zico and former England star Gary Lineker when it began in 1993, but has struggled to attract marquee players in recent years. Iniesta—who famously scored Spain's winning goal against the Netherlands in the 2010 World Cup final—had been top of the wishlist of Vissel owner Hiroshi Mikitani. The billionaire businessman is also the founder and CEO of Rakuten, Barcelona's main sponsor, and was heavily involved in the deal that brought Iniesta to Japan. In December 2017 Atletico Madrid's French striker Antoine Griezmann apologised after receiving criticism on social media for posting a pic-



Andres Iniesta

ture of himself on his official Twitter account dressed as a Harlem Globetrotter, covered in black paint and wearing a wig. — AFP



**25** Halep and Stephens bundled out in Sydney International



**26** England cricket boss Giles targets World Cup, Ashes double



**27** Wiggins scores 40 as Wolves edge Thunder, Suns stun Kings



## Japan survive scare against Turkmenistan

Qatar, Uzbekistan get welcome win at Asian Cup



ABU DHABI: Lebanon's defender George Felix Melki (L) fights for the ball with Qatar's midfielder Abdelaziz Hatim during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup group E football match between Qatar and Lebanon at Hazza bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP

**AL-AIN:** Yuya Osako's quickfire double spared Japan's blushes against lowly Turkmenistan at the Asian Cup yesterday, as 2022 World Cup hosts Qatar briefly lifted the clouds of the Gulf crisis with a 2-0 win over Lebanon.

Uzbekistan left it late before seeing off Oman 2-1 but it was four-time champions Japan who had the biggest scare as they had to come from behind from a team ranked 127th in the world. Arslan Amanov's first-half rocket raised the prospect of a titanic upset by Turkmenistan but Osako's brace restored order before Ritsu Doan appeared to make the game safe.

However, Ahmet Atayev buried a penalty 11 minutes from time before Japan survived to win 3-2, a further reminder that the big teams have not had it all their own way at this Asian Cup.

"The first match is always a bit special and we expected a battle," said Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu, who was

relieved to get off to a winning start in Group F. "Obviously we're happy to get the three points but we have a lot of things to work on for the next game."

Earlier in the tournament's opening group games, defending champions Australia were shocked 1-0 by Jordan, South Korea laboured to a 1-0 win over the Philippines and China needed an own goal to spark a 2-1 comeback win against Kyrgyzstan.

The Blue Samurai have arguably the best pedigree in the competition after reaching the last 16 of last year's World Cup, and were not expected to be troubled by Turkmenistan. But Turkmen captain Amanov put the heavy underdogs ahead after 26 minutes in Abu Dhabi, unleashing a ferocious long-range drive that arrowed into the top corner.

Osako produced a smart turn and finish inside the box to equalise for Japan 10 minutes into the second half after

sustained pressure from the former champions. The Werder Bremen striker put Japan in front four minutes later, tapping into an empty net, and Doan added a deflected third after 70 minutes but Atayev smashed in a penalty nine minutes later to ensure more anxious moments for the Japanese.

In yesterday's other Group F fixture, in Sharjah, Eldor Shomurodov was the hero for Uzbekistan as he struck four minutes from time to grab a 2-1 win. Shanghai SIPG midfielder Odil Ahmedov fired the White Wolves ahead on 34 minutes with a low free kick, before Oman's Muhsen Al-Ghassani levelled midway through the second half.

But as full time loomed, Shomurodov shrugged off the attentions of two defenders and beat goalkeeper Faiz Al-Rushaidi at his near post to clinch victory.

Elsewhere, Qatar's campaign in Group E opened under the shadow of the Gulf showdown that has left them

blockaded and shunned by their neighbours, including Asian Cup hosts UAE, for more than 18 months.

Near the end of a tepid opening half in Al Ain, Lebanon's Ali Hamam thought he had scored with the game's first shot on target-only for his volley to be ruled out for a foul. The pace quickened in the second period and the breakthrough came on 65 minutes, when Bassam Al-Rawi swept a curling free kick over the wall and past a diving Mehdi Kahlil.

Substitute defender Abdelkarim Hassan, the 2018 Asian player of the year, was causing problems down the left and it was his break that created Qatar's second when Almoez Ali gobbled up a rebound with 11 minutes on the clock.

It was a welcome win for Qatar, who as well as contending with the Gulf blockade are also desperate for a good showing before their next major tournament—the 2022 World Cup on home soil. — AFP

## Salah retains African award to seal great day for Egypt

**DAKAR:** Mohamed Salah completed a memorable day for Egyptian football by retaining his African Player of the Year award in Senegal Tuesday. The 26-year-old Liverpool star finished first with club-mate Senegalese Sadio Mane and Arsenal and Gabon striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang the other finalists.

"I have dreamt of winning this award since I was a child and now I have done so twice in a row," Salah said soon after receiving his trophy in Dakar. "My thanks go to my family, my team-mates and my fans and I dedicate this trophy to my homeland, Egypt."

It was an identical outcome to last year when Salah became only the second Egyptian after 1983 winner Mahmoud al Khatib to be voted the best footballer in

Africa. Egypt crushed sole rivals South Africa 16-1 earlier on Tuesday in a CAF executive committee vote in Dakar to decide which country succeeded Cameroon as 2019 Cup of Nations hosts. Delays to preparations and concerns about security resulted in the central African nation being replaced as hosts, and they will stage the 2021 tournament instead. While the 15-vote winning margin for Egypt was unexpected, the success of Salah was anticipated as he continues to score regularly for the English Premier League leaders.

Salah netted 44 goals in all competitions for Liverpool last season—his first with the Anfield club—and has bagged 13 Premier League goals so far this season. Ironically, Aubameyang has scored one league goal more than Salah, topping the charts with Tottenham Hotspur and England star Harry Kane on 14.

Salah was born in a northern Egyptian town Nagrig and used to make eight-hour return trips on buses to train with Cairo-based El Mokawloon (Arab Contractors). Spotted by scouts from Swiss club Basel, he moved there in 2012 before joining Premier League giants Chelsea two years later. Salah found scoring difficult early in his professional career and was nicknamed "chancetod" (chance killer) by the Swiss media.

Later, playing for Chelsea in a League Cup tie, the Egyptian was so off-target with a goal attempt that the ball trickled over the touchline for a throw-in. Unhappy

with his two-goal return, Chelsea lent Salah to Italian outfit Fiorentina and Roma, then sold him to the latter club.

Salah blossomed in Rome, averaging close to a goal every two matches, and Liverpool paid almost 37 million pounds (about \$47 mn/41 mn euros) to sign him two years ago. The Egyptian had his share of setbacks last year, too, with an injury in the Champions League final loss to Real Madrid also keeping him out of a World Cup defeat by Uruguay.

He returned to score against hosts Russia and Saudi Arabia, but the Pharaohs exited their first appearance at the global showpiece in 28 years without securing even one point. Salah netted twice and missed two penalties three months later in a 6-0 Cup of Nations rout of Niger and snatched the late winner in a 3-2 victory over Tunisia in the same competition.

Having defended his Player of the Year title, his next goal will be to match the four straight wins in the competition by former Manchester City and Ivory Coast star Yaya Toure. The other male awards went to France-born Morocco coach Herve Renard, the Mauritania national team, and Moroccan Achraf Hakimi in the youth category. South African Chrestinah Kgatllana was voted Women's Player of the Year and South Africa coach Desiree Ellis and the Nigeria national team were the other female winners. The Goal of the Year award also went to Kgatllana.—AFP



DAKAR: Liverpool's Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah poses with the 2018 African Footballer of the Year Award also called Ballon d'Or during an award ceremony in Dakar. — AFP





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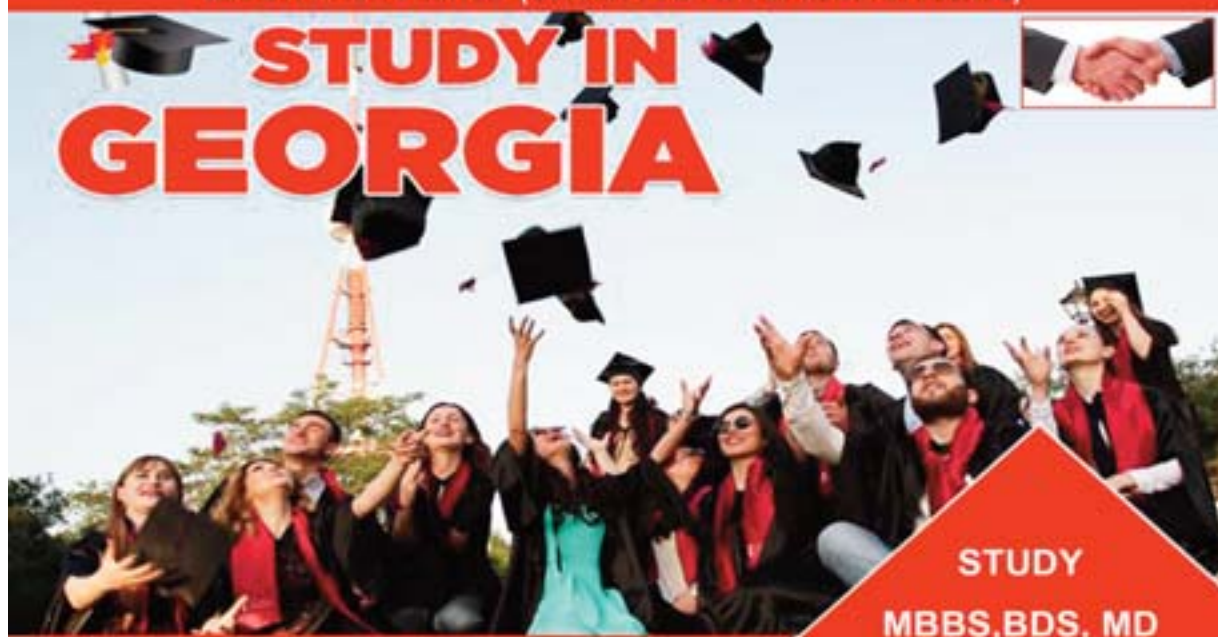
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# TIPS TO CHOOSE YOUR CAREER

By Prof. Dr. PR Venkitaraman, Career Guru

Career choosing has become a difficult proposition today due to bewildering number and types of opportunities emerging in our country. Many students resort to study a course with no clear cut plan and idea about the job market and career options. I would like to mention some of my observations gained from conducting more than 6000 seminars in India and abroad.

1. No Awareness about their career choices.
2. Giving least importance of acquiring soft skills which leads to failure in jobs.
3. Lack of analytical skills and mismatch between course and job domain.

This indicates that an educated young Indian student may have to change nearly 16 jobs during his life. Here are seven steps that will help to ensure that your choices are scientific, effective and stable.

1. Begin with your values.

Begin your career search by sorting out your values and writing them down as clearly and distinctly as you can.

2. Identify your skills and talents.

A talent is something you've been born with, or at least that you seem naturally qualified to do. It is important to recognize the difference between the two. You may be skilled at something and still not find it interesting. Chances are, however, if you are naturally talented at something, there will be a correspondence between that particular talent and your values.

3. Identify your preferences.

From early on, we approach the world with certain personal preferences--how we perceive others, how we think and make decisions, whether we prefer concepts over people or vice versa, and the extent to which we are comfortable with uncertainty in our lives.

4. Experiment.

There's no substitute for experience, the more the bet-

ter. It is probably safe to say that nearly every career looks vastly different from the outside than from within. If you are new to the job market or if you are considering a career change, get out and talk to people who are actually doing it.

5. Become broadly literate.

In this high tech information world, there is an incredible pressure to specialize, to know more and more about less and less. That's dangerous, because it increases your chances of being obsolescent immensely.

6. In your first job, opt for experience first, money second.

One must contemplate as "Which position will offer me the best chance of becoming excellent at what I do?" and not necessarily the one that pays the highest initial salary.

7. Invest five percent of your time, energy, and money into furthering your career.

Dedicate yourself to getting ahead by keeping ahead, and you do that by controlling the one thing you can control: your dedication to being the best that you can be.

Listing of careers

1. IT Sector
2. Business Administration
3. Engineering Profession
4. Chartered Accountant
5. Company Secretaries
6. Work Accountants
7. Financial Analysts
8. Medicine
9. Para Medical

Fashion designing, merchandising are yet some of the other creative fields that most of the younger lot opt for. Creative fields as these are still unorganised and are more individualistic.

Parameters considered for ranking of careers

1. Salary compensation

2. Gestation period
3. Growth in employing firms
4. Employability rate
5. Career growth
6. Sustainability of Career
7. Job sectors
8. Opportunity for self-development
9. Opportunity for diversification

About Prof. (Dr.) P. R. Venkitaraman, Career Guru

Dr.P. R. Venkitaraman has conducted nearly 6000 career seminars in India and abroad. He is a renowned guru in Career guidance and counseling. He has written columns in Times of India and also in other popular dailies. PRV also writes articles in "Vaniitha" and Smart Family.

For a project of almost 2 years, PRV appeared every-

day in Amrita TV in Vidyabyasa Vartha answering career questions of students & parents. He also speaks on FM All India Radio, Cochin, on all 365 days in a branded program "ENTHUPADIKANAM ENTHAGANAM" for the last 10 years.

PRV is nominated as the National counselor by Educational Times of Times of India, and he was answering 200 queries in a week. He has published 6 text books and many scientific articles. He is a former Head & Professor in Mahathma Gandhi University. He has taken his PhD from Cochin University of Science & Technology.

Dr PRV can be contacted for telecounselling on Wednesdays & Fridays between 8pm & 9 pm on 0484 2319627.

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34	A Z INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL AND DENTAL SCIENCES - MANGALORE	+918242225533	azinst@rediffmail.com

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59	ASTA PACIFIC INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES - DELHI	+911146203000	www.astapacific.edu.in
60	EMPI BUSINESS SCHOOL - DELHI	+911126652373	www.empindia.com
61	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT, MEDIA & IT - DELHI	+911365134465	www.iimmeducation.com
62	INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY & MANAGEMENT- DELHI	+919312727273	www.iitm.net.in
63	JAGAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES - DELHI	+919871097501	www.jimsindia.org
64	NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF APPLIED MANAGEMENT - DELHI	+911126929250	www.niamindia.org
65	NEW DELHI INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT - DELHI	+9111 - 41677447	www.ndimdelhi.in
66	NEW DELHI INSTITUTE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY - DELHI	+911165634061	www.newdelhiit.org
67	IPD COLLEGE - DELHI	+911132495000	www.ipdcollege.com
68	K.R.MANGALAM GLOBAL INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT	+911129229271	www.kgm.org

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36	FATHER MULLERS INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH - MANGALORE	+918242436301	muller@psnl.in
37	KASTURBA MEDICAL COLLEGE - MANGALORE	+918242427298	kmcmcg@manipal.edu
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44	STATE INSTITUTE OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT - KULIKSHETRA	+917144238786	www.ihmkkr.com
45	INSTITUTE OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT - SHIMLA	+911772648208	www.ihmsimla.org
46	INSTITUTE OF HOTEL MANAGEMENT - MUMBAI	+912224487241	www.ihmchn.edu
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