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Kuwait and US share similar Mideast agendas: US envoy

Silverman hails resumption of direct flights, Kuwaiti humanitarian aid

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Kuwait and the United States share similar agendas in the Middle East, including efforts to preserve Gulf unity, US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman said yesterday. He was speaking during a roundtable at the US Embassy on the Kuwait-US strategic dialogue with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo that will kick off tomorrow. Issues of regional importance and bilateral cooperation between the two countries will be the main subjects to be discussed, including defense and security, economy, education and trade.

"We had a similar dialogue in 2016 and 2017 - it's a process. What we are trying to do is strengthen our relations in all aspects, including making travelling from Kuwait to the US easier. Just last week, Kuwait Airways was able to resume direct flights to New York

City, which was the result of the two governments' continuing commitment to make the American and Kuwaiti people reap the practical benefits of our strategic relations," he said. Silverman also revealed "Kuwait's desire" to set up an American-staffed custom checkpoint at Kuwait International Airport, similar to the one in Abu Dhabi. Kuwait's request in this regard is currently under discussion, he said.

Silverman said Pompeo's visit is part of his tour of the Middle East which included Jordan, Iraq and Egypt, and underscores America's interest in the region, including the GCC countries. Silverman reiterated his country's commitment to regional security and the importance of relations between the two countries as well as look for ways to curb Iran's destabilizing practices in the region and find solutions to regional problems including Yemen. "The unity of the GCC is extremely

important; it will be highlighted in this trip. The secretary is here to find and explore solutions to regional conflicts and find solutions to the negative activities of Iran," he said.

Silverman said the US president and his secretary of state appreciate the efforts made by Kuwait, not only in the diplomatic sphere, but also Kuwait's humanitarian contributions to refugees as a major effort for the stability of the region. "We would like to thank HH the Amir for his humanitarian work - the Amir does not need to do what he does. It's not only the right thing to do in terms of humanitarian assistance, but also a major investment for stability in the region," he added.

Silverman pointed out that military agreements between Kuwait and the US are aimed at enhancing the capabilities of the Kuwaiti army and training its personnel. Military contracts, according to Silverman, are due to be

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KUWAIT: US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman speaks during a roundtable at the US Embassy yesterday. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Pompeo urges Gulf nations to end dispute

DOHA: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said yesterday that a rift between Qatar and its Gulf Arab neighbors had gone on for too long and was threatening regional unity needed to counter Iran. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and non-Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member Egypt cut diplomatic, transport and trade ties with Qatar in June 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism and their regional foe Iran - something Doha denies.

The United States, an ally of the six-nation GCC, sees the rift as a threat to efforts to

contain Iran and has pushed for a united Gulf front. "When we have a common challenge, disputes between countries with shared objectives are never helpful," Pompeo, who is on an eight-day tour of the Middle East, told a news conference in the Qatari capital Doha. "They never permit you to have as robust a response to common adversaries or common challenges as you might," he added.

Gas-rich Qatar says the boycott is aimed at undermining its sovereignty and has started charting a course away from its Gulf neighbors, including forging new trade partnerships, strengthening its ties with Turkey and quitting OPEC. Those moves have deepened expectations that the row will not be resolved quickly.

"We're hoping that the unity of GCC will increase in the days and weeks and months ahead," Pompeo said, adding that Gulf unity was essential for a planned Middle East

Strategic Alliance (MESA) that would also include Jordan and Egypt.

Saudi Arabia and the UAE have repeatedly said the dispute is not a top priority and assured Washington it will not affect defense cooperation. Pompeo later told reporters that he had brought up the rift with officials in Bahrain, Egypt and the UAE. "It's ... not at all clear that the rift is any closer to being resolved today than it was yesterday and I regret that," he said.

Pompeo has used the regional tour, which included stops in Abu Dhabi and Cairo, to shore up support for the US troop withdrawal from Syria. He will head next to the Saudi capital Riyadh, where he said the United States would ensure there is "full and complete" accountability on the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, a US-based Washington Post journalist from Saudi Arabia.

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DOHA: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meets Amir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani at the Sea Palace yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

White House sought to strike Iran

WASHINGTON: The White House's national security team last fall asked the Pentagon to provide it with options for striking Iran after a group of militants aligned with Tehran fired mortars into an area in Baghdad that is home to the US Embassy, the Wall Street Journal reported yesterday. The request by the National Security Council, which is led by John Bolton, sparked deep concern among Pentagon and State Department officials, the newspaper reported, citing current and former US officials. The Pentagon complied with the request. — Reuters

Israeli energy minister in Egypt

CAIRO: Israel's Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz arrived in Cairo yesterday to attend a natural gas conference in a rare visit to Egypt by an Israeli official, airport sources said. Steinitz's visit came at the invitation of the Egyptian government, Israel's energy ministry said. The Israeli minister was set to attend a regional forum on natural gas, which has become a major economic and strategic issue in the eastern Mediterranean. The "development of gas fields has geopolitical and geostrategic value," Steinitz told Israeli army radio ahead of the trip. — AFP

Azhar expels female student

CAIRO: Egypt's Al-Azhar university yesterday said it had expelled a female student after she appeared in a video hugging a male colleague, accusing her of undermining the school's reputation. The video, which went viral earlier this month, showed a young man carrying a bouquet of flowers kneeling before a young woman and then hugging her in what appeared to be a marriage proposal at Mansoura University. The disciplinary council of the Al-Azhar University campus in Mansoura on Saturday "decided to expel the young girl definitively", university spokesman Ahmed Zarie said, adding the woman can appeal the decision. The young man could also face sanctions, a spokesman for Mansoura University said, adding that the school's disciplinary council will meet today to decide his "punishment". — AFP

Italian militant arrested 38 yrs after jailbreak

BRASILIA: Former Italian communist militant Cesare Battisti, sought by Rome for four murders in the 1970s, has been arrested after an international police squad tracked him down on the run in Bolivia where he faces quick extradition to Italy. Italy has repeatedly sought the extradition of Battisti, who lived in Brazil for years under the protection of former leftist president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (2003-2010), who is now in prison for corruption.

Battisti, 64, was arrested late Saturday in the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Italian interior ministry sources confirmed, where he gave up without a struggle after reportedly being caught disguised in a false beard and moustache. "Italian terrorist Cesare Battisti was detained in Bolivia (Saturday night) and will be soon brought to Brazil, from where he will probably be sent to Italy to serve a life sentence," tweeted Filipe G Martins, a senior aide on international affairs to Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro.

Tunisians have 'freedom' but not 'dignity'

DOUAR HICHER, Tunisia: Young Tunisians say the revolution they staged eight years ago to oust their longtime dictator has failed to restore their "dignity" and ease the North African country's economic woes. "Since the revolution we have freedom but still no dignity," says Sofiene Jbeli, an unemployed computer technician who lives in the working class satellite town of Douar Hicher west of Tunis.

Like many of his compatriots Jbeli says he does not regret taking part in the first of the Arab Spring uprisings that shook the region and forced out veteran strongmen like Tunisia's president Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. But he feels

bitter. "If the system does not change in 2019 (when presidential and legislative elections are due to take place) the revolution would have been for nothing," says the 35-year-old.

Sociologist Olfa Lamloum of the NGO International Alert shares some of Jbeli's assessment but disagrees that the revolution failed completely. "The revolution's slogan was 'work, dignity and freedom' but the first two were not achieved," says Lamloum. While Tunisia has been praised as a model of democratic transition, wealth and control of the economy remain concentrated in the hands of a small elite despite economic growth.

The country is grappling with an inflation rate of 7.5 percent and unemployment stands at more than 15 percent, with those worst hit being young university graduates. In May, Tunisia held its first free municipal elections with more than 57,000 candidates - half of them women and young people - running for office.

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SANTA CRUZ DE LA SIERRA, Bolivia: A handout picture shows former far-left Italian militant Cesare Battisti after he was arrested late Saturday. — AFP

During Brazil's recent presidential campaign the far-right Bolsonaro - who took office on Jan 1 - vowed that if elected he would "immediately" extradite Battisti to Italy. In mid-December Brazil's outgoing president, Michel Temer, signed an extradition order for Battisti

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Fewer Indians heading to work in Kuwait, GCC

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The number of emigration clearances granted to Indians headed to GCC states for employment considerably dropped in 2018, according to a report in the Times of India, noting that a 21 percent drop was detected with only 295,000 clearances issued in 2018 compared to 374,000 in 2017. According to statistics, the total number of Indians emigrating to Kuwait dropped by 7 percent in 2018 to 52,000 compared to 56,000 in 2017.

Statistics also showed that there had been a sharp drop of 62 percent in the number of Indians emigrating to GCC states over the past five years (2014-2018), and a 35 percent drop in those coming to Kuwait in the same period.

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DOUAR HICHER, Tunisia: Tunisian youth Omar rehearses for the role of a peer who dreams of migrating to Europe in this commune in Manouba on the western outskirts of the capital Tunis on Jan 11, 2019. — AFP

Local

Amir expresses condolences over US snowstorm victims, Chinese mine collapse casualties

Amir, Crown Prince receive state officials at Bayan Palace



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States of America Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable to US President Donald Trump, offering his condolences over the victims of the snowstorm, which spread across the US, causing loss of lives in several Midwestern states. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the

American President. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir cabled Chinese President Xi Jinping expressing condolences on death of citizens in a coal mine collapse in the northern Chinese region of Shaanxi.

His Highness the Amir wished the injured quick recovery, hoping the leaders would successfully deal with repercussions of the tragic accident. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister addressed cables of

identical content to the Chinese president. In other news, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince at Bayan Palace yesterday.

His Highness the Amir later received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. His Highness then received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness the PM Sheikh

Jaber Al-Mubarak, Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received the State of Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States of America Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Cultural festival marked with unique books' gallery

KUWAIT: A gallery displaying unique Kuwaiti books, manuscripts and documents, opened recently at the National Library of Kuwait, depicting the keenness on preserving the country's heritage. Some of the publications on display belong to the ruling family, including copies of the Holy

Quran and interpretation books of the holy book. The exhibition is held in line with an initiative by the 25th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival to shed light on the genuine Kuwaiti culture and history, as advocated by the National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL). — KUNA



KUWAIT: Historic documents displayed at the gallery. — KUNA photos

Students visit Kuwaiti-funded projects in Tajikistan

KHATLON, Tajikistan: A group of Kuwaiti outstanding students visited yesterday two ongoing projects funded by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in Tajikistan. The Kuwaiti delegation visited the first project in Danghara for irrigating the valley, funded by KFAED with KD 4 million (\$13.1 million). The project aims to increase agricultural production,

job opportunities and enhance the country's economy. In a statement to the press, the Director of the project, Ebrahim Zada, said in four villages, approximately 14,000 families have benefited from this venture. The delegation visited the second project rebuilding a road in Kolab, funded with KD 7.5 million (\$25 million). The director of the project, Zafar Sharif, said this project "helped in rehabilitating the roads of Kolab and saving a lot of effort and time in transporting people and goods."

Meanwhile, the group of male well-achievers on Saturday paid a visit to a hydroelectric power plant in Tajikistan, as part of their trip organized by KFAED in collaboration with the Education Ministry. The program of the trip continues until January 17. Speaking on the sidelines of the tour, student Mohammad Oqail said it was an interesting and wonderful visit

during which students were informed about sources of energy in Tajikistan. He added that they knew how water is used in producing electricity and how natural sources are well functioned for serving the society. Hamad Al-Ajmi, another student, said it was an enjoyable visit, as students watched several charming natural sights such as mountains, snow and heights, indicating that information about the power plant was useful for him.

The journey program was launched in 2010 upon an initiative by the KFAED and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. Under the program, two trips are organized for two overseas countries per year for outstanding high-school students: one for 12 females and another for a dozen of males. The aim of KFAED's trip to reward the outstanding students and encourage them for more success and excellence. — KUNA

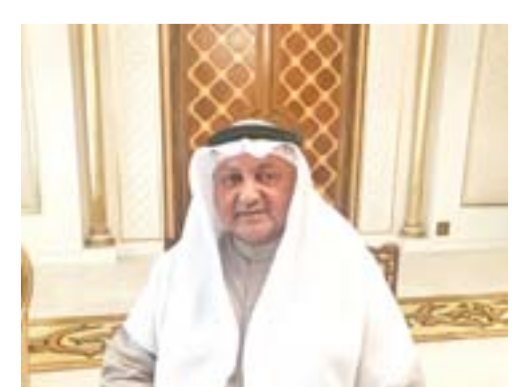


DUSHABNE: Kuwaiti outstanding students pose for a group picture during their visit to a hydroelectric power plant in Tajikistan. — KUNA

Kuwaiti national celebrations epitomize patriotic zeal: Official

KUWAIT: Kuwait's National Day festivities are a testament to the unbridled patriotism the people of this Gulf state exude, a Kuwaiti official said yesterday, about a month before national celebrations begin. This year's celebrations will be a concerted display of nation-

al unity, encapsulating the Kuwaiti people's allegiance to their leader, the Ministry of Information's undersecretary Mohammad Al-Awash said in a statement. He revealed that the ministry would have tons of up-to-the-minute coverage of the festivities, which is necessary to foster and maintain a favorable image of the nation. As part of the national celebrations, a bevy of Kuwaiti youth entrepreneurs will be feted for their outstanding work, in what Al-Awash said was a testament to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's support for the youngsters. Kuwait celebrates each year its independence and liberation from the Iraqi occupation on consecutive days, falling on February 25th and 26th respectively. — KUNA



Mohammad Al-Awash

Local

Former MP calls for resuming probe on Dow Chemical case

Early retirement law to be debated in next session

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Former MP Abdullah Al-Turaiqi yesterday officially asked the public prosecutor to resume investigations into the Dow Chemical case after it was shelved over a year ago. Turaiqi said on Twitter that he made the official request because he was the main witness in the case that cost Kuwait to pay a fine exceeding \$2 billion after unilaterally revoking a multi-

billion-dollar contract with the giant US petrochemicals manufacturer.

The National Assembly had launched an investigation into the whole affairs and Turaiqi was the head of the investigation committee that came up with a report on the issue. The public prosecution had shelved investigation into the case and did not press charges in December 2017 for a lack of evidence. But the criminal court has recently scrapped the decision to

shelve investigation and ordered the case to be sent back to the public prosecution to resume its investigation. There had been accusations by MPs against former government officials and top oil executives of committing violations that cost the country the massive fine.

Meanwhile, head of the National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee MP Salah Khorsheed said yesterday that the panel will complete the controver-

sial early retirement law soon and expected the law to be debated in the assembly's next session on January 30. The law has undergone several changes since it was approved overwhelmingly by lawmakers in the last term but was then rejected by the government. When it came back to the assembly, it underwent some amendments that a number of lawmakers claim have destroyed its original objectives.

The law initially aimed at

encouraging Kuwaiti civil servants to seek retirements five years ahead of time when they reach 50 years or complete 25 years of service for men and when female employees reach 45 years or complete 20 years of service. Now, the government introduced a precondition for that which is a two-percent deduction of pension for life for those who want to avail of the early retirement. Some MPs said they will oppose the new form of the law.



Abdullah Al-Turaiqi

Businessman jailed for forgery

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The court of cassation yesterday sentenced a Kuwaiti businessman to 30 months in prison over charges of forging some municipality documents so that he could build a 25-floor hotel instead of the licensed 20 floors.

Vehicle stolen

Astronomer Adel Al-Saadoun reported that on stepping out of his vehicle for a few meters to photograph a plant in a residential area, someone stole the vehicle. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Residential project

The resident engineer at the South Abdullah Al-Mubarak residential project site Feras Saleh said that the project is close to other residential areas and it is surrounded by Abdullah Al-Mubarak to the north, the Seventh Ring Road to the west and south and the airport to the east. Saleh added the project includes 3,260 plots of 400 sq m each over a total area of 4,357,000 sq m, including all the needed infrastructure and public facilities. Meanwhile, the deputy resident engineer for quality control Hilal Al-Hilal said that the project was awarded to Turkey's Limak and its local agent with a total value of KD 29 million, which is expected to be concluded in April 2020.

fake degrees. Responding to a parliamentary inquiry by Deputy Speaker Essa Al-Kandari, Bushehri refuted a report in a local daily, stressing that the Ministry of Public Works (MPW) had not been approached by the ministry of education, Civil Service Commission (CSC) or any other official body in this regard. Bushehri added that all appointments at MPW are done through the CSC, which sends lists of nominees according to the ministry's annual needs.

National labor support

The government referred a bill to the parliament on amending article 14 of law 19/2000 pertaining supporting national labor and encouraging them to work in non-governmental bodies and the incentives given to citizens working for the private sector. According to the amendment, the maximum penalty for citizens unlawfully getting such incentives or provide fake information to do so will be increased to three years and a KD 5,000 fine, including anyone who facilitates this crime.

Unqualified engineers

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri denied appointing 1,400 engineers at the ministry although some of them hold no engineering degrees, others have average qualifications while a third group allegedly hold



KUWAIT: A team from the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development visited the site of the new Sabah Hospital project yesterday. Plans and Programs' Preparation and Follow-up Department's Director Suad Al-Awadh said that the project is 59 percent complete, and noted that while the project is scheduled to be delivered in July 2019, a slight delay is expected. — KUNA

Palestine praises Kuwait's donation to rebuild Gaza

GAZA: Palestinian Minister of Public Works and Housing Mufeed Al-Hasanya praised yesterday financial donation by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) to rebuild Gaza. On sidelines of the Minister's visit to Al-Shifa medical complex, he said in a statement to the press that this donation is one of the most important aid to the Palestinian people because it includes the sectors of health, housing, industry, agriculture and infrastructure.

Hasanga expressed gratitude to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Kuwaiti people and KFAED on executing the project of rebuilding the obstetrics section in Al-Shifa medical complex and all projects executed in Gaza.



GAZA: Palestinian Minister of Public Works and Housing Mufeed Al-Hasanya visits the Al-Shifa medical complex. — KUNA

"The new section will be fully equipped with all medical devices and machinery for treating Palestinian women and it will be ready to operate within six months," the minister

added. The donation reached \$200 million and was presented during Cairo's International Conference designated specifically to rebuild Gaza. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Finance Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf meets with the visiting Lord Mayor of London Peter Estlin. — KUNA

Finance Minister meets with London Mayor

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Minister of Finance Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf discussed yesterday with the visiting Lord Mayor of London, global ambassador for the UK's financial and professional services industry, Peter Estlin, means of boosting bilateral commercial ties between the two countries.

The Ministry of Finance said in a press statement that the meeting tackled economic cooperation, especially in investment opportunities in both governmental and private sectors, in addition to boosting collaboration in the fields of technology, health and education. — KUNA

Youth initiative to protect Kuwait's oldest Sidr tree

KUWAIT: An initiative launched by a Kuwaiti youth succeeded in protecting 'Sidrat Hawally,' the oldest Sidr tree (Ziziphus spina-christi) in the country, estimated at 200 years old, against damage. The initiative by citizen Mubarak Al-Uwaini led authorities to surround the tree with a chain-linked fence to protect it from waste and diseases. The tree was originally called 'Sidrat Dahi', referring to farmer Dahi Al-Sabri, who had planted it in his own farm back then. It then became a part of Kuwait's heritage and a place to rest away from the sun, especially by travelling cattle owners.

Speaking on the initiative, farmer Uwaini said that it started by a video he posted on social media, calling on officials to protect the tree as it was in a very bad shape. He added that the authorities responded after an hour and a half of posting the video and started setting the fence around the tree. They also treated the tree from different diseases caused by old age and waste thrown by people.

Meanwhile, the Public Authority of Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources' (PAAAFR) Deputy Director General for Ornamental Horticulture Affairs Ghanem Al-Sanad noted that PAAAFR is working on planting Sidr trees all over the country. These trees adapt well with Kuwait's climate and have many benefits including the honey production, while their leaves are used in treating different diseases, he added. — KUNA



KUWAIT: 'Sidrat Hawally,' the oldest Sidr tree in the country, estimated at 200 years old. — KUNA



Anti-corruption authority refers two to prosecution

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) has referred a supervisor at Kuwait Municipality and an employee who works at one of its branches to the public prosecution. Nazaha official spokesman Mohammad Bouzbar said in a statement yesterday that the pair had been referred to the prosecution for questioning on charges of counterfeiting. In other news, well-informed sources at Kuwait Municipality said that demand on licensing camp has been 'very low' after launching

applications over a month late. Only 119 camps have been licensed till Thursday in all allowed desert locations, the sources added. Meanwhile, Municipal Council Chairman Osama Al-Otaibi said that he held a 'fruitful' meeting yesterday with Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahd Al-Sholah. Otaibi added that Sholah was 'fully cooperative' as he was in his previous position at the expropriation department. "The minister is cooperative and very flexible in decision making," he said, noting that the minister will soon visit the council to meet the entire board.

Student officer killed in crash

KUWAIT: A student officer from Qatar at the Saad Al-Abdullah Security Sciences Academy was killed in an accident on Salmi Road, Al-Rai reported yesterday. The body was recovered by the coroner and will be sent back to his country.

Meanwhile, Al-Rai also reported that Capital security department closed a

liquor brewery in a Jaber Al-Ahmad house. Hundreds of drums full of liquor and equipment were found in the house. After learning about their activities, police raided the place and found two men and two women there. The municipal emergency team hauled away hundreds of drums as the suspects, Nepalese, were placed under arrest.

Enriching innovation and creativity: Focus of Zain's sustainability strategy

Company showcases last year's top entrepreneurship and innovation achievements



Bader Al-Kharafi with Zain executives during the inauguration of the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC).



One of KILMITAIN's monthly sessions at ZINC.



KON students with Zain and LOYAC officials at ZINC.



Waleed Al-Khashti listens to a Coded student showcasing his project.

KUWAIT: During the first quarter of 2018, Zain Kuwait adopted the enrichment of innovation and entrepreneurial creativity as the main focus of its sustainability strategy for the entire year ahead. This strategy featured a plethora of initiatives, projects, and innovative programs that came in collaboration with various local, regional, and international partners, presenting Zain as a key player in progressing the digital investments wheel in the Kuwaiti market.

In the following report, Zain showcases the most prominent initiatives and projects the company launched and supported during 2018 to achieve its sustainability strategy, with the main aim of offering the proper educational environment for students, youth, and entrepreneurs to embrace their talents and encourage tech innovation, contributing to the further progress of Kuwait's national economy.

Zain Innovation Center (ZINC)

In early 2018, the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) was inaugurated in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh during a ceremony that witnessed the attendance of Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, Zain Group's Vice Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain's senior management, as well as many successful identities from the Kuwait and regional digital ecosystem. ZINC is set to encourage young minds to think and act creatively outside of the norm in an open, supportive environment. The design of the hub utilizes light and is deliberately modern and sleek, with the view to creating the right atmosphere for entrepreneurs to generate new ideas and develop them into viable opportunities. Apart from the inspiring co-working hub facilities, ZINC also provides aspiring entrepreneurs and startups access to experts in various fields and advice from mentors from the region and across the globe, including from Zain senior personnel and associated technology partners.

The introduction of ZINC is another step forward by Zain to align its brand values and Corporate Sustainability objectives, as well as the company's active investment in delivering on its strategic digital lifestyle aspirations. ZINC attracts major global pioneers and mentors from across the digital value chain to make appearances and inspire budding entrepreneurs through presentations, workshops, and much more.

The inauguration of ZINC also witnessed the launch of the all-new ZINC Kuwait app, which connects and promotes ZINC activities to the local startup community and allows users to make bookings and more. The app also informs users of the programs hosted in the center and how interested young startups and entrepreneurs can benefit from ZINC.

Coded Juniors Summer Camp

During 2018, Zain was the Strategic Partner of the Coded Juniors Summer Camp. The program aimed at teaching children the basics of coding and technology using the latest tools and gadgets throughout 4 weeks at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center. Zain's support came in line with its strategy towards encouraging innovation and digital transformation. The company is keen on contributing to the development and advancement of tech innovation within all age groups, including school children, with the aim of boosting their coding and technology skills, as such skills are essential for the modern digital world.

Coded Juniors Summer Camp mainly aimed at teaching school children (ages 7-12) the basics of coding languages and technology using the latest tools and gadgets like robots, smart toys, computers, and more, as well as traditional learning methods such as art, drawing, and music. The program featured a fun educational environment that lasted for 4 weeks in the Space Museum of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Cultural Center.

KON Social Entrepreneurship Program

During 2018, Zain organized a workshop for the participants of the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh. The event, brought to Kuwait in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, came as part of Zain's Strategic Partnership of LOYAC, a non-profit organization that aims at developing the youth's talents and skills. The partnership comes in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy, which centers around the development of the Education and Youth sectors, especially in regards to nurturing and developing entrepreneurial skills within the youth.

Zain hosted the students at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh, where they took part in a workshop facilitated by Khaled Al-Amiri, owner of the Li3ib project and an ex-participant of Zain's fourth Zain Great Idea accelerator program. The workshop covered tech startup acceleration, common challenges of entrepreneurship and how to overcome them, the basics of starting your own business, and more. Zain also participated in awarding the winning teams of the best project ideas as part of the program during the concluding ceremony.

KON, one of LOYAC's latest youth development programs, trained youth (12-16 years) in the area of Social Entrepreneurship throughout 6 weeks at the American University in Kuwait. The program was brought to Kuwait in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, considered the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education.

IFAD Internship Program

During 2018, Zain was the Exclusive Partner of the Internship Program at the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). Zain's support to the program, which came for the second consecutive year, was part of the company's Strategic Partnership with LOYAC.

Zain's exclusive support to LOYAC's Internship Program at IFAD featured the participation of Kuwaiti students Wadha Al-Mussalam (2017) and Thuraya Al-Holi (2018) in the program at Rome, Italy. Both students were selected by LOYAC amongst many outstanding Kuwaiti students of Accounting, Finance, and Economics to take part in this internship program, which extended throughout six months and aimed at training students on finance agricultural development projects primarily for food production in rural areas of developing countries.

LOYAC Part-time Training Program

During October - December 2018, Zain hosted 32

students of the LOYAC part-time training program who worked at the company's various divisions, giving them an opportunity to gain experience in the private sector work environment. Zain's support to the program came as part of the company's Strategic Partnership with LOYAC.

The 32 students, enrolled in the LOYAC part-time program, took part in completing tasks, learning new skills, and going through professional training in the real business world at various departments and divisions within Zain, where they gained valuable experiences of working in the private sector environment. Zain also offered the students financial rewards in recognition of their efforts and as an encouragement to their dedication. Zain is proud to be one of the Strategic Partners of LOYAC since its inception, especially that it is considered one of the most prominent national programs that cater to the youth and offers them a healthy and empowering environment to develop their skills and talents in an educational, fun, and social atmosphere.

INJAZ Al-Arab 12th Young Entrepreneurs Competition

During 2018, Zain sponsored the twelfth annual INJAZ Al-Arab Young Entrepreneurs Competition entitled 'Next Stop.. Forward.' The regional competition, organized by INJAZ Al-Arab and INJAZ Kuwait, was hosted last year by the State of Kuwait under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The company's support to this regional competition came as part of its Strategic Partnership with INJAZ Al-Arab, which extends throughout the years under the umbrella of Zain's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards developing the youth and education sectors. The competition witnessed 80 students competing to represent 11 different countries from all over the Middle East and North Africa region.

The INJAZ Al-Arab Young Entrepreneurs Competition is the culmination of six months of experiential learning and application based on INJAZ Al-Arab's internationally acclaimed Company Program, which is executed by a select group of corporate mentors who work hand-in-hand with students on establishing, marketing and liquidating a real business. The Competition is an annual celebration of the achievements of students who participated and won the National Company Program Competition in their countries after demonstrating sound knowledge in business planning, market research, marketing, sales and feasibility studies.

Makers Academy Program

During 2018, Zain was the Strategic Partner of the Makers Academy program held in collaboration with the

Ministry of State for Youth Affairs at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC). Zain's support to the program came in line with its strategy towards encouraging digital innovation, as the company is keen on contributing to the development and advancement of tech innovation within all age groups, including school children, with the aim of boosting their technology skills, as such skills are essential for the modern digital world.

The Makers Academy program was hosted at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh throughout two weeks, where 50 students aged 11-15 from both public and private schools took part in exciting sessions that aimed at teaching them the basics of digital manufacturing, product design, inventions, project creation, 3D modeling and printing, robotics, electronics, and more.

Smartphone Photography Workshops

During 2018, Zain organized three specialized workshops that covered the fundamentals of smartphone photography in collaboration with H&S Store. The workshops, held at the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh, were presented by professional photographers Abdulaziz Al-Suraya, Musaad Al-Obaid and Zainab Abdal. Zain organized the workshops in line with its continuous keenness to offer world-class specialized programs for those who are interested in developing their talents within all areas. Zain, being a leader in the Kuwaiti private sector, believes in the importance of enriching the talents of the community in which it operates by adopting such initiatives.

KILMITAIN 2.0 - The Innovation Series

During 2018, Zain supported the KILMITAIN 2.0 Innovation Series organized by Khaleesque Magazine and hosted by the Zain Innovation Center (ZINC) in the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh. The series featured unique monthly discussion sessions covering innovation and creativity within various fields, hosting many prominent innovators from Kuwait who shared their experiences, skills, and success stories with the audiences.

ING Creatives Program

During 2018, Zain sponsored the latest edition of the ING Creatives Program that was held for the first time in Kuwait. The program, hosted at Sheikh Abdullah Al Salem Cultural Center, organized creative design workshops featuring many internationally renowned designers, including a designer from NASA, a prominent meditative design practitioner from Boston, a sustainable design expert from Canada, and more.



Group photo of Zain and Coded officials with young mentors.

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A general view of Kuwait City's skyline. —Photo by Mohammad Sobhi (KUNA)

The Scientific Center hosts three-month 're_use' program

In partnership with the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences

KUWAIT: The latest edition of the re_use program launched recently at The Scientific Center of Kuwait (TSCK); re_use being the unique multi-arts program that seeks to create a sustainable, integrative environment to further social interest and research in the fields of environmental sustainability and STEAM education. The opening exhibition for the program took place recently, featuring a number of never-before-seen live performances at TSCK's IMAX theatre with the attendance of a number of VIP guests.

A cutting-edge, multi-arts program, re_use was developed by renowned Kuwaiti multimedia artist, Zahed Sultan. This latest three-month program is taking place under the umbrella of re_use's three-year collaboration and strategic partnership with TSCK and the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS).

Rana Nibari, General Manager at TSCK, said: "We at TSCK are committed to fostering an understanding of and responsibility towards our environment, thereby connecting us to the world around us. By raising awareness of issues impacting the environment through a hands-on, interactive method, we offer people the opportunity to investigate and make their own decisions about complex environmental issues."

Adding: "Without a doubt, TSCK is delighted to support and host exhibitions and programs such as this one, which reflect our vision and goals. We are fully aware of the magnitude of our responsibility towards our environment and our role in dealing with environmental issues facing our world, especially our beloved Kuwait. We are also firm believers in art being a medium for us to introduce new ideas which increase our involvement in the world around us."

The re_use program features a multimedia exhibition which investigates topics related to environmental sustainability, and seeks to shed light on practical and creative solutions to tackle challenges the world faces today. The exhibition features interactive, digitally creative works by local and international artists and designers that engage the general public, including: Plastic Reflectic, an installation which provokes thought on how we impact the environment with plastic waste; and Phonofolium, an interactive artwork of a living tree which reacts to sound or touch to demonstrate human influence on living things.

Furthermore, 're_use' also features an audio-visual performance at the IMAX theatre, in addition to a lab program offering educational classes for both adults and children - which takes place over the course of 12 weeks with a dedicated space focusing specifically on local relevance of the program's central topic to Kuwait's future. Visitors of all ages can take part in the workshops, as the program serves as a knowledge-exchange platform for topics related to environmental sustainability.



KUWAIT: Officials inaugurate the 're_use' program at The Scientific Center of Kuwait (TSCK). — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



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NIT No. NBCC/CPG/Indian Pavilion/Dubai/2019/189 Dated: 02.01.2019

NBCC (India) Ltd. invites global open e-tender from eligible applicants who fulfill qualification criteria as stipulated in clause 2.0 of NIT for "Construction of Indian Pavilion for World Expo 2020 at Dubai" on Design, Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) basis including Operation & Maintenance." Estimated Project Cost of this work is AED 13,31,99,848.5 (INR 253.08 Crores Approx.). Last date of submission of Bid is 05.02.2019. Completion period is as per NIT. The detailed NIT will be available on websites www.tenderwizard.com/NBCC and www.eprocure.gov.in Conjointly/Adendum to this publication if any, would appear only on the said websites and not be published. Chief General Manager (CPG)

Team Members:

Omar Khalil (Team Leader)
Islam Khaled Al-Toukhy
Ruonan Wang
Noureddin Khalil
Mohammad Hazem
Hind Al-Nusif

www.auk.edu.kw

AUK is one of the top 25 finalists

First place winners at the recent NASA Space Apps Challenge (Kuwait) have been chosen as one of 25 finalists (out of 400) to compete in the final round!

RISE Center at the American University of Kuwait hosted the NASA Space Apps Challenge. KIPCO is the strategic partner for this event as part of the CSR activities in support of youth empowerment and innovation.

International

MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 2019



Gandhi vows to reform sales tax, seek investment as polls nears

UK PM May warns it would be catastrophic to halt Brexit

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RAMALLAH: Israeli soldier clash with Palestinian youth during an incursion into the West Bank city. — AFP

President Abbas plans anti-Hamas measures

A cornered Hamas could renew violence against Israel

RAMALLAH: The decade-long Palestinian split looks set to deepen in the coming months, with president Mahmud Abbas poised to take multiple measures against Gaza to squeeze its Islamist rulers Hamas. The moves raise concerns of more suffering for Gaza's two million residents, already under an Israeli blockade and facing severe electricity shortages, while a cornered Hamas could renew violence against Israel.

Analysts say the measures will also widen the gap between Hamas-run Gaza and the occupied West Bank, where Abbas's government has limited self-rule. Hamas and Abbas's secular Fatah party have been at loggerheads since the Islamists seized control of Gaza from Abbas's forces in a near civil war in 2007, a year after sweeping parliamentary elections. Hamas has since fought three bloody wars with Israel and fears of a fourth remain.

Multiple reconciliation attempts between the Palestinian factions have failed but Egypt thought it had made a breakthrough in late 2017 when the two sides agreed to eventually share power. As part of that agreement Hamas withdrew from border crossings

between Gaza and Egypt and Israel, allowing the Fatah-dominated Palestinian Authority to return and the Egyptian border to be reopened regularly. The reconciliation agreement has since collapsed acrimoniously. Yesterday, the PA announced it would withdraw from the Egyptian border crossing, creating a dilemma for Cairo about whether to leave it open with Hamas in control. So far they have indicated they will. Senior officials close to Abbas say he is looking for other measures to punish Hamas.

'Very important decisions'

Among these could be removing staff from the crossings between Israel and Gaza — making it hard for the Jewish state to allow anything into the territory without dealing directly with Hamas, which it and many other countries label a terrorist organization. They could also include cutting salaries to families of Hamas prisoners or rescinding Palestinian passports for Hamas employees.

Abbas has also pledged to dissolve the Hamas-dominated Palestinian parliament, which though it hasn't met

since the 2007 split is still nominally the basis for new laws. "Very important decisions against Hamas are being discussed," a senior official said on condition of anonymity. It follows a series of arrests of those affiliated with Fatah in Gaza, according to Abbas allies. The official said the PA spent around \$100 million per month in Gaza, including for electricity subsidies, and was looking to cut back significantly. "Those that want to rule Gaza must bear the responsibility of governing it," the official said.

Azzam al-Ahmad, a senior Abbas ally and negotiator of the 2017 reconciliation agreement, told AFP "the leadership is considering a number of measures".

Senior Hamas official Bassem Naim said the Islamists had seen similar threats before. "Any type of sanctions such as electricity, preventing medicine, closing the border or cutting the salaries are intended to blackmail residents into rising against Hamas and they fail," he told AFP. "This is the most that Abbas can do."

'Short-term thinking'

The Palestinians have faced stark challenges over the

past two years, with US President Donald Trump leading what he has called the most pro-Israel administration in the country's history. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government has meanwhile continued to expand settlements in the West Bank.

Abbas's government froze contacts with the Trump administration after it recognized the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017. The deepening split between the two factions weakens their ability to respond to such pressure, said Hugh Lovatt of the European Council on Foreign Relations think-tank.

He said the PA withdrawal from the border crossings was part of a "package of measures designed to try and squeeze Hamas." "It is not irreversible but it is certainly a very negative step. This is short-term thinking triumphing longer-term strategy." Nadia Hijab, president of the Al-Shabaka Palestinian think-tank, said the infighting prevented a united front against Israeli policies. "Palestinians fear that this latest move will cement the division and lead to a complete break between Gaza and the West Bank, something Israel has been pushing," she said.—AFP

Iran protests to Poland over Iran focused summit

DUBAI: Iran's foreign ministry summoned a senior Polish diplomat to protest at Poland's jointly hosting a global summit with the United States focused on the Middle East, particularly Iran, state news agency IRNA reported yesterday. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Friday the summit — to be held in Warsaw on Feb. 13-14 — would focus on stability and security in the Middle East, including on the "important element of making sure that Iran is not a destabilizing influence".

An Iranian foreign ministry official told Poland's charge d'affaires in Tehran that Iran saw the decision to host the meeting as a "hostile act against Iran" and warned that Tehran could reciprocate, IRNA added. "Poland's charge d'affaires provided explanations about the conference and said it was not anti-Iran," the agency added. The Polish foreign ministry could not be reached for comment.

Relations between Tehran and Washington

are highly fraught following the decision in May by President Donald Trump to withdraw from a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers and to reimpose sanctions, including on Iran's vital oil sector. On Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif criticized Poland for hosting the meeting and wrote on Twitter: "Polish Govt can't wash the shame: while Iran saved Poles in WWII, it now hosts desperate anti-Iran circus."

Zarif was referring to Iran hosting more than 100,000 Polish refugees during the Second World War. Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri said the summit was being held because US sanctions had failed to bring Iran to its knees. "Americans thought pressures would break down our economy. They wanted to bring our oil exports to zero but failed... Now they've decided to hold an anti-Iran conference in Europe," the semi-official news agency Fars quoted Jahangiri as saying.

Meanwhile, a cultural official said a planned Polish Film Week in Iran would be cancelled if the summit plans are not dropped. "Iranians have hosted various nations and ethnic groups with open arms, especially the Poles," Hossein Entezami, head of the Cinema Organisation of Iran, said on Twitter. "In order to protect the honor of Iran and Iranians, the holding of the Polish Film Week will depend on Warsaw's appropriate behavior." —Reuters

Battisti: A life on the run

PARIS: Convicted as a murderer for bloodshed in the 1970s, former leftwing Italian activist Cesare Battisti, who was caught in Bolivia, has spent almost four decades on the run, detailing his experiences in a string of acclaimed thrillers. His capture at the weekend was the latest twist in a near 40-year legal and diplomatic saga worthy of the kind of autobiographical novel the 64-year-old made his specialty.

Convicted in absentia to life behind bars by an Italian court, he has spent years on the road, travelling from Mexico to France and Brazil, despite regular threats of extradition. Battisti was convicted by an Italian court in 1993 and sentenced to life for involvement in four murders in the 1970s when he was a leftwing activist. Although he admits being part of an armed revolutionary group, he has always denied responsibility for any deaths. But Rome

remains determined to punish one of the last figures from Italy's so-called Years of Lead, a decade of violent turmoil which began in the late 1960s and saw dozens of deadly attacks by hardline leftwing and rightwing groups.

A softly spoken apologist who can tirelessly argue in multiple languages, Battisti was born in southern Rome on December 18, 1954 into a Catholic family of communists. In the late 1970s, after spending several brief stints in prison for minor offenses, he joined the Armed Proletarians for Communism (PAC), a radical leftwing group which staged a string of robberies and attacks.

"Aspiring to change society with arms is idiotic," he said in an interview in 2011. "But listen, at the time everyone was packing a gun. There were guerillas all over the world, Italy was in a pre-revolutionary situation." Arrested in Milan in 1979 and sentenced for belonging to an armed gang, Battisti managed to escape from prison near Rome two years later, fleeing first to France and then to Mexico in 1982.

Following a pledge by France's then socialist president Francois Mitterand not to extradite former Italian activists

who had turned their back on their past, Battisti returned to France in 1990 and began his writing career. Three years later, a Milan court convicted him in absentia of personally killing two Italian police officers, participating in the murder of a butcher, and planning an attack on a jeweller who died in a shoot-out that left his 14-year-old son in a wheelchair. But Battisti has denied having any blood on his hands over the four murders, which took place in 1978 and 1979.

Like hundreds of other Italians who were politically active in the 1970s, Battisti rebuilt his life in Paris, where he stayed until 2004. Working as a caretaker to make ends meet, he began writing thrillers, publishing more than a dozen of them, many with a strongly autobiographical bent focusing on the exile and redemption of former headline activists. In 2004, the government of Jacques Chirac decided to end Mitterand's policy and extradite Battisti back to Italy.

Despite the support of several high-profile figures, including best-selling crime novelist Fred Vargas and philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy, Battisti's legal appeals were rejected.—AFP

International

Israel says all the Hezbollah cross-border tunnels found

Latest tunnel began in the Lebanese village of Ramyeh

JERUSALEM: Israel said yesterday it had uncovered all cross-border attack tunnels dug by Hezbollah from Lebanon and will bring its operation to find and destroy them to an end after more than a month. The operation begun on December 4 had raised concerns that Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based Shiite group and enemy of Israel, would respond and spark a new conflict between them, but the border has remained calm throughout.

An Israeli military spokesman declined to say how many tunnels had been discovered in total, but the army has announced six since the operation was launched. The last tunnel was exposed on Saturday, the army said. "We have found yet another Hezbollah cross-border attack tunnel from Lebanon to Israel," Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Conricus told reporters. "According to our intelligence and our assessment of the situation there are no longer any cross-border attack tunnels from Lebanon into Israel."

The latest tunnel began in the Lebanese village of Ramyeh, some 800 meters away from Israel, the army said. It reached a few dozen meters into Israel, and at 55 meters underground was the deepest as well as "the longest and most detailed" of all the tunnels the army exposed, Conricus said. The army said its discovery marked the end of the operation that it called "Northern Shield" and that the last tunnel will be destroyed in the coming days.

'Achieved the goal'

The tunnels are being destroyed either with explosives or by filling them with a cement-like material to make them unusable. Conricus said there were no more tunnels reaching Israel from Lebanon but the army was

still monitoring "facilities" being dug by Hezbollah inside Lebanese territory. "We have achieved the goal (to expose and destroy the tunnels from Lebanon) which we set out to achieve at the beginning," Conricus said. He also reiterated that Israel holds the Lebanese government accountable "for any act of violence or violation of 1701," the UN resolution that ended the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah.

UNIFIL, the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, was informed of the latest tunnel, Conricus said. Israel alleges Hezbollah had planned to use the tunnels to kidnap or kill its civilians or soldiers, and to seize a slice of Israeli territory in the event of any hostilities. It has said, however, that they were not yet operational. A month-long war in 2006 between Israel and Hezbollah killed more than 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and more than 160 Israelis, mostly soldiers.

Israel says all anti-tunnel operations have taken place within its territory, and the highly publicized mission has gone ahead without drawing a military response from Hezbollah. The announcement that the operation is ending comes as military chief of staff Gadi Eisenkot steps down at the end of his term. Israeli analysts see the operation as one of Eisenkot's important achievements. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu listed the tunnel operation on Sunday when thanking Eisenkot for his 40 years of military service, including the last four as chief of staff.

"We are thus approaching the completion of the goal we set at the outset of Operation Northern Shield: the eradication of Hezbollah's tunnels weapon," Netanyahu said at the start of a cabinet meeting. Neither Lebanon nor Hezbollah has commented directly on the end of the operation.



A United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) force patrols along the border with Israel in the southern Lebanese village of Adaiseh. —AFP

Lebanese officials however held talks on Sunday with US Under Secretary of State David Hale that included discussion of the border area, statements from both sides said. —AFP

Yemen rebels boycott meeting with UN truce monitors

SANAA: Yemeni rebels yesterday boycotted a meeting chaired by the head of a UN-led ceasefire monitoring team in the flashpoint city of Hodeida, accusing him of pursuing "other agendas". Retired Dutch general Patrick Cammaert is leading a joint committee, which includes both government and rebel representatives, tasked with overseeing a truce in the Red Sea port city and the withdrawal of both parties.

Houthi rebel negotiator Mohammed Abdelsalam said Cammaert "steered from the course of the agreement by implementing other agendas". "If (UN envoy to Yemen Martin) Griffiths does not address the issue, it is going to be difficult to discuss any other matter," he said on Twitter without elaborating. An AFP photographer said that the Houthi representatives did not take part in the committee meeting in Hodeida yesterday. The UN declined to comment. Clashes erupted between Houthi rebels and government forces in Hodeida on Saturday, dealing a new blow to the fragile truce.

The rebel-held port city, which is a lifeline for the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid, was for months the main front line in the Yemeni conflict after government forces supported by Saudi Arabia and its allies launched an offensive to capture it in June. But last month the warring parties agreed a ceasefire for Hodeida during UN-sponsored talks in Sweden.

The United Nations has said the truce has largely held since it came into force on December 18 but there have been delays in the agreed pullback of rebel and government forces. The Houthis control most of Hodeida while government forces are deployed on the southern and eastern outskirts. Since the Saudi-led military coalition intervened in support of the government in March 2015, the conflict has killed nearly 10,000 people and unleashed the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations. UN aid officials say 80 percent of the population — 24 million people — are in need of aid and nearly 10 million are just one step away from famine.

Top Yemen brass dies

In related news, a high-ranking Yemeni intelligence official injured in a Houthi rebel drone attack on the country's largest air base died of his wounds yesterday, medical sources said. Intelligence Brigadier



An image grab taken from a video obtained by AFP TV shows a wounded Yemeni soldier being carried by comrades after a drone exploded above Yemen's al-Anad air base in the government-held southern province of Lahj. —AFP

General Saleh Tamah was wounded on Thursday in a strike on a military parade in Al-Anad air base, in government-held Lahij province some 60 kilometers north of Yemen's second city Aden. Medical sources told AFP that Tamah underwent several surgeries in a hospital in Aden but died Sunday morning.

At least seven loyalists — including Tamah — were killed and 11 injured in Thursday's incident, which threatens to hamper United Nations-led peace efforts. Among those injured were Yemen's deputy chief of staff Saleh Al-Zandani, senior army commander Fadel Hasan and Lahij governor Ahmad Abdullah Al-Turki. Turki and Zandani were transported to Saudi Arabia for treatment, a Yemeni official told AFP. The UN voiced alarm on Friday following the attack and urged "all parties to the conflict to exercise restraint and refrain from further escalation".

At talks in Sweden last month, the UN brokered several agreements between the Iran-aligned Huthi rebels and the Saudi-backed government seen as the best chance of ending nearly four years of devastating conflict. The warring sides agreed on truce deals for the key rebel-held aid port of Hodeida and battleground third city Ta'ez. The UN is working to schedule a new round of consultations, possibly in Kuwait, aimed at drafting a political framework.

The war between the Huthis and loyalist troops escalated in March 2015, when President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi fled into Saudi exile and a Saudi-led military coalition intervened. Since then, the conflict has killed nearly 10,000 people and unleashed the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the UN. UN aid officials say 80 percent of the population — 24 million people — are in need of aid and nearly 10 million are just one step away from famine. —AFP

west of St. Louis, where about a foot and a half of snow was recorded, with still more falling on Saturday, Orrison said. At least five people died in weather-related crashes on roads in Missouri and Kansas, according to the highway patrolmen in both states. "I think it's safe to say that every road is bad in Kansas right now!" Trooper Tod Hileman, a spokesman for the Kansas Highway Patrol, said on Twitter on Saturday.

Dozens of flights were canceled at St. Louis Lambert International Airport, which described the onslaught of snow on Twitter as one of its biggest single-day winter storms in years. Snow is forecast for the Appalachian Mountains and the Mid-Atlantic on Saturday evening and Sunday. "Given how cold it is across the Midwest and even in the mid-Atlantic region, certainly people who are going to be out are going to want to dress in layered clothing," Orrison said.

Washington, where many federal government offices are closed due to the U.S. government shutdown, is expected to receive 6 to 8 inches of snow from this storm, according to the National Weather Service. Central and northern Virginia will receive even more, with up to 10 inches of snow possible in some places. Baltimore and parts of Maryland are also bracing for a similar amount. Philadelphia is expected to receive a few inches of snow, but areas north of there are expected to be spared, Orrison added. —Reuters

Australia police call off outback search for German tourist


SYDNEY: An extensive aerial search for a German tourist missing in the vast Australian outback for almost two weeks has been called off, police said. Monika Billen, 62, was reported missing last week after leaving her resort in Alice Springs, a remote town near the geographical centre of Australia. She

is believed to have hitched and walked her way to the Emily Gap, a site popular with tourists in a remote nature park famed for its rocky ravines and gorges.

Police had launched land and aerial searches for Billen, including the use of drones. They believe a motorist may have seen her looking dehydrated and a disoriented as early as January 2. "Despite our efforts no further evidence has been found to indicate Monika is still out there," Northern Territory Police Superintendent Pauline Vicary said in a statement on Saturday. "Neither is there any evidence to indicate foul play. The last physical sighting we have for her is the Emily Gap and surrounding area, which we have thoroughly searched." —AFP

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Snowstorm targets Washington, five dead in Midwest

WASHINGTON: A winter storm that dumped heavy snow on the US Midwest, causing at least five roadway deaths, stranding some motorists in Missouri and canceling dozens of flights, marched east toward Washington on Saturday. The weather system, which started as rain from Mexico but has since turned into snow, is forecast to affect an 1,800-mile swath of the United States from Colorado to the Mid-Atlantic.

The storm hit Kansas and Missouri on Friday and pummeled those states again on Saturday as it extended into parts of Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Ohio, said U.S. Weather Prediction Center meteorologist Andrew Orrison. In Kansas City, snow dusted the field at Arrowhead Stadium during Saturday's National Football League playoff game between the hometown Chiefs and Indianapolis Colts. "There's snow time like Showtime," the Chiefs said on Twitter, sharing video of the team's quarterback Patrick Mahomes arriving at the stadium in the snow.

The storm is leaving its heaviest snowfall on areas

International

Ahead of vote, UK PM May warns it would be catastrophic to halt Brexit

Parliament divided as clock ticks towards exit date

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May warned lawmakers yesterday that failing to deliver Brexit would be catastrophic for democracy, in a plea for support two days before parliament is expected to reject her deal with Brussels. With the clock ticking down to its March 29 exit from the European Union and parliament deadlocked, Britain faces a hugely uncertain path that could lead to a disorderly exit or even remaining in the bloc.

May, who postponed a vote in parliament on her deal in December after admitting she was set to lose it, said lawmakers must not let down the people who backed Brexit in a June 2016 referendum. "Doing so would be a catastrophic and unforgivable breach of trust in our democracy," she wrote in the Sunday Express. "So my message to Parliament this weekend is simple: it is time to forget the games and do what is right for our country."

May has so far refused to retreat from her unpopular deal, which envisages close trading ties with the EU, but without any say on policy as Britain has now. The vexed Brexit issue represents Britain's biggest shift in foreign and trade policy in more than 40 years. May's deal has come under fire from all sides — with opponents of the EU seeking a cleaner break and many pro-Europeans pressing for a second referendum. May is expected to suffer a big defeat when parliament votes tomorrow.

Brexit minister Stephen Barclay told BBC TV that persuading enough lawmakers to support the deal would be "challenging" but that even if it was rejected, he suspected parliament would ultimately support

something "along the lines of this deal". Opposition Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said leaving the EU without a deal would be catastrophic and his party would do everything it could to prevent that outcome. However, Corbyn's priority is to force a national election and he said he would propose a vote of confidence in the government "soon" if May loses tomorrow.

Parliament flexes muscles

After a week in which parliament forced the government to promise to come back with a 'plan B' within days if May's deal is rejected, Barclay said the risk of parliament acting in a way that frustrates Brexit had increased. The Sunday Times reported that rebel lawmakers were planning to wrest control of the legislative agenda away from May next week with a view to suspending or delaying Brexit, citing a senior government source.

Vince Cable, the leader of the pro-EU Liberal Democrats, said parliament would act to prevent a no deal Brexit, and could ultimately seek to prevent Brexit altogether. "I think parliament will take control of this process, will insist that we pursue the option of no Brexit," he told BBC TV. Cable said this could be done by revoking Article 50, the mechanism which triggered the exit process, or by holding a second referendum.

Asked about the prospect of another referendum, Labour leader Corbyn told BBC TV: "My own view is that I would rather get a negotiated deal now, if we can, to stop the danger of a no-deal exit from the EU on the 29th of March which would be catastrophic for industry, catastrophic for trade." Corbyn said that if he forced a



SUNDERLAND: In this file photo taken on October 25, 2016 a man walks his dog past graffiti. — AFP

national election and his party won, Brexit may have to be delayed while they negotiated a new deal with the EU. "An election would take place what February-March

time, clearly there is only a few weeks then between that and the leave date, there would have to be a time for those negotiations," he added. — Reuters

Far-right AfD to campaign on German EU exit

RIESA: German far-right party AfD voted yesterday to campaign for Berlin's exit from the EU in the upcoming European Parliament elections if its demand for reforms within the bloc are not met. The decision marks the first time any party has called for "Dexit" — a German departure from the EU in the mould of Brexit. If the EU is not reshaped in line with the party's ideas "in an appropriate timeframe", Germany must leave the bloc, according to the draft manifesto agreed by delegates at a party congress in eastern Saxony state.

Congress attendees also voted through a call to abolish the European Parliament — the very Brussels body the AfD candidates will be campaigning to join this spring. "We see nation-states as having the exclusive competence to make laws," the text read,

blasting the "751 privileged members" of the present European house. While both demands are now in the draft manifesto, a final vote later Sunday will adopt or reject the entire campaign package. Elections for the European Parliament will take place in May.

AFD was originally founded as a eurosceptic party, but rose to its current strength and representation in Germany's national parliament after right-wingers took over and switched its focus to opposing Islam and immigration. Like other nationalist movements around the continent, its leaders argue too much power has been transferred to Brussels, saying the EU has far outgrown its origins in economic cooperation.

"We don't need to abolish the EU, but bring it back to its sensible core," AfD leader Alexander Gauland told delegates Saturday ahead of the vote, saying the party "has partners that would walk the path with us" like Austria's FPÖ or Italy's Lega. Concerned about scaring off potential voters in majority pro-EU Germany, party chiefs warned the congress against even harder proposals that would have called for an exit if AfD's reform demands were not imposed by 2024. — AFP

Border plan sparks fear in Kosovo's Serb enclaves

GRACANICA: A possible land swap between Serbia and Kosovo, suggested by their leaders to end one of Europe's most volatile territorial disputes, has sparked concerns that the border could be redrawn along ethnic lines and reignite festering communal ethnic animosities. With few details yet made public, media reports say that the Serb majority northern border region around the city of Mitrovica would be incorporated into Serbia under the plan, which would also see Belgrade hand over a mainly ethnic Albanian region in Serbia.

The trade-off would also see Belgrade finally recognize its former province as an independent state, 20 years after a bitter war between Serbia's forces and pro-independence ethnic Albanian guerrillas that led to Kosovo breaking away from Serbia in 2008. Kosovo's President Hashim Thaci, who along with Serbian counterpart Aleksandar Vucic last year raised the possibility of redrawing the border, has insisted a revised version would not be drawn along ethnic lines.

'Clear ethnic division'

But the plan has sent ripples of alarm through minorities in these regions, notably among ethnic Serbs living in enclaves dispersed in Kosovo who would be unaffected by such a deal. A territory swap would mean "clear ethnic division so that within decades there will be no Serbs left in Kosovo," said Stefan

Filipovic, a 24-year-old Kosovan Serb activist in Gracanica, one of those enclaves and a short drive south of the capital, Pristina.

There are an estimated 120,000 Serbs living in Kosovo in total. Of those some 40,000 are thought to live around Mitrovica — and are likely set to be part of the land swap — while a further 80,000 live deeper in Kosovo and would remain under Pristina. Gracanica, home to one of Kosovo's main Orthodox monasteries, is one of six mainly Serbian municipalities that are like islands surrounded by Kosovo Albanian neighborhoods.

For Rada Trajkovic, an ethnic Serb politician in his 60s living in Gracanica, the border change would amount to creating "two mono-ethnic spaces" and lead to Serbs leaving Kosovan enclaves. Trajkovic is one of few Kosovar Serbs willing publicly to criticize Srpska Lista, or Serbian List, the minority's main political outlet. Most of Trajkovic's fellow Serb colleagues back the Belgrade line of President Vucic.

'Abandoned by Belgrade'

Long a taboo subject, a territorial exchange has the backing of the United States as well as several EU officials. Germany, however, is opposed, warning of the potential for a renewed flare-up of the hardline nationalism which has marked the still fragile Balkans in the past. A NATO-led peacekeeping force has guarded Kosovo since it broke away from Serbia in a bloody war in 1998-99 that left more than 13,000 dead. Border revision "is a very dangerous, particularly dramatic idea," says Filipovic, who feels "abandoned by Belgrade". For Trajkovic, "if they cede the north of Kosovo to Serbia, I don't see why the (Kosovar) Albanians would show empathy with those (Serbs) living" in the enclaves. — AFP

Sudan police fire tear gas as protests erupt

KHARTOUM: Sudanese police fired tear gas yesterday at crowds of anti-government protesters in Khartoum and the western war-torn region of Darfur after organizers called for nationwide rallies against President Omar Al-Bashir. The demonstrations in Darfur were the first of their kind since unrest erupted last month over a government decision to triple the price of bread.

The protests have since swiftly escalated into nationwide rallies widely seen as the biggest threat to Bashir's rule in his three decades in power. Protesters who took to the streets in the capital's Bahari district chanting "peace, peace" and "revolution is the people's choice" were quickly confronted by riot police, witnesses told AFP. Authorities say the protests have left 24 people dead, while Human Rights Watch has put the death toll at 40, including children and medical staff.

Protest organizers have called for near daily demonstrations across the country against Bashir this week, calling it a "Week of Uprising". In Khartoum on Sunday protesters were seen carrying the Sudanese flag as others held banners bearing the words "peace, justice, freedom", which has become a key slogan in the rallies. Witnesses told AFP that police were pursuing protesters down Bahari's streets and alleys. "It's like a cat and mouse game," a witness said. Police arrested several protesters, witnesses said, as footage of the rally which could not be independently verified spread on social media networks.

Protests in Darfur

Protests broke out in Darfur after calls for



KHARTOUM: A picture taken on January 13, 2019 shows anti-government demonstrators in the Sudan capital. — AFP

rallies there by the Sudanese Professionals' Association, which has spearheaded the demonstrations. Police fired tear gas at demonstrators who took to the streets of El-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state and in Niyala, the capital of South Darfur state, witnesses said.

Darfur, a region the size of France, has been torn by violence since 2003 when ethnic minority rebels took up arms against Khartoum, accusing it of economic and political marginalization. Bashir, who seized power in an Islamist-backed coup in 1989, has been charged by the Hague-based International Criminal Court (ICC) with genocide and war crimes allegedly committed in Darfur. Anti-government demonstrations first erupted on December 19 in towns and villages before later spreading to Khartoum.

Rights groups say more than 1,000 people have been arrested since the protests began,

including opposition leaders, activists and journalists as well as demonstrators. The crackdown has drawn international criticism, with countries like Britain, Norway, Canada and the United States warning Khartoum that its actions could "have an impact" on its relations with their governments.

Although the unrest was triggered by the rise in the price of bread, Sudan has faced a mounting economic crisis over the past year, led by an acute shortage of foreign currency. Repeated shortages of food and fuel have been reported in several cities, including Khartoum, while the cost of food and medicine has more than doubled. Bashir and other officials have blamed Washington for Sudan's economic woes. The US imposed a trade embargo on Khartoum in 1997 that was lifted only in October 2017. It restricted Sudan from conducting international business and financial transactions. — AFP

Greek PM calls vote as minister quits over Macedonia deal

ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras yesterday called an "immediate" no-confidence vote in parliament over the resignation of a top minister opposed to the country's name change deal with Macedonia. "We will proceed immediately to the renewal of the confidence in our government by the parliament in order to proceed with the major issues for our country," he said.

Tsipras earlier yesterday accepted the resignation of Defence Minister Panos Kammenos, who is head of his main coalition ally in government, the nationalist Independent Greeks party (ANEL). The semi-official ANA news agency said the debate on a no-confidence vote could begin as early as Tuesday and could be concluded by Thursday. Kammenos said that he would vote against the government as supporting it would imply backing for the name deal with Macedonia.

The nationalist ANEL has supported the Tsipras administration with its seven lawmakers and has six ministers and junior ministers in the government. Kammenos had threatened to pull out of the government when the name deal comes to a vote in Athens from the moment Tsipras signed it with Macedonian



ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras makes statement to the media after meeting with Greek Defense Minister and coalition partner Panos Kammenos. — AFP

Prime Minister Zoran Zaev in the border Prespes region in June. However some of his ANEL party's MPs remain ambivalent.

Macedonian lawmakers voted late on Friday to rename their country the Republic of North Macedonia but the agreement now needs backing from the Greek parliament to come into effect. For the Greeks, Macedonia is the name of a history-rich northern province that was the cradle of Alexander the Great's ancient empire.

Greece has blocked its neighbor's accession to NATO and the European Union ever since Macedonia broke away from the former Yugoslavia in 1991. "We will do everything to block the ratification of the Prespes deal,"

Kammenos told a news conference Sunday after announcing his resignation.

He charged that the agreement was "anti-constitutional" and called for a referendum on the issue to coincide with EU elections in May. After meeting with Tsipras earlier yesterday, Kammenos said "the Macedonia issue does not allow me not to sacrifice my post". Tsipras believes the agreement can be ratified with the 145 lawmakers of his leftist Syriza party plus the votes of the small pro-EU To Potami party as well as some ANEL lawmakers who disagree with Kammenos's position. The main opposition New Democracy party is vehemently against the agreement. — AFP

International

Gandhi vows to reform sales tax, seek investment as polls near

‘We will take some rational economic decisions’

NEW DELHI: India's main opposition Congress party will simplify the goods and services tax (GST) and take "rational economic decisions" to attract foreign investment if voted back to power in a general election due by May, its leader Rahul Gandhi said on Saturday. Launched in 2017, the GST was initially hailed as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's biggest economic reform as it replaced more than a dozen federal and state levies and unified Asia's third largest economy.

But its chaotic implementation and complexities months after a shock ban by Modi on high value bank currency aimed at unearthing untaxed wealth — badly hurt small businesses and led to millions of job losses in the cash-driven economy, presenting the biggest challenge to Modi's re-election chances.

Gandhi, scion of India's Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, said during a visit to Dubai that foreign investment was at a multi-year low in India due to the "ill-advised and badly thought out economic moves" such as the currency ban and a "poorly designed GST".

"We will take some rational economic deci-

sions," he told a press conference, which was broadcast live on Twitter. "We will restructure the GST and we will embrace investments from the Middle East and other parts of the world. We are the party of (India's economic) liberalisation, we are the party that gave the fastest economic growth in the first decade of the century, and will do that again."

Fight over autonomy

He said his main priority would be to create jobs, simplify the GST, rebuild confidence in institutions such as the Reserve Bank of India — whose governor resigned recently after a fight over autonomy with the government, and the Supreme Court. Four Supreme Court judges held a rare press conference early last year saying that "unless this institution is preserved and it maintains its equanimity, democracy will not survive in this country".

Modi told a BJP convention in New Delhi on Saturday that for Congress "every institution was wrong and only they were right". The Congress press conference was organised by the Indian Overseas Congress, which is present

in about 35 countries, as Gandhi tries to reach out to rich Indians living abroad for funds and social media support for the party that has dominated the country's politics for decades before being nearly decimated in the last general election in 2014 by Modi.

But back home, Gandhi received a jolt when bitter rivals Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP) announced an election tie-up without Congress in Uttar Pradesh state, which sends the highest number of lawmakers to the lower house of parliament. "The BSP and SP have made a political decision," Gandhi said. "It's on us on how to strengthen the Congress party in Uttar Pradesh and we will fight with our full capacity. Whether we do or their alliance does, the BJP is not winning there."

Modi said at the Delhi convention that the opposition was working on a "desperate alliance", while the BJP would give a "strong government". The Hindu nationalist BJP lost power in three key states recently, forcing the government to announce a flurry of measures to woo small businesses and the less well-off since then. — Reuters



JAIPUR: An Indian farmer takes a photo on a smartphone during a rally for the farming community held by Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi. — AFP

Hindus gather in India for world's largest festival

ALLAHABAD: Hindu devotees began gathering yesterday in northern India for the world's largest religious festival, with millions of pilgrims travelling to bathe in holy rivers for the spectacular Kumbh Mela. State authorities in Uttar Pradesh are expecting 12 million visitors to descend on Allahabad for the centuries-old festival, which officially begins Tuesday and continues until early March.

The ancient city rises alongside the banks of the Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers, and the meeting point of the three is considered highly sacred in Hinduism. Hindus believe bathing there during the Kumbh helps cleanse sins and

free the soul from the cycle of death and rebirth. Two days before the gigantic bathing ritual begins, naked holy men wandered the banks smeared in ash, offering blessings for devotees.

"We help devotees get rid of their pains and troubles through our blessings, sacred ash, yoga, knowledge and wisdom," said Prahlad Puri, a holy man with his long knotted hair tied in a bun. "We distribute food, we serve the poor." According to Hindu mythology, gods and demons fought a war over a sacred pitcher, or kumbh, containing the nectar of immortality.

During the tussle, a few drops fell to earth at four different locations—one being Allahabad. The historic city was recently renamed Prayagraj by the state's conservative Hindu government but is still widely known by Allahabad, the name it was given by Muslim rulers hundreds of years ago. The Mela, which runs until March 4, was recognised as an intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2017. — AFP



ALLAHABAD: An Indian devotee prays after taking a dip on the Triveni Sangam banks, the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers, at the Kumbh Mela festival. — AFP

UN urges Pakistan not to execute mentally ill prisoner

GENEVA: UN experts yesterday urged Pakistan to stay the "arbitrary execution" of a former police officer suffering from mental illness, just days before his sentence was to be carried out. The appeal comes two days before Pakistan was scheduled to execute Khizar Hayat, a 55-year-old former police officer who was sentenced to death in 2003 for shooting a colleague.

"The imposition of capital punishment on individuals with psychosocial disabilities is a clear violation of Pakistan's international obligations," said Agnes Callamard, UN expert on extrajudicial executions and Catalina Devandas, the special rapporteur on disabled rights. Hayat, who has spent more than 15 years in custody, has been kept in solitary confinement since 2012, they said, urging the government to halt the execution and questioning the veracity of his conviction.

"During his trial, no evidence or witnesses were called in his defense and no questions were asked regarding his mental health, although he was later diagnosed with a mental health condition and has been receiving treatment for the past 10 years," they said. The execution order was issued just two weeks after the Pakistani Human Rights Commission issued an order directing a stay of the execution in his case on humanitarian grounds.

"Implementing the death penalty under these conditions is unlawful and tantamount to an arbitrary execution, as well as a form of cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment," the UN panel said. Two years ago, experts from the World Psychiatric Association also appealed to Pakistan to halt his execution, saying he was suffering from schizophrenia and did not understand the crime he had committed. Government doctors had diagnosed Hayat as suffering from schizophrenia in 2008. A petition to move him to a mental health facility was dismissed on 6 December 2018, the experts said. — AFP

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Mood of revolt as anti-Vucic protesters turn out

Major opposition protests in Serbia have been relatively rare over the past decade, but the icy January air has ushered in a swelling mood of revolt. Since last month, thousands of demonstrators have rallied each Saturday through Belgrade's frozen streets against President Aleksandar Vucic, accusing him of stifling media freedoms and cracking down on the opposition. This Saturday, for the sixth time in a row, the marchers again hoisted their flags and banners in a united display of discontent against Vucic's increasingly controversial rule.

"Dictator!" cried the crowd at a recent demonstration in the capital. "We are with the people, not with thieves of yesterday and today," a banner read this Saturday as thousands marched along central Belgrade street. "This is the country for us and not for thieves," actor Branislav Trifunovic, a prominent activist of the protest, told the crowd from an improvised stage set at a truck with loud speakers.

Trifunovic also called people to protest again on Wednesday to commemorate the anniversary of the 2018 murder of Kosovo Serb leader Oliver Ivanovic, a fierce critic of President Vucic. Protests were also held in several other Serbian cities, including the southern town of Nis and central Kragujevac. In Belgrade, more than a dozen people again carried a giant banner reading: "Stop bloody shirts" - a reference to opposition politician Borko Stefanovic's bloodstained shirt after he was beaten up last November.

It was that incident that triggered the first protests. The assault was reminiscent of the violent attacks on political opponents in the 1990s under the rule of late strongman Slobodan Milosevic. The authorities denied involvement in the attack on Stefanovic, but the Alliance for Serbia, an umbrella group of opposition parties from across the political spectrum, blamed Vucic's Serbian Progressive Party (SNS).

Then youth activists, who insist they are not affiliated with any political party, decided to step in. "We realised that the time had come to do something on the street," one of the protest organizers, Jelena Anasonovic, told AFP. "The violence, both physical and verbal" in everyday Serbian life, had become "the norm", Anasonovic said. Vucic, a former ultra-nationalist who now says he favors Serbia joining the EU, has rejected claims he has become autocratic.

And despite the protests, opinion polls suggest Vucic's SNS party dominates the political arena. Serbia's divided opposition that has little in common other than an aversion to the president. The opposition does not offer "a viable alternative to the autocracy of Vucic" even though "he is unbearable", said protester Milos Banjanin, a 27-year old economist. The next national vote is expected in 2020 but Vucic, who served as premier from 2014 and became president in 2017, has hinted he could call early elections. Observers and polls suggest he would likely win.

'One in five million'

The first anti-Vucic protest on Dec 8 drew several thousand people, but the numbers quickly grew due to two unrelated events - the reaction of the president and a report by a pro-government TV journalist. Speaking after the first demonstration, Vucic told the nation "even if there were five million people in the street" he would not agree to the protesters' demands. That acted as a catalyst for the demonstrators, who adopted the slogan "one in five million".

Then TV reporter Barbara Zivotic, from the pro-government private channel said that "very few people" were demonstrating. Those who were, she said, "calling for lynching, rape, violence and a coup d'etat". Video of the report went viral and was widely mocked online. "Thank you Barbara" protesters wrote on Twitter, as thousands of people were inspired to brave the heavy snow and freezing temperatures to join the protests. The latest protests brought out 40,000 people on to the streets say organisers, although police have not confirmed the figure.

'Break media blockade'

The scale of the demonstrations "caught many people by surprise, including some (opposition) politicians," said Dragan Djilas, an opposition leader. Although opposition parties hope to capitalize on the protests, which now include celebrities and prominent activists, some protesters are wary of politicians trying to cash in on their success. "Only when the opposition does something to prove itself in fighting" the authorities "will it get the right to speak," said actor Trifunovic, one of the most prominent protesters. "For the moment they can walk with us and shut up," he said.

Protesters have called for the head of the public broadcaster RTS to step down. They want "at least five minutes of air time each day" to "break the media blockade", Trifunovic added. The European Commission last year raised concerns about media freedoms in Serbia, denouncing threats, intimidation and violence against journalists. But Vucic has rejected such criticism. According to Serbian media, the president could use the next week's visit of Russia's President Vladimir Putin to show off the strength of his national support. "These are protests of all opposition voters who are unhappy with the authorities. At some point it will have to be politically articulated," said independent political analyst Boban Stojanovic. — AFP



Mayor Muriel Bowser of Washington, DC signs the "Let Our Vows Endure Emergency Act of 2019," or "LOVE Act", which gives the mayor the authority to issue marriage licenses during the partial federal government shutdown during a signing ceremony in Washington on Jan 11, 2019. — AFP

Three weddings (whew!) and a shutdown

There doesn't seem to be much love in the air in Washington these days, as a long and bitter government shutdown drags on with no end in sight. But couples whose marriage plans were thwarted by the partial shutdown have gotten a break, thanks to the action of Mayor Muriel Bowser and city council. The city's Marriage Bureau, part of the US capital's federally funded court system, had been deemed "nonessential" and shuttered as part of the thorny standoff between President Donald Trump and congressional Democrats.

But on Friday, Bowser signed an emergency measure authorizing city officials to validate marriages in the absence of the Marriage Bureau, which closed when the budget standoff began on Dec 22. "They can shut down the US government, but they cannot shut down love in the District of Columbia," City Council member Brandon Todd said when he introduced the measure. Titled the Let Our Vows Endure Emergency Amendment Act, or LOVE act, the law is valid for 90 days and will spare future brides like Claire O'Rourke from finding themselves in Kafkaesque situations.

"Practically, we couldn't sign all the legal certificates

during the shutdown without having a marriage license," O'Rourke, a Washingtonian who was preparing to wed fiancé Sam Bockenbauer, told AFP. "So we were going to have a wonderful party, of course, but couldn't be legally married in DC until we got our marriage license." Some couples, like Dan Pollock and Danielle Geanacopoulos, had no time to spare. They managed to get their wedding license on Dec 27, just two days before their scheduled wedding.

'A speed bump'

"By the time we figured out we couldn't get a license, we were running out of time before friends and family were coming to Washington to celebrate with us," Geanacopoulos said. "So we focused on the really important thing - celebrating - and decided to figure out the rest later." Her mother, Daphne, said she was "delighted". "We had a really great big wedding two weeks ago... (but) it feels wonderful to have it official."

For Caitlin Walters, who plans to wed Kirk Kasa on Feb 2 on the campus of Catholic University, the shutdown was simply "a small speed bump in the road".

"Obviously we knew about the shutdown, but we didn't know that it would directly affect our ability to get married in DC legally," said Walters, a New York resident who was determined to get married in the nation's capital.

But while some have taken the shutdown in stride, it has brought "chaos" to those in the wedding business. "It's a lot of chaos, it's a lot of uncertainty," said Rachel Rice, a wedding planner who recently had to shift a wedding ceremony from Washington to nearby Virginia. Even if the shutdown were to end next month, Rice said, "some people might say, 'I can't wait to book my venue; I have to book my catering, my photographer.'"

On top of that, the approximately 800,000 federal employees sent home or forced to work without pay - some of them with wedding plans, no doubt - have just missed their first paycheck and will be forced to scale back their plans. Claire O'Rourke has her own shutdown-related regret. She had hoped to have her official wedding photo taken in the National Portrait Gallery. But like most of the capital's vast Smithsonian system, the popular museum remains closed. — AFP

Congo poll leaves uncertainty for miners at heart of EV revolution

The surprise outcome of Congo's election - a vote meant to bring closure to years of turmoil under President Joseph Kabila - has done little to ease uncertainty for miners and investors in a country crucial to the electric vehicle revolution. Democratic Republic of Congo is the world's leading miner of cobalt, a mineral used in electric car batteries which has seen a surge in demand in recent years, with mines run by firms including Glencore and China Molybdenum.

Opposition candidate Felix Tshisekedi, an unknown quantity for mining executives, was declared the winner of last month's chaotic vote on Thursday, defeating Kabila's chosen successor, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary. The stakes for mining firms are high. In a study last year, McKinsey forecast a 60 percent increase in demand for cobalt by 2025, and cited uncertainty in Congolese government policy as one of the major risks to supply. "It could be that, as a mining sector, we're worse off than when we were under Kabila," said one mining operator, who asked not to be identified. "There may be some improvements, but we're not counting on it."

Tshisekedi's supporters hailed the election result as the end of nearly two decades of corrupt rule under Kabila. But the outcome has quickly come under question, and the extent to which Kabila will continue to wield influence over the economy through sprawling patronage networks remains unclear. "It's going to be an extremely volatile period," said Jason Stearns, director of New York University's Congo Research Group. "If I were a savvy investor, I'd look at Congo and just step back for six months."

Tshisekedi has little political track record for investors to judge. Few companies had expected him to win, one industry source said, and had focused attention on Martin Fayulu, another opposition leader and ally of the former governor of Congo's mining region, Moise Katumbi. They fear that strategy could now hurt relations with the new president, the source said.

Tshisekedi's party, the Union for Democracy and Social Progress, has historically favored an important state role in mining and opposed the privatization of state assets. But in what appeared an olive branch to mining firms, Tshisekedi said on the campaign trail that he would take a second look at a new mining code introduced last year. Relations between miners and the government hit a nadir over the code, signed into law in March, which raised royalty rates across the board. But even under Tshisekedi, the prospect of a rethink is slim, said Elisabeth Caesens, director of Resource Matters, which advocates for better natural resource governance. "Increasing taxes on multinationals was way too popular a move to easily turn back," she said.

Turf wars?

Five mining executives contacted by Reuters said they



A supporter of Congolese presidential candidate Martin Fayulu protects himself as policemen close on him outside the constitutional court in Kinshasa on Saturday. — AFP

Patronage networks

Despite the political uncertainty, Congo's mineral wealth remains a draw for mining firms. As well as its cobalt reserves, it is Africa's biggest copper producer and also mines gold and diamonds. A day after the election results were announced, companies announced two mining transactions which could help bring concessions into production. Australia's Vector Resources acquired a 60 percent stake in the Adidi-Kanga Gold project in Ituri province. And AIM-listed Armadale Capital sold its Mpokoto gold project to Arrow Mining and African Royalty.

A source involved in the Adidi-Kanga transaction said that government approvals for the deal were secured long before the election. Communications consultants for Armadale said work on the Mpokoto deal began in 2016. Tshisekedi will need a functioning mining sector to raise revenues and, importantly, ensure the army is paid. Clawing revenue streams back from Kabila's patronage networks would help consolidate his position, as would improving governance to help attract new investors.

Under Kabila, Congo lost at least \$1.36 billion in potential revenues from 2010-2012 alone due to cut-price asset sales to offshore companies, according to a panel led by former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan. Campaigners say the trend has continued. A review of the most controversial deals of the past decades could also help Tshisekedi prove to the Congolese people that he's his own man, analysts said. "Maybe Tshisekedi will set out and try to clean things up," said Ryan Cummings, director of business intelligence firm Signal Risk. "But I'm not sure I'd put any money on it." — Reuters

Business

MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 2019

12 Dollar falls amid dovish Fed and stalemate over govt shutdown**13** Calls for Huawei boycott get mixed response in Europe**14** Trade war, geopolitical jitters weighed on economic sentiment in 2018

EL PASO, Texas: People shop in the stores near the border crossing with Mexico, as the United States government continues its shutdown over a fight to fund more border wall construction on Saturday in El Paso, Texas. President Donald Trump wants \$5.7 billion to build additional walls along the US-Mexico border and the Democrats oppose the idea. — AFP

Shutdown could send US economy into tailspin

Longest shutdown taking a growing bite out of the economy

WASHINGTON: The US government shutdown on Saturday became the longest in history and is taking a growing bite out of the world's largest economy with each passing day, economists say.

While most of the 21 "lapses" in government spending since 1976 left barely a scratch on economic growth, the length of this shutdown makes it harder to say just how bad the impact could get.

"It's not a hard stretch to say that initially it's smaller and then it expands, the pain starts to widen," Beth Ann Bovino, chief US economist at S&P Global Ratings, told AFP. "Think of it as a butterfly effect."

With about a quarter of the federal workforce affected, the shutdown is currently squeezing an estimated \$1.2 billion a week out of the economy, Bovino said, but that figure could grow if it drags on.

At the current rate, within two weeks it will have cost America more than the \$5.7 billion US President Donald Trump is demanding for a wall on the border with Mexico, the dispute with Congress that led to the failure

to pass funding for government operations.

Following extended closures in 1995 and 2013, the US economy continued to grow while stock markets mainly went sideways. And GDP growth lost in one quarter can rebound in the next as the government springs back to life and workers recoup lost salaries. But some losses can never be recovered. In myriad but often unseen ways, the \$4 trillion federal budget is felt in the daily lives of all Americans, well beyond the 800,000 government workers now going without pay—many of whom missed their first paychecks on Friday.

Switching off even a part of the government means that life force quickly begins to bleed away. Payments to farmers and poor families, craft beer labels, food inspections and economic data all have fallen victim to the budget impasse. Meanwhile, tax refunds and borrower income verifications crucial to the mortgage industry were briefly up in the air with billions at stake.

"The tentacles start to touch many avenues of life and that's a very sad thing," Bovino said.

US Coast Guard cutters, their crews working without pay, on Monday began icebreaking at commercial ports in the frigid waters of Great Lakes near the Canadian border so local steel mills can remain supplied with iron ore. Meanwhile, farmers cannot collect aid payments designed to help ease the pain caused by Trump's trade war with China.

Hurting the poorest most

Small Business Administration loans to help mom-and-pop businesses trying to invest, hire and grow have been delayed. There are no government loans for seeds or cattle feed and none of the regular Agriculture Department data about crop yields and commodity prices that farmers depend on to plan for the coming year. Permits from some oil and gas drilling—which feeds into GDP calculations—are delayed.

Bloomberg estimates that government contractors are losing \$200 million a day, cutting revenues for defense industry giants like Boeing, General Dynamics and

Leidos. Tourism at the country's 400 national parks normally generates a reported \$18 million a day, but with some parks unattended and many services halted, local restaurants, hotels and shops are losing customers.

Government assistance to feed the poorest Americans is funded through next month only.

None of this includes the hardships felt by the 380,000 federal workers who have been furloughed or the 420,000 who are deemed "essential" but are working without pay. They owe an estimated \$438 million a month in rent and mortgage payments, according to the real estate firm Zillow. Around the Washington region, home to about 20 percent of the federal work force, restaurants are sitting empty, taxis are idled and traffic increasingly moves with eerie ease along the capital's choked boulevards. Yingrui Huang, an engineer for a defense contractor at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, said his company is normally at work building weather satellites and telescopes for the government but is shuttered until further notice. —AFP

Saudi to set up \$10bn oil refinery in Pakistan

GWADAR, Pakistan: Saudi Arabia plans to set up a \$10 billion oil refinery in Pakistan's deepwater port of Gwadar, the Saudi energy minister said on Saturday, speaking at the Indian Ocean port that is being developed with the help of China. Pakistan wants to attract investment and other financial support to tackle a soaring current account deficit caused partly by rising oil prices. Last year, Saudi Arabia offered Pakistan a \$6 billion package that included help to finance crude imports.

"Saudi Arabia wants to make Pakistan's economic development stable through establishing an oil refinery and partnership with Pakistan in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor," Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih told reporters in Gwadar.

He said Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman would visit Pakistan in February to sign the agreement. The minister added that Saudi Arabia would also invest in other sectors.

Beijing has pledged \$60 billion as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that involves building power stations, major highways, new and upgraded railways and higher capacity ports, to help turn Pakistan into a major overland route linking western China to the world.

"With setting up of an oil refinery in Gwadar, Saudi Arabia will become an important partner in CPEC," Pakistan Petroleum Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan said. The Saudi news agency SPA earlier reported that Falih met Pakistan's petroleum minister and Maritime Affairs Minister Ali Zaidi in Gwadar to discuss cooperation in refining, petrochemicals, mining and renewable energy. It said Falih would finalize arrangements ahead of signing memorandums of understanding.

Since the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan came to power in August, Pakistan has secured economic assistance packages from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and China. In November, Pakistan extended talks with the International Monetary Fund as it seeks its 13th bailout since the late 1980s to deal with a looming balance of payments crisis.

The Pakistani prime minister's office had said on Thursday that Islamabad expected to sign investment agreements with Saudi Arabia and the UAE in coming weeks. — Reuters

Outrage as Mnangagwa raises gas prices in Zimbabwe

HARARE: Zimbabweans reacted with outrage yesterday to a sharp rise in the price of fuel announced by President Emmerson Mnangagwa in a move to improve supplies as the country struggles with its worst gasoline shortages in a decade. After years in international isolation, Zimbabwe's economy has been in decline for more than a decade, with cash shortages, high unemployment and recently a scarcity of basic staples like bread and cooking oil.

In a televised address on Saturday, Mnangagwa said prices of petrol and diesel would more than double to tackle a shortfall caused by increased demand and "rampant" illegal trading.

The main labour alliance Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) said the government had demonstrated a lack of empathy for the already overburdened poor by introducing the more than 100 percent hike. "Workers' government has officially declared its anti-worker, anti-poor and anti-people ideological position by increasing fuel prices. Workers' salaries have been reduced to nothing and our suffering elevated to another level," it said.

Opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Nelson Chamisa said: "We have a national crisis which is descending into a humanitarian crisis.

"We believe this crisis requires all hands on the deck. We



HARARE: A motorcyclist with two jerry cans attached to his motorbike counts his bond notes at a fuel station in Harare. —AFP

will lead and stand ready to play a key role in finding a lasting solution." Evan Mawarire, a cleric and activist who led anti-government protests in 2016 that shut down major cities, said: "You have cornered us and you leave us no choice. It's time to mobilize every person who truly loves Zimbabwe."

Looking tired after spending his second night in a petrol queue in Avondale suburb, motorist Edmore Phiri said: "We are not going anywhere with these piecemeal solutions that are not solutions. Those in government may not admit it but they know in their hearts that they have failed. —AFP

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Dollar falls amid dovish Fed and stalemate over govt shutdown

British economy slows as Brexit approaches

KUWAIT: The US governmental shutdown has ended its third week at an inconvenient time for markets given that the Federal Reserve has claimed policy would be predominantly "data dependent" for 2019. Around 800,000 federal employees have been affected, with agencies that produce vital data to market participants now in disarray. On Wednesday, US President Donald Trump used a televised address to warn of a "growing humanitarian and security crisis" at the southern border. The president insisted that the US needed \$5.7 billion in funding for the border security wall, while Democrats hold firm in their position against funding for a wall. Trump blamed Democrats for the shutdown, claiming "The federal government remains shut down for one reason and one reason only: because Democrats will not fund border security."

On Thursday, Trump had a meeting with Democratic congressional leaders on border security. The meeting came hours after he reiterated his demands for congressional money for the wall, and insisted that he had the "absolute right" to declare a national emergency in order to fund funding for his wall. Republican senator Lindsey Graham said during the day that a "congressional path" to funding the border barrier was now virtually closed, and that the time has come for Trump to use emergency powers to bypass Capitol Hill and pay for the proposals. US media reports have mentioned that the Trump administration examined an option where they use funds that had been allocated to the US Army Corps of Engineers to deal with the aftermath. A declaration of a national emergency has the potential to trigger a backlash among the lawmakers as well as court challenges. President Trump had abruptly walked out of a White House meeting.

On Twitter, Trump confirmed he had cut the meeting short and declared it "a total waste of time". "I asked what is going to happen in 30 days if I quickly open things up, are you going to agree Border Security which includes a Wall or Steel Barrier? Nancy said, NO, I said bye-bye, nothing else works," he wrote.

Federal Reserve Meeting

The US central bank lifted rates by a quarter-point during last month's meeting and claimed it would take more time before increasing rates further. According to minutes of the Fed meeting on Dec 18-19 released last week, officials indicated that the central bank "could afford to be patient" about future rate hikes. The minutes also revealed projections of two more hikes in 2019, putting aside President Donald Trump's demands for a halt and losses in the stock market. After claiming rate-rises in 2019 would be heavily "data-dependent", volatility in the stock market rose as worries regarding global growth heightened. Fed officials have continued to assure investors that their outlook for higher rates will depend on the economy's performance going forward. The dovish tone of Powell's comments along with strong nonfarm payroll reports in December eased concerns and stocks saw a slight recovery. The US dollar index carried the reaction and was down 2.07 percent from its December High and closed the week at 95.688.

US stocks regained strength after the Federal Reserve's minutes indicated that the central bank will be taking on a cautious approach. Additionally, the release of strong job reports for the month of December along with optimism regarding trade talks also aided recovery in the



equity markets. The S&P 500 index rose around 10.70 percent since its December lows. The Dow Jones index has also recovered around 10.50 percent in the same period.

US services slowdown

The US services sector expanded at a slower than expected pace in December as the non-manufacturing index dropped to 57.6 from the 60.7 level in November, marking the slowest pace of growth since July 2018. This figure follows the manufacturing index revealing a drop to its lowest level since November 2016 at 54.1. The data represents growth in both sectors as a reading above 50 indicates expansion. However, December's non-manufacturing data exposed a sharp decline from November and sent stocks to session lows following the release as they fueled worries of a global economic slowdown.

Oil prices rise

Looking at commodities, oil prices continued their upward momentum and rose to a five week high on Friday amid optimism regarding the US-China trade dispute. The West Texas Intermediate has risen 15.50 percent since the beginning of the year, while Brent crude followed the trend rising 12 percent. Oil prices have also risen due to the supply cuts as OPEC and its allies are now pumping 1.2 million less barrels per day since the start of the year. The main driver in the recovery of crude is the resumed talks between the US and China this week, given that the trade stalemate had created a dampening outlook for global growth.

Brexit clock is ticking

Brexit is getting more serious. In the last couple of months, UK Prime Minister Theresa May finally reached a deal with the EU, she planned to put it to Parliament, and then decided that this might not be the best idea. She also faced a vote of no confidence from within her own party, and rescheduled the vote on her own deal to mid-January. And then as a result, Labor Party leader Corbyn tabled a motion of no confidence against the Prime Minister.

At this point, we have 12 weeks left until the day the UK is set to leave the EU, which is not long for May to get her deal through Parliament, and if it fails this week, then there really isn't enough time for a new deal to be reached. Due to the time constraints, some are speculating that Brexit may never actually end up happening.

May will now prepare for a vote on her Brexit deal scheduled Tuesday, January 15. The vote that was previously rescheduled at the end of last year as May acknowledged that she would have been defeated by a "significant margin" as more than 100 conservative members rejected her original deal. With the March 29 deadline approaching, the House of Commons could accept an

Rates – 13 January, 2019

Currencies	Previous Week Levels				This Week's Expected Range		3-Month Forward
	Open	High	Low	Close	Minimum	Maximum	
EUR	1.1403	1.1570	1.1403	1.1468	1.1265	1.1665	1.1557
GBP	1.2717	1.2865	1.2704	1.2846	1.2640	1.3045	1.2909
JPY	108.45	109.08	107.76	108.54	106.50	110.55	107.74
CHF	0.9862	0.9868	0.9713	0.9840	0.9645	1.0040	0.9757



Article 50 extension if MPs fail to agree. Last week, May spoke about the dangers of a no-deal Brexit saying "We're going to be in uncharted territory. I don't think anybody can say exactly what will happen in terms of the reaction we'll see in the parliament".

A slowing UK economy

With factories suffering through global trade conditions and the approach of Brexit, data on Friday showed that Britain's economy grew at its weakest pace in half a year in three months to November. GDP was 0.3 percent higher than the previous three-month period, down from growth of 0.4 percent in the three months to October. Manufacturers endured their longest period of monthly declines in output since the financial crisis, feeling the pain of weaker overseas demand. Industrial output dropped 1.5 percent in November alone, its biggest fall since August 2013.

The sterling pound has continuously struggled since the Brexit vote which took place June of 2016. Dropping around 15 percent since then, the Cable is currently trading around the 1.2846 level, down from the 1.5 level seen in 2016.

Trade deal talks

After three days of negotiations, US and Chinese officials have concluded their talks on ways to implement a trade deal between the two countries. After the eye for an eye tariff escalation which occurred over the past year, this week's session was crucial, given that the March 2 deadline for an agreement is not far ahead. The Office of the United States Trade Representative claimed China has pledged to buy a "substantial amount" of agriculture, manufacturing, energy and other products from the US in an attempt to balance the trade deficit. Asian markets reacted positively to the news: Shanghai's CSI 300 rose 1.95 percent on Wednesday after the talks had concluded. Japan's Topix was up 1.1 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng rose 1.99 percent.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30295
The USDKWD opened at 0.30295 yesterday morning.

Al-Tijari announces winner of Al-Najma prize program

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the winner of the weekly draw as follows :-

Weekly draw prize KD 5,000- Jameelah Ateyah Al-Shammari

The draw was conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Latifa Al-Jean.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000 & monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the grand prize (the biggest prize in the world) of KD 1,500,000 for which the draw will be held on 18th of January 2019. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

Now CBK existing customers can open Al-Najma Account through Al-Tijari Online and enter all draws without visiting the Bank's branch. However, CBK non-customers can submit an account opening application via the Bank's website where the Bank's Sales Unit will call them to arrange a visit to the customers to complete the account opening formalities.

Cathay Pacific makes second first class blunder in two weeks

HONG KONG: For a lucky few, it's the gift that keeps on giving: a Cathay Pacific snafu offering premium tickets at a fraction of their value, for the second time in less than two weeks.

On its website yesterday morning, Cathay was offering first-class flights from Lisbon to Hong Kong-via a connecting flight through London with a partner airline-for just \$1,512, the South China Morning Post reported. A similar journey in first-class via Frankfurt meanwhile, would set travellers back an eye-watering \$16,000. "We are looking into the root cause of this incident both internally and externally with our vendors," a Cathay spokesperson, who attributed the error to an "input issue", was cited as saying.

The Hong Kong-based carrier will honor the cheap fares for the "very small number" of savvy and fortunate travellers, the spokesperson added, as it did last time.

Mexico City's massive wholesale market quiets amid fuel shortage

MEXICO CITY: The mood at Latin America's largest wholesale market, the Central de Abastos in Mexico City, has morphed from typically cacophonous and bustling to cloudy and anxious as deliveries and sales grow sluggish amid a days-long fuel shortage.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador late last month launched a sweeping plan to stanch rampant



Cathay did not immediately respond to AFP's request for comment. Airline and travel blogs went into overdrive on New Year's Eve after eagle-eyed shoppers noticed the carrier was offering first and business class tickets on its website from Vietnam to the United States and Canada for as little as \$670.

That represented a staggering discount from the usual \$16,000 round trip flight on first class, and \$46,000 on business class. It took two days for Cathay to publicly acknowledge the error, and a spokesperson declined to say how many tickets were sold at the dis-

counted price.

Cathay had a tough year in 2018. It continued to struggle with the rise of cheaper mainland Chinese rivals, losing \$33 million in the first six months of the year.

Then in October it sparked outrage among customers and politicians in Hong Kong when it admitted to a massive data breach five months after hackers made off with the data of 9.4 million customers, including some passport numbers and credit card details.—AFP

fuel theft, the first major move of his young administration against widespread corruption and organized crime. But the move to close key fuel pipelines that have been tapped by criminals and instead re-route distribution via trucks has prompted hours-long lines at gas stations, while threatening to crimp the economy and damage the president's popularity if shortages persist.

The effects of the crackdown have grown noticeably in the past week. At the Central de Abastos, where 62,000 cars and trucks converge daily to buy and sell fruits, plants and other goods, according to figures provided by the market, vendors say many have been staying home.

"Forty to 50 percent of supply has been affected," said Rafael Perez, 43, the purchasing director for Drinks Depot, a beverages wholesaler. "We are talking about suppliers from [the states of] Hidalgo,

Guerrero, Cuernavaca, Puebla and Tlaxcala."

"Our suppliers' deliveries have been impacted," Perez added. "Customers are not coming." Avocado vendor Juan Carlos Ximil, 35, said he had seen a drop of about 30 to 40 percent in sales of his stock, which he normally purchases from suppliers outside the capital, including state of Michoacan.

His customers, modest street-side vendors and grocery stores with limited means of transport, have stayed away too, he said, most likely because fears of long waits to stock up on gasoline, or a shortage itself, would hit hard at their carefully calibrated daily routines. "I feel like, more than a shortage, there is a kind of collective panic," said Ximil. "If you were used to consuming 200 pesos (\$10.45) of gas you go and load up even if you don't need it, for fear that you'll run out."—Reuters

Business

China to ease foreign investment restrictions; FDI rose 3% in 2018

Handling Sino-US trade frictions is major task in 2019: Minister

SHANGHAI/BEIJING: China will reduce restrictions on foreign investment and address difficulties facing foreign companies investing in the country, the commerce minister said, according to a transcript of an interview he gave to state media.

Commerce Minister Zhong Shan said China would allow full foreign ownership of companies in more areas of the economy and would reduce the number of industries in which foreign investment was restricted or barred, according to the transcript posted on the Ministry of Commerce's website yesterday. The comments appeared to be largely reiterations of past pledges by Chinese officials for further market opening.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) into China rose by 3 percent year-on-year to \$135 billion in 2018, Zhong said. That would mark a slowdown from growth rates of 7.9 percent in 2017 and 4.1 percent in 2016.

But Zhong said China had maintained stable FDI growth "against a gloomy global climate," noting that total FDI around the world had slumped by 41 percent in the first half of last year.

China has been pushing to broaden opportunities for private firms and foreign investors to stimulate an economy that is slowing on the back of weakening domestic demand and a trade war with the United States. Zhong said "properly handling" trade frictions with the United States was a major task for the ministry in 2019.

The ministry would "conscientiously implement" the consensus to work toward a resolution of the trade row reached by Chinese President Xi Jinping and US counterpart Donald Trump in Argentina late last year, he added. The two sides held three days of trade talks at a vice-ministerial level in Beijing last week.

Zhong said the Commerce Ministry would push for the introduction of a foreign investment law as soon as

possible, improve the handling of complaints from foreign firms, and encourage foreign investment in manufacturing and high tech.

The ministry would also encourage foreigners to invest in central and western China, he said.

China will roll out a series of measures to maintain stable employment this year, the official Xinhua news agency reported yesterday, citing the country's human resources ministry.

China is grappling with the impact of a slowing economy amid a damaging trade dispute with the United States, its largest trading partner, and sources have said it plans to set a lower economic growth target of 6 to 6.5 percent in 2019, compared with "around" 6.5 percent in 2018.

In order to ensure employment, the Chinese government will reduce the burden on companies, officials from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security said, according to Xinhua, adding that research on plans to cut their social insurance premium rate would be accelerated.

"Enterprises with fewer or zero layoffs can take half of the previous year's unemployment insurance premium back," Xinhua quoted an unnamed senior ministry official as saying, reiterating a policy that was flagged by the State Council, China's cabinet, in December. Xinhua said China's urban unemployment rate was 3.8 percent by the end of 2018, with 13.61 million new jobs created in urban areas last year, up 100,000 from 2017.

In comments published on Saturday, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said planned tax cuts targeting smaller companies would help support employment and economic stability.

"For 2019, China still faces large employment pressure, with more than 15 million newly-added job-seek-



SHANGHAI: A woman walks on a pedestrian bridge in Shanghai's Lujiazui financial district. —AFP

ers in urban areas, including a record number of 8.34 million college graduates expected," the human resources ministry official added.

College graduates, migrant rural workers and

veterans should be given targeted assistance in finding jobs, the official said, adding that more skills training channels should be opened for the unemployed. —Reuters

Calls for Huawei boycott get mixed response in Europe

PARIS: Europe is giving US-led calls for a boycott of Huawei 5G telecoms equipment a mixed reception, with some governments untroubled by spy suspicions against the Chinese giant, but others backing a ban.

In the latest setback for the company, Huawei said Saturday it had fired an employee in Poland who was arrested there a day earlier on suspicion of spying for China. "His alleged actions have no relation to the company", Huawei said in a statement to AFP.

Huawei had already seen the arrest of the daughter of the firm's founder in Canada and US efforts to blacklist the company internationally over security concerns.

Several Asian and Pacific countries have followed Washington's call for a Huawei ban, but the picture in Europe is more nuanced, not least because Huawei's 5G capabilities are so attractive. They are well ahead of Sweden's Ericsson, Finland's Nokia and South Korea's Samsung, analysts say.

Fifth generation (5G) technology represents a quantum leap in wireless communication speed, and will be key to developing the internet of things, including self-driving cars. That is why Europe wants to deploy it as quickly as possible.

"Operators have looked at alternatives but have realized that Huawei is currently more innovative and probably better for 5G," said Dexter Thillien, an analyst at Fitch Solutions.

'Competence' and 'talent'

Huawei has faced increasing scrutiny over its alleged links to Chinese intelligence services, prompting not

just the US but also Australia and Japan to block it from building their 5G internet networks.

But in Europe, Portugal's main operator MEO signed a deal with Huawei in December during a visit by Chinese President Xi Jinping, praising the Chinese company's "know how, competence, talent and capacity to develop technology and invest in our country". By contrast Norway, whose current networks are for the most part made up of Huawei equipment, is thinking of ways to reduce its "vulnerability", according to the Nordic country's transport and communications minister quoted in the local press—especially towards countries with whom Oslo "has no security cooperation", an implicit reference to China.

Britain's Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson meanwhile said he had "grave, very deep concerns about Huawei providing the 5G network in Britain". The Czech cybersecurity agency said that Chinese laws "force private companies with their headquarters in China to cooperate with intelligence services", which could make them "a threat" if involved with a country's key technology.

'Expensive but better'

Germany is under pressure from Washington to follow suit, news magazine Der Spiegel reported. But the country's IT watchdog says it had seen no evidence Huawei could use its equipment to spy for Beijing.

Meanwhile, telecom operators across Europe, under heavy pressure to roll out 5G quickly, seem to be playing down security fears because using Huawei makes business sense to them.

"Huawei is much more expensive today than its competitors but it's also much better," said a spokesperson at a European operator who asked not to be named because of the sensitive nature of the matter. The quality of Huawei's



LAS VEGAS: Attendees walk between the booth of Chinese consumer electronics companies Huawei and Changhong, on the last day of CES 2019, on Saturday at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, Nevada. —AFP

equipment "is really ahead" of its European competitors, he added.

Furthermore, "everywhere in Europe, operators are the target of huge controls in that area and Huawei's equipment has never been found to be at fault".

To add to the confusion, large operators could reject Huawei equipment in some of their markets, but not in others. Historic French operator Orange has said that it won't use Huawei networks in France, but could very well do so in Spain and Poland.

High stakes in Europe

Germany's Deutsche Telekom announced a deal with Huawei for its future 5G network in Poland, but hasn't said what it will do in Germany itself. Meanwhile, Huawei is making great efforts to prove its good faith. It has opened test labs for its equipment in Germany and the UK in cooperation

with the governments there, and is to launch another in Brussels by the end of the first quarter.

The stakes are high: Europe is a crucial market for Huawei, whose combined sales for Europe, the Middle East and Africa accounted for 27 percent of overall group sales in 2017, mostly thanks to spending by European operators. Huawei rotating chairman Guo Ping in late December complained that his company was being subjected to "incredibly unfair treatment".

"Huawei has never and will never present a security threat," Guo wrote in a New Year's message to staff.

Some analysts doubt that even a widespread ban on Chinese telecoms networks equipment could possibly guarantee watertight security. "In Paris alone, there are more than a million Huawei smartphones. If you want to listen in, that's how many opportunities you have," said a sector specialist. —AFP

Bangladesh garment workers clash with police as strikes roll on

DHAKA: Thousands of Bangladeshi garment workers churning out clothes for top global brands walked off the job yesterday and clashed with police as protests over low wages entered a second week.

Police said water cannons and tear gas were fired to disperse huge crowds of striking factory workers in Savar, a garment hub just outside the capital Dhaka.

"The workers barricaded the highway, we had to drive them away to ease traffic conditions," industrial police director Sana Shamunur Rahman told AFP about yesterday's strike action. "So far 52 factories, including some big ones, have shut down operations due to the protests."

One worker was killed on Tuesday after police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at

some 5,000 protesting workers. Bangladesh is dependent on garments stitched by millions of low-paid tailors on factory floors across the emerging South Asia economy of 165 million people.

Roughly 80 percent of its export earnings come from clothing sales abroad, with global retailers H&M, Primark, Walmart, Tesco and Aldi among the main buyers.

Union leader Aminul Islam blamed factory owners for resorting to violence to control striking workers.

"But they are more united than ever," he told AFP. "It doesn't seem like they will leave the streets, until their demands are met." The protests are the first major test for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina since winning a fourth term in December 30 elections marred by violence, thousands of arrests and allegations of vote rigging and intimidation. Late Sunday, the government announced a pay hike for mid-level factory workers after meeting with manufacturers and unions. Not all unions have signalled they will uphold the agreement.

Babul Akhter, a union leader present at the meeting, told AFP the deal should appease striking workers. "They should not reject it, and peacefully return to work," he said. Minimum wages for the lowest-paid garment workers rose by a little over 50 percent this month to 8,000 taka (\$95) per month.



DHAKA: Bangladeshi garment workers shout slogans during a demonstration to demand higher wages in Dhaka. The readymade garment (RMG) workers staged the demonstration for the fifth consecutive day in Dhaka yesterday. —AFP

But mid-tier tailors say their rise was paltry and fails to reflect the rising costs of living, especially in housing.

"No work, no pay" Bangladesh's 4,500 textile and clothing factories shipped more than \$30 billion worth of apparel last year. The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters'

Association, which wields huge political influence, warned all factories might be shut if tailors do not return to work immediately.

"We may follow the 'no work, no pay' theory, according to the labour law," association president Siddikur Rahman told reporters. —AFP

South Africa's ANC says central bank should broaden economic focus

DURBAN/JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's ruling party said on Saturday the central bank should broaden its focus to include boosting employment and economic growth, a move that will worry investors already concerned about the direction of economic policy. The African National Congress (ANC), which has governed South Africa since the end of apartheid in 1994 but has seen its majority wane, is trying to woo voters in the lead-up to a parliamentary election expected to take place in May.

The party led by President Cyril Ramaphosa wants to counter growing support for the radical leftist Economic Freedom Fighters, which wants the government to have a greater say in how the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) is managed. The SARB's mandate now focuses on price stability, but the ANC said in its 2019 election manifesto released on Saturday that monetary policy should also "take into account other objectives such as employment creation and economic growth".

Past attempts to alter the SARB's mandate have caused the rand to weaken. The economy has only recently climbed out of recession triggered in part by investor worries about policies such as the ANC's plans to make the SARB fully state-owned and allow land expropriation without compensation. "The ANC believes the South African Reserve Bank must pursue a flexible monetary policy regime, aligned with the objectives of the second phase of transition," the manifesto said, promising renewed efforts to tackle unemployment and racial inequalities.

Enoch Godongwana, the chairman of the ANC's economic transformation committee, denied that the ANC was preparing to change the mandate of the SARB. He told Reuters the manifesto merely reflected an intention for more coordination between monetary and fiscal authorities, adding "the independence of the Reserve Bank is sacrosanct".

The central bank guards its independence and has opposed attempts to alter its mandate, which is enshrined in the constitution. The bank did not respond to a request for comment.

ANC divisions

The ANC is divided into two broad factions with divergent views on how the economy should be managed. One supports Ramaphosa's drive to boost private investment, while another loyal to his predecessor Jacob Zuma backs a strong state role.

Towards the end of Zuma's nine years in power, South Africa's anti-graft watchdog tried unsuccessfully to make the central bank promote economic growth rather than price stability. In September, the ANC hastily retracted a statement calling on the SARB to do more to help the poor after an intervention by Godongwana, a member of Ramaphosa's faction.

Peter Attard Montalto, head of capital markets research at Intellidex, said the manifesto comments were a concern although he did not expect the SARB's mandate to change in the short term.

"The fact the manifesto specifically links the monetary policy committee's actions to the 'second phase of transition' is an explicit benchmarking of monetary policy against political aims," he said. "It sets the SARB up for criticism in future as counter-revolutionaries and can further fuel the nationalization debate," he added. —Reuters

Business

KFIC Equity Markets Annual Review

Trade war, geopolitical jitters weighed on world economic sentiment in 2018

Kuwait's economic fundamentals remain strong

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance and Investment Company (KFIC) released its report for December 2018 which discusses the status of local and international markets.

International economic overview:

International economic sentiment has weakened throughout 2018 mainly due to trade war tensions, geopolitical tensions, implications of Brexit, and oversupply in oil markets. Moreover, strength in the USD continues to place pressure on debt heavy emerging market economies. According to Oxford Economics, World GDP is expected to fall to +2.76 percent in 2019 from +3.02 percent in 2018. The biggest risks are a rise in trade protectionism, as elevated trade wars and protectionism between US and China has resulted to large downside risk to global growth expectations. Concerns surrounding trade tensions and tariffs has also disrupted global supply chains. In addition, Global Manufacturing PMI level readings are at their lowest level since November 2016 as it is currently hovering near 52.0 and has declined from 54.0 from the beginning of 2018. Most recently, China's PMI fell below 50 for the first time in nearly two years as the world's second largest economy falls into a bear market. In Europe, the political turmoil between the EU and UK could ignite a crisis in business confidence as Brexit negotiations remain underway.

GCC Economic Overview

GCC nations endured mixed economic highlights during the year as efforts remain underway to shift from oil revenue reliance to non-oil revenue sources. Saudi Arabia is set to adopt an expansionary policy heading into 2019 as spending is set to increase by +7 percent YoY with projected expenditure amounting to SAR 1.1 trillion. Revenues are set to grow by +9 percent YoY to SAR 975bn, driven primarily by substantial growth in non-oil revenues such as VAT and higher expat levies. Spending in KSA is mostly driven by capital expenditures, which is set to rise to SAR 246 billion and represents a +20 percent increase as compared to 2018. The 2019 budget focuses mostly on investments in infrastructure and entertainment industries and policies to support the private sector in tourism and helps empower Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs). KSA has scaled down significantly on Military and Educational services. In addition, MSCI EM upgrade is underway as of June 2019 and anticipated FTSE inclusion as of March 2019. In Kuwait, the economic fundamentals remain strong in the region and government regulations and economic policies suggest an expansionary tone.

Kuwait has also been included in the latest FTSE EM upgrade which is a positive impetus mostly for Kuwaiti banks. Kuwait is also being considered for MSCI in the 2019 annual market classification review as of June 2019, which could potentially reclassify it from Frontiers Market to Emerging Market status and possibly attract more than \$1 billion in foreign inflows. In UAE, VAT contributed more than AED 12 billion to revenues in 2018 as the emphasis remains to boost non-oil income and narrow the budget deficit. UAE real estate property prices also



GCC nations continue efforts to shift reliance from oil revenue to non-oil revenue resources.



The Implications of Brexit causing a weakened international economic sentiment

tumbled in 2018 as prices fell by -5.8 percent on a yearly basis. The real estate market has been plagued with being oversupplied, weak demand, and implications of VAT on disposable income. In Qatar, the country revoked foreign ownership limits as it allowed foreigners to own 100 percent of businesses in all economic sectors. The gas-rich country remained resilient to the GCC blockade and has maintained strong economic performance throughout 2018 due to healthy fiscal reserves. In Oman, the country remains on road to recovery as GDP forecasts point towards higher growth in 2019. The ministry of tourism has stated that contribution of tourism to GDP will rise to 10 percent in 2019 from 6 percent in 2018. Bahrain remains the most vulnerable out of all GCC states as the country has the highest leverage among peer groups with a Debt to GDP ratio of 90 percent (vs World Debt to GDP of 60 percent).

Markets overview

International markets ended the year in bearish territory due to weaker global growth trajectory, trade war tensions, and uncertainty in corporate earnings guidance as the MSCI World index fell -10.0 percent year to date (YTD). China's Shanghai's index was the worst performing global market as compared to

the other heavyweight world indices. In the US, the S&P 500 declined by -6 percent as investors have been worried by trade protectionism policies with China, a potential yield curve inversion, and weaker global growth sentiment.

Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell has stated that the outlook for the US economy remains "solid" and interest rates are just below the neutral range, suggesting that there will be less anticipated interest rate hikes in 2019 and beyond. In Europe, Germany's DAX dropped by -18 percent as PMI data continued to overshadow European markets after the European Central Bank (ECB) rejected the Italian government's budget plan and ask for revisions to be made to the fiscal targets.

UK's FTSE 100 fell -12 percent as investors are awaiting to see if British lawmakers will decide to accept prime minister May's plans for a "soft" exit and keep relatively close economic ties with the EU, or to reject it completely in favor of a "hard" Brexit. The final decision is set to be made on March 29. In China, Shanghai Composite fell by -20 percent in 2019 as trade war tensions intensified as Donald Trump has proposed to place up to 25

percent tariffs on import goods worth up to \$500 billion. China has stated that they are ready to retaliate, and no deal has been agreed upon yet. In Japan, Nikkei 225 fell by -17 percent as it entered bear market territory for the year. The equity markets are pricing in concerns over a slowdown in the global economy and a downward revision to corporate earnings in advance. Japanese stocks have been caught in a global market bear market, mainly driven by concerns about everything from the US China trade war to global central banks' moves to tighten monetary policy.

Sentiment has significantly weakened, with foreign investors selling billions of dollars in the country's shares. In commodities, oil prices retraced as Brent dropped by -19.2 percent to close at \$54.3 bb/l and WTI fell by -24.3 percent to close at \$45.4 bb/l. There have been concerns over a global supply glut as US has become the world leader in oil production, overtaking Saudi Arabia and Russia to produce more than 11 million bpd. US trade war tensions has also led to concerns that global demand will fall as corporate earnings could stall. OPEC is currently in efforts to reduce the global supply glut as 1.5mm bpd have been removed from the market since December 2018.

Note: Sources—KFIC Research, Bloomberg, Reuters, GulfNews, KUNA, JPM Chase, S&P, IMF, Oxford Economics.

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 Quttainah Medical Center. 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.



Othman Tawfiqi

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. Tawfiqi concluded by noting that customers can learn more about KIB's various products and services by visiting www.kib.com.kw, contacting the customer service center at 1866866, or following the Bank's social media accounts on @KIBpage.

The Port Fund denounces statement by KPA GM

KUWAIT: The Port Fund denounced yesterday misstatements from the General Manager of the Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA), Sheik Yousef Al-Abdullah, made in a CNBC Arabia interview aired on Tuesday, January 8, 2018 regarding The Port Fund and its efforts to distribute \$496 million to its investors and others owed the monies.

To The Port Fund's surprise, the KPA General Manager stated that the name of the account holder at Noor Bank, Port Link GP, was "unknown" to the KPA even though the legal documents governing the Fund, signed by the KPA and all other Fund investors, expressly authorize "Port Link GP" to act as the

Fund's General Partner and to conduct its business. Contrary to the KPA General Manager's suggestion, the \$496 million wired to Port Link GP's account at Noor Bank clearly belongs to The Port Fund and can be distributed to investors from that account.

The Fund confirms that the statements made by KPA's General Manager during a televised interview are inaccurate and conflict with the official position of the Kuwait Government and the Kuwait Attorney General, who is working to have Dubai promptly release the funds back to Port Link GP and allow it to pay the Kuwait investors and others.

Contrary to the KPA General Manager's statement that the KPA's investment in The Port Fund was "lost", other Kuwaiti officials recognize that the funds were never lost or stolen but are currently frozen in an account at Noor Bank in the name of the Fund's General Partner, Port Link GP.

The Port Fund was surprised with The KPA General Manager's statements that the KPA did not recognize an \$11 million

payment previously sent to the KPA from a subsidiary of The Port Fund, suggesting that The Port Fund has not paid any money to the KPA since it invested in The Port Fund, which is factually incorrect.

Mark Williams, Investment Director of the Fund called on KPA General Manager "to correct these misstatements in order to avoid any further confusion or delay in Dubai's release of the funds, which will only continue to harm the KPA, the Public Institution for Social Security, and other Port Fund investors." Williams added, "Kuwait government officials have been working to have Dubai release these funds and such incorrect information from the KPA potentially undermines the effort of those officials."

The statements from the KPA General Manager come at a time when senior government officials are working on the release of the funds. The Kuwait Prime Minister sent a letter dated September 18, 2018 to the Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai stating that these funds "are



considered public funds and as well belong to investors in the private sector, and since the continued freezing of these funds is very damaging to government entities and other investors, we ask your Highness to direct your entities in charge to release the funds quickly" (emphasis added).

The Kuwait Attorney General has twice written to the Dubai Attorney General requesting the release of the funds. Most recently, the Kuwait Attorney General wrote a letter dated December 30, 2018 requesting the Dubai Attorney General "to remove the hold [on the funds] ... and enable the account holder company [Port Link GP] to transfer and distribute the mentioned amount [\$496 million]."



Malabar Gold & Diamonds raffle draw

KUWAIT: The raffle draw winner of "Win up to 2 kilos of Gold" campaign by Malabar Gold & Diamonds, T. Arul, receiving the prize 100gm gold from Afsal Khan, Zonal Head, Malabar Gold & Diamonds in the presence of management team members of Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

- * Osama Rasmi Abedalfattah Humuda
- * Fawaz Fouzi Alhariri
- * Amal Jassim Mohammad Al-Sabah
- * Abdulla Rumaih Al-Shemmeri
- * Haidar Taher Abdulla Al-Herz

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

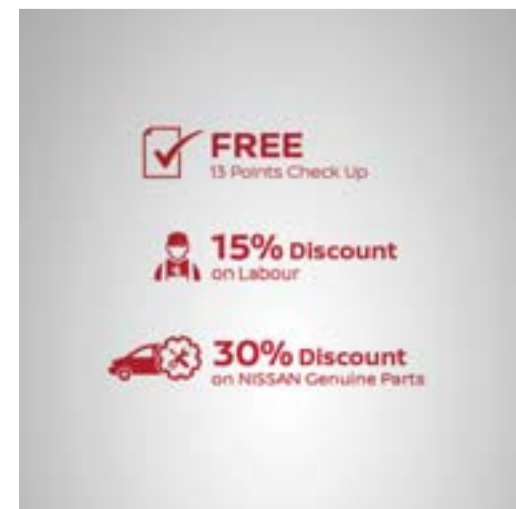
Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

Final week for Nissan Al-Babtain aftersales offer

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co. the sole authorized agent of Nissan in the State of Kuwait, announces the special aftersales service campaign that is applicable on all Nissan models prior to December 2018. Exceeding customer expectations and needs, the new offer is part of an ongoing effort to facilitate the requirements of all of its owners.

Owners of Nissan models prior to December 2018 owners will now be entitled to a 30 percent discount on car parts, 15 percent off on service labor with 13 points free checkup. Nissan Al-Babtain provides the perfect opportunity for customers to equip their car for the cold winter season.

Nissan Service centers are equipped with the latest tools and devices and is managed by skilled, and trained service advisors. Nissan Al-Babtain in an effort to accommodate its loyal customers, the popular brand presently owns 9 Nissan service centers and 14 Parts Outlets located in strategic locations around Kuwait.



Health & Technology

New app gives throat cancer patients their voice back

Technology uses patient's voice recordings to create synthetic speech

PRAGUE: Vlastimil Gular's life took an unwelcome turn a year ago: minor surgery on his vocal cords revealed throat cancer, which led to the loss of his larynx and with it, his voice. But the 51-year-old father of four is still chatting away using his own voice rather than the tinny timbre of a robot, thanks to an innovative app developed by two Czech universities. "I find this very useful," Gular said, using the app to type in what he wanted to say, in his own voice, via a mobile phone.

"I'm not very good at using the voice prosthesis," he added, pointing at the hole the size of a large coin in his throat. This small silicon device implanted in the throat allows people to speak by pressing the hole with their fingers to regulate airflow through the prosthesis and so create sound. But Gular prefers the new hi-tech voice app. It was developed for patients set to lose their voice due to a laryngectomy, or removal of the larynx, a typical procedure for advanced stages of throat cancer.

The joint project of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, Prague's Charles University and two private companies—CertiCon and SpeechTech—kicked off nearly two years ago. The technology uses recordings of a patient's voice to create synthetic speech that can be played on their mobile phones, tablets or laptops via the app. Ideally, patients need to record more than 10,000 sentences to provide scientists with enough material to produce their synthetic voice. "We edit together individual sounds of speech so we need a lot of sentences," said Jindrich Matousek, an expert on text-to-speech synthesis, speech

modeling and acoustics who heads the project at the Pilsen university.

A matter of weeks

But there are drawbacks: patients facing laryngectomies usually have little time or energy to do the recordings in the wake of a diagnosis that requires swift treatment. "It's usually a matter of weeks," said Barbora Repova, a doctor at the Motol University Hospital, working on the project for Charles University. "The patients also have to tackle issues like their economic situation, their lives are turned upside down, and the last thing they want to do is to make the recording," she told AFP.

To address these difficulties, scientists came up with a more streamlined method for the app, which is supported by the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic. Working with fewer sentences—ideally 3,500 but as few as 300—this method uses advanced statistical models such as artificial neural networks. "You use speech models with certain parameters to generate synthesized speech," said Matousek.

"Having more data is still better, but you can achieve decent quality with less data of a given voice." The sentences are carefully selected and individual sounds have to be recorded several times as they are pronounced differently next to different sounds or at the beginning and end of a word or sentence, he added. So far, the Pilsen university has recorded 10 to 15 patients, according to Matousek. Besides Czech, the Pilsen scientists have also created synthesized speech samples in English, Russian and Slovak.

Baby dinosaurs

Gular—an upholsterer who lost his job due to his handicap—managed to record 477 sentences over the three weeks between his diagnosis and the operation. But he was stressed and less than satisfied with the quality of his voice. "Throat cancer patients often suffer from some form of dysphonia (hoarseness) before the surgery, so in combination with a limited speech sample it makes the voice sound unnatural," said Repova.

In a studio at the Pilsen university meanwhile, entrepreneur Jana Huttova is recording outlandish phrases. The 34-year-old mother of three faces the risk of losing her voice to minor throat surgery—an operation on her parathyroid gland. "The Chechens have always preferred a dagger-like Kalashnikov," she says, reading from the text before her. "I have small kids and I want them to hear my own voice, not a robot," Huttova said. Then she moved on to her next sentence: "We were attacked by a tyrannosaur's baby dinosaurs."

Connected to the brain

Matousek believes that in the future, patients will be able to use the app to record their voice at home using a specialized website to guide them through the process. And he hopes that one day it will go even further. "The ultimate vision is a miniature device connected to the brain, to the nerves linked to speech—then patients could control the device with their thoughts," he said. This kind of advanced solution is a very long way off, said Repova. "But look at cochlear implants—40 years ago when



Vlastimil Gular, who lost his larynx and his voice, speaks in his own voice via a mobile phone using the special app to type in what he wants to say, during an interview at his home in the village of Miada Vozice. — AFP

they started, we had no idea how it would develop, how widely they would end up being used," she said, referring to the inner-ear implants used to tackle severe deafness. "A happy end would be a device implanted in the throat that could talk with the patient's own voice," she told AFP. "It's realistic: it may not come in a year or even in 10 years, but it's realistic and we're on the way." —AFP

India plans manned space mission by December 2021

BANGALORE: India will send its first manned mission into space by December 2021, the head of the country's space agency said on Friday. The three-person mission would make the Asian giant the fourth country after Russia, the United States and China to put people in space. "We are planning to have the first unmanned mission by December 2020, the second by July 2021, and the manned mission by December 2021," Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) chairman Kailasavadivoo Sivan said in Bangalore.

Plans for a manned mission were first announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi last year, and his government has since approved around \$1.4 billion to provide technology and infrastructure. The sum would make it one of the cheapest manned space programs in the world. Modi, up for re-election this year, has hailed the national space program as a prestige project and said that both men and women could be selected for the mission.

India has already invested heavily in its space program in the past decade. New Delhi is competing with other international players for a greater share of the satellite market, and hopes its low-cost space program will give it an edge. It sent an orbiter to Mars in 2013 which is still operational and last year launched a record 104 satellites in one blast-off. China put its first humans into space in 2003 but its Shenzhou program cost more than \$2.3 billion. Experts say the United States spent the equiv-



BANGALORE: Indian space scientist Kailasavadivoo Sivan, right, chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), gestures while addressing a press conference at the ISRO headquarters Antariksh Bhavan in Bangalore. — AFP

alent of about \$110 billion at current values on preparatory flights and the mission to put the first man on the moon in 1969. The ISRO chief said they had planned 32 missions in 2019 with a budget of around \$4.2 billion. Indian Air Force pilot Rakesh Sharma was the first Indian to go into space, flying on a Russian mission in 1984. —AFP

California sea lions killed to protect migrating fish

LOS ANGELES: Authorities in the western US state of Oregon have euthanized four sea lions in the last month as part of a program to protect salmon runs and steelhead trout that are at risk of going extinct. A spokesman for the state's Department of Fish and Wildlife said the lethal removals of the California sea lions began in mid-December and would continue through May.

Rick Swart said the killings were necessary to save migrating steelhead that have been ravaged by the sea lions in recent years as they swim upstream from the ocean to spawn. "Our scientists

believe that if these sea lions aren't removed, that run of steelhead could go extinct anytime," Swart said. He said salmon were also threatened by the sea mammals, whose population has exploded since the Marine Mammal Protection Act was passed in 1972.

"What's going on here is we have a run of wild native Oregon steelhead and they are moving right now from the ocean upstream to spawn," Rick Swart said. "And when they get to Willamette Falls in Oregon, in downtown Portland, they come up against the waterfall and a dam and it takes them a while to get across that." He said that as the fish gather in a big school while preparing to go over the waterfall and dam, the sea lions swim in and feast on the trout.

"Two years ago, the sea lions destroyed 25 percent of that wild steelhead run," Swart added. "They killed about 512 fish and that represented about one fourth of all the fish that we had left." —AFP

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Travel



Astrological adventures: Where to travel based on your zodiac sign

Adventurous Aries? Voyaging Virgo? Globetrotting Gemini? Whether you find western astrology to be just a bit of fun or something more serious, it can be amusing to see what the planets say about your personality. In turn, you might just find that your astrological placements provide a useful gauge for many life choices - including where to travel. We've scoured the zodiac, and Planet Earth, and come up with suggestions for where to go based on your astrological sign.

**Aries - sunny SoCal, USA
March 21 - April 19**

As the first sign in the zodiac, you are the astrological young-at-heart Aries. You are pioneering, spontaneous and a burst of sunshine. You know how to get the party started and like to be challenged. For your perfect getaway, head to Southern California, where you can bask in the sunny glow. Hire a car, put the top down and live your most glamorous life cruising the Sunset Strip, clubbing with L.A.'s prettiest, or soaking up the rays in chilled-out San Diego. Get your hit of much-needed action by signing up for a surfing lesson or follow your strong spontaneous side and drive to Las Vegas just for the hell of it. It's the Aries way.

**Taurus - Tuscany, Italy
April 20 - May 20**

No one understands how to enjoy the earth's finest pleasures better than you, dear Taurus. Your constellation may be the bull, but your ruling planet is Venus and you are easy to seduce with fine tastes and sophisticated, beautiful surroundings. Head to Italy - Tuscany specifically - where you can cozy up in a rustic villa, crack open a bottle of fine Chianti and simply take in the perfect views. Make sure to plan a day to see some of humanity's most elegant artworks - Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* hangs at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, for a start.

**Gemini - twin cities
May 21 - June 20**

As the sign dominated by the twin constellation, you are known for having multiple personalities, Gemini. We know it's just because you love meeting people, communicating and sharing ideas, and since you're a mutable sign, you are prone to change (often, your mind). Your ruling planet is white-hot Mercury, which zips around the sun faster than any other planet, so it's important for you to visit somewhere that stimulates your ever-ticking brain and offers something to fit your dualistic, fluctuating nature.

**Cancer - South of France
June 21 - July 22**

Kind Cancer, you really get what 'slow



travel' means. Cancer's constellation is the crab and you're ruled by the emotional moon, meaning you are most comfortable in your shell and like to feel at home wherever you are. That means having a few creature comforts and a very easy-going pace to your trip: tasty food, a thoughtful museum, maybe a cooking course. We think you should spend some time in the south of France, where the relaxed energy will revive you. Snag a cozy rental apartment (hotels are far too impersonal for you) in Aix-en-Provence, where you can wander the leafy boulevards, stop for an espresso or a glass of Provençal rose, then meander through one of France's oldest art museums - the Musée Granet - to fill your culture cup.

**Leo - Argentina
July 23 - August 22**

Leos - the lions of the zodiac - are ruled by the sun and tend to light up dance floors and gatherings with their warm energy. It's true that many Leos love the spotlight, but we know you are also big softies who crave true romance, childlike adventure and good energy. Travel is in your blood and you need to go somewhere that will produce great stories to tell for years to come. Somewhere that has it all: Argentina. The blazing Buenos Aires nights will give you plenty of opportunities to get up to no good, and you can indulge your passionate, fiery personality with lavish steaks and wine, then hit the beach for a party like no other or maybe an amorous interlude with a mysterious stranger. You do nothing by halves, so plan a hiking trip in Patagonia to find those epic views you crave... and yourself, of course.

**Virgo - Malaysia
August 23 - September 22**

Virgo's sign is the virgin, but really, you are a practical creator ruled by the asteroid Chiron (in Greek mythology, Chiron was a

healing centaur wounded by one of Hercules's arrows). You are exacting and value organization, clarity, luxury and well-being. Though sometimes you come across as picky, you are in fact a sign that constantly thinks about how to perfect things and are a natural-born helper. In many ways, you live to fix, and by that count, Virgo, we reckon you need a little healing time for yourself on a spa retreat. The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat in Perak, Malaysia offers opulent relaxation, with plenty of trickling streams, neatly arranged zen gardens, private plunge pools and stone massages on speed dial.

**Libra - Istanbul, Turkey
September 23 - October 22**

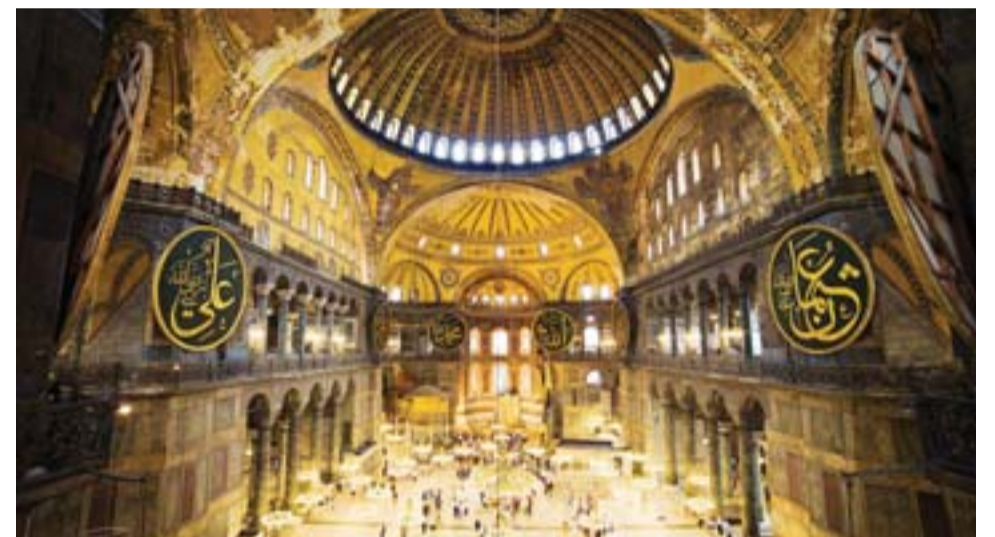
The most balanced sign in the zodiac is Libra, whose name in Latin and constellation are weighing scales. Libras are the fair judges of the world who value balance, peace and harmony, and because you are also ruled by Venus, you're hopeless romantics who can't help but love beautiful things. As an intellectual air sign, you're great philosophizers and thinkers and appreciate anything that's thoughtful and well-made. With such a need for symmetry in your life, we think you should head to the very centre of the world: Istanbul, a city that straddles two continents. In Istanbul, you won't have to choose between Asia and Europe (we know you hate picking sides); you'll get them both in one, or stay completely centered by taking a boat trip down the mighty Bosphorus, which divides the city and the two continents.

**Scorpio - Johannesburg, South Africa
October 23 - November 21**

Brave, deep, dark and enigmatic, scorpions are drawn to the mysterious and like to push boundaries. Your ruling planet is Pluto - arguably not a planet at all, far away, difficult to see and composed largely of ice and rock - but if you manage to get up close, also beautiful, just like you, Scorpio. Though you're curious about everywhere and can find the art in almost anything, we think you will appreciate somewhere that, like you, has the power to survive and thrive through difficult times. And like you, Johannesburg is a city with a rich personality and scars that only make it stronger. We know you feel a lot, though you keep a hard shell that covers your obvious emotions; you'll relate to Jo'burg's turbulent history and the city's magnificent ability to hold itself up amidst times of great and deep divide.

**Sagittarius - South America (all of it)
November 22 - December 21**

One word for you Sagittarius: expan-



**Aquarius - Detroit, USA
January 20 - February 18**

siveness. You're ruled by the biggest planet in the solar system - Jupiter, a world associated with bounty, blind optimism and reach. Sagittarius is symbolized by the archer constellation and you are known wanderers - the natural travelers of the zodiac. As truth-seekers, you are prone to fly off to find yourself when any mood at all strikes. We know you're restless and love the wild things, whether that means camping under the stars, swimming in pristine lakes, exploring gritty urban scenes or all of the above. A short city-break just won't do for you, so that's why we think you should set off on the adventure of a lifetime by backpacking around South America. With a whole continent at your disposal and plenty of passionate culture to fuel your fire-sign personality, you just might find the fountain of youth you always seem to be searching for.

Oh, Aquarius, you love to act the rebel, but we know you're a true humanitarian who's constantly seeking all that is innovative, avant-garde and experimental. You root for underdogs and you value freedom, counterculture and, frankly, a little bit of the weird in life. We think you'll dig Detroit: America's greatest comeback kid, a place full of creative people employing DIY spirit to revive their city from economic peril. We suggest taking a tour of the on-the-rebound ruined Packard Plant to get a sense of just where Detroit's coming from, and then hop from the hip-to-hipper stalls at Eastern Market looking for an eccentric souvenir to take home. And since we know you love music, don't miss the Motown Historical Museum, where the likes of Stevie Wonder, Diana Ross and Marvin Gaye all got their start.

**Capricorn - Taiwan
December 22 - January 19**

As the most ambitious, driven and hard-working sign in the zodiac, Capricorns deserve a holiday more than any other. And yet you won't be satisfied with just any old vacation. You desire to go somewhere important, to learn all of the things you can about the world and to remain efficient in the going. You're ruled by Saturn, a god who ushered in a golden age on earth and was celebrated through feasting and revelry, meaning you also know how to have a good time. So, we're sending you to Taiwan, where the work-hard/play-hard ethic has long held sway. You will marvel at Taiwan's clean, efficient public transport, its fiercely freedom-loving attitude and its verve for getting things done. But when work clocks off here, there are all-night markets to eat your way through, temples to lose yourself in and beaches to linger on.

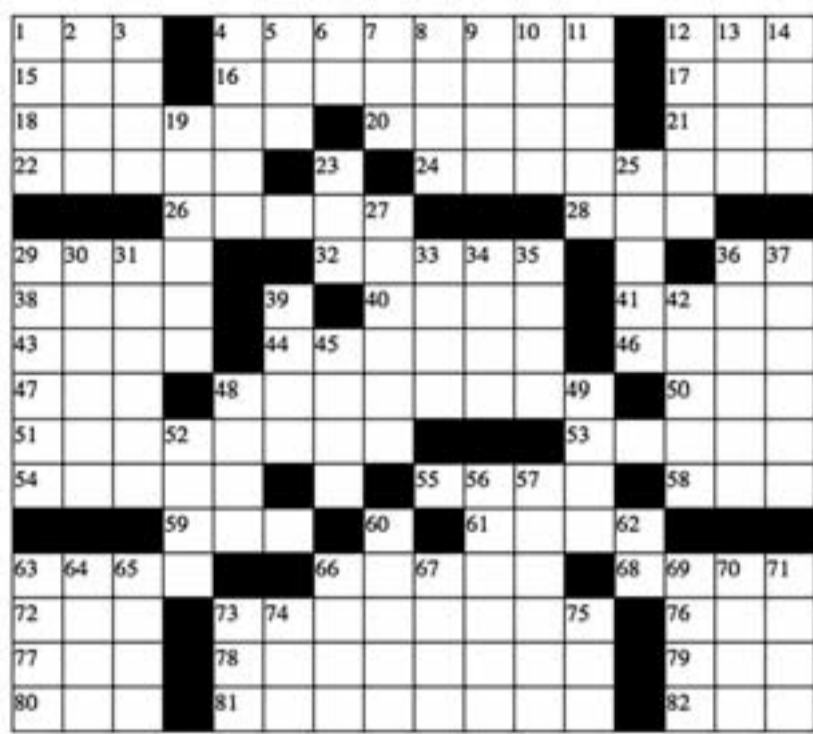
**Pisces - The Himalaya
February 19 - March 20**

Dreamy Pisces, you rarely come down to earth and may not even be from this planet, but you are the healer and the lover of the zodiac. You're also an old soul, a spiritual seeker, a romantic. You need downtime, gentle air and somewhere free of crowds. Short of sending you into outer space (where your mind mainly seems to stray anyway), we suggest you ascend to the roof of the world. Tibet is vast, exceptionally beautiful, brimming with spirituality and quiet - all things you value in life and travel. Your sign is symbolized by the fish constellation, and many Pisceans are revived by water, so aim for one of Tibet's sacred lakes, such as Nam-tsoor Yamdrok-tso, where you can gaze at turquoise waves, go for a swim, and then drift from monastery to monastery, meditating, learning and practicing compassion for all humankind, just as you are meant to do. —www.lonelyplanet.com



Stars

CROSSWORD 2109



ACROSS

- Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
- Of or relating to or in the manner of the playwright Henrik Ibsen.
- A United States unit of weight equivalent to 2000 pounds.
- A rapid escape (as by criminals).
- A nation in Asia.
- Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
- (zoology) Pertaining to alulae.
- In such a manner as could not be otherwise.
- A sharp hand gesture (resembling a blow).
- English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
- A substance derived from amygdalin.
- An atom having a valence of one.
- Noisy talk.
- The work of caring for or attending to someone or something.
- A Russian unit of length (1.067 km).
- In bed.
- Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
- The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
- Any of the short curved hairs that grow from the edges of the eyelids.
- Situated at an apex.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
- A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
- A card game played in casinos in which two or more punters gamble against the banker.
- Mix up or confuse.
- Ludicrously odd.
- An awkward stupid person.
- Experiencing or showing sorrow or unhappiness.
- Lacking self-confidence.
- A less than average tide occurring at the first and third quarters of the moon.
- An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
- The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- Genus of tropical American timber trees.
- A young woman making her debut into society.

DOWN

- Showing or causing joy and pleasure.
- City in southwestern Colombia in a rich agricultural area.
- An Asian river between China and Russia.
- Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
- A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
- A gray lustrous metallic element of the rare earth group.
- The compass point that is one point north of due east.
- Period extending from Dec. 24 to Jan. 6.
- The content of cognition.
- An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
- Offensive or even (of persons) malicious.
- A landlocked mountainous republic in southeast central Asia north of Afghanistan.
- A translucent mineral consisting of hydrated silica of variable color.
- The compass point that is one point east of northeast.
- The 12th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- A room equipped with toilet facilities.
- Marked by excessive enthusiasm for and intense devotion to a cause or idea.
- Show in, or as in, a picture.
- A port city in southwestern Iran.
- Surgically remove a part of a structure or an organ.
- Framework for holding objects.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
- An esoteric or occult matter that is traditionally secret.
- Compelled forcibly by an outside agency.
- Queen of England as the 6th wife of Henry VIII (1512-1548).
- A game played with playing cards.
- French cabaret singer (1915-1963).
- German organist and contrapuntist (1685-1750).
- The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
- (computer science) A kind of computer architecture that has a large number of instructions hard coded into the cpu chip.
- The capital of Turkey.
- A smooth-textured sausage of minced beef or pork usually smoked.
- Any of the equal portions into which the capital stock of a corporation is divided and ownership of which is evidenced by a stock certificate.
- An informal term for a father.
- A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
- Make an etching of.
- (trademark) A tinned luncheon meat made largely from pork.
- Chief port of Yemen.
- Set down according to a plan.
- (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- The residue that remains when something is burned.
- A secret agent hired by a state to obtain (military) information about its enemies or by a business to obtain industrial secrets from competitors.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You know who and what are the priorities in your life. Your sense of appreciation is heightened. This is a time you are able to beam with pride when you look at your life situation. You are highly respected and others admire you for what a success you have become. Be sure to appreciate the fact that others seem to always look to you for advice and guidance. Remember to take time for you. You may tend to take the problems of those you love to personally. You can not carry the weight of the world on your shoulders alone. Spend time this evening to unwind. This could prevent you from becoming overwhelmed.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

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



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may feel an emotional distance to your loved ones at this time. You are deeply focused on your ideas at this time. Personal concerns are trivial to you as your level of thinking and focus deepens to that which is new, edgy, and unusual. An abstract way of thinking. You are fascinated by the more eccentric things in life. You may find that you are surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals as you have no tolerance for those who do not appreciate your points of views on matters. Within the company of these individuals you find your communication skills to be on point today and feel as if you are in your element.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Everything is going your way. It is your time to shine. You may feel as if the world is revolving around you. Enjoy each breath you take. Live life to the fullest and seek the beauty in all that surrounds you. You are beaming with pride and a sense of accomplishment and others will be drawn to you today. Enjoy this feeling and spread joy wherever you go.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are full of wit. A very eccentric side of you shines through. You may have insights and breakthroughs. This is a very enlightening time in your life. New beginnings are on the horizon. You may experience a breakthrough concerning your living situation. This is a great time to follow your gut feeling and take action. Your independence and unique qualities seem to draw others in. You may find yourself surrounded by those who admire you today.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

People are attracted to your non-judgmental attitude. You always give the benefit of the doubt. This leads people to trust you when you make suggestions for change or improvement. Your friends and coworkers all know they can depend on you to come through for them. The downside may be that you don't see character flaws. This can lead to deep disappointments. Don't change your attitude Virgo. It's a valuable asset. Just watch for the clues.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are ready to get serious about taking care of you! Meal planning seems to appeal to you. Organized and healthy are a great combination. You feel great about yourself and about who you are. It is time to take the new healthy you to a new level. You have previously made small changes and now you are ready to dive head first into a new lifestyle. Join the gym, take the walk, get up and get going. Changes now will bring great reward in the future. Live out loud.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may find yourself tense and anxious about a situation you have found yourself in. You may feel under pressure and feel somewhat anxious. This may lead to you mentally checking out. You may use this as a coping mechanism for the stress you are under. An out of body feeling in a dreamy state may be the way your mind chooses to handle this conflict. Others may not be fond of this side of you and this could result in conflict with someone close to you. You will find your way and through your ability to get to the root of your problems, this too will be solved. Scorpio. You may find a negative result from the escape you take from reality as it may cause an opportunity you have been hoping for to pass you by.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may find yourself feeling emotionally detached from your surroundings. Ideas are what are important to you now. You may not have tolerance and find yourself distancing yourself from those who do not see things this way. You seem to be drawn to all that is unusual and a bit on the eccentric side. From the way you are beginning to think to the material possessions you wish to acquire, your taste is changing. You have a desire to travel and are focused on your relationships with friends and those who are in your social circle. Pay close attention to any red flags that seem to appear. Do not ignore these signs as they may be just the encouragement you need to take a detour and avoid some type of conflict or setback.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may be feeling a need for change. A deep desire for emotional security takes hold now and you feel your most content when surrounded by family and those closest to you. Relationships are a priority in your world now. You feel as if things in your life are monotonous and you are ready to spice things up. This may mean a shiny new car purchase, a vacation, or simply surrounding yourself with a new group of friends. Any direction you choose, this will be a time of excitement and give you a fresh start and a more focused outlook. We all need a bit of change from time to time. Keep life interesting and exciting.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Details are important today. Be aware of what you say. Be sure anything you put on social media communicates what you intended. Words can be misinterpreted, and you may not have an opportunity to correct a misunderstanding. Written words are a permanent record, and they can come back to haunt you. Relationships can be permanently damaged because the reader did not get the message that was intended. Choose your words wisely today.



Pisces (February 19-March 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, Pisces. Don't worry. They will grow to love the new you.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Refrigerator

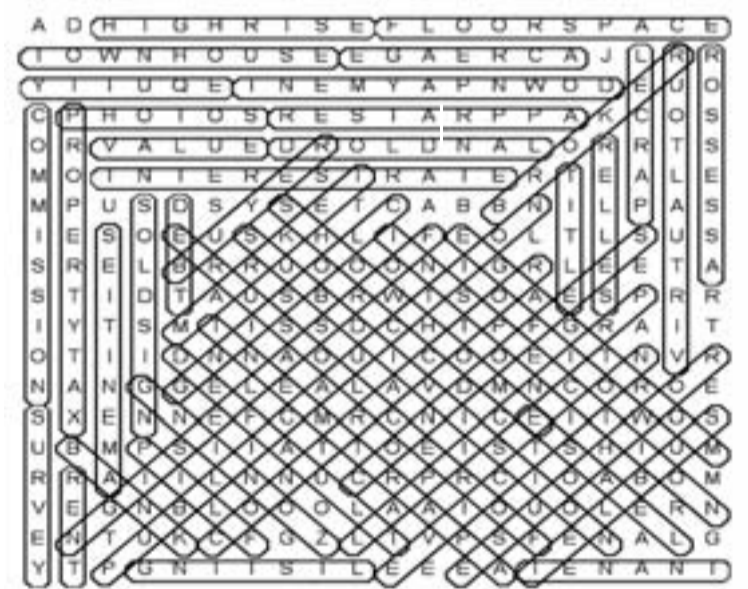
Find and circle all of the refrigerator items that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional item found in many refrigerators.



- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| APPLES | DRAWERS | LETTUCE | ORANGES |
| BACON | DRINKS | LIGHTBULB | PEAS |
| BANANAS | EGGS | MAGNETS | POULTRY |
| BREAD | GRAPES | MAPLE SYRUP | PRODUCE |
| BROCCOLI | ICE CUBES | MAYONNAISE | SHELVES |
| BUTTER | JAM | MEAT | SPINACH |
| CAKE | JUICES | MILK | STRAWBERRIES |
| CARROTS | KETCHUP | MUSTARD | WATER |
| CHEESE | LEFTOVERS | OLIVES | YOGURT |
| COLD | LEMONS | | |

Yesterday's Solution

Real Estate 2



- | | | | |
|------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| ACREAGE | DEBT | LANDLORD | SELLER |
| AMENITIES | DEFAULT | LEASE | SHOW HOME |
| APARTMENT | DOWN PAYMENT | LISTING | SOLD SIGN |
| APPRAISER | EQUITY | MARKET | SUBDIVISION |
| ASSESSOR | EVICTION | MORTGAGE | SUBLET |
| BANK | FLIP | PARCEL | SURVEY |
| BROKER | FLOOR SPACE | PHOTOS | TENANT |
| BUYER | FOR SALE SIGN | PRINCIPAL | TITLE |
| CLOSING | FORECLOSURE | PROPERTY TAX | TOWNHOUSE |
| COMMISSION | HIGH RISE | PUBLIC AUCTION | VALUE |
| CONDO FEES | INSPECTION | RENT | VIRTUAL TOUR |
| CONTRACTOR | INTEREST RATE | ROW HOUSE | ZONING |

The hidden message is: ADJUSTABLE-RATE MORTGAGE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

MONDAY, JANUARY 14, 2019



Two policemen walk past a wall with an owl graffiti drawing as they patrol in a street in central Moscow. — AFP

In Saudi weddings, small is the new beautiful

It was a Saudi wedding like any other—clutching a decorative sword, the groom bobbed and swayed in a traditional dance. But there was one striking difference—a tiny guest list. Weddings in the oil-rich kingdom are typically lavish affairs, with a bulging guest list which is seen both as a social obligation and a symbol of affluence. Such expectations are often a source of economic strain for grooms, who foot most of the bill which includes renting out exorbitantly-priced marriage halls where nuptial celebrations are usually held.

But millennials like Basil Albani are increasingly hosting weddings at home, defying family traditions and social pressure and making huge savings instead. Fewer than two dozen close relatives and friends were invited to the 26-year-old insurance executive's recent wedding feast comprising kabasa—a traditional rice and meat dish—at his ancestral home in western Jeddah city. It was a microscopic figure by Saudi standards. "People go all crazy with weddings, inviting hundreds of guests and spending millions in one night to get the best singers, best bands, best thobes," said Maan Albani, the 21-year-old brother of the groom, dressed in a gold-trimmed cloak. "We wanted to do something different with a smaller celebration at home, which can also be fun."

Arab world's biggest market

Although prevalent for years, home weddings symbolize a war on excess by the country's youth as much as they are a barometer of the lagging economy. They appear to be gaining popularity in the petro-state in a new age of austerity amid low crude prices. Saudi Arabia has one of the world's highest concentrations of super-rich households. But with cuts to cradle-to-grave subsidies and a new value-added tax amid soaring youth unemployment, Saudi households are seeing stagnating



Saudis attend the wedding of a friend at his home in the Red Sea resort of Jeddah.

disposable incomes and what experts call a lifestyle downgrade. The change in fortunes is the once tax-free kingdom facing a youth bulge is a stress point that poses a challenge for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country's de facto leader.

And there are signs of an impact on the Saudi wedding market. Annual spending on marriages in the kingdom exceeds two billion riyals (\$533 million, 466 million euros), the highest in the Arab world, organizers of the Saudi international wedding fair said last year. Statistics on frugal home marriages are hard to come by, but two wedding planners with a large Saudi clientele told AFP that average spending on marriages had dropped by 25 percent over the past year, with many trimming back the pomp and pageantry. A retailer of wedding invitation cards in Riyadh said business fell by 70 percent over the period, as many customers demand rich designs at cheaper prices.

Family feud

"Weddings should not start with a bank loan," said Murtada Al-Abawi, a 29-year-old Uber driver. It typically costs 80,000 riyals (\$21,300, 18,600

euros) to rent a wedding hall and pay for the dowry and bridal accoutrements—including gold and makeup—a price Abawi was unwilling to pay. He created a family storm when he suggested a small soiree in the local community center for his own wedding in 2016. A physical altercation broke out with his elder brother, who branded the idea shameful because "people will call us poor".

His parents and those of the would-be bride were equally furious but, ultimately, they all caved when Abawi cannily resorted to emotional blackmail. He threatened to remain unmarried and flee to neighboring Bahrain, a relatively liberal archipelago that many conservative Saudis view as a seedy offshore Las Vegas. Abawi put his foot down: no dowry, no gold, no post-wedding party.

For the main wedding party, he used another ploy—he invited all his friends and relatives so as not to offend anyone, but hosted the late-evening celebration on a busy weeknight, forcing families with school-age children to voluntarily opt out. The wedding, ultimately, cost only 9,000 riyals (\$2,400, 2,100 euros). The experience led Abawi to start an "affordable marriage" self-help group in his native eastern city of Al Ahsa, which counsels young men on tackling the social pressure to overspend.

Cultural minefield

Not everyone is cutting wedding expenditure, however, with many Saudis still splurging on designer prom dresses for the bride and belly dancers from Egypt for the entertainment. Many still succumb to the pressure—or choose to get hitched overseas to circumvent the cultural minefield that hosting a small wedding can become. In a 2017 newspaper column titled "Expensive weddings, a waste of money", writer Abdul Ghani Al-Gash chided the kingdom's religious scholars for



failing to educate the masses that weddings were not an occasion to show off.

Weddings, typically segregated by gender, are also known for wasting colossal amounts of food. Mountains of food, which culturally reflect generosity and class, often end up in the trash can. The pressure to keep up appearances amid rising costs and unemployment is prompting many young men to delay marriage up to the age of 40, the Saudi Gazette newspaper reported in September.

But even Saudis who can afford to splurge are discovering an aesthetic value in simplicity and cutting back waste. "My wife looks back at our wedding and says 'why did we even spend 9,000 riyals?'" said Abawi. "We could have travelled with that money." — AFP

Saudi groom Basil Albani poses for a selfie with his friends during his wedding at his home in the Red Sea resort of Jeddah. — AFP photos



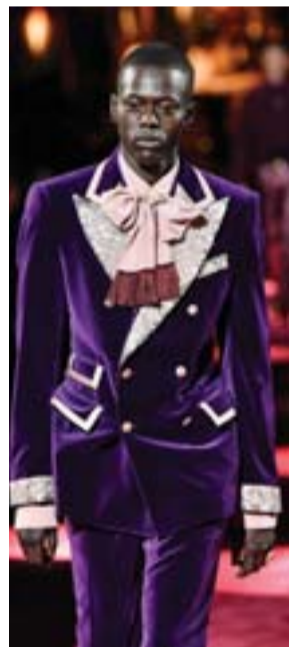
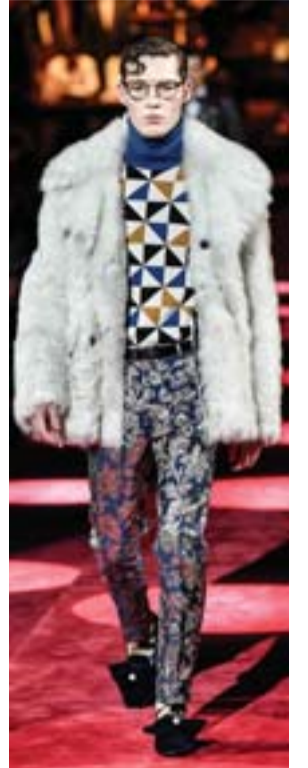
Saudis attend the wedding of a friend at his home in the Red Sea resort of Jeddah.



Saudi groom Basil Albani dances with his friends at his home during his wedding in the Red Sea resort of Jeddah.



Saudis attend the wedding of a friend at his home in the Red Sea resort of Jeddah.



Models present creations for fashion house Dolce & Gabbana during its Men's Fall/Winter 2019/20 fashion show in Milan.—AFP photos

D&G unveil Italian oomph at Milan after China fiasco; Versace offers daring masculinity

Dolce and Gabbana mixed checks, furry gloves and shimmering dressing gown-style coats on Saturday at Milan Fashion Week, branding it Italian oomph. The Sicilian duo were making their first presentation after the fashion house was forced to apologize to Chinese customers in November 2018 for posting short clips on Instagram showing a Chinese woman eating pizza, spaghetti and a cannoli with chopsticks.

The uproar escalated when Stefano Gabbana allegedly used poop emojis to describe China and hurled insults at the country and its people. But the pair steered clear of controversy at their Autumn-Winter 2019-2020 collection named Eleganza, or Elegance in Italian. The backdrop oozed 1930s Berlin decadence with giant red curtains, jazz and a master of ceremonies (shades of Joel Grey!) recreating a Cabaret ambience. But to highlight Italy's mastery of cloth, an atelier was also recreated with tailors and fitters taking measurements and cutting and stitching as the models walked up and down the ramp.

Models showcased quirky styles, teaming tailcoats with plaid trousers, matador suits with sparkling bow ties and a ginger velvet suit with black lapels. D&G did not skimp on the lame Hollywood-level glamour incorporating colors

such as midnight blue, burgundy and deep purple.

'We made mistakes'

Although there were some Chinese people at the show, Chinese online retailers are boycotting D&G despite a public apology in which Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana capped a 1 minute 30-second mea culpa by saying "sorry" in Mandarin in an attempt to salvage their reputation in the world's most important luxury market. "Our families always taught us to respect different cultures across the world and because of this we want to ask for your forgiveness if we have made mistakes in interpreting yours," Dolce said in Italian. "We want to say sorry to all Chinese people across the world, of which there are many, and we are taking this apology and message very seriously," Gabbana added.

The Chinese-subtitled video was posted on Weibo, the popular Chinese Twitter-like social media platform where they have close to one million followers. The controversy marked the latest backpedalling by a foreign company for offending Chinese consumers or authorities. Earlier in 2018, German automaker Mercedes-Benz apologised for "hurting the feelings" of people in China after its

Instagram account quoted Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, seen as a separatist by Beijing.

And under pressure from Beijing, a growing number of international airlines and companies have edited their websites to refer to the self-ruling democratic island of Taiwan as "Taiwan, China" or "Chinese Taipei". Hotel chain Marriott's website in China was also shut down by the authorities for a week in 2018 after a customer questionnaire listed Taiwan, Tibet and Hong Kong as separate countries, prompting the hotel chain to apologize and change the wording. By now, the two Milan Fashion Weeks dedicated to menswear have transformed themselves into platforms for co-ed shows and up-and-coming brands beyond the menswear stalwarts.

The little more than three days of previews for next fall and winter that launched Friday evening include 52 collections in 27 runway shows and 25 presentations. Eleven brands are showing mixed men's and women's collections during the less hectic week dedicated to male apparel. While menswear tends to create less of a spectacle than the womenswear shows, the lines still carry bottom-line weight. Italian menswear registered a turnover of 9.5 billion euros last year, a 1.5 percent increase over 2017.



Models present creations for fashion house Versace during the Men's Fall/Winter 2019/20 fashion shows in Milan.

Lifestyle | Fashion



Models present creations for fashion house Ermenegildo Zegna during the Men's Fall/Winter 2019/20 fashion shows in Milan.



Versace's daring man

The Gianni Versace fashion house has changed ownership, but not style. Donatella Versace explored bondage in the fashion house's latest collection, the first since being bought by the US fashion group Capri Holding Limited.

The opening look had a bondage image printed cheekily on the front of a shirt, worn over dark trousers and with a leather overcoat. Repeated as a motif, bondage became as banal as a bandana print on a blouson. Then, there was winter bondage for her, underneath puffer jackets, and office bondage for him and her, with the back of suit jackets held together with O-rings, showing off colorful satiny prints.

The looks also veered toward cozy, with warm scarves and fuzzy sweaters bearing a new Versace logo, a V encircled by a G. But the Versace man also is not afraid of feminine touches, like colorful boas peeking out of suit jackets, bejeweled broches, crystal encrusted jeans and least of all, colorful embroidered silken boxers with a prominent Versace label peeking out of trousers, or on their own with a sober black suit jacket and button-up dress shirt.

Versace said in her notes that the image of masculinity has evolved since the 1990s "when there was a specific idea of 'A man.'" "What I wanted to show in this collection are the different faces of a man, who... has gained the courage that he didn't have before. If I had to find a word

that defines today's men, it would be daring," she said.

Versace also previewed a collaboration with US car-maker Ford, including the oval-shaped blue Ford logo on leather jackets, trousers, sneakers, hoodies and button-down shirts. The latter was layered kinkily with a silky lace top and a leopard-print fur coat. For good measure, the model's hair was colored in leopard print.

Underlining some of the feminine touches, Versace sent out women's looks worn by top models Bella Hadid, Kaia Gerber, Vittoria Ceretti and Emily Ratajkowski. Actor Luke Evans and Italian rapper Sfera Ebbasta were in the front row, along with fellow rapper Fedez and his wife, fashion blogger and influencer, Chiara Ferragni.

Zegna's global citizens

Menswear fashion house Ermenegildo Zegna showed Friday evening under the cavernous arched ceilings of Milan's fascist-era train station, offering cups of mulled wine to warm spectators before the show.

The space in the entrance hall was replete with symbolism. Thousands of commuters and travelers rush through each day. But the hall's mezzanine was also used as a way station for thousands of migrants who had arrived by sea in the south and were making their way to northern Europe from 2013-2015. Designer Alessandro Sartori seemed to have both in mind, writing that he chose the venue as "a place of arrivals and departures, but also integration and acceptance of diversity."

The collection aimed at Sartori's vision of a "multicultural generation of global citizens" combined classic suits, sportswear and military detailing. For the traveller, the looks were finished with easy-striding footwear including Zegna's first sneaker, called Cesare. A purple suit closed slightly asymmetrically, the tight silhouette completed with a riding cap and a leather bag with Army-surplus volume. Cropped puffer jackets and rich pile hoodies added volume over slim trousers. An oversized plaid notched-lapel bomber jacket paired with matching cargo trousers gave a neat daytime look. Military detailing included ribbed knits, calf straps and a touch of camouflage.

Billionaire and the game of kings

German designer Philipp Plein staged a game of polo in the center of the runway for his Billionaire collection, giving a plug for his sponsorship of the Monte Carlo Polo team. For four minutes, polo players on horseback played a fast-paced match on a courtyard covered with faux snow in what is likely a Milan Fashion Week first. More horses were brought on to the field after the match, forming a central runway for the models.

It was little surprise, then, that the collection for mature men featured equestrian looks, including tight-fitting jodhpurs, reptile riding boot and matching caps and even saddles. Blazers had leather or fur lapels, and fur coats draped over silken pyjamas, perhaps to take a last

look at the stable. Flashier looks include bold medallion print suits featuring the Billionaire logo alternating with the stallion profiles. They were worn with leather gloves, a neckerchief and a blanket draped over the arm. After the show, the fashion crowd had to be directed away from the horse droppings on their way out.

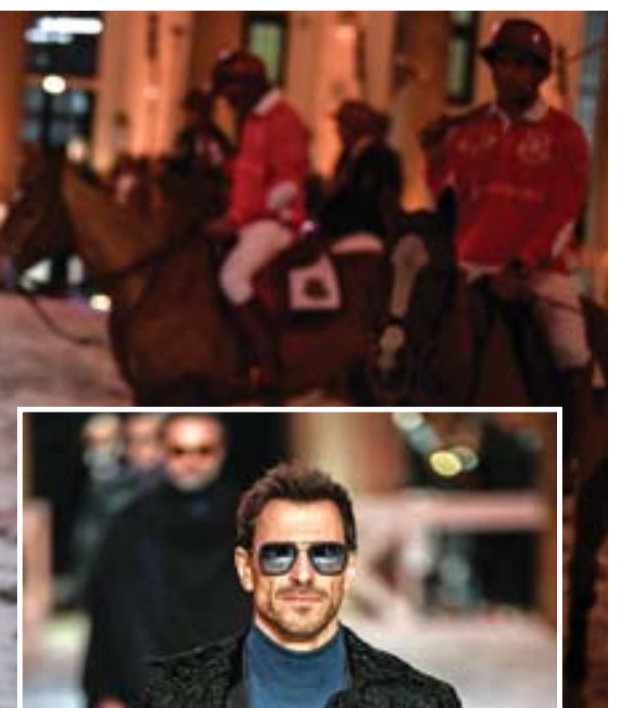
Neil Barret celebrates 20 years

British designer Neil Barrett celebrated his 20th anniversary with an exploration of what he called "the uniform of rebellion." The co-ed show was set against a video projection of a cityscape with office buildings lit up and a plethora of flashing neon, which were reproduced in bright prints on trousers and trenches. Worn together, they formed a moving cityscape.

The collection also featured tartan and animal prints, leather and fur accents, with references to the British punk scene of the 1970s. The silhouette was crisp and disciplined, with cuffed trousers and long blazers, or transparent PVC trenches easily transferring from men to women. — Agencies



Models present creations for fashion house Billionaire during the Men's Fall/Winter 2019/20 fashion shows in Milan.



Lifestyle | Music & Movies

'A Prophet' creator takes on France's war in Algeria



In this file photo French scriptwriter Abdel Raouf Dafri poses during a photo session in Paris. — AFP

One of France's most celebrated screenwriters is taking on its biggest taboo, the bloody conflict in Algeria, in a new war film. Abdel Raouf Dafri told AFP that he had been itching for years to broach the delicate subject. The writer of the Oscar-nominated "A Prophet", and the Emmy-winning television series "Braquo", has Algerian roots but was born in the French port of Marseille, where many former French "pied noir" colonists who were forced to flee Algeria settled. The film's title "May an impure blood..." is plucked from the most controversial line in the French national anthem, "La Marseillaise", which ends "...water our fields".

Dafri cleverly turns it around to refer to "the blood of the colonized" who suffered under the French, which "just goes to show how universal our national anthem is", he argued. His story, however, centers on a group of French conscript soldiers sent on a "grotesque mission that none of them want to go on. 'Like a lot of military operations, it serves little or no purpose," said Dafri, who also scripted the acclaimed "Mesrine" gangster films. "When you make a film about World War II, you know who the good guys are," the writer said. "The war in Algeria is more complicated, because nobody was nice."

Torture

The film opens with a brutal interrogation of three Algerian villagers—the sort of violent questioning that the founder of France's far-right National Front party, Jean-Marie Le Pen, said he proudly took part in. It was only last year that the French government finally acknowledged that these interrogations were part of an official system of routine torture during the bloody seven-year war, before Algeria declared independence from France in 1962. "All the violence which I show in the film happened in reality," Dafri insisted.

Yet the film's lead character—a tough non-commissioned officer who has survived France's earlier colonial defeat in Indochina—is inspired by the rather more sympathetic figure of Roger Vandenberghe, Vandenberghe, a tragic and highly decorated hero of that earlier conflict, died aged 24 in Vietnam. "I wanted a hero, but not a Rambo," the first-time director said. "A man who was both fragile deep down but who was also capable of cruelty."

With France and Algeria still unable to agree on a death toll more than half a century after the war ended, Dafri insisted that he wanted "to be as honest and as just as possible". After much

research, he borrowed a phrase from the ethnologist Germaine Tillion as his guiding light.

Tillion was a French resistance hero and concentration camp survivor who secretly met Algerian guerrilla leaders in a bid to end the bloodshed. She tried to win hearts and minds as the military stepped up their repression.

French-Algerian identity

"When in 1828 our ancestors crossed the sea to seek revenge for a slap with a fly-whisk, Algeria was an archaic country, and France was too," Tillion wrote. The quotation refers to how France used a clash between the country's former Ottoman ruler Hussein Dey and the French consul in Algiers as a pretext to invade the country. Tillion tried to bring health services and education to Algeria's "pauperized" indigenous population as the war raged. She was among the first to condemn the systematic torture of suspects.

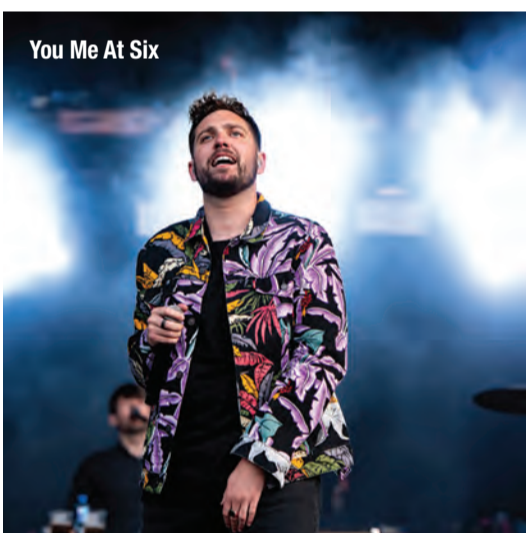
To understand the Algerian war, "you have to go back to the beginnings of the history of France and its principal colony", Dafri said. But writing the film he also had to confront his own personal history and identity as the French-born son of Algerian emigrants. "I wanted to understand why my parents brought me into the

world in France in 1963"—a year after the war ended—"when their own country had just been liberated from its oppressors."

Dafri said he is dedicating the film, which will be released later this year, both to the Algerian people and to the young French conscripts who were forced to serve there, "thrown into a disaster" that was not of their own making. According to the French historian Benjamin Stora, conscripts made up two-thirds of the 23,000 French soldiers killed in Algeria. Estimates of the number of Algerians who died range from around one million to between 300,000 and 400,000, three percent of the local population at the time. Dafri is less forgiving of those in power. "The Algerian people suffered from colonization and then independence led by corrupt men who are still in power," he said. "I don't want people to say that I have taken sides" when they see the movie, Dafri said. "I do not have a side to take: France is my country." —AFP

You Me At Six didn't like their own band on Night People

You Me At Six "weren't a fan" of their own band on their album 'Night People'. The 'Back Again' group's frontman Josh Franceschi has confessed he and his bandmates - Max Helyer, Chris Miller, Matt Barnes and Dan Flint - got themselves into a mindset that every track on their fifth studio album had to be "pretty similar", and the 28-year-old vocalist says in hindsight it was boring. He told former The Blackout star Sean Smith's Snappenin' podcast: "I definitely found that on 'Night People', we were so consumed in this idea of a cohesive record and our theory of what a cohesive record was, was that all the songs should sound pretty similar. "But actually what that is, is just boring. "We went back to being like, 'No, the identity of our band and strength of our band, [is that] we are the five biggest You Me At Six fans there are. "Because if you are not a fan of your own band, then that is when you are in trouble: that is usually the red flag.



"We weren't fans of our own band on that, although maybe it was because of other external things." Josh previously admitted they were "underwhelmed" by the 2017 record, despite it getting to number three in the official UK chart, and he said their sixth LP, which was aptly titled 'VI', is their "career-defining" album. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz, he spilled: "We felt underwhelmed by our own record so we wanted to make another one quickly, and a good one. "Being a number three album doesn't mean it's any good. "[Sir] Cliff Richard had how many numbers ones at Christmas, they were all crap so that doesn't mean it's any good." The British star said the band's transition from 'Night People' to 'VI' was much like the Arctic Monkeys' journey from 2009 LP 'Humbug' to 2013's 'AM', arguably their best record to date. He explained: "I still stand behind 'Night People' because it's something we've done. "You know how Arctic Monkeys had 'Humbug' as a stepping stone before 'AM', that's how I feel it was like for us.

"It's a record we had to make and the only record we could have made at that moment in time. Ultimately, it's what shaped us to make this one, it served a purpose." After working with Biffy Clyro producer Dan Austin - who practically became a sixth member of the band - You Me At Six hope 'VI' is "the one" that leaves a lasting impression. Josh said last summer before the record was released in October: "We'd never had that record. We've always made stepping stones, we've had milestones and we've grown. — Bang Showbiz



This undated handout made available by the Polish Institute and Sikorski museum shows Wojtek baby bear surrounded by Polish soldiers in then Persia 1942. — AFP photos



An undated handout made available by the Polish Institute and Sikorski museum shows Wojtek among the soldiers of the 22nd Polish Artillery Company in 1943.

Animated film to spotlight bear that served in WWII

During World War II, Wojciech Narebski and his fellow Polish servicemen had to lift crate after heavy metal crate of artillery. Fortunately for them, one of the soldiers had superhuman strength: Corporal Wojtek, a Syrian brown bear. "When he saw that we were struggling, he'd want to help... He'd come over, grab a crate and carry it to the truck," Narebski, now 93, told AFP of his days with Wojtek in the 22nd Artillery Supply Company. This can be heavy work, even for a bear. When Wojtek got tired, he would simply stack one crate on top of the other, "which also helped us, because we didn't have to lift the crate off the ground," recounted the veteran who spent two and a half years with the friendly giant he considered a brother. "Of course he got a reward. Honey, marmalade. That was his favorite."

Wojtek the Bear also liked to drink beer and smoke (or rather eat) cigarettes, take showers, smuggle with his handler at night, and wrestle with his comrades. When an opponent lost, Wojtek would lick their face in apology. Old photos show the bulky beast—who grew to be over 1.8 meters (six feet) tall and weighed about 220 kilograms (490 pounds) — giving bear hugs, opening his toothy jaw wide for food, and enjoying a day at the beach with smiling soldiers. The unbelievable true story of the orphaned cub, which was found by Polish troops in Persia and then travelled through Iraq, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Italy and Scotland as a morale-booster, is now being turned into an animated movie.

The British-Polish filmmakers hope to release the family-friendly "A Bear Named Wojtek" in 2020 on the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. But the film's British producer, Iain Harvey, was skeptical when Scottish animator Iain Gardner first approached him. "To be honest I thought, 'This man has had too many whiskys,'" Harvey said, before he realised that: "For once the magic is real."

Real-life fairytale

"When you actually find a story that is almost like a fairytale but is real, and documented and true, it just opens up so many emotions I think," he told AFP. "You know, that humanity can have magic and that things can happen that you wouldn't normally think are rational," he went on. Not that all the lore is true. Wojtek probably did not visit the Sphinx in Egypt, as recounted by some storytellers. Nor did the Nazis necessarily know they had a special animal enemy and bombard his positions. Sometimes truth is stranger than fiction, however.

Docile Wojtek was an enlisted soldier, with his own pay-book, rations, and rank—a status he needed to sail from Egypt



This undated handout made available by the Polish institute and Sikorski museum shows brown bear Wojtek standing at a truck carrying female soldiers who want to pet him in Palestine 1943.



A handout made available by the Polish Institute and Sikorski museum shows the brown bear Wojtek carrying a tree trunk in Castrocaro, Italy on March 22, 1945.

to Italy with his comrades in arms. "The port authority is being difficult about the bear and monkey," reads a 1944 entry in the company's journal. "Only after consulting the British High Command in Cairo does the port authority allow them to board the ship." Yes, there was a monkey too.

In fact there were hundreds of non-humans milling about during the war, according to wartime Polish refugee Krystyna Ivell, who herself had a chameleon in Palestine. "You have no mother, you have no sisters, you have no father, you're all alone, you might die, so of course you find something to love," said the 83-year-old, who put together a London exhibition and compiled a book: "Wojtek Album", with photos and anecdotes about the bear.

"Stray dogs. Foxes. Horses. You name it. Everybody wanted a pet... I remember a bloke who had a ferret, and used to have it under his khaki shirt and the head would appear," she told AFP.

'Polish soul'

What was special about Wojtek, according to Narebski, was that he seemed to believe he was human. "Because he

was brought up from a cub among people, he acquired human traits... In a bear's body there was a Polish soul," said Narebski, who was known as "Little Wojtek" and the bear as "Big Wojtek". He recalled an occasion in Italy, along the Adriatic Sea, when the hairy Corporal Wojtek managed to break away from the men and make a beeline for the water, giving beachgoers a fright. "Well he didn't pay them any attention... it was hot and he swam around a bit, shook himself off, and then came right back."

This docility is what Gardner, the animator, finds interesting about the imagery of a bear in a human conflict. "The most common kind of cultural shared image that we have of a bear is that it's a savage animal. You know, it's a beast," Gardner said. "And yet you put it in the context of the Second World War and you have to ask, 'Who are the animals?'" After the war, Wojtek ended up at Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland, where he died at the age of 21 in 1963. At the time, the BBC announced "with regret the death of a famous Polish soldier." — AFP

Britney Spears grateful for career

Britney Spears is "grateful" for her long career. The 37-year-old singer has honored the 20th anniversary of her debut album "...Baby One More Time" and admitted the past two decades have seen her embark on the "journey of a lifetime". She shared a photo of the album cover on Instagram and wrote: "It's definitely been the journey of a lifetime, full of ups and downs, but I'm grateful for every single moment of it all." The "Slumber Party" singer went on to thank her loyal fans for their support over the years. She added: "Getting to know you all over the years has been such an incredible experience, and has made this all worth it. Thank you for your support from 20 years ago, all the way to today. I am blessed [heart emoji] #20yearsofBritney (sic)" The heartfelt message prompted a

reply from Britney's boyfriend, Sam Asghari. He commented: "This humbles me! Always blessed. Look where gratitude has gotten you."

The "Toxic" hitmaker's musical milestone comes shortly after she revealed she's going on indefinite hiatus due to her father, Jamie Spears', ill health. She has had put her 'Britney: Domination' run at the Park MGM resort in Las Vegas on hold until further notice in order to spend time with her dad. Britney - who has kids Jayden, 12, and Sean Preston, 13, with ex-husband Kevin Federline - explained: "I am dedicating my focus and energy to care for my family. We have a very special relationship and I want to be with my family at this time just like they have always been there for me. "Thank you to all my fans for your

continued love and support during this time. I apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused and I look forward to the time when I can be back on stage performing for all of you."

Jamie became seriously ill two months ago, when his colon spontaneously ruptured and he was required to undergo surgery. He subsequently spent the next 28 days in the hospital, and members of the Spears family have thanked the doctors, nurses and staff at the hospital for saving his life. Jamie is said to have endured a complicated post-operative period, but he is now regaining his strength and is expected to eventually make a full recovery.



Classifieds

Monday, January 14, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.

BY NIGHT: Cold and Cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind, with speed of 12 - 42 km/h with a chance for scattered rain.

WEATHER WARNING		No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	12 °C	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	21 °C	09 °C	
ABDALY	20 °C	08 °C	
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C	
JAHRA	21 °C	11 °C	
FAILAKA ISLAND	19 °C	09 °C	
SALMIYAH	19 °C	13 °C	
AHMADI	18 °C	13 °C	
NUWAISIB	21 °C	09 °C	
WAFRA	21 °C	08 °C	
SALMY	19 °C	09 °C	

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	MAX. Temp.	MIN. Temp.	Wind Direction	Wind Speed
Monday	01/14	Cloudy with a chance for rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundersy at times	22 °C	14 °C	SE-NW	20 - 50 km/h
Tuesday	01/15	Cloudy to partly cloudy and Cool with a chance for rain that might be thundersy at times	19 °C	12 °C	VRB-NW	12 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	01/16	Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain	21 °C	10 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 30 km/h
Thursday	01/17	Dusty and Cold	15 °C	08 °C	NW	25 - 60 km/h

Prayer	Time
Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:44
Zuhr	11:57
Asr	14:51
Sunset	17:10
Isha	18:31

MAX. Temp.	15 °C
MIN. Temp.	05 °C
MAX. RH	79 %
MIN. RH	37 %
MAX. Wind	N 28 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
Ayoum Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

NOTICE
December 20, 2018

Mr. Jasol Parambath son of Mr. Basheer Parambath, resident of Parambath House, PO Thikkoti, Kazhikode, Kerala and Ms. Roobiya Ashraf Raheena daughter of Mr. Ashraf Sayed Muhammed, resident of Theruvil, Kuzhivilakom, Perumathura PO, Trivandrum, Pin: 695303, Kerala, both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait, have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (welfare2@indembkwt.gov.in, welfaresection@indembkwt.org) or letters / telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

(To atpallwar) Second Secretary (Cons) and Marriage Officer.
Embassy of India, Kuwait. Email: welfare2@indembkwt.gov.in

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Watanaya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073

Flight Schedule

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Monday 14/1/2019					Departure Flights on Monday 14/1/2019					Arrival Flights on Monday 14/1/2019					Departure Flights on Monday 14/1/2019						
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Gate	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Gate	RBG	554	Alexandria	14:45	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
THY	766	ISL	00:30		FDB	072	Dubai	00:40		IRA	666	Esfahan	15:10	JAI	572	Mumbai	15:00	JAI	572	Mumbai	15:00
JZR	254	Amman	00:40		JAI	571	Mumbai	01:15		FDB	060	Dubai	15:10	KAC	618	Doha	14:40	KAC	618	Doha	14:40
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45		JZR	111	Doha	01:45		KAC	363	Colombo	15:00	JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	JZR	734	Cairo	00:50
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50		KAC	677	Dubai	01:50		KAC	677	Dubai	15:10	THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	KAC	677	Dubai	15:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50		KAC	285	Dhaka	01:55		ETA	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	102	London	00:50
KAC	102	London	00:50		KAC	417	Manila	02:00		JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55
JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55		DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:25		PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00		THY	773	Istanbul	02:30		DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	DLH	625	Dammam	01:25
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25		PGT	859	Istanbul	02:55		RJA	642	Amman	01:35	RJA	642	Amman	01:35	RJA	642	Amman	01:35
RJA	642	Amman	01:35		IGO	1758	Kochi	02:55		UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	UAE	853	Dubai	01:45
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45		THY	767	Cairo	03:05		THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	THY	764	Istanbul	01:50
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50		UAE	854	Dubai	03:40		IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55		PGT	819	Istanbul	03:45		GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30		OMA	644	Muscat	03:55		PGT	818	Istanbul	02:40	PGT	818	Istanbul	02:40	PGT	818	Istanbul	02:40
PGT	818	Istanbul	02:40		THY	765	Istanbul	04:00		QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	QTR	1086	Doha	02:40
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40		QTR	1087	Doha	04:00		OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	OMA	643	Muscat	02:55
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55		KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:00		KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05		ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05		ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05		MSR	613	Cairo	04:15		MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	MSR	612	Cairo	03:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15		JZR	701	Asyut	04:30		JZR	502	Lahore	03:35	JZR	502	Lahore	03:35	JZR	502	Lahore	03:35
JZR	502	Lahore	03:35		IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10		QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	QTR	1076	Doha	04:00
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00		KAC	203	Lahore	05:10		IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10		DHX	173	Bahrain	05:30		KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	418	Manila	04:25	KAC	418	Manila	04:25
KAC	418	Manila	04:25		QTR	1077	Doha	05:30		KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30		FDB	070	Dubai	05:50		DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35	DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35	DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:35		JZR	215	Jeddah	06:00		FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	FDB	069	Dubai	05:00
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00		KAC	303	Mumbai	06:10		KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	KAC	382	Delhi	05:05
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05		JZR	713	Sohag	06:15		KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10		JZR	121	Dubai	06:35		JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10		THY	771	Istanbul	06:40		THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	THY	770	Istanbul	05:10
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10		KAC	167	Paris	07:10		KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15		RJA	643	Amman	07:15		JZR	112	Doha	05:25	JZR	112	Doha	05:25	JZR	112	Doha	05:25
JZR	112	Doha	05:25		GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15		KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30		KAC	413	Bangkok	07:20		KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40		KAC	163	MXP	08:40		KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	KAC	344	Chennai	05:50
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50		FDB	054	Dubai	08:50		KAC	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	402	Mumbai	06:05
KAC	402	Mumbai	06:05		KAC	161	Geneva	09:00		KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10		KAC	501	Beirut	09:00		KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	KAC	678	Dubai	06:55
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55		KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05		BAW	157	London	07:05	BAW	157	London	07:05	BAW	157	London	07:05
BAW	157	London	07:05		BAW	156	London	09:10		KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35		JZR	731	Cairo	09:10		KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35		KAC	541	Cairo	09:30		FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	FDB	053	Dubai	07:50
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50		KAC	561	Amman	09:40		KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	384	Delhi	08:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00		KAC	101	London	09:45		KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC	358	Kochi	08:05
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05		ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45		UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	UAE	855	Dubai	08:35
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35		KAC	671	Dubai	09:45		ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05		UAE	856	Dubai	10:00		ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05		KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10		QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	QTR	1070	Doha	09:30
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30		ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10		FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40		KAC	617	Doha	10:35		GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	GFA	213						

Trump rejects report that he hid details of Putin meetings

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump has rejected a Washington Post report that he has refused to share details of his conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin with top US government officials. Trump, in a telephone interview late Saturday with Fox News, dismissed as "ridiculous" the Post story that alleged he went to great lengths to hide the content of his talks with Putin, even confiscating the notes of his interpreter and ordering that person to not discuss what was said.

Trump said he had "a great conversation" with Putin in Helsinki in July 2018. When asked why not release details of the nearly two-hour conversation, Trump said: "I would, I don't with care. I mean, I had a conversation like every president does. You sit with the president of various countries... We were talking about Israel and securing Israel and lots of other things ... I'm not keeping anything under wraps, I couldn't care less. I mean, it's so ridiculous." He added: "Anybody could have listened to that meeting, that meeting is up for grabs."

According to the Post there is no detailed record of Trump's personal talks with Putin at five locations over the past two years. The newspaper quotes unnamed current and former government officials as sources for the story. Trump also told Fox when asked about Putin that "no collusion" has been found between his 2016 campaign and Russia, that he was a better candidate than Democrat Hillary Clinton, that the US economy "is the strongest in the world", and that The Washington Post is "basically the lobbyist for Amazon", as both are owned by billionaire Jeff Bezos.

A national security threat?

Trump also took aim at an earlier story in The New York Times stating that the FBI launched a previously undisclosed counterintelligence investigation to determine whether he posed a national security threat, at the same time that it opened a criminal probe into possible obstruction of justice. The FBI investigation was later folded into the broader probe by Special Counsel Robert Mueller into Russia's meddling in the 2016 election and possible collaboration by the Trump campaign.

Fox asked if he had ever worked for Russia. "I think it's the most insulting thing I've ever been asked," he said, without directly answering the question. He slammed the Times story as "the most insulting article I've ever had written and if you read the article, you'd see that they found absolutely nothing." No evidence has publicly emerged that Trump was secretly in contact with or took direction from Russian officials, the Times said.

The FBI had been suspicious of Trump's ties to Russia during the 2016 campaign, but it held off on opening a probe until the president sacked Comey, who refused to roll back the Russia investigation, the Times said. Mueller has indicted 33 people in the probe and convicted some of the president's close associates. Trump's ex-national security advisor, Michael Flynn, has pleaded guilty to lying to investigators about his Moscow ties.

Trump's former personal lawyer, Michael Cohen, has been sentenced to three years in prison for multiple crimes, including felony violations of campaign finance laws that prosecutors allege were carried out under



HELSINKI: In this file photo taken on July 16, 2018, US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands ahead of a meeting. —AFP

Trump's direction. And Trump's former presidential campaign chairman, Paul Manafort, has been convicted in one case brought by Mueller and pleaded guilty in

another, over financial crimes related to his work in Ukraine before the 2016 campaign, and for witness tampering. — AFP

Qatar Investment Authority aims to reach \$45bn in US investments

DOHA: Qatar Investment Authority aims to raise investments in the United States to \$45 billion in the next two years as it rebalances its portfolio of assets away from Europe, its chief executive said yesterday. The sovereign wealth fund has built up a huge European portfolio through stakes in companies including Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse, London Stock Exchange and Volkswagen. QIA currently has about \$30 billion invested in the US, Mansour Ibrahim Al-Mahmoud told reporters on the sidelines of a conference. "We are talking about \$45 billion for the US market...we are on track for this over the next two years," he said.

Mahmoud's predecessor Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohamed bin Saud Al-Thani in 2015 committed to invest \$45 billion in the US over a five-year period. "Our objective is to balance our portfo-

lio...currently we have a little bit of concentration in Europe and having this allocation toward the US market is to balance the portfolio," he said. In the US, QIA was looking at fundamental sectors such as real estate, technology or US exchanges, he said. In one such US deal, QIA and hedge fund Elliott Management Corp in Dec 2017 took Gigamon Inc, the US networking software company, private for \$1.6 billion.

Mahmoud was speaking as US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo visited Qatar on a tour of the region. Qatar is at loggerheads with Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Egypt, which have cut off diplomatic and transport ties with Doha, accusing it of backing terrorism and cozying up to Iran. Qatar denies supporting terrorism and its government is seeking to use the sanctions enforced by its neighbors as an opportunity to develop its own industry and its relations with other countries.

The value of bilateral trade between Qatar and the US has doubled in 10 years, Qatar's trade minister Ali Al-Kuwairi said at the US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue conference. He said the US tops the list of exporters to the Gulf nation. Kuwairi said bilateral trade volume reached \$6 billion in the period from January to October last year. The minister didn't give the equivalent figure the previous year but this would be higher than the value for all of 2017, which was about \$4.3 billion in bilateral trade, according to the United States Census Bureau. — Reuters



DOHA: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo shakes hands with Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani, the Deputy Prime Minister and Qatari Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Sheraton Grand in the Qatari capital yesterday. — AFP

Pompeo urges Gulf nations...

Continued from Page 1

"We will continue to talk about that and make sure we have all the facts so that they are held accountable certainly by the Saudis but by the US as well where appropriate," Pompeo told the news conference. Khashoggi, a long-time royal insider who had become a critic of the kingdom's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was killed inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul on Oct 2. His body was dismembered and removed from the building to a location still publicly

unknown. Top Turkish officials have tied his death to the highest levels of Saudi leadership.

The murder has left the kingdom facing its worst political crisis in generations, strained ties with Western allies and focused attention on the prince's domestic crackdown on dissent and the war in Yemen. The sister of Loujain Al-Hathloul, one of several Saudi women's rights activists detained in the kingdom since last summer and accused of treason, pressed Pompeo to raise the issue with officials in Riyadh. In a New York Times op-ed, Alia Al-Hathloul described how her sister was allegedly tortured and threatened while in detention. "Even today, I am torn about writing about Loujain, scared that speaking about her ordeal might harm her," she wrote. The Saudi authorities have denied such torture charges. — Reuters

Fewer Indians heading to work...

Continued from Page 1

The newspaper noted that UAE issued the largest number of work permits for Indians in 2018, followed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

The study showed Saudi Arabia lost its spot as most

attractive destination for Indian labor. The total number of Indians travelling to Saudi Arabia was 329,000 in 2014, but dropped by 80 percent over the past five years to around 65,000. On the other hand, the newspaper showed Qatar is the only GCC state to which the number of Indian workers increased in 2018 to reach 32,000, compared to 25,000 in 2017. TOI also quoted the Indian ministry of foreign affairs explaining the drop to economic problems in some GCC states as a result of the drop in oil prices, in addition to policies of nationalizing jobs in both the public and the private sectors.

issues will be discussed too," he added.

On the sanctions against Iran, Silverman said this is only the beginning stage and results will not appear quickly. He pointed out that Iranian oil exports had fallen from 2.7 million barrels per day to less than 1 million, hoping to see results on the ground soon. "The economic sanctions on Iran reduce the Iranian government's support of terrorist groups, including Hezbollah in Lebanon, which by its practices harms the economy of Lebanon. So sanctions have an effect - as the history of sanctions shows, countries will always claim they are not affected, but they have a great impact on the economy in the long term. I hope the Iranian government will realize the magnitude of the economic difficulties it is putting on itself and its people," he added.

On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the ambassador said the US government is keen to revive peace talks, pointing out there is no specific timetable for relaunching negotiations between the two countries. On the US military pullout from Syria as announced by US President Donald Trump, he said it was mainly a tactical decision rather than a strategic one, stressing that the US policy toward Syria has not changed and the elimination of Iranian-backed terrorist groups is still the top priority.

"We want to see a political solution with regards to the Syrian regime. We ask them to comply with UN Security Council Resolution 2254. Some Arab countries have expressed their desire to reopen embassies in Syria, but we disagree with this. If you (the Arab countries) are trying to influence the Assad regime to do what it is supposed to do, we don't believe the reopening of embassies is the right thing to do," he concluded.

Tunisians have 'freedom' but...

Continued from Page 1

The quotas for women and youth candidates in the polls - touted as another milestone on the road to democracy - "allowed a large number of young people to be elected to municipal councils", says Lamoum. And yet, she says, "nothing has been done to improve the lives of young people... Socially, their situation has really deteriorated".

One thing the revolution did achieve, according to Lamoum, is to allow politicians, researchers and non-governmental organizations access to impoverished areas like Douar Hicher. This, she says, has created space for debate, although politicians did not clearly use the opportunity to look into the problems facing the population to try and find solutions. For Jbeli and other young Tunisians this has not been enough. They point to numerous hurdles, beyond their economic hardships, that are stifling their daily life.

Following a series of deadly militant attacks in 2015, authorities have prevented some citizens, mainly men and women under 35, from travelling to certain countries without parental permission. "Based on official statements, the measure is part of efforts to prevent people from joining extremist armed groups abroad," according to Human Rights Watch, calling it "arbitrary". Sofiene

said the measure was one of several "humiliations".

"We launched a revolution in order to become full-fledged citizens but for me the only thing I got out of it was freedom of expression," says high school student Hamza Dhifali. "Before (the uprising) I could not express myself freely, now I can. It's great, but no one listens," he adds. Issam Elhali, a 31-year-old father of two, says the promises made by the revolution that toppled strongman Ben Ali and forced him to flee to Saudi Arabia on January 14, 2011 were "only on paper".

Elhali says authorities have proposed loan programs to help young people set up projects. "I borrowed 7,000 dinars (\$2,400) to set up a small hardware store but the interest rate is fixed at 21 percent and I simply cannot manage that," he says. "The authorities say they are backing the young people but in truth they are ripping us off," he adds. "There is no future for us."

Nevertheless, in Douar Hicher young people - scouts, dancers and would-be stand-up comedians - are keeping busy preparing a show to mark the eighth anniversary of Tunisia's uprising. Others like Elhali work in community groups tasked with keeping their town clean. "We are the rare few to still have some hope. Others feel let down and while the time away by just sitting in cafes," says Elhali. He also took to task the country's politicians and the political struggles that have recently emerged between the prime minister and the president. "We are in a boat whose captains are having a dispute while watching the boat sink," says Elhali. "I want to save myself and leave the boat" and build a new life abroad. — AFP

Italian militant arrested 38 yrs...

Continued from Page 1

after a judge ordered his arrest. By then the Italian militant had disappeared and gone on the run. "Battisti was arrested in the street, unarmed and he didn't resist, responded to police in Portuguese and showed a Brazilian document confirming his identity," an Italian interior ministry source said. "Now Italy is waiting for him."

Italian state police said the arrest had been carried out by a joint team of Italian and Bolivian officers with the help of Italy's counter-terrorism section. According to the Italian government sources, Battisti was spotted "with certainty" in Santa Cruz last week and an operation was prepared with local authorities. Italian newspaper Corriere della Sera reported the fugitive, wearing a false beard and moustache, was snatched in the street by a special Interpol squad.

An Interpol team had targeted their search in Santa Cruz before Christmas, closing in on the Italian fugitive in a few of the city's neighborhoods, the paper said. Italy's envoy to Brazil fired off a triumphant tweet upon hearing the news. "Battisti has been arrested! Democracy is stronger than terrorism!" ambassador Antonio Bernardini wrote. Battisti could be expelled "within hours" from Bolivian territory, a Bolivian government source told AFP,

without giving details where he would be sent.

Italian authorities yesterday dispatched a plane carrying police and secret service agents to Bolivia, the interior ministry said, in apparent preparation for a possible extradition. "Now it's necessary to work out if Battisti will make a stopover in Brazil or if he will be brought immediately to Italy. This is a problem that will be decided in the coming hours," the Italian interior ministry source said. Italian President Sergio Mattarella expressed yesterday his satisfaction at Battisti's arrest. "We hope Battisti is swiftly handed over to Italian justice," he said.

Italy's Interior Minister Matteo Salvini thanked the Italian and foreign police who captured "a delinquent who did not deserve the comfortable life on the beach, and who should spend out the rest of his days in prison". Bolsonaro's son, Brazilian lawmaker Eduardo Bolsonaro, tweeted in Italian with a picture of Battisti: "Brazil is no longer the land of bandits, Matteo Salvini, the 'little gift' is on its way." Salvini, head of the rightwing League party which partners the 5-Star Movement in Italy's ruling coalition, was one of the first top European politicians to endorse Bolsonaro's election.

Battisti escaped from an Italian prison after being convicted in 1979 of belonging to an outlawed leftist group, the Armed Proletarians for Communism. He was subsequently convicted in absentia of having killed two Italian policemen, taking part in the murder of a butcher, and helping plan the slaying of a jeweller who died in a shootout which left his 14-year-old son in a wheelchair. Battisti admitted to being part of the group but denied responsibility for any deaths. — AFP

Kuwait and US share similar...

Continued from Page 1

signed during the dialogue. He said there have been deals on F18 aircraft and MIA2 tanks, indicating that the two sides will discuss the delivery of the military equipment in the coming few years.

Silverman reiterated America's commitment to hosting the GCC-US summit in Washington, expected to be held in the first quarter of this year as an annual event to discuss many issues, including ending the Gulf crisis, strengthening trade and economic relations and combating terrorism and drying up its sources.

"We had committed to host the summit - Saudi Arabia hosted the May 2017 summit. We want to see the end to the Gulf dispute, along with other issues such as fighting terrorism, stopping terrorist financing, creating a real structure to maximize the defense against ballistic missiles and also enhance our economic and trade relations," he said.

The envoy also confirmed the attendance of Kuwait at a ministerial meeting scheduled to be held in Warsaw in mid-February. "An invitation was sent to Kuwait and they confirmed that they are going to attend the ministerial meeting along with 70 other countries. We hope to see the maximum attendance - Iran will be part of the conference, with the hope that it could lead to a change in the behavior of the Iranian regime, but other

Sports

Seventh heaven beckons for Federer, Djokovic at Open as Murray bows out

Djokovic to open his assault on seventh crown against American Krueger tomorrow

MELBOURNE: Roger Federer and Novak Djokovic are both gunning for a record seventh Australian Open crown from today, but Andy Murray will make his last appearance in Melbourne as the era of the "Big Four" draws to a close.

Number one Djokovic and third seed Federer face a stern challenge from the likes of youthful force Alexander Zverev, seeded four, who is still looking for a first major to cement his place as torch-bearer for the next generation.

But Murray dropped a pre-Grand Slam bombshell, breaking down during a tear-filled press conference as he revealed chronic hip pain means he will retire after Wimbledon-if he can carry on that long.

And question marks remain over the fitness of world number two Rafael Nadal who pulled out of his Brisbane warm-up but arrived in Melbourne professing he was "fully fit" and promising to unleash a remodelled serve.

It all means the era of the "Big Four" is almost over after a season in which Federer—who opens his title defence against Denis Istomin today—rolled back the years on Rod Laver Arena to lift an emotional 20th Grand Slam.

It put him on a par with other six-time Australian Open winners Djokovic and Roy Emerson—although the Australian great's victories all came before the Open era. By contrast, the 31-year-old Djokovic endured a miserable early Melbourne exit in 2018, 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.

And Djokovic said yesterday he was delighted to be back in Melbourne where his rise to greatness all began in 2008 with his first Grand Slam win. "It was my first major trophy, that obviously served as a great springboard for my career," Djokovic said as he prepared to open his assault on a seventh crown against American Mitchell Krueger tomorrow.

"It opened a lot of doors for me. It allowed me to believe in myself that I can actually win the biggest tournaments in the world, challenge the best players in the world."

NADAL 'FEELS GOOD'

Federer, now 37, remains the chief threat to the Serb and he sounded a warning yesterday. "I'm playing good tennis. I'm confident that I think it needs a good performance by my opponent probably to beat me," said the Swiss master, who warmed for Melbourne with victory in Perth's Hopman Cup.

Second-ranked Nadal, 32, pulled out of Brisbane with a thigh strain although he returned for an exhibition in Sydney and insisted at the weekend his fitness woes were behind him. "I feel good. If I am not feeling good, I will not be here," he said before revealing he had remodelled his serve.

"There are always things to improve," said the Spaniard, who faces Australian wildcard James Duckworth today. Djokovic picked young guns Zverev of Germany, Borna Coric of Croatia, Karen Khachanov of Russia and Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas as key threats to the top three.

"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 to reach the final of Perth's mixed teams Hopman Cup, despite his terrible record at Grand Slams.



MELBOURNE: Serbia's Novak Djokovic hits a return during a practice session ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

He has never got beyond the third round in Melbourne and faces Slovenia's Aljaz Bedene in his opener tomorrow. Last year, seeded four, he crashed out in the last 32 to South Korea's Chung Hyeon and has only reached one quarter-final in 14 major appearances. Home fans will look to new Sydney champion

and 27th seed Alex de Minaur, who faces Portugal's Pedro Sousa today, and the temperamental Nick Kyrgios. Kyrgios has a tough opening match against former world number three Milos Raonic and then a possible clash with former Australian Open champion Stan Wawrinka in round two. — AFP

Wozniacki upbeat ahead of Aussie Open defence

MELBOURNE: An upbeat Caroline Wozniacki said she was relishing returning to the Australian Open as defending champion yesterday and dismissed concerns health problems were affecting her game.

The Dane achieved a career milestone at Melbourne Park to claim her maiden Grand Slam last year, but also revealed she was suffering the debilitating auto-immune condition rheumatoid arthritis.

Wozniacki, 28, insisted there was no extra pressure returning Down Under as the title holder, saying she was treating her upcoming campaign as "a nice, fun challenge". "I felt comfortable straightaway when I hit balls on that court. It was just a good feeling," she said of her return to Rod Laver Arena, the scene of last year's three set triumph over world number one Simona Halep.

"Then, you see your photos all over the place, which is cool. So it's definitely great to be back," Wozniacki, seed-

ed third at this year's tournament, said she was carefully managing her arthritis, a condition which sometimes leaves her so exhausted she can barely move her arms.

"For me, it's just all the time making sure I get good massaging, good treatments, ice baths, stretching, do everything even more thoroughly than maybe in the past," she said. She added that she had not changed her playing style and had learned to recognise symptoms of arthritis to avoid flare-ups. "I think especially as an athlete, you're even more aware of it. You know your body even better," she said. "It's kind of hard to put into words, but I can definitely tell the difference whether it's just soreness from training or soreness from that (arthritis)."

She said the pre-season routine was unchanged, aside from some extra gym work to keep in shape before training began in earnest. After such a rollercoaster 2018, Wozniacki said she needed "to leave the racquet behind for a while" during the off-season, recharging her batteries in the Maldives and the Virgin Islands.

The avid Liverpool fan also visited the less sunny climes of Anfield to see her beloved team in action, indulging in the local fare after cheering Jurgen Klopp's men on to victory. "They have great burgers right outside. There's a huge line outside one of them... they had fries, all sorts of stuff," she said. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki hits a shot during a practice session ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Court says nerves could jinx Serena's record Slam bid

MELBOURNE: Australian great Margaret Court has predicted nerves could undermine Serena Williams' bid to match her record 24 singles majors at Melbourne Park, clearing the way for an outsider to snatch the title.

She disputed the bookies' assessment that Serena is red-hot favourite to lift the Australian Open trophy for an eighth time, taking her overall Grand Slam tally to 24 and equalling Court's mark. "I think it's possible for Serena to equal me, if anybody's gonna do it, it's Serena, but I don't think there's a clear-cut favourite," Court told Melbourne's Herald Sun newspaper yesterday.

"I think it's a pretty open tournament and I think an outsider can win it," Williams, 37, has won 23 singles Grand Slams since 1999 — seven Australian Opens, three French Opens, seven Wimbledon and six US Opens. Court, now 76, won 24 singles Grand Slams from 1960-73 — 11 Australian Opens, five

French Opens, three Wimbledon and five US Opens.

However, 13 of Court's titles came before 1968, when the women's game entered the Open era and became fully professional. For that reason many pundits, including 18-time Slam champion Chris Evert, believe Williams is already the greatest of all time.

Another win at Melbourne Park would settle the argument once and for all, but Court said the American no longer had the fearlessness of youth on her side. "When you're young, you tend not to think about it too much," she said. "I won my first Australian championship when I was 17 and I had no nerves. As I went along... it became harder."

Williams has been one shy of Court's record since winning the 2017 Australian Open, when she was eight weeks pregnant. She has spoken in the past about the mental hurdles she faced before reaching Steffi Graf's Open-era milestone



MELBOURNE: Serena Williams of the US hits a return during a practice session in Melbourne yesterday, ahead of the Australian Open tennis tournament. — AFP

of 22 majors at Wimbledon in 2016.

Her extraordinary success rate in Grand Slam finals has slowed in recent years. Between 1999 and 2015 she reached 25 Slam deciders and lost only four, but since then her record stands at only two wins in six finals.

Critics say Court not only won the bulk of her titles in the amateur era, but her record was bolstered by 11 Australian crowns at a time when the journey Down

Under involved an arduous boat trip that many top players declined to make.

Other detractors point out that some of the Slams she won involved only 32 competitors, rather than the 128-player draws Williams has faced throughout her career. However, Court bristles when her own record is dismissed as largely irrelevant in the world of modern tennis and points out she won 11 titles in the Open era. — AFP

WADA gets ready to rule on Russia compliance

LONDON: An explainer ahead of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) Compliance Review Committee's (CRC) meeting on Jan. 14-15 in Montreal where a report will be submitted to the executive committee making recommendations on the reinstatement of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA):

IS RUSADA SUSPENDED?

No. At a meeting in the Seychelles in September, WADA's executive committee voted to reinstate the Russian agency, which had been suspended since November 2015 over alleged state-backed doping.

That reinstatement, however, was conditional on Russia allowing access to a tainted Moscow laboratory and data in the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).

SO WHERE ARE WE?

Russian authorities had indicated they were prepared to allow a five-member WADA inspection team access to the lab before a Dec. 31 deadline but then threw up a late roadblock, saying the equipment being used to extract the data was not certified under Russian law. Facing new sanctions, Russia opened the door to a second, three-member WADA inspection team on Jan. 9 when the data extraction process began.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The inspection teams will meet WADA's Compliance Review Committee at the agency's Montreal headquarters on Monday and Tuesday. Russian authorities will have the opportunity to make submissions to the CRC for their consideration. The CRC will file a report to the

WADA executive committee no later than Thursday which could recommend that RUSADA be ruled compliant or that new sanctions be considered. The executive committee will announce its decision on Jan. 22.

SO WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Russian authorities will say they have now met all the requirements in the Road Map to Compliance laid out by WADA and that RUSADA's provisional status should be lifted. However, athletes' groups and anti-doping organisations have concerns about whether all data and testing samples were handed over or whether they might have been tampered with.

END GAME

If WADA is satisfied that Russia has met all the obligations RUSADA's conditional reinstatement will be confirmed. If WADA is not satisfied it has received full cooperation it can impose new sanctions. Russia would then have 21 days to appeal against WADA's decision to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). — Reuters

Djokovic insists no decision on ousting ATP Tour chief

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic insisted yesterday no decision had been taken about ousting ATP Tour chief Chris Kermode after reports of a player revolt against the way the sport was being run. Britain's Daily Telegraph said a move was underway to topple the Briton, citing a strongly worded email sent by ATP player council member Vasek Pospisil to players ranked between 50 and 100.

It reportedly called for the workforce to "start acting and running like a business not like a bunch of scared kids ... we need a CEO that first and foremost represents OUR interests". The email added that "the governance structure of the ATP favours the interests of the tournaments and its (their) owners ... It's time for a change and it can be achieved by staying unified and demanding what we deserve for our hard work".

The newspaper said the ATP board—comprised of three tournament representatives and three player representatives—would vote on a possible renewal of Kermode's contract this month. He needs two of the three board members from each side of the ATP to support him.

The ATP players council, headed by Djokovic, met in Melbourne on Saturday and reportedly voted 5-4 against Kermode continuing in his role. Asked for clarity in a press conference Sunday, Djokovic said: "I don't know where you got that information, a 5-4."

"That information is completely confidential, so I can't speak about anything that we spoke about in that room." The world number one added: "The decision hasn't been made on the president. He's still president. He'll remain president till the end of his term."

"Whether there's a renewal or not, it's going to be decided in the next period." One man who has been touted as a potential replacement is Tennis Australia and Australian Open boss Craig Tiley. Roger Federer said he wanted to speak with his colleagues about what was going on.

"We've had a good five, six years now under Chris's leadership. Obviously it's an important role," he said. "We need to look at it very thoroughly. I need to speak with Novak, Rafa (Nadal), and Andy (Murray) a little bit just to get their take on it all." In recent days Stan Wawrinka and Nick Kyrgios have expressed support for Kermode, illustrating the divided nature of the men's game. Top Australian coach Darren Cahill, who until recently was working with world number one Simona Halep, said he would be stunned if Kermode was removed.

"Big increases in prize money, pension plan, new events, doubles initiative supporter, new progressive rules for injured players & LLs (lucky losers), challenger increases, facility upgrades ++," he tweeted. "I'd be stunned if Chris Kermode is removed. ATP needs stability right now."

Adding to the ATP board woes was member Justin Gimelstob pleading not guilty last month to a felony battery charge in a Los Angeles court. The two-time Grand Slam mixed doubles champion was accused of attacking one-time friend Randall Kaplan. He pleaded not guilty. — AFP

Sports

De Kock, Steyn put South Africa on course to complete series clean sweep

Pakistan 153 for three at close, needing another 228 runs

JOHANNESBURG: A century by Quinton de Kock and a double strike by Dale Steyn kept South Africa on course to complete a series clean sweep on the third day of the third and final Test against Pakistan at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday.

Set to make a daunting 381 to win, Pakistan were 153 for three at the close, needing another 228 runs. De Kock made an imperious 129, equalling his highest Test score, before South Africa were bowled out for 303. Imam-ul-Haq and Shan Masood got Pakistan off to their best start of the series, putting on 67 for the first wicket.

Both batsmen looked comfortable on a pitch which played easier on Sunday than the first two days. But a change of ends brought immediate results for Steyn. Bowling from the southern, Corlett Drive end for the first time in the match, he had Imam caught behind for

35 with a superb delivery which moved away from the batsman just enough to find the edge.

Four overs later Steyn claimed the wicket of Masood after umpire Joel Wilson originally gave him not out. A successful review by South Africa showed a faint inside edge onto Masood's thigh pad before the ball carried through to wicketkeeper De Kock.

Duanne Olivier dismissed Azhar Ali for the fourth time in the series when the batsman gloved a bouncer to De Kock. Asad Shafiq (48 not out) and Babar Azam (17 not out) saw Pakistan through to the close with an unbeaten stand of 49.

De Kock and Hashim Amla were mainly responsible for South Africa posting a target likely to be beyond Pakistan's reach. They came together on Saturday when their side were 93 for five, at which stage their lead was a modest 170. While Amla patiently compiled an



JOHANNESBURG: South African batsman Quinton de Kock (L) jumps to celebrate his century (100 runs) during the third day of the third Cricket Test match between South Africa and Pakistan at Wanderers cricket stadium in Johannesburg, South Africa yesterday. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

Scores at close of play on the third day of the third and final Test between South Africa and Pakistan at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday:

South Africa, first innings, 262	(De Kock), 9-302 (Rabada)
Pakistan, first innings, 185	Bowling: Mohammad Amir 20-2-56-2, Mohammad Abbas 18-3-73-1 (lw), Hasan Ali 17-1-83-1, Faheem Ashraf 14-3-42-3 (2w), Shadab Khan 11.3-0-41-3.
South Africa, second innings	
D. Elgar c Sarfraz Ahmed b Mohammad Amir	5
A. Markram c Sarfraz Ahmed b Mohammad Abbas	21
H. Amla c Sarfraz Ahmed b Hasan Ali	71
T. de Bruyn c Asad Shafiq b Faheem Ashraf	7
Zubayr Hamza lbw b Faheem Ashraf	0
T. Bavuma c Sarfraz Ahmed b Shadab Khan	23
Q. de Kock c Hasan Ali b Shadab Khan	129
V. Philander lbw b Mohammad Amir	14
K. Rabada c Shadab Khan b Faheem Ashraf	21
D. Steyn not out	0
D. Olivier c Sarfraz Ahmed b Shadab Khan	1
Extras: (b2, lb6, nbl, w1)	11
Total: (80.3 overs)	303
Fall of wickets: 1-24 (Elgar), 2-29 (Markram), 3-45 (De Bruyn), 4-45 (Hamza), 5-93 (Bavuma), 6-195 (Amla), 7-223 (Philander), 8-302	
Pakistan, second innings	
Imam-ul-Haq c De Kock b Steyn	35
Shan Masood c De Kock b Steyn	37
Azhar Ali c De Kock b Olivier	15
Asad Shafiq not out	48
Babar Azam not out	17
Extras: (lb1)	1
Total: (3 wks, 40 overs)	153
Fall of wickets: 1-67 (Imam), 2-74 (Masood), 3-104 (Azhar)	
Bowling: Steyn 12-1-37-2, Philander 10-3-28-0, Olivier 8-2-41-1, Rabada 10-1-46-0	
Match situation: Pakistan need 228 runs to win with seven wickets remaining.	

innings of 71 off 144 balls, the left-handed De Kock played fluently as the pair put on 102 for the sixth wicket. De Kock also shared an eighth wicket stand of 79 with Kagiso Rabada.

De Kock reached his fifty off 49 balls and his fourth Test century off 121 deliveries. He was finally caught in the deep, trying for a second successive six off leg-spinner Shadab Khan, after facing 138 balls and hitting 18 fours and a six.

Shadab finished with three for 41 while medium-pacer Faheem Ashraf took three for 42. Captain Sarfraz

Ahmed set a record for a Pakistan wicketkeeper by taking five catches in each innings. His total of ten dismissals in the match was one better than the record previously shared by Rashid Latif and Kamran Akmal.

Pakistan only made one total over 200 in their first five innings in the series and had not batted for longer than 70.4 overs. Steyn's two wickets took his total in Tests to 433, bringing him level with Sri Lanka's Rangana Herath and Stuart Broad of England in joint eighth place on the all-time Test wicket-takers list. — AFP

Sheikh Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah shooting championship concludes



KUWAIT: Sheikh Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah Shooting Championship, which included air guns and archeries, concluded competitions on Saturday. Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Sabah, speaking to reporters after the conclusion of the championship, said the family of Sheikh Abdullah was keen on organizing the tournament every year in recognition of late Sheikh Abdullah and a support for Kuwait Shooting Club. Hamad Al-Namshan, from Kuwait National Guard (KNG), won the Men's Air Pistol competition while KNG's Sultan Al-Ussaimi won the Air Gun event. Kuwait Shooting Club's Abdullah Taha won the Archery competition. Amira Al-Mordhi, of Kuwait Shooting Club, won the Women's Air Pistol competition while Maryam Erzuqi won the Air Gun shooting event. Abdulrahman Al-Hamad won the Juniors' Air Pistol medal, Saud Al-Subaiee claimed the Air Gun title and Yara Al-Khalaf won the Girls' Air Gun title. — KUNA



Blake Griffin dominates Clippers in return to LA

LOS ANGELES: Blake Griffin took advantage of the first opportunity to show his former fans what they're missing, scoring 44 points on Saturday afternoon to lead the visiting Detroit Pistons to a 109-104 victory against the Los Angeles Clippers. Griffin was drafted No. 1 overall by the Clippers in 2009 and spent his first eight seasons with them, helping the team reach the playoffs in six straight years from 2012-17. He was traded to Detroit last January. Detroit center Andre Drummond added 20 points and 21 rebounds, including nine on the offensive end. Reggie Bullock, another former first-round pick of the Clippers, scored 17 points for the Pistons, who had lost nine of 11. The starting lineup for the Clippers included two players who came to Los Angeles in

the Griffin trade; forward Tobias Harris and guard Avery Bradley. Harris finished with 11 points, 10 below his scoring average, and 10 rebounds. Bradley finished with three points.

MAGIC 105, CELTICS 103

Jayson Tatum's tying attempt at the buzzer missed, helping Orlando hold on late over visiting Boston and snapping a four-game losing streak.

Aaron Gordon had 11 points in the fourth quarter and led all scorers with 28 points along with 12 rebounds. Terrence Ross added 25 points off the bench, and Nikola Vucevic had 16 points and 13 rebounds. The Magic were coming off a disappointing road trip in which they went 1-5. Kyrie Irving had 25 points, six assists and five rebounds, and Marcus Morris added 17 points and eight rebounds for the Celtics. Boston has lost back-to-back games, including to Miami on Thursday to end a four-game winning streak.

HEAT 112, GRIZZLIES 108

Justise Winslow produced a game-high 26 points to go with seven rebounds and four assists as Miami defeated visiting Memphis. Winslow

made 10 of 16 shots, including 4 of 4 3-pointers, as Miami improved to 10-4 in its past 14 games. The score was tied at 108 with 56 seconds left when Miami's Bam Adebayo made 1 of 2 free throws. The Heat led the rest of the way. Memphis was led by reserve JaMychal Green, who had a double-double with 24 points and 11 rebounds in just 22 minutes. The Grizzlies lost for the seventh time in eight games.

TIMBERWOLVES 110, PELICANS 106

Karl-Anthony Towns had 27 points and 27 rebounds as host Minnesota held off New Orleans. Andrew Wiggins added 18 points, Josh Okogie scored 17, Dario Saric and Tyus Jones had 14 each and Taj Gibson 10 for the Timberwolves. Anthony Davis had 30 points and 14 rebounds, Jrue Holiday scored 25 points, Julius Randle added 22 points and 11 rebounds and Elfrid Payton had 10 points to lead the Pelicans, who saw a three-game winning streak end in the opener of a five-game road trip.

THUNDER 122, SPURS 112

Dennis Schroder scored all 19 of his

points in the second half as Oklahoma City picked up a come-from-behind victory over visiting San Antonio. Russell Westbrook led the Thunder with 24 points and 10 rebounds, and Paul George finished with 18 points and 11 rebounds.

Marco Belinelli had a season-high 24 points off the bench to lead San Antonio. DeMar DeRozan added 18 while LaMarcus Aldridge, coming off a 56-point performance in Thursday's 154-147 double-overtime win over the Thunder in San Antonio, scored 17 points.

SUNS 102, NUGGETS 93

Kelly Oubre Jr. and Richaun Holmes combined for 40 points off the bench as Phoenix's reserves dominated their Denver counterparts in a home win over the Western Conference's top team. The Suns, who have the worst record in the West at 11-33, used a 10-0 flurry late in the first quarter to take a lead they never relinquished en route to their first win over the Nuggets in three tries this season. Nikola Jokic had 23 points and 10 rebounds for Denver, which at 28-13 retained a half-game lead over Golden State atop the West. — Reuters

India call up Shankar, Gill to replace suspended pair

SYDNEY: India yesterday called up all-rounder Vijay Shankar and batsman Shubman Gill for their Australia and New Zealand tours after KL Rahul and Hardik Pandya were ordered home in disgrace over comments made about women.

Rahul and Pandya were axed ahead of India's opening one-day international against Australia in Sydney on Saturday, which the tourists lost, pending an investigation into the comments made on a TV celebrity show.

"Vijay Shankar will join the team before the start of the 2nd ODI in Adelaide," the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said, referring to tomorrow's match. "He will be a part of the squad for the ODI series in Australia and the tour to New Zealand. Shubman Gill has been picked for the ODI and Twenty20 series in New Zealand."

Pandya had bragged about his success with women and made other sexual remarks during an Indian celebrity chat show broadcast last week just as India were celebrating their historic first Test series win in Australia.

Rahul was also on the programme and watched his teammate's antics, which sparked outrage on social media and condemnation from skipper Virat Kohli who made clear the comments did not reflect the culture within the squad.

Both players, who have apologised, have been suspended "from playing any form of cricket" pending an enquiry for misconduct and indiscipline. With Pandya and Rahul missing, India crashed to a 34-run defeat in Sydney on Saturday despite a explosive century from Rohit Sharma. The next game in the three-match series is a day-night contest in Adelaide tomorrow. — AFP

Rayudu reported for suspected bowling action

NEW DELHI: India's Ambati Rayudu has been reported for a suspect bowling action in the first one-day international against Australia, the International Cricket Council said yesterday. The part-time spinner's action was flagged by match officials, citing concerns about its legality, after the match in Sydney.

"Rayudu's bowling action will now be scrutinised further under the ICC process relating to suspected illegal bowling actions," cricket's world governing body said in a statement. The 33-year-old's action must be tested within 14 days, but he is allowed to bowl until the results are out.

Rayudu bowled just two overs, giving away 13 runs, in the ODI on Saturday, which India lost by 34 runs. Adelaide will host the second ODI tomorrow, and the final game of the series will be played in Melbourne on Friday. Rayudu has scored 1,447 runs in 46 ODIs, while taking three wickets. — AFP

25 Seventh heaven beckons for Federer, Djokovic at Open as Murray bows out

26 De Kock, Steyn put South Africa on course to complete series clean sweep

27 Griezmann strikes again to give Atletico narrow win over Levante



‘Lucky’ Japan reach Asian Cup knockouts



ABU DHABI: Oman's midfielder Raed Saleh (R) heads the ball during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup group F football match between Oman and Japan at Hazza bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi yesterday. — AFP

ABU DHABI: Genki Haraguchi smashed home a controversial penalty as former champions Japan scraped a 1-0 win over Oman to book their place in the last 16 of the Asian Cup yesterday. Earlier, Almoez Ali plundered four goals for Qatar as the 2022 World Cup hosts hit North Korea for six to progress from Group E.

Japan, who have scooped Asian football's biggest prize on four occasions, enjoyed their share of good fortune against Oman in Abu Dhabi. Haraguchi clipped the crossbar after just two minutes before Takumi Minamino fluffed a handful of golden opportunities.

That profligacy almost came back to haunt the Blue Samurai as Oman flooded forward and Muhsen Al-Ghassani shaved the post from an acute angle. But Haraguchi settled Japan's nerves in the 28th minute, converting from the spot after he had appeared to go down easily under minimal contact from Oman captain Ahmed Al-Mahajiri.

Oman had extra reason to feel aggrieved when their

own penalty claims were waved away just before half-time after Yuto Nagatomo looked to have handled a Salaah Al-Yahyaie drive. "We were unlucky with the handball," shrugged Oman coach Pim Verbeek, whose team were beaten 2-1 by Uzbekistan last week.

"I just saw it again on the television and for me it was 100 percent a penalty. Against a team like Japan you need a little bit of luck and we didn't get it. Now we have to pick ourselves up for the last game and make Oman proud." Japan reached the knockout stages of last year's World Cup but they squeaked past Turkmenistan 3-2 in their opening Group F game and were poor against Oman, who almost equalised when Raed Saleh's acrobatic late volley flashed wide.

But the Japanese remain unbeaten in seven matches since Hajime Moriyasu took charge after the World Cup and have now lost just one of their last 30 games at the Asian Cup, excluding penalty shootouts.

Japan are seeking to make up for their Asian Cup

flop four years ago when they lost on penalties to the United Arab Emirates in the quarter-finals. But they will need to find another gear if they are to threaten Iran, who are purring, and a South Korea side set to be boosted by the arrival of Tottenham forward Son Heung-min.

"It was tougher than we thought it would be," Japan captain Maya Yoshida told AFP. "We were a little bit lucky with the penalty we had—and the one not given as well. "But we should have scored two or three more. That's why we struggled at the end of the game in the last 10 minutes."

Qatar's 6-0 romp over North Korea was played out in an almost eerie silence in front of barely 300 spectators in Al Ain. The long-running blockade of Qatar by Gulf neighbours who accuse Doha of supporting terrorism largely prohibits Qataris from entering the UAE.

"The players know this is the scenario and they deal with it," said Qatar coach Felix Sanchez. "We don't have

our supporters here but we know that they're supporting from Qatar." Ali took his tally to a tournament-best five goals with two in each half, completing this Asian Cup's first hat-trick by dinking the ball over goalkeeper Kim Myong Guk 10 minutes after the interval.

His salvo equalled an Asian Cup record as he became the fourth player to score four goals in one game. Qatar, who beat Lebanon 2-0 in their opening game, top the group on goal difference from three-time champions Saudi Arabia.

North Korea have failed to find the net once and conceded 10 times in a pair of performances that will not please Pyongyang. Japan will take on either Saudi Arabia or Qatar after qualifying for the knockout stage for the eighth consecutive time. In the day's late kickoff, Eldor Shomurodov bagged a first-half brace as Uzbekistan crushed Turkmenistan 4-0 in a clash of former Soviet republics to progress and go top of Group F ahead of Japan on goal difference. — AFP

Man Utd win, Everton ride luck for 2-0 victory

TOTTENHAM: Tottenham Hotspur's Premier League title ambitions suffered a major blow as Marcus Rashford's goal gave Manchester United a 1-0 victory at Wembley yesterday to maintain caretaker manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's perfect start.

Rashford beat Tottenham keeper Hugo Lloris from a tight angle in the 44th minute as rejuvenated United claimed a sixth win from six matches since former striker Solskjaer stepped in following the sacking of Jose Mourinho.

United's Spanish keeper David De Gea produced a series of superb saves to deny Dele Alli, Harry Kane and Toby Alderweireld after the break as United hung on for a first away league win against Tottenham since 2012.

Solskjaer's side remained in sixth spot but are now level on 41 points with Arsenal while Tottenham have 48 points in third place, nine behind leaders Liverpool and two behind champions Manchester City who face Wolverhampton Wanderers on Monday.

In a wide-open first half full of attacking football, Kane had a goal disallowed for the hosts but United, with Jesse Lingard, Anthony Martial and Rashford forming a rapid attacking trio, were dangerous every time they broke forward.

The first goal always looked like being vital and it arrived for United just before the break when Rashford made ground down the right and with no other option he drove into area and fired a shot that Lloris got a firm hand to but could not keep out of the net.

Lloris redeemed himself with two saves from Paul Pogba early in the second half but after that it was all about the excellence of De Gea as Spurs, roared on by the majority of the 80,000 Wembley crowd, desperately sought an equaliser. First he saved Kane's close-range header, then blocked Alli's shot with his legs after the midfielder went through one-on-one, before making a stunning reaction save to deny Toby Alderweireld's near-post flick. Kane's free kick was saved acrobatically by De Gea and with five minutes remaining he saw another goalbound effort cannon off the shins of the Spaniard.

Earlier, Everton avoided a third consecutive Premier League home defeat as Kurt Zouma's header and a late goal by Dominic Calvert-Lewin earned them a flattering 2-0 victory against Bournemouth at a rainy Goodison Park yesterday.

There were grumbings of discontent from the home fans as Everton were outplayed

before the break but Marco Silva's side improved in the second half to move back into the top half of the table.

Eddie Howe's eye-catching Bournemouth side dominated the opening 25 minutes and should have been ahead with young Welsh striker David Brooks a thorn in the Everton defence. Brooks struck a shot against the base of the post in the 14th minute after being played in by Junior Stanislas while Stanislas himself nearly embarrassed England keeper Jordan Pickford with a free kick.

Bournemouth also had two penalty shouts ignored before Everton gradually roused themselves, with defender Michael Keane heading against the crossbar shortly before half-time. The hosts took the lead with only their second effort on target in the 61st minute. Lucas Digne did well to keep a ball in play and his hoisted cross was headed home powerfully by defender Zouma for his first Everton goal since joining on loan from Chelsea.

Everton's second in stoppage time, struck home excellently by Calvert-Lewin after great work by Ademola Lookman, was harsh on Bournemouth who will wonder how they went home unrewarded. Bournemouth, who had 16 goal attempts, remained in 12th spot with 27 points from 22 games, nine points above the bottom three while Everton moved into 10th spot on 30 points. —Reuters



LONDON: Manchester United's Swedish defender Victor Lindelof (2nd R) vies with Tottenham Hotspur's English defender Kieran Trippier (L) during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United at Wembley Stadium in London, yesterday. — AFP