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Pompeo postpones Kuwait visit to attend family funeral

Top US envoy talks Khashoggi, Yemen, Iran, GCC rift with Saudis, then heads to Oman

KUWAIT/RIYADH: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo cut short his Middle East tour yesterday and headed home early to attend a family funeral instead of travelling on to Kuwait. "Secretary Pompeo will return to the United States after his meetings in Muscat, Oman. This curtailment of travel is required so that the Pompeo family may attend a family funeral," US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman said in a statement.

"The secretary very much looks forward to visiting Kuwait to conduct the United States-Kuwait Strategic Dialogue with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah in the near future. Secretary Pompeo places a high priority on our strategic dialogue, which commits the United States and Kuwait to increased cooperation in the areas of greatest practical benefit to our governments and our peoples," the statement added.

During his visit to Saudi Arabia yesterday, Pompeo faced a tough balancing act as he pressed the Saudi crown prince over critic Jamal Khashoggi's murder while shoring up strategic ties with Riyadh. The top US diplomat, on an extensive Middle East tour, held talks with King Salman and his son Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, which also focused on the conflict in Yemen and countering threats from Iran.

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(Left) US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meets Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz at the Royal Court in Riyadh yesterday. (Right) Pompeo meets Sultan of Oman Qaboos bin Said at the Beit Al Baraka Royal Palace in Muscat yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

Azhar imam urges rethink

CAIRO: Egypt's top Muslim cleric Ahmed Al-Tayeb urged Al-Azhar University yesterday to reconsider the expulsion of a female student who was filmed hugging a male colleague. Tayeb, the grand imam of Al-Azhar, Egypt's most prestigious seat of Sunni Islamic learning, called on the university's disciplinary board to "reconsider the punishment". He cited the student's young age and her educational future, although said her conduct outside campus was "unacceptable" and unbecoming for "religious and oriental traditions". Hany Helal, spokesman for Mansoura University, where the man filmed is a student, said the disciplinary board "decided to expel the student for two years" although he can appeal the decision. — AFP

NSHR denounces 'inciting' women

RIYADH: An organization backed by Saudi Arabia accused several foreign countries of inciting young women to reject their families, the first public comments from Riyadh since a woman claiming domestic abuse was granted asylum in Canada. In a statement late on Sunday, the head of the National Society for Human Rights (NSHR) Mufleh Al-Qahtani accused unspecified countries and international organizations of pursuing political agendas and "pushing (women) ultimately to be lost and maybe to fall into the arms of brokers and human traffickers". NSHR "was surprised by some countries' incitement of some Saudi female delinquents to rebel against the values of their families and push them out of the country and seek to receive them under the pretext of granting them asylum," Qahtani said. — Reuters

Turkey vows not to be intimidated by Trump threats

ANKARA: Turkey yesterday vowed it would not be intimidated by US President Donald Trump's threats of economic devastation if Ankara attacks Kurdish forces as American troops withdraw. Trump's threat came after Ankara repeatedly threatened a new cross-border operation against the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), which have been working closely with the United States in the war on Islamic State (IS) extremists. US support for the YPG has been a major source of tension between the NATO allies.

"We have said repeatedly we are not scared of and will not be intimidated by any threats," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said, adding: "Economic threats against Turkey will get nowhere." Trump on Sunday warned the US would "devastate Turkey economically if they hit Kurds". While there have been tensions over American training of the YPG under the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) alliance, there appeared to be some improvement on the issue after Trump said last month 2,000 American troops would withdraw from Syria.

Ankara welcomed the pullout decision after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told Trump in a phone call that Turkey could finish off the last remnants of IS. Trump had also pushed for the creation of a 30-km "safe zone". US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo yesterday said talks were under way on Washington's proposal to establish the zone in flashpoint border areas of northeastern Syria. "We want to make sure that the folks who fought with us to down the (Islamic State group) have security... and also that terrorists acting out of Syria aren't able to attack Turkey," Pompeo said in Riyadh. Cavusoglu earlier said that Turkey was "not against" a "security zone" in Syria, during a press conference in Ankara.

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Jordan king visits Iraq for first time in decade

BAGHDAD: Jordanian King Abdullah II met Iraq's president and prime minister in Baghdad yesterday, in the monarch's first trip to Iraq in more than a decade. It is the latest in a string of top-level visits to Iraq in recent weeks, which kicked off with a surprise Christmas trip by US President Donald Trump. King Abdullah met separately with Iraqi President Barham Saleh, who had travelled to Jordan in November, and Prime Minister Adel Abdel-Mahdi, their press offices said. They said Jordan and Iraq were looking to strength bilateral ties but did not give additional details.

Abdullah's last trip to Iraq was in 2008, when he became the first Arab leader to visit Baghdad after strongman Saddam Hussein was toppled by the US-led invasion in 2003. The two countries share a 179-km border, and Jordan is a major importer of Iraqi crude oil.

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BAGHDAD: Children wave Iraqi and Jordanian national flags as Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel Mahdi (left) welcomes Jordan's King Abdullah II yesterday. — AFP

Qatar rejects ties with Assad; won't reopen embassy

DOHA: Qatar's foreign minister ruled out yesterday the possibility of reopening an embassy in Damascus, in line with some other Gulf countries, calling Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad a war criminal. "Normalization (of relations) with the Syrian regime at this stage is the normalization of a person involved in war crimes, and this should not be acceptable," Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani said at a Doha press conference. He said the reasons why Assad - who was elected unopposed in 2000 and has stayed in power during nearly eight years of civil war - was excluded from the international community are still in place.

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15 killed in Iran plane crash; Amir sends condolences

TEHRAN: A military cargo plane overshot a runway, crashed and caught fire during a botched landing near the Iranian capital Tehran, killing 15 people, the army said yesterday. The plane was carrying meat from Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan when it crashed near the capital Tehran, an army spokesman told state TV, adding that only the flight engineer survived. "The plane had 16 passengers, 14 of whom were the army crew and two were civilians; 15 were martyred," spokesman Amir Taghikhani said. "One, the flight engineer, was injured and is currently in hospital."

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed his deepest sympathies yesterday over the victims of the crash.

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TEHRAN: People gather amid the debris of a Boeing 707 cargo plane that crashed into a residential complex yesterday.— AFP

Int'l parliamentary body chief hails Kuwait's 'exemplary' leadership

London Mayor: Depth of relations with Kuwait exceeds 'political situation'

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Gabriela Cuevas Barron. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Lord Mayor of London Peter Estlin.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memento from Lord Mayor of London Peter Estlin.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the Lebanese Information Minister Milhim Riyashi.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Gabriela Cuevas Barron.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, accompanied with President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union Gabriela Cuevas Barron, who is visiting the country. After meeting His Highness the Amir, Barron said it was important to recognize the leadership that Kuwait is having. "First in terms with dialogue with all the region, Kuwait is a platform to speak for the humanitarian agenda, for looking for a common purpose in the region and also looking for those people who are really suffering from violence, from war and from conflicts," she noted. "His Highness's leadership and the presence now of Kuwait in the Security Council of the United Nations is a very important voice. It is a voice that is able to build bridges, able to build concusses and able to look for assistance and aid to refugees and the people who are really struggling. I believe that we should hear more about Kuwaiti proposals and of course it's a huge honor for me as a president of the Inter-Parliamentary Union to have this meeting with His Highness." The reception was attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received the visiting IPU Chief and her accompanying delegation. MP Safaa Abdulrahman Al-Hashem, the head of the accompanying honorary mission, and MP Rakan Yousef Al-Nisf attended the meeting.

Amir receives IPU President, Lord Mayor of London

Lord Mayor of London

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf, accompanied with the visiting Lord Mayor of London Peter Estlin. "I've just had a very enjoyable meeting with His Highness, where we both extended the warmth of friendship that we enjoyed for the last 120 years and set the the foundation for the next 120 years, so a very enjoyable meeting," noted Estlin after the reception. "We touched very briefly on the political situation of Brexit, but both agreed that the depth of our relationship is one that will transcend any political situation like Brexit and very much focused on the opportunities for our countries to invest in each other and through each other to develop our economies around the world, so very exciting and very enjoyable to have the meeting," he pointed out. His Highness the Amir also received the visiting Lebanese Information Minister Milhim Riyashi. He was escorted by Information Minister and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri.

In other news, His Highness the Amir is set to patronize and attend Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) international conference, which takes place today at Bayan Palace theater at 10:30 am. — KUNA

Kuwait marks 13th anniversary of 'Amir of Hearts' passing

The late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

The late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah

The late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah attends a graduation of Kuwait University students.

KUWAIT: Kuwait marks the 13th anniversary of its late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's death today. All Kuwaitis have been recalling the deeds and achievements by the 'Amir of Hearts' who spent his life serving his country and people. Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who was born in 1926 in Kuwait and died on January 15, 2006 after being in power for 29 years, was the country's 13th ruler, and the third Amir in the state's constitutional era, which began with signing the Constitution on November 11, 1962, by the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

Since he came to power in 1977, the late Amir Sheikh Jaber led the country to development and progress in all domains and on all levels, and enhanced its status on political, economic and charitable arenas across the globe. The late Amir was so keen to establish balanced bilateral relations with the world; his wise leadership helped Kuwait overcome challenges and address crises it faced, mainly in the 1980s and 1990s of the last century. During his tenure, Kuwait has remarkably witnessed an urban renaissance and development in all sectors and general utilities, with a successive pace. He paid much attention to the Kuwaiti youth. This was manifested in 1992, when the Public Authority for Youth and Sports was founded and entrusted with caring for the affairs of Kuwaiti young people and promoting their physical and mental capabilities.

On the plight of the Iraqi invasion 1990, Sheikh Jaber's wisdom and experience have managed to mobilize big support by sisterly and friendly countries to drive the Iraqi troops out of the country and liberate the entire homeland. Due to his wisdom and the support of Kuwaitis, the State of Kuwait resumed the renaissance march, achievements and reconstruction, and removed all traces of the Iraqi invasion. He paid much attention to the martyrs' children through establishing the Martyrs Bureau on June 19, 1991. He also spared no efforts on the release of Kuwaitis held by the Iraqi regime. He cared about Kuwaiti women, and issued in 1999 a decree giving women citizens' full political rights. Among the prominent institutions established during Sheikh Jaber's reign were the Public Authority for Social Insurance to secure dignified living conditions for the elderly, and the Reserve Fund for Future Generations, which benefited the Kuwaiti people during the Iraqi invasion.

Establishing the GCC

On the political level, the late Amir launched several initiatives on Gulf, Arab and international levels, and suggested the idea of establishing the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which mirrored his keenness on the joint cohesion and common destiny to face foreign challenges and political blocs. In the 1996 GCC Doha Summit, Sheikh Jaber suggested the formation of a 30-member consultative council in order to provide proposals to the GCC leaders to promote the process of decision-making. The late Amir also prioritized Muslim and Arab issues as he proposed the establishment of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development in 1961. He chaired the board of directors of this institution, which offered financial support to development efforts not only in the Arab world but in many others. He also dropped interest of debts due on poor countries.

The late Amir was keen on taking part in several conferences and meetings across the globe, and paid many official visits to enhance Kuwait's status globally. In a poll conducted by a London-based media institution in 1995, Sheikh Jaber was chosen as the humanitarian personality of the year among five million Arabs, in recognition of his charitable actions and financial support for many global institutions. 'The Amir of Hearts' was engraved in all people's minds and hearts; as several places were named after him like Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital, Jaber Al-Ahmad Armed Forces Hospital, Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, Jaber Al-Ahmad City, Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway and others. Furthermore, many places in several countries were named after him, in recognition of his status in the hearts of many people not only in Kuwait but also in many Arab and Muslim states.

Late Amir's wisdom

Chairman and Director General of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij Al-Ibrahim Al-Sabah affirmed the march of the 'Amir of Hearts.' On the 13th anniversary of his passing, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij said that the late Amir was one of the most prominent founders of the State of Kuwait, as he contributed to building the modern state and establishing its foundations and consolidating its institutions since the early 1950s. During his ruling, Sheikh Jaber paid more attention to concerns of his people and the interests of his country, achieved security and stability of Kuwait, maintained its sovereignty and unity and strengthened its position in the world through the establishment of strong diplomatic relations with various countries.

History will remember with pride and appreciation that Kuwait got a high position among other world countries and got a strong and influential presence in international forums and global events during the rule of the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad, Sheikh Mubarak explained. The late Amir kept Kuwait safe with his wisdom and ability to overcome tribulations despite all challenges and difficulties experienced by the region during his reign and was keen to keep it away from the dangers and conflicts surrounding it, he noted.

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij remembered the huge efforts made by late Sheikh Jaber with late father Amir Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during the Iraqi Invasion and how they managed to mobilize the world with the largest international coalition to expel the occupation forces and to liberate and reconstruct Kuwait. He pointed out that this coalition came as a result of Kuwait's wise policy and its close and balanced relations with various brotherly and friendly countries, and its efforts to achieve peace and stability in the world. He referred to the unique initiatives launched by the late Amir and had a great global impact, such as the establishment of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, which provided great economic assistance to many countries, the idea of establishing the Gulf Cooperation Council and its remarkable initiative to cancel the debts of poor countries. He also referred to Sheikh Jaber's initiatives to establish a reserve fund for future generations, Zakat House, Kuwait Finance House and other immortal historical achievements that reflect his deep insight and wisdom.

Sheikh Mubarak Al-Duaij stressed that the late Amir has carried out the ambitions of Kuwaiti people since he started his political career, and throughout his life he exerted the effort and time to realize the dreams and hopes of his people, whom he loved sincerely until the last moments of his life. The 'Amir of Hearts' passed away on January 15, 2006. — KUNA

$4.4 billion mutual trade between Kuwait, UK in 2018: London Mayor

Kuwait succeeded in luring foreign investments: Roudhan

KUWAIT: Lord Mayor of London, global ambassador for the UK's financial and professional services industry, Peter Estlin said yesterday that the total worth of mutual investments between Kuwait and UK reached about $4.4 billion in 2018. The amount of investments reached about GBP 3.5 billion, with in an increase of eight percent since 2017.

"Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) has been investing in the UK since 1952 and it is considered one of the oldest leading investment funds in the world," said the Mayor during a meeting held in the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA). The Mayor affirmed that Brexit does not affect UK's leading financial role because of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) supported by the British rules, in addition to his country's commitment to training and education provided by the best universities in the world.

"We do not look at Brexit as a challenge, we look at it as an opportunity that gives us stronger collaborations with people outside Europe, such as Kuwait," the Mayor continued. "London is the biggest international center in financial and banking technology considering the amount of workers that reached 45,000 with an income estimated GBP 6.6 billion about $8.4 billion," the Mayor added.

Foreign investments

In other news, Minister of Commerce and Industry and the Minister of State for Services Khaled Al-Roudhan yesterday affirmed significance of the achievements in the Kuwaiti economy, recoded over the past two years, namely successful attraction of foreign investments. Roudhan, speaking at the 'second Kuwaiti-American economic forum,' has mentioned some of the

Mayor downplays Brexit's effect

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry and the Minister of State for Services Khaled Al-Roudhan speaks at the 'second Kuwaiti-American economic forum' yesterday. — KUNA

concrete steps at this level; that foreign investors have been allowed to possess and trade in stocks of Kuwaiti banks, that Kuwait has improved its ranking in the international competition in 2018 and Boursa Kuwait has been uplifted to the level of an emerging market.

Meanwhile, Ali Al-Ghanim, Chairman of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said in a statement following the forum session that the chamber has been seeking to elevate its bonds with many states at the economic levels-namely the ties with the United States of America. The relations between the United States have significantly improved, particularly following the visit by His Highness the Amir to Washington in 2017, minister Roudhan added.

Earlier, the chamber deputy chairman, Abdulwahab Al-Wazzan, said during the session that the US is the second commercial partner for Kuwait, with trade exchanges between the two countries estimated at $7 billion. The US lured more than half of the Kuwaiti public investments, he said, adding that both the private and public Kuwaiti businesses in America are valued at $600 billion. — KUNA

Assembly office moves to accelerate legislation

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Assembly speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday chaired an extended meeting for the assembly office to discuss ways to accelerate the pace of approving legislation that has been slow. Ghanem said that 26 lawmakers representing heads and rapporteurs of various assembly panels debated the issue, adding that the pace of legislation has been below ambitions. He said the meeting agreed to form a five-member committee that will coordinate between the speaker and heads of various panels who will be encouraged to submit their priority issues.

Ghanem said based on the decision, the assembly will start approving legislation in February and March and if the experiment succeeds, it will be adopted on permanent basis. Head of the financial and economic affairs committee MP Salah Khorshid said the new panel will follow up with committees' reports and place them on the assembly agenda for debate.

In the meantime, rapporteur of the legal and legislative committee MP Khalil Abul said the panel has again delayed its final decision on the legality of a grilling filed against the prime minister. Abul said the delay this time came in order for the opinions of the assembly constitutional experts to arrive.

KUWAIT: Lawmakers meet to discuss ways to accelerate the pace of approving legislation. — KUNA

About two months ago, opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri filed to grill the prime minister holding him responsible for the failure of the government to deal with the devastating effects of unprecedented heavy torrential rain.

Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah charged that the grilling violated the constitution and demanded that it be referred to the assembly's legal committee for its opinion. The committee has so far held several meetings with constitutional experts but MP Muwaizri refused to attend its deliberations because he said its work was against the law.

Meanwhile, the assembly public funds protection committee yesterday began debating charges that the public authority for agricultural affairs has distributed state-owned agricultural plots and stables for breeding animals to fake companies. The charges say that such companies were established through forged documents.

Panel reviews 2019-2020 budget

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The parliament's budgets and final statements committee yesterday held a meeting to review the new state's budget of the new fiscal year (2019-2020), the final statement of the awqaf secretariat general and the related State Audit Bureau and auditors' remarks. The committee's chairman MP Adnan Abdulsamad said the meeting was also attended by representatives from the finance ministry, the awqaf secretariat general, the State Audit Bureau and Civil Service Commission (CSC). Abdulsamad added that the finance ministry reviewed the proposed oil price used in the budget and expected payroll increases, adding that the committee was not satisfied with the review, which excluded the ministry's maximum proposed revenues and expenses and some other data included in the budget. Abdulsamad noted that the finance ministry saw the proposals made by government bodies were too exaggerated and far from following instructions concerning sustainability and controlling expenditure.

Solving problems

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri held several meetings with Ministry of Public Works assistant undersecretaries to discuss various problems facing projects executed in their respective sectors and work on resolving them, said informed sources, noting that the problems discussed included accelerating work pace of various projects, gravel on various roads and delayed road projects.

New KU branch

Kuwait University's (KU) supreme council approved using the land allocated to it in Sabah Al-Ahmad City as a new branch for KU until the law of government universities is passed, well-informed sources said. The sources added that the government plans to build more universities to expand university education, adding that more government universities will be soon launched after KU moves in the Shadadiya campus, using its current campuses for a new university and building a third one in Sabah Al-Ahmad. The sources said some council members expressed concerns about building a new university in Sabah Al-Ahmad because the allocated land is located in a pathway where torrents occur.

Power grid upgrade

The Ministry of Electricity and Water will soon launch the largest study ever conducted in two decades to determine the power grid requirements until 2035, said informed sources, noting that the study will be done by a specialized international consultancy firm. The sources added that Central Agency for Public Tenders has already awarded the consultancy contract with the aim of providing the needed infrastructure to expand the power grid and meet the growing demand for electricity resulting from building new cities and population growth. The sources also explained that this comes within a strategy to achieve the New Kuwait 2035 vision all ministries are working on through developmental projects. Separately, the Ministry of Public Works extended the deadline to file bids for a consultancy contract for the second phase of Kuwait International Airport project till Feb 6, 2019 instead of the previous date of Nov 25, 2018, which had also been extended to Jan 8, 2019. Notably, the companies invited to file bids include CH2M (USA), EGIS (France), Hill International (USA), ENECO (Spain), Louis Berger (USA), Parsons (USA), NC-Lavalin (Canada) and Turner & Townsend (USA). The contract includes providing consultancy for T2, which is currently under construction.

Molded copper exports banned to fight thefts

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan yesterday issued a ministerial resolution banning the export of molded copper without written approval from the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW), said informed sources, noting that the decision was made upon a request from MEW. The step comes in a bid to fight theft of high voltage cables which thieves steal from power transformers, extract copper from inside then export that copper as scrap metal.

Social aid

Ministry of Social Affairs' acting undersecretary Hana Al-Hajery said the ministry recently finished automating 100 percent of all aid given in 2018 in a bid to reduce the burden of citizens receiving such aid, adding that automation included interconnection with 15 government bodies pending connecting with others by the end of the year. Hajery added that this was one of the ministry's achievements in 2018, in addition to automating the cooperation sector and co-ops' elections, electronic barcoding and entrepreneurs' complaints. Hajery said automating the cooperation sector helped increase sales to KD 900 million and reduce the value of unsold goods from KD 5.2 million to only KD 1.6 million.

Kuwait-India talks focus on aviation cooperation

NEW DELHI: India and Kuwait yesterday held bilateral talks in India's financial capital Mumbai to enhance cooperation in the field of civil aviation and air transport. During the talks, the Kuwaiti delegation was headed by President of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, while the Indian side was represented by Union Minister of Commerce, Industry and Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhu. In the presence of Kuwait's Ambassador to India Jassim Al-Najim and senior Kuwaiti officials, a number of issues of mutual concern in the field of civil aviation and air transport were discussed. The meeting also underlined the importance of more dialogue between technical teams from both sides to enhance cooperation, increase flights and deepen coordination among airlines from both nations. Kuwaiti National Carrier, Kuwait Airways, was part of the Gulf state's delegation, which included Chief Executive Officer Kamel Al-Awadhi along with Jazeera Airways CEO Rohit Ramachandran and Deputy Director General for Aviation Safety and Air Transport Affairs Engineer Emad Al-Jlewi. The meeting aims to boost cooperation with the Indian authorities in the field of civil aviation, according to Al-Jlewi. — KUNA

NEW DELHI: Kuwaiti and Indian officials meet in Mumbai yesterday. — KUNA

News in brief

310 news websites licensed

KUWAIT: Acting Information Ministry Undersecretary Mohammad Al-Awash asked the municipality to divide the three lots allocated for use by non-daily newspapers, magazines, satellite channels and information services to six equal lots of 1,500 sq m each. Awash asked for allocating new lots to the information ministry so that they could be distributed to the largest number of beneficiaries. An informed source said the information ministry is contemplating granting lots to Kuwaiti satellite channels according to rules to be determined later. The source said the electronic media law commits the information ministry to provide care and support to news websites, but this does not mean granting them land. He said the number of licensed news websites is 310, so the ministry is working on allocating premises for a news websites union with offices for them. — Al-Qabas

Electronic crimes dropped

KUWAIT: Informed sources said the percentage of electronic crimes the prosecution investigated in 2018 dropped to nearly 50 percent from 2017, as the information prosecution that investigates such crimes registered 1,250 cases last year out of 1,500 it received. The sources said the drop of this type of crime last year to 1,250, during which 2,400 IT cases were registered out of 2,700, is due to implementing laws pertaining these crimes. She added the drop is also due to the increased legal awareness by individuals about the danger of crimes committed on various social media, in addition to the issuance of many convictions during the past years. She said the surprise in the statistics was the drop of crimes committed by newspapers and satellite channels after registering nearly 250 complaints against papers and violation of copyright and the electronic transactions law, which indicates that crimes are being committed on social media instead of papers. — Al-Jarida

5.9 percent divorce rate

KUWAIT: A study by the Justice Ministry on marriage and divorce rates during the years 2007-2017 showed the percentage of divorce between Kuwaitis in the first year of marriage reached 5.9 percent in the 10 years included in the study. Justice Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Information Technology Department and Statistics Heba Al-Abeljalil expected the number of divorce cases to reach 8,145 in 2022. She said that among the 100,017 marriages between citizens from 2007 until 2017, 5,926 divorces occurred in the same year of marriage. About the most important reasons for divorce, Abdeljalil said the study found several causes and factors, most importantly the personal affairs law 51/1984, which is one of the most important reasons for divorce, as it encourages the woman to ask for divorce because she would get alimony, car, maid, driver and residence. — Al-Anbaa

Rumors denied

KUWAIT: Commenting on social media warnings not to photograph environmental law violators, the interior ministry's relations and security information denied the claims attributed to environmental police. It said the claim is false and has nothing to do with environmental police, adding that item 14 of the procedures law says that "reporting is the duty of whoever sees the act and photographs the event on condition of not defaming anyone", and asked social media users not to publish any statement from security sectors without referring to official sources. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun

Dogs bite two at border

KUWAIT: Paramedics carried out first aid on two Bahraini women who were bitten by dogs at Abdaly border outlet. One of them suffered superficial wounds and scratches, and both refused to lodge a case. The two women arrived in a bus from Iraq and were attacked on their way to the toilet. An informed source said the dogs are fed by an employee despite complaints by customs officers to remove from there. — Al-Rai

Policeman questioned

KUWAIT: A female citizen accused a police colonel of beating her inside a police patrol after she was arrested on a debt charge. The woman, after paying the due amount, was released. She then went to Zour police station and told police that while on her way from the chalets, she was stopped at a checkpoint and was taken to a patrol car, where an argument with a colonel took place. "He verbally insulted me and beat me, causing injuries as stated in a medical report," she said. Investigations are ongoing. — Al-Rai

Photo of the Day

KUWAIT: A colorful sunset over Kuwait. — Photo by Jaber Abdulkhaleq (KUNA)

In Loving memory of

Fouad Philip Bardawil

Founder of Al-Bahar & Bardawil Specialities

Who passed away on 20th December 2018 and was laid to rest in Lebanon on 28 December 2018. He is survived by his wife Mrs. Madeleine Esber and his children Philip, Sumaya, Albert and Marwan.

A condolence reception will be held by his family members, partners, colleagues and friends on Thursday 17 January 2019 from 16:00 to 20:00 at JW Marriott Hotel, Al Thuraya Ballroom, 16th floor, Salhia, Kuwait City

Skydivers shatter record in story of hardship, triumph

KUWAIT: Through sheer will and an unflinching determination to succeed, a trio of Kuwaiti Army officers have broken a Guinness skydiving world record for leaping 13,000 feet while carrying aloft a 63-square meter Kuwaiti flag. Kuwaiti lieutenant colonels Fahad Al-Yaqoub, Salem Al-Mell and Nasser Al-Sabah have set a skydiving world record through this notable achievement, according to Guinness judges. What started as an ambitious idea morphed into a huge accomplishment, an elated Al-Mell said yesterday, saying the triumvirate were not fazed by the hardships they encountered. The accolade, he explained, is a testament to what Kuwaiti youngsters are capable of, saying he derived a sense of gratification from seeing the Kuwaiti flag fluttering proudly in the blue sky. Echoing his compatriot's sentiments, Al-Yaqoub said breaking a Guinness world record is no easy feat, citing the adversity the officers have had to withstand in an effort to turn their dreams into reality.

"This world-class achievement would not have been remotely possible without the support of the Kuwaiti leadership and people," he emphasized. With a little time to let their accomplishment sink in, Al-Sabah revealed that the officers were inundated with congratulations messages from Kuwait's political leaders, chief among them Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Officials from across Kuwait's political spectrum were ecstatic over the "unprecedented achievement," commending the officers for making all Kuwaitis proud, he added. — KUNA

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Army officers hold the Kuwaiti flag during their record-breaking skydive. — KUNA photos

The Kuwaiti Army officers pose with their Guinness World Record certificate.

Qurain Cultural Symposiums address society issues

KUWAIT: Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Ali Al-Youha said yesterday that Al-Qurain Cultural Festival seminars tackles many social issues and enriches the cultural arena. Youha made his remarks in his speech at the opening of the main symposium accompanying the 25th Qurain Cultural Festival entitled 'New Media and Cultural Crisis.'

He said that NCCAL is proud of this festival, which represents a three-week cultural event with intensive cultural program to promote creativity. He pointed out that the success of the festival comes from the booming social and political situation in Kuwait, under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, coordinator of the seminar, Professor of Political Sociology at Kuwait University Dr Mohammed Al-Rumaihi said in a similar speech that the seminar focused on the rapid media development in societies and its negative and positive impacts. The 25th Al-Qurain Cultural Festival kicked off on January 8 and will proceed until 25th of the month, and includes theatrical performances, movies, concerts, plastic exhibitions and artistic workshops. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Secretary General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) Ali Al-Youha speaks during the symposium. — KUNA

Private sector leads development in New Kuwait vision: Minister

8th edition of Horeca Kuwait underway

KUWAIT: A group photo of officials, guests and participants following the inauguration of the 8th edition of Horeca Kuwait yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Participating chefs pose for a group photo.

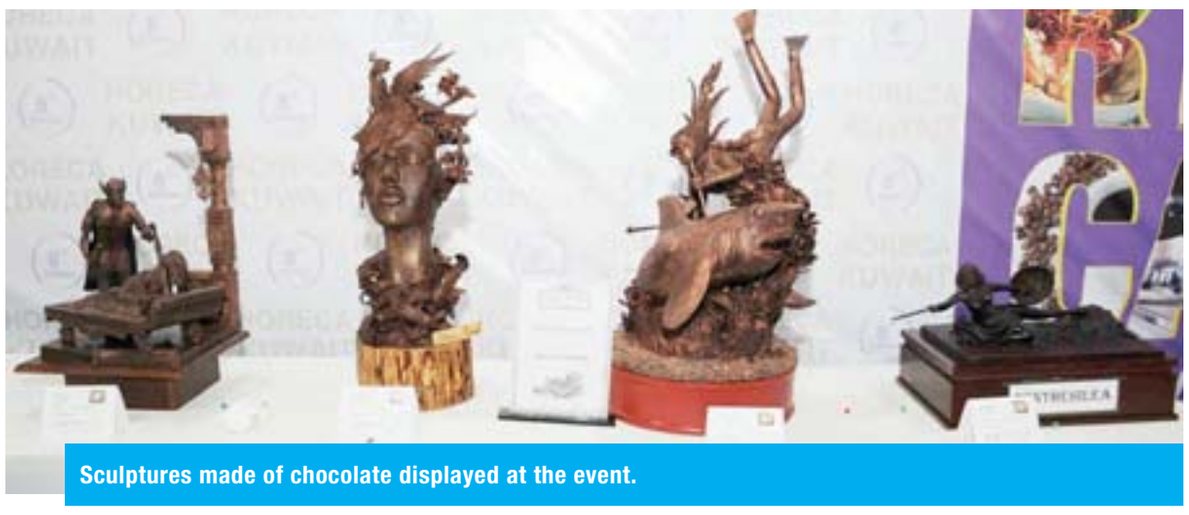
By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Over 100 companies from the hospitality and food industry are participating in 8th edition of Horeca Kuwait, being held from Jan 14 to 16, 2019 at the Kuwait International Fairgrounds. The event includes various activities and competitions. "This annual exhibition reflects the New Kuwait vision 2035 that aims to turn Kuwait into an international financial and commercial center, where the private sector leads development. Sponsoring this event in which many small enterprises are participating is part of the development plan. Many countries depend on small and medium businesses for alternative sources of income for the national budget," said State Minister for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel during the opening of the exhibition yesterday.

"This exhibition presents an interactive platform for various sectors including hospitality, food industries, hotels, resorts, restaurants and many others. This should bring new work opportunities for the national manpower, and will also improve the work environment," she added. "The government always supports national products and particularly the industrial sector. Food industries here are very important for strategic food security, so the government supports it, as well as the development of the hospitality sector. This needs cooperation with the education sector to meet the needs of the labor market," explained Aqeel.

Nabila Al-Anjeri, Head of the Organizing Committee of Horeca, highlighted the increasing success of this event. "The number of participants this year is more than double of the number in the first edition. The sectors that are participating in this fair are partners of the development plan of Kuwait. Without the support of the companies and institutions that are participating in Horeca, the plan cannot be realized," she pointed out.

The exhibition is held over an area of 7,000 sq m. Many ambassadors attended the opening ceremony, where over 100 companies are displaying their services and products, which represents a 25 percent growth in the number of companies. A competition accompanying the fair includes various categories - best chocolate design, best sweets, best cake for occasions and best cake for weddings. Other cooking competitions include the best traditional Kuwaiti dish, best Kuwaiti sweets, best steak, best sushi, best sandwich, best preparation for the family, best design on ice and many others. Every day, there will be competitions including more categories, which will be judged by a judging committee from abroad. Various workshops will also be held. The exhibition is open from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm.



Sculptures made of chocolate displayed at the event.

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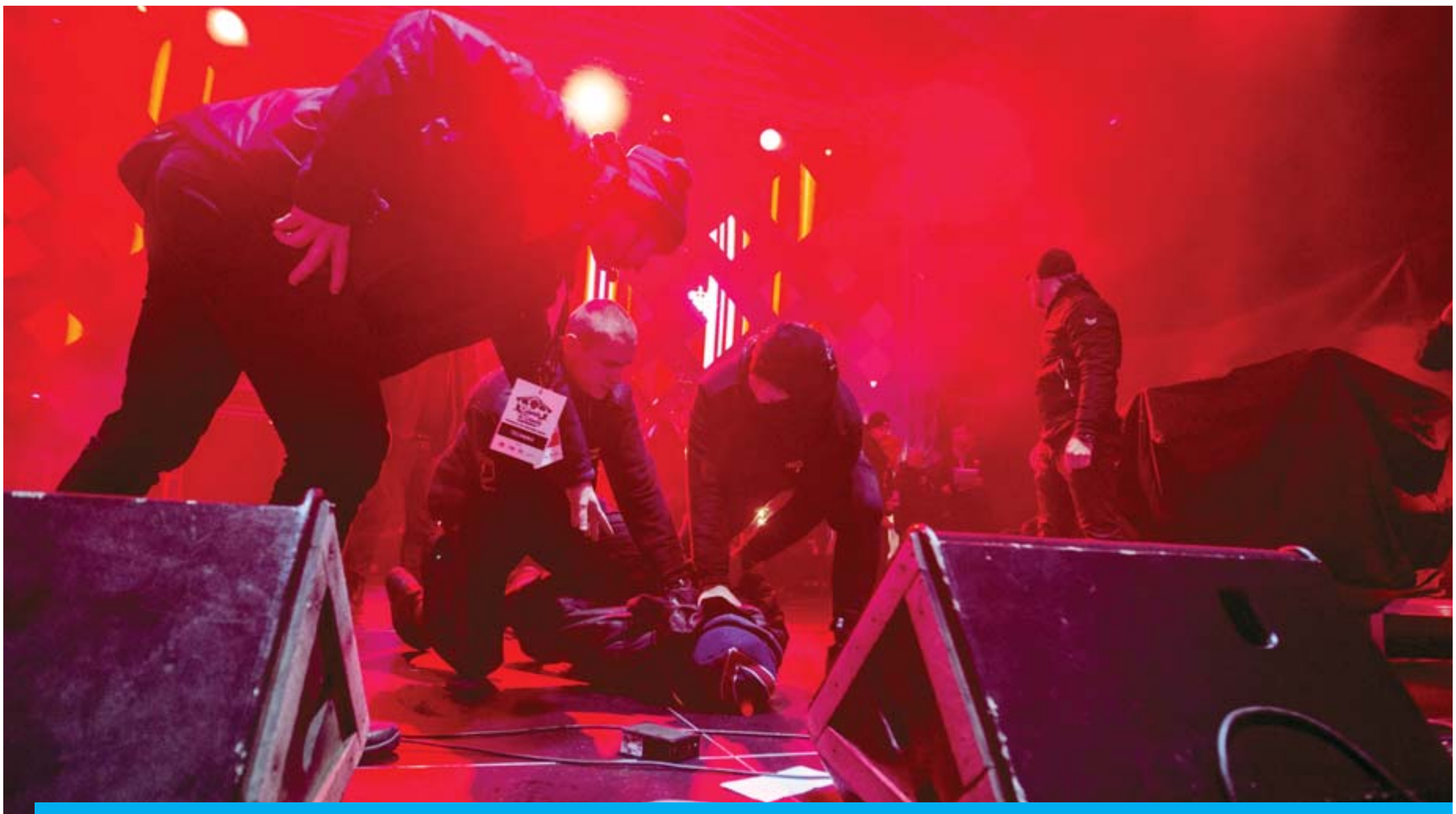


GDANSK: A man is held on the ground by security personnel after he attacked the mayor of Gdansk during a charity event. — AFP

Poland's Mayor of Gdansk dies after stabbing

'There is an atmosphere of aggression in Poland'

WARSAW: Pawel Adamowicz, the liberal mayor of the Polish city of Gdansk, died yesterday of his wounds a day after being stabbed on stage at a charity event. "We couldn't win," Poland's health minister Lukasz Szumowski told reporters via private broadcaster TVN. Adamowicz was attacked while attending the annual Great Orchestra of Christmas charity, a fundraiser where volunteers collect money for medical equipment in hospitals.

Television footage showed a man screaming "Adamowicz is dead!" as he rushed the stage and stabbed the mayor. Speaking on the stage before he was arrested, the man accused the mayor's former party of putting him in prison and said he was tortured. Doctors operated on Adamowicz for five hours after the incident, Poland's state news agency PAP said.

Politicians across the political spectrum in Poland condemned the stabbing, including members of the ruling nationalist Law and Justice Party (PiS), such as Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki and Interior Minister Joachim Brudzinski. Adamowicz was known as an opponent of PiS. "I'm expressing great pain for the tragic death due to the criminal attack on mayor Pawel Adamowicz. We express solidarity with his family," Jaroslaw Kaczynski, the country's ruling party leader was quoted as saying in a tweet from the party spokeswoman.

Polish President Andrzej Duda will meet with political party leaders to organize a march against violence and hatred in the wake of the attack. Adamowicz stood out for his initiatives to encourage migrants to seek refuge in the northern Polish city, and for his support of a protest campaign defending the rule of law in Poland against PiS efforts to increase its control over the judiciary and other bodies. Adamowicz was one of Poland's longest-serving mayors, holding his position in Gdansk since 1998. In the 2018 regional election, he won 65 percent of votes.

'Atmosphere of aggression'

Paramedics resuscitated Adamowicz at the scene before rushing him to the hospital. Gdansk residents flooded blood donation centers following news that Adamowicz had received 15 liters of blood and required more of the rare O Rh- type. "There is an atmosphere of aggression in Poland," a blood donor who identified himself only as Zygmunt told AFP, reflecting on the broader context of the attack. A local police spokesman said the detained man was a 27-year-old who lived in Gdansk, a Baltic coast city with a population of around half a million that was the cradle of Poland's anti-communist Solidarity movement in the 1980s.

In a video recording of the attack posted on YouTube, the suspect was seen seizing the microphone and claiming he had been wrongly jailed by the previous centrist government of the Civic Platform (PO) party and tortured. "That's why Adamowicz dies," he said. One witness told broadcaster TVN that the man appeared "happy with what he had done".

'Solidarity' with mayor

Adamowicz has been mayor of Gdansk for two decades and the opposition Civic Platform, the arch-rival of Poland's governing right-wing Law and Justice (PiS) party, had supported his re-election in 2018 municipal polls. Since winning office in 2015, the PiS has systematically blamed PO politicians for an array of issues, ranging from VAT fraud to the 2010 crash of a Polish presidential jet in Russia that claimed the life of then president Lech Kaczynski, the identical twin brother of PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski.

Sunday's fundraising event was part of a popular annual nationwide drive to purchase medical equipment for children and featured a colourful stage set-up including lights, smoke and pyrotechnics. "Despite our political differences, I stand without question in solidarity with him and those close to him... I pray for his swift recovery," PiS-allied President Andrzej Duda said on Twitter.

'Doubts about his sanity'

The suspect had previously been sentenced to more than five years in prison for four armed attacks on banks in Gdansk, justice officials confirmed. Deputy prosecutor general Krzysztof Sierak said the suspect would be charged with attempted murder and would undergo a psychological assessment due to "doubts about his sanity".

Police were investigating how the attacker had been able to breach security to reach the podium, local police spokeswoman Joanna Kowalik-Kosinska told reporters. "We know that he used an identifier with the inscription 'Press'," she said. "Now we have to establish how it was obtained, was the accreditation in his name and was he really entitled to be there at that time?" This type of attack is rare in Poland. A similar incident occurred in 2010 when an assailant gunned down an aide at a regional PiS office before stabbing another PiS employee, who survived. — AFP

Mohammad Reza: The last king of Iran

PARIS: Iran's last shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who fled his country 40 years ago under pressure from massive street protests, was the "King of Kings" who came to be damned by his own people. His exile with his third wife Farah Diba on January 16, 1979 ended not only his 37-year reign but also 2,500 years of monarchy in Iran, replaced by an Islamic system that remains in charge today. Pahlavi would die from cancer just 18 months later at the age of 60, broken and stateless, having been refused asylum by his former ally, the United States.

'Island of stability'

Tyrannical, arrogant, extravagant but also modernizing, the playboy king started out as a darling of the US which groomed him to act as sentry in the Middle East against the Soviet Union. The "great leadership of the shah" had made Iran "an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world," US president Jimmy Carter declared just a year before the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Pahlavi enjoyed all the trappings of his royal status, believing his escape from two assassination attempts was proof of his divine calling. But gradually his Western-style leanings and reforms, as well as his increasingly autocratic behavior and lavish lifestyle, contributed to his alienation among Iranians and angered the conservative clerics who would help drive the revolution that sent him fleeing.

Replaces forced-out father

Pahlavi was just 21 when he ascended to the throne on September 16, 1941 to replace his father, Reza Khan, who had been forced to abdicate following an invasion by Britain and the Soviet Union which were unhappy at his neutrality in their stand against Germany during World War II. Born on October 26, 1919 and educated in Switzerland, Pahlavi was at first seen as only a pale copy of his military strongman father. It was only 12 years later, following a CIA-backed coup against his popular prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh, who had nationalized the oil industry, that Pahlavi began to amass real power.

Modernizing reforms

Determined to drag Iran rapidly into the modern age, he launched wide-ranging education and healthcare programs, while hosting leaders from around the world in his Napoleonic uniform. He helped drive up global oil prices in the early 1970s, and poured the resulting billions into nuclear power projects and new military hardware. As a pilot himself, much of the money went into the airforce.

By then, the king was married to the glamorous Soraya Esfandiary Bakhtiary, having divorced his Egyptian first wife Fawzieh — sister of King Farouq of Egypt — after she had given birth to a daughter but no sons. They too divorced in 1958 when Princess Soraya failed to produce an heir. Farah Diba, whom he married in 1959, bore him two sons and two daughters.

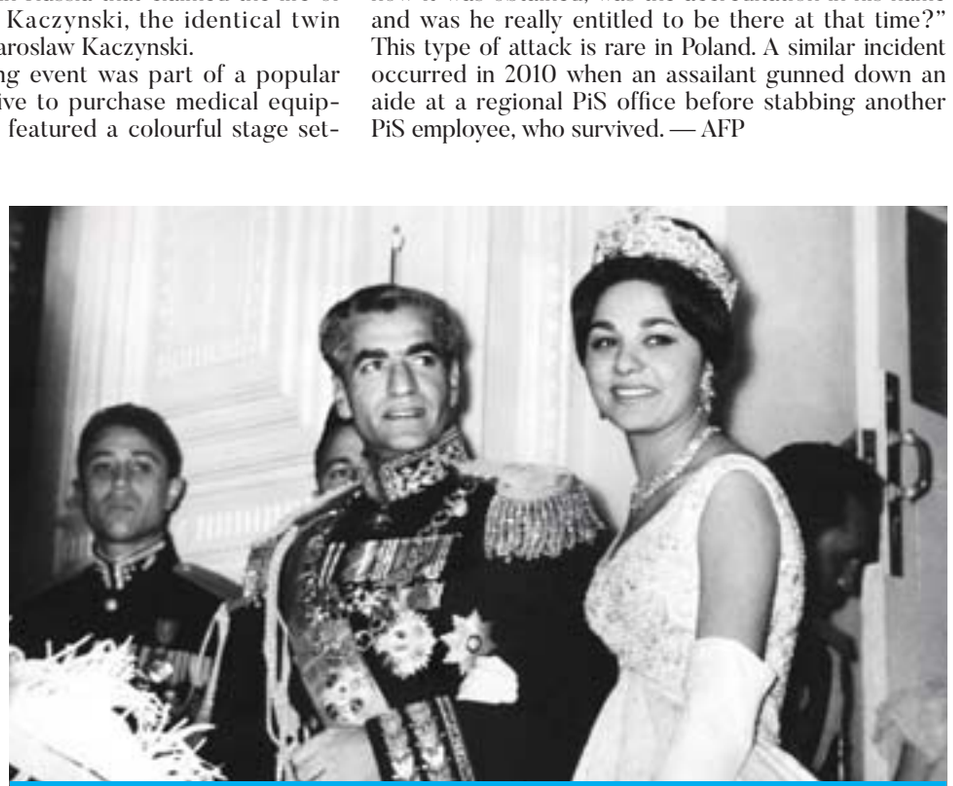
Many trace the beginning of the shah's downfall to 1963 when he implemented the "White Revolution", a large-scale reform program centered on agriculture that alienated the traditional land-owning elite and their clerical allies, who also fiercely opposed the decision to grant women the vote. The following year he exiled Shiite religious leader Ruhollah Khomeini, who railed against the shah's perceived kowtowing to the West.

Khomeini's star grew in exile and he would eventually become the figurehead of the Islamic revolution that ended Pahlavi's reign. Major economic powers queued up in Tehran to take advantage of the oil boom while closing their eyes to the authoritarian drift, as the shah outlawed opposition parties and relied ever-more heavily on his feared secret police, the SAVAK. Angry over US criticism of his human rights record, Pahlavi grew closer to the Soviet Union and China, while also launching an economic partnership with Europe and in particular France.

'King of kings'

At home the billionaire shah's extravagance and the wealth lavished on those in the royal circle drew increasing criticism. He took on the traditional title of "King of Kings" in a lavish coronation ceremony in 1967, having already adopted the specially chosen moniker of "Light of the Aryans" two years earlier. The unprecedented luxury of his party to mark the mythical 2,500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy in 1971 was also vilified by his left-wing and clerical opponents.

The shah's power began to crumble in January 1978 after a daily newspaper was forced to publish an article critical of Khomeini. It sparked demonstrations by theology students that were violently crushed, the memorials to victims leading to a cycle of protests that grew through the year. Unable to comprehend why his people were ungrateful for his modernising efforts, the shah grew increasingly paranoid and reclusive. A final bid to arrest the uprising, by apologizing for his mistakes and lifting many repressive measures, came too late and only fuelled the protests. — AFP



TEHRAN: In this file photo taken on December 21, 1959, the Shah of Iran Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and his wife Farah Diba pose for a photograph during their wedding celebrations. — AFP

India temple trailblazers braving serious threats and family anger

'This was another step forward to reinforce gender equality'

KERALA: Bindu Ammini and Kanakadurga are living on the run since infuriating Hindu traditionalists by entering one of India's holiest temples that for generations banned nearly all women. In black robes and under cover of darkness, the two women evaded a blockade to enter the remote hilltop Sabarimala temple early on January 2, setting off violent protests across southern Kerala state.

Physical threats have since forced the temple trailblazers into hiding, and they have moved to more than 10 different safe houses. But they told AFP in an interview at a secret location that they hope to escape their clandestine existence in the coming days to take more action on Sabarimala, as well as face the ire of their families.

Both were unrepentant over their defiant gesture, which turned them into heroes for women's groups, but hate figures for Hindu hardliners. "I wanted to exercise my right as a devotee, that's all," said Kanakadurga, a 39-year-old government worker who like many people in southern India uses just one name. "This was another step forward to reinforce gender equality." Getting access to the women meant going through a string of intermediaries, switching cars and turning off phones before being taken to a villa where the pair were waiting. They said they would leave their latest bolthole for an 11th safe house the next morning.

Social flashpoint

Sabarimala has become a new flashpoint for Indian women in their battle for social change. The country saw massive protests after the brutal gang rape and murder of a student on a Delhi bus in 2012 and last year female actors, journalists and academics detailed cases of sexual aggression. Bindu and Kanakadurga said they believed only extremists wanted to harm them, adding that most worshippers did not harass them when they went to Sabarimala, where up to five million people trek each year.

"The real devotees caused us absolutely no problems. We stopped for refreshments on the way and all behaved as though we were just another pilgrim," said Bindu, a 40-year-old law professor. "It is only a select few who are politically motivated who always cause trouble for us." After India's Supreme Court ruled on September 28 that all women should be allowed into the temple, the pair linked up on social media. They were among scores of women who tried to reach Sabarimala soon after, but were blocked by thousands of opponents. Kanakadurga said the authorities did not know in advance that they would enter the temple on January 2 and police there "did for us what they would have done for any other devotee".

Mother's anger

"Police made sure we got out safely from the temple. But after that we did not want them involved, so now we are on our own," she said. "But we both hope we can come out of hiding in the next week to resume our normal lives." Their actions have also angered family members. "I have my family's complete support except for my mother, who genuinely believes I should not have broken tradition," said Bindu. "But I know that she is concerned for me, I respect her right to a different opinion."

Kanakadurga did not tell her family in advance that she was going to Sabarimala. "Had I told them, they would surely have done everything to block me. So because I kept them in the dark, there is friction between us, but I think it will only be temporary. "Most people are with me and that gives me courage." Hours after the women walked into Sabarimala, violent protests erupted across Kerala and more than 1,000 people were arrested.

The temple priest ordered purification rites because women of menstruating age had entered the shrine. Bindu is from the Dalit community, a downtrodden caste considered "untouchable" until this was declared illegal under the 1950 constitution. She said she would go to the Supreme Court to seek action against the priest for breaching India's caste laws. "By holding purification rituals after my visit to the temple, what the priest did was practice untouchability," said Bindu. "It is an offence, so Kanaka and I have made up our minds to go to the Supreme Court against the priest."

KERALA: In this photo taken on January 11, 2019, Bindu Ammini (R) and Kanakadurga (L), the two Indian women who entered the Sabarimala Ayyapa temple, pose for photographs during an interview with the media. —AFP

Political fuse

Their entry into the temple has lit a political fuse as India prepares for general elections in the coming months. The ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has sided with devotees who accuse the Supreme Court of rejecting their beliefs by letting women in. Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi meanwhile said Sunday there was "validity" in both sides of the argument. Sabarimala is dedicated to the celibate deity Ayyappa, and followers believe letting in women goes against his wishes. A longstanding ban on women was made legal in 1991 by the Kerala High Court, but the Supreme Court overruled this as unconstitutional and discriminatory. Some BJP leaders have called Bindu and Kanakadurga anarchists and anti-Hindu, but the women dismissed the claims. "We were not the first ones to try to enter Sabarimala. Scores of women went in the past, but failed," said Kanakadurga. "I am a believer who always wanted to worship Ayyappa at the Sabarimala temple." —AFP

China sentences Canadian drug suspect to death

DALIAN, China: A Chinese court sentenced a Canadian man to death on drug trafficking charges yesterday after his previous 15-year prison sentence was deemed too lenient, a ruling that has deepened a diplomatic rift between Ottawa and Beijing. Robert Lloyd Schellenberg, 36, nodded as the judge in the northeast city of Dalian asked him whether he understood the verdict, following a day-long retrial in which he declared his innocence. He can appeal against the sentence in an upper court.

The sentence comes against the backdrop of the Chinese government's anger over the arrest in Canada of a top executive from telecom giant Huawei last month on a US extradition request related to Iran sanctions violations. Chinese authorities later detained two Canadian nationals - a former diplomat and a business consultant - on suspicion of endangering national security, a move seen as retaliation over the Huawei executive's arrest.

Schellenberg had originally been sentenced to 15 years in prison and a 150,000-yuan ($22,000) forfeiture in November. But following an appeal, a high court in Liaoning ruled in December that the sentence was too lenient given the severity of his crimes. "I am not a drug smuggler. I came to China as a tourist," Schellenberg, said in his final statement before the sentence was announced. The Dalian court said Schellenberg, who was detained in Dec 2014, played a "key part" in an international drug trafficking syndicate.

"The court completely rejects the accused person's explanation and defense because it is completely at odds with the facts," the chief judge said in a courtroom packed with observers - among them Canadian embassy officials and three foreign reporters, including one from AFP. "This syndicate... does not just spread drugs in one country, the problem has spread across borders... it is a harm to human health and also to the stability of countries," the court said. Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau yesterday expressed "extreme concern" that China had "chosen to arbitrarily" apply the death penalty in Schellenberg's case.

China denies political link

China has executed other foreigners for drug-related crimes in the past, including a Japanese national in 2014, a Filipina in 2013 and a Briton in 2009. Experts said retrials are rare in China, especially ones calling for a harsher sentence, but rights groups noted that courts are not independent and can be influenced by the Communist Party. "Many factors in this case raise serious questions of concern: particularly, that the retrial was rushed through so quickly and that state-run media drew such deliberate attention to the case," William Nee, China researcher at Amnesty International, told AFP. "Most likely, China wants to send a tough message to Canada," Nee added.

Beijing has repeatedly denied any links to Canada's arrest of the Huawei executive. The Chinese foreign ministry said Friday critics "can stop recklessly suspecting others of politicizing legal issues just because they have done so". Last week, Trudeau accused China of "arbitrarily and unfairly" detaining former diplomat Michael Kovrig and business consultant Michael Spavor, who were rounded up nine days after Canada arrested Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou. Trudeau suggested that Kovrig still enjoyed diplomatic immunity, an assertion rejected by the Chinese foreign ministry yesterday. —AFP

Indonesia recovers second black box from Lion Air crash

JAKARTA: The cockpit voice recorder from an Indonesian Lion Air jet that crashed in October has been recovered, officials said yesterday, a discovery that could be critical to explaining why a brand new plane fell out of the sky just after take-off. The Boeing 737 MAX vanished from radar about 13 minutes after departing Jakarta, slamming into the Java Sea moments after pilots had asked to return to the capital and killing all 189 people onboard.

The bright orange voice recorder was discovered early yesterday about 10 meters from a flight data recorder that was located back in November, authorities said. "It's broken into two pieces so hopefully it's still useful" to investigators, Haryo Satmiko, deputy head of Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC), told AFP. More human remains were also found near the voice recorder, he added, without giving details. "This will really help the investigation... and could give some more answers on the cause" of the crash, said Jakarta-based aviation analyst Dudi Sudibyo. The doomed airliner's flight data recorder supplied information about the its speed, altitude and direction before it plunged into the sea on October 29. "But (the data recorder) does not show how the flight crew's decisions were made or discussed in those final moments," Stephen Wright, an aviation expert at Leeds University, told AFP.

A preliminary crash report from Indonesia's transport safety agency suggested that the pilots of Flight 610 struggled to control the plane's anti-stall system just before the accident. The agency also found that the Lion Air jet should have been grounded over a recurrent technical problem before its fatal journey, and it criticized the budget carrier's poor safety culture. But it did not pinpoint a definitive cause of the crash and a final report is not likely to come before later this year.

Boeing lawsuits

Despite the name, black boxes are usually bright orange with reflective stripes, and all commercial planes are obliged to have them on board. They're built to survive at vast depths and in extreme heat, and are fitted with a beacon which can emit a signal for one month. Black box data helps explain nearly 90 percent of all crashes, according to aviation experts.

Authorities called off the grim task of identifying victims of the crash in November, with only 125 people named after tests on human remains that filled some 200 body bags. "We're thankful and grateful that they have found the CVR, but it's not enough," said Evi Samsul Komar, whose son and nephew were on the fatal flight. "There are still many passengers unaccounted for."

A cockpit voice recorder, the second "black box" from Lion Air flight 610 that crashed last October killing all 189 people onboard, is displayed to the media by Indonesian Navy personnel after the device's recovery at sea off the coast of Karawang. —AFP

Despite a spotty safety record and an avalanche of complaints over shoddy service, the carrier's parent Lion Air Group — which also operates five other airlines — has become Southeast Asia's biggest airline group by fleet size in less than 20 years of operation. Indonesia's aviation safety record has improved since its airlines, including national carrier Garuda, were subject to years-long bans from US and European airspace for safety violations. But the country still recorded more than three dozen fatal accidents over the past 15 years. —AFP

Skepticism in France as Macron launches 'great national debate'

'I intend to transform anger into solutions'

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron faced a battle yesterday to convince the skeptical French of his latest move to quell "yellow vest" anger as he kickstarted a two-month national debate on his policies. Macron, who is struggling to end the biggest crisis of his presidency, on Sunday set out 35 questions to be debated in towns and villages across the country between January 15 and March 15.

"We won't agree on everything, that's normal, that's democracy. But at least we'll show we're a people that is not afraid to talk, exchange and debate," he wrote in his "letter to the French". The missive followed a ninth consecutive Saturday of nationwide "yellow vest" rallies which saw an uptick in turnout but less violence than previous demonstrations over the past two months. Macron hopes that returning to more participative democracy — a key feature of his 2017 grassroots election campaign — will satisfy the protesters' demands for a greater say in the running of the country.

"I intend to transform anger into solutions," he wrote, promising "a new contract for the nation". But he made clear there was no question of him resigning, saying the debates, which will revolve around taxation, democracy, the environment and immigration, were "neither an election nor a referendum". Within the ranks of the "yellow vests", reactions were mixed, with some welcoming Macron's letter but many calling it a government smoke-screen.

"A debate means discussing everything. When you say we're going to debate, but not about that, that, that and that...that's called 'shut up and listen to me'," Maxime Nicolle, one of the movement's most prominent figures, said in a YouTube video. In its editorial yesterday, the left-wing Liberation daily called the missive an attempt by Macron "to save the three years he has left" as president. "The exercise is all the more perilous given the mood in the country, which is extremely grumpy," the paper added. In an Odoxa-Dentsu poll published last week, 32 percent of respondents said they would take part in the debate but 70 percent said they did not believe it would lead to significant change.

Taxes, environment

The questions that will be debated include: "Which taxes do you think should be lowered first?", "Should some public services that are out of date or too expensive be eliminated?", "What concrete proposals do you think would accelerate our environmental transition?" and "Should we use more referendums?" A question about immigration asked: "Once our asylum obligations are fulfilled, do you want parliament to be able to set annual targets?"

While Macron assured that there were "no forbidden questions", he did say that there was no question of bringing back the death penalty, banning abortion or ending the right to seek asylum. He also said the government would not revisit steps taken "to encourage investment and make work pay more" — seen as a slapdown of the "yellow vests" demand for him to reinstate the fortune tax he partly repealed last year for high earners.

The hard-left France Unbowed party, which has been vying with the far-right National Rally to be seen as chief champion of the "yellow vests" cause, accused him of pre-determining the outcome. "The people may debate, but Jupiter decides," Eric Coquerel, a France Unbowed MP tweeted, referring to Macron mockingly by his nickname, the king of the gods in Roman times. Macron has promised to report back on the consultation a month after the debates wind up. Today, he will embark on a tour of town-hall meetings around the country, the first of which will be held with local mayors in Bourgtheroulde in northwest France. — AFP

LE MANS: A protester carries a placard depicting a cigarette pack and reading "Macron seriously harms health" as he stands in tear gas smoke during an anti-government demonstration called by the "Yellow Vest" (Gilets Jaunes) movement. — AFP

Soaring sexual violence pushes S Leone to face 'rape culture'

FREETOWN: "Mary" was nine years old when her childhood abruptly ended. Three men fed her sedatives then raped her. Her mother, who had been washing clothes in a stream near their home in Freetown, Sierra Leone's capital, got home to find her child lying on the ground distraught, her legs and dress stained with blood. "They put dirty clothes in my mouth and raped me," the girl told AFP, without giving her real name.

The family reported the attack to the police and identified the rapists, but no charges were ever brought. Thousands of children and young girls were raped last year in Sierra Leone — a silent epidemic of suffering in one of the world's poorest countries. According to police statistics, recorded cases of sexual and gender-based violence almost doubled last year, reaching 8,505 in a population of 7.5 million, up from 4,750 a year earlier. And of that number, 2,579 cases — around a third — involved the rape of a minor. But, as with the incidence of rape in almost every country, this shocking tally is almost certainly an understatement. "Mary" and her family plucked up the courage to report the crime: many do not.

'Culture of rape'

"We have a culture of rape in Sierra Leone," admitted Chernor Bah of the UN's Global Education First Initiative at a demonstration in Freetown last month where more than 500 black-clad protesters took to the streets over violence against women. "The rape of minors is a national problem," rally organiser Asma James said. "The situation is sad, selfish, barbaric and inhuman and requires all of us, women and men, to speak up."

Just weeks before, the country had been shaken by the rape of a five-year-old girl by her 28-year-old relative. Her attacker raped her anally, crippling her spine. Doctors at the Aberdeen Women's Centre in Freetown, which helps women and girls who have suffered from sexual violence and rape, said it was unlikely the child would ever be able to walk again. The attack sparked outrage, with many people demanding that child rapists face a lifetime behind bars — calls echoed by President Julius Maada Bio himself. "Let me be very clear: men who rape girls deserve to be jailed for life," Bio said as his wife launched a campaign called "Hands off Our Girls".

Most victims under 15

Reports of rape and the sexual penetration of minors, as child rape is legally termed, have steadily increased, according to the Freetown-based Rainbo Initiative, which provides free medical services and counseling to victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Figures collated by the centre show that in 2018, 76 percent of rape victims were aged 15 years or younger — including babies. The rest of the victims were aged between 16 and 20. And every month, an average of 149 victims fell pregnant as a result of rape. "Children are brought to our centers in tattered clothes covered with blood stains," executive director Daniel Kettor told AFP.

In Freetown alone, there were 1,491 cases of sexual abuse reported between January and October 2018, with the youngest victim just seven months old and the oldest aged 85. "Amongst the survivors, six were HIV-positive and 484 fell pregnant after being raped," Kettor said. Doctors at the centre examine the victims, looking for evidence of sperm specimens and blood stains around the genital area before providing them with a medical certificate which is necessary for police to open an investigation.

Rape and war

Those looking for an explanation of Sierra Leone's rape crisis often turn to the country's violent recent past. During a 10-year civil war (1991-2001), thousands of women and girls were subjected to widespread and systematic sexual violence and rape, a 2003 Human Rights Watch report found. In this pervasive environment, there has been little headway toward rooting out attitudes of sexual predation and prosecuting rapists. "Sexual violence against women and girls is a prevalent and destructive practice that still has deep roots in the country, despite various initiatives to eliminate it," Commissioner of Sierra Leone's Law Reform Commission Rhoda Suffian-Kargbo Nuni told AFP. Many attacks go unpunished, and those that are reported often fail to end in indictments or make it through Sierra Leone's judicial system, rights groups and police say.

Court records show that in 2018, only 26 rape cases were successfully prosecuted and led to a conviction. Some cases fail to make it to court due to a lack of adequate facilities to carry out DNA tests to secure the necessary evidence. Others never get off the ground because the victims simply cannot afford the legal costs. "The police have limited resources to investigate sexual and gender abuse," says Superintendent Fatmata Daboh, who heads the Family Support Unit. "Many cases are settled out of court or without going to trial due to the lack of a forensic science lab to prove evidence."

A pledge for change

Sierra Leone's Human Rights Commission in 2017 highlighted systemic failures, including "inefficiencies and corruption in the judicial system" for many cases being settled out of court or never going to trial. Legally, rape is a criminal offence which carries a jail term of between five and 15 years, according to the Sexual Offences Act of 2012 — a law that Sierra Leone reworked and toughened specifically to combat sexual predators. But such sentences are rare. — AFP

Regional lawmaker is Germany's first transgender MP

BERLIN: Lawmakers returning to the Bavarian regional parliament after elections three months ago will find a transgender woman colleague, Tessa Ganserer, on the benches where Markus Ganserer previously sat. Ganserer is believed to be the first transgender person in Germany to hold a regional or national MP's seat, or to change their gender while in office. Just a few weeks after coming out on social media to a burst of publicity, the 41-year-old will make a first appearance before the press Monday to discuss her change of identity. Long a laggard on social issues, some abrupt changes have taken place in Germany in recent years.

Parliament legislated last month for a third gender on birth certificates after a Constitutional Court decision that the documents must respect intersex people. And in summer 2017, MPs pushed through gay marriage after Chancellor Angela Merkel said she would not whip her party on the subject. While Ganserer won her Bavarian parliament seat in October, in the United States Democratic party candidate Christine Hallquist recently failed in her bid to become the first transgender woman governor in Vermont.

'Madam regional MP'

"I am a woman with every fiber of my body and now Madam regional MP as well," Ganserer posted on her Facebook account in early January, announcing her intention to sit in parliament as a woman. Just a few weeks ago, she had said both Markus and Tessa remained a part of her. But from now on she hopes to live as a female politician, wife and mother of two children. While Bavaria is a strongly conservative and mostly Catholic region, the president of the regional parliament Ilse Aigner of the Christian Social Union (CSU) backed the change.

"Mrs Ganserer has taken a very brave and highly personal decision," Aigner said. The CSU usually takes very conservative positions on social questions and opposed the federal gay marriage law. "Our male colleague is becoming a female colleague, that should not be a problem in this house," Aigner said in a public statement after speaking with Ganserer. "A person's personality is always more important than their gender." At the first plenary session of the year from January 23, the Greens party MP — first elected in 2013 and reelected last October — will be registered as a woman.

MUNICH: This combination of pictures created on January 14, 2019 shows Markus Ganserer (L), a member of Bavarian State Parliament posing for a photographer at the Bavarian state Parliament on July 06, 2017 in Munich, and at (R) transgender woman Tessa Ganserer giving a press conference. —AFP

'Getting used to it'

Among fellow MPs, "many definitely still have to get used to it," Aigner said. One member of the pro-business FDP cried "what are you playing at here? A drag queen?" when he first saw Ganserer in a long blonde wig and makeup in the Munich chamber, daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung (SZ) reported. As for her official identity papers, Ganserer has a little longer to wait.

In late November, she received a medical certificate from a psychiatrist confirming she is transgender. German law requires two medical opinions to back a name change in the official register. Securing that step "meant getting my real birth certificate to me", Ganserer told the SZ. While she has made little public comment, she told the paper that she "discovered" herself as a woman around ten years ago when looking in the mirror wearing a dress.

Since then, she has picked her way through different roles: as man, father, husband, woman, wife, and mother. Now, her doubts are so far gone that she has told her sons, 11 and 6, that "from now on I will always be like this". "Children don't have prejudices. If you present the world to them in a friendly way, they will accept it as it is," Ganserer said. She doesn't plan to undergo any medical procedures, but to mark the definitive arrival of Tessa, Ganserer took a major step: she packed all her ties, shirts and suit jackets into bags and gave them away. — AFP

Protests 'will not change government', says Bashir

KHARTOUM: Defiant Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir said yesterday that ongoing protests will not lead to a change in government, as he addressed a rally of cheering supporters in war-torn Darfur. "Demonstrations will not change the government," Bashir told crowds of supporters gathered in Niyala, the capital of South Darfur state, where just a day ago police had broken up an anti-government demonstration, state television reported.

"There's only one road to power and that is through the ballot box. The Sudanese people will decide in 2020 who will govern them," said Bashir, who is planning to run for the presidency for the third time in elections to be held next year. Deadly protests have rocked Sudan since December 19 when angry crowds took to the streets in towns and villages against a government decision to raise the price of bread.

At least 24 people have died in the protests, which swiftly turned into nationwide anti-government rallies, with protesters calling on Bashir to step down. "Sudan has many enemies and those enemies have few people among us who don't want stability and security," said Bashir, with state television broadcasting footage showing him waving his trademark cane as supporters chanted "stay, stay". "We will not allow anyone to destroy our homeland by looting and burning our properties," said Bashir. In the initial days of protests, several buildings and offices of Bashir's ruling National Congress Party were set on fire in towns and villages. On Sunday, the first anti-government demonstrations were held in Niyala and El-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur.

KHARTOUM: Supporters of Sudan's President Omar Al-Bashir wave Sudanese flags during a rally for him in the Green Square in the capital. — AFP

'Economic problems'

Darfur, a region the size of France, has been torn by violence since 2003 when ethnic minority rebels took up arms against Khartoum's Arab-dominated government, accusing it of economic and political marginalization. About 300,000 people have been killed in the conflict and another 2.5 million displaced, according to the United Nations. Most of those displaced still live in sprawling camps. 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.

Yesterday, he reiterated that Sudan faced "economic problems," but they could not be solved by looting and burning of properties. Sudanese security agents, meanwhile, stopped a group of journalists in Khartoum from holding a sit in to protest the banning of a newspaper this week, witnesses said. — AFP

Kamala Harris dons running shoes, but is the White House her goal?

Harris is no novice at breaking through glass ceilings

WASHINGTON: With not one but two new books out, coupled with a frenetic series of interviews that saw her alternately sharing a laugh, solemnly contemplating "the soul of the nation" or relating poignant memories of her immigrant parents, one could be forgiven for suspecting that Kamala Harris is about to join the Democratic field seeking the presidential nomination in 2020. For political observers, that much is obvious — you can almost see their eyerolls — since Harris's are the classic moves of someone preparing a White House run.

"I might," she said, just a bit coyly, before bursting into contagious — and revealing — laughter in an appearance Thursday on the set of celebrated comedian and CBS television host Stephen Colbert. The coming days should bring a more definitive answer. But her calls for unity in her newly published memoir — "The Truths We Hold: An American Journey," from Penguin Press — clearly set the tone for what a Harris candidacy might mean in an America sorely divided by the unsettling presidency of Donald Trump.

If she does announce her candidacy, the 54-year-old California senator — whose first name should be pronounced like "comma-la," she insists — would be aspiring to become not only the first female president of the United States but also the first black female. As someone who seems to personify the "American dream" and its melting-pot ideal, Harris is no novice at breaking through glass ceilings.

After two terms as district attorney of San Francisco (2004-2011), she was twice elected as attorney general of California (2011-2017), becoming not only the first woman but the first black person to serve as chief law enforcement officer of that populous state. Then in January 2017, she took the oath of office as California's junior US senator, making her the first woman of South Asian descent (her mother is a Tamil Indian) and only the second black woman senator in American history, after Carol Moseley Braun.

Her focused and often tough-sounding lines of questioning during closely watched Senate hearings reflect her past as a prosecutor. Harris often proudly recalls her past as a prosecutor in California when she fought big banks in the midst of the financial crisis in order to benefit families. She casts herself as a defender of middle class families "living paycheck to paycheck" and denounces police brutality and the killing of unarmed black men.

'As though she were dumb'

The daughter of immigrants — her father is from Jamaica — Harris grew up in the 1960s in the progressive hotbed of Oakland, California, proud of the struggle her parents waged for civil rights. "My mother was the strongest person I have ever known," she has written on Twitter. Mother Shyamala was only 19 when she arrived in California in 1960 to pursue her studies, eventually becoming a renowned cancer researcher.

Harris mentions her father, Donald, as well, calling him "a respected economist" who is an emeritus professor at Stanford University. But after her parents separated when she was about five years old, it was Kamala's mother who raised her and her younger sister, Maya, who went on to become a lawyer and an advisor to Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential campaign.

Hers was a happy childhood, Harris now says, where education was highly valued, and it inspired her to write her second new book, "Superheroes Are Everywhere," a children's picture book that was also published last week. But Harris has also experienced discrimination. "I have too many memories of my brilliant mother being treated as though she were dumb because of her accent," she wrote in her autobiography. Asked about that, she shared some tough words about Republican president Trump. "There are powerful forces — including this president — that are attempting to vilify immigrants because they were born in another country," she said recently on CNN.

'Charismatic' and 'compelling'

But her political ascent does share one small link to that of the wealthy president: she was elected to the Senate on November 8, 2016, the day of Trump's unexpected victory. In her book she describes the shock she felt that night, but also the stirring realization that soon followed: "We are better than this," she wrote, "but we're going to have to prove it."

Her resolutely optimistic message stands in stark contrast to the much darker landscape described by Donald Trump, who referred in his inaugural speech to "American carnage." "It's a smart move on her part," said Dena Grayson, a Democratic strategist. Grayson added: "She's taking a page out of the Obama playbook, which was 'hope and change,'" a message that resonated, particularly among Democrats, after the George W. Bush presidency. Both Grayson and Jennifer Lawless, a professor of politics at the University of Virginia, see Harris as a compelling and charismatic candidate who should be well-positioned in the emerging Democratic field. But both analysts emphasized that with that field expected to be huge and diverse — as Democrats see a chance to run against an embattled president many of them detest — prediction is difficult. "The question is, is she — and is her message — going to break through when you have a group of 10 or 12 or 15 people running for office," Lawless said. — AFP

SANTA CLARITA: In this file photo taken on November 3, 2018 Democratic Party Senator Kamala Harris speaks at a rally for California gubernatorial candidate Gavin Newsom before the mid-term elections. — AFP

Million dead fish cause ecological stink in Australia

SYDNEY: As many as a million fish are believed to have died along the banks of a major river system in drought-battered eastern Australia, and the authorities warned yesterday of more deaths to come. The banks of the Murray-Darling Rivers are thick with rotten fish, with officials putting the number of dead at hundreds of thousands and saying the toll is likely closer to one million.

Further high temperatures forecast for this week could make the situation worse, the New South Wales government has warned. Low water conditions and the heat may also have encouraged an algae bloom that starves the fish of oxygen and produce toxins. "We do expect to see more fish kills across parts of the far west and Northern Tablelands this week," said state minister Niall Blair. The deaths have become a national issue, sparking angry allegations about the cause and who is responsible.

"It's a devastating ecological event," said Prime Minister Scott Morrison yesterday, pointing to apocalyptic scenes. "The sheer visual image of this is just terribly upsetting," he said. Morrison's government has blamed the fish deaths on drought, and defended policies which some locals say has caused the systemic depletion and pollution of the river system. "There's a drought and this is one of the consequences of drought. There are many, and my focus on drought has not shifted one inch," Morrison said.

But for years scientists have been warning of people extracting vast amounts of water without check for irrigation or other uses, undercutting billions of dollars of investment. "Dead fish and dying rivers are not because of the drought, it's because we are extracting too much water from our river," said John Williams, an expert in water economics at the Australian National University.

MENINDEE: Member of parliament Jeremy Buckingham shows Buckingham (R) holding a decades-old native Murray cod, which was killed during a massive fish kill in Menindee on the Darling River, as local residents Dick Arnold (L) and Rob McBride from Tolarno Station (C) look on. — AFP

Opposition leader Bill Shorten called on the government to set up an "emergency task force" to address the issue. "You can't ignore a million dead fish, that's a shocking development," said Shorten. Morrison insisted the management plan for the Murray-Darling Basin was bipartisan, adding that his government was only following on the policies of the opposition Labor government. "I'm concerned today that some might want to play politics with that," he said. "There were reports done by scientists under Labor's contribution to that plan back in 2012 and the plan has been operating in accordance with that advice." Scientists are calling for politicians to be held to account. — AFP

Italian ex-militant extradited after decades on run

ROME: Former communist militant Cesare Battisti, wanted in Italy for four murders in the 1970s, arrived in Rome yesterday after an international police squad tracked him down and arrested him in Bolivia. Jailed in 1979 for belonging to an armed revolutionary group outlawed in Italy, Battisti escaped from prison two years later, and has spent nearly four decades on the run.

An Italian-flagged Falcon 900 plane carrying Battisti landed at Rome's Ciampino airport on Monday morning. Battisti, who was not wearing handcuffs, smiled grimly as he was escorted off the plane by a dozen policemen. He was expected to be taken to Rome's Rebibbia jail, where according to media reports he will begin life behind bars with six months solitary confinement.

Italy had repeatedly sought the extradition of the militant, who lived in Brazil for years under the protection of former leftist president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, himself now in prison for corruption. Battisti, 64, was seized late Saturday in the Bolivian city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra in an operation carried out by a joint team of Italian and Bolivian officers, Italian state police said. Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini and Justice Minister Alfonso Bonafede were at the airport for Battisti's arrival.

'Rot in jail'

The fugitive could be seen walking casually about Santa Cruz in sunglasses and a blue T-shirt, in surveillance footage taken hours before his capture. He gave up without a struggle, according to Italian government sources. "We've got him. And now he'll have to rot in jail. He's a communist terrorist. A killer. A coward," Salvini said.

Battisti was sentenced to life imprisonment for having killed two Italian policemen, taking part in the murder of a butcher and helping plan the slaying of a jeweler who died in a shootout that left his teenage son in a wheelchair. "It's over, now the victims can rest in peace," said Alberto Torregiani, the son of the slain jeweler. "It should have happened years ago." Battisti has admitted to being part of the Armed Proletarians for Communism, a radical group which staged a string of robberies and attacks, but has always denied responsibility for any deaths, painting himself as a political refugee.

However Rome is 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. Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said in a Facebook post that he had expressed gratitude to Brazil's recently inaugurated President Jair Bolsonaro in a telephone call.

During his presidential campaign the far-right Bolsonaro — who took office on January 1 — vowed that if elected he would "immediately" send Battisti back to Italy. Battisti had filed for asylum without receiving any response from authorities, Bolivia's ombudsman said in an article published in the local El Deber de Santa Cruz newspaper. He had been hoping to find favour with Bolivia's left-wing President Evo Morales after saying in his asylum request he had been forced to quit Brazil due to "the ominous coincidence" that Italy and Brazil were both now run by "far-right" governments. 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 the rest of his days in prison". — AFP

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Thanks for sharing? US politicians' online tone seeks an authentic like

Ex-congressman Beto O'Rourke Instagrammed his dentist appointment. Senator Elizabeth Warren guzzled a beer on the same online platform. And an unfiltered Senator Cory Booker sends video selfies to young users on Snapchat. These American politicians may or may not be running for president in 2020, but they are united in their savvy social media use to raise their national profiles, appear more relatable to new voters, and rake in millions of dollars in donations.

The approach - even when desperately oversharing personal lives online - is a bold one, full of promise and some pitfalls. A fresh generation of Democratic lawmakers, and a few canny veterans, are pioneering the new social media strategy they hope will help them topple US President Donald Trump. Today's digital age is a startlingly frank and revealing one, and some lawmakers are embracing it, political risks be damned.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez was tending bar one year ago, but now, as a new Democratic member of Congress, the 29-year-old New Yorker has 2.3 million Twitter followers and, perhaps more intriguingly, 1.7 million on photo- and video-sharing platform Instagram. While Ocasio-Cortez posts about policy, she also shares videos of herself showing off dance moves, or cooking macaroni and cheese.

At first glance they are just glimpses into the everyday world of the lawmaker known simply as AOC. But she and others are gambling big time on bringing along thousands or even millions of viewers on their life journey. That could make all the difference for those running for president in 2020. "If you're not... making serious investments online, you likely have zero shot in the Democratic primary," said Adam Parkhomenko, a consultant and former staffer for 2016 Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. "It's probably the most important thing that a campaign can do," he told AFP in an interview.

Relatable

Online personal brand promotion is being embraced by politicians, especially those who came of age in the 21st century and recognize its importance. "They're using it to get out their message, and it works," Parkhomenko said. The idea that non-presidential imagery or messaging is taboo for White House candidates is almost trite today. The president himself is famous for pushing the boundaries of decency on his favorite platform, Twitter. "Things have changed a ton in the last two or three years," Parkhomenko added. "You want to support someone that you can relate to" - even if that means watching them shop, jog, drive through their district or see a doctor.

Enter O'Rourke, whose visit to a dentist in his hometown of El Paso, Texas for a conversation about life near the US-Mexico border triggered an avalanche of reaction online. "So, I'm here with Diana, my dental hygienist," O'Rourke says to kick off the video on Instagram, where he has 760,000 followers. The clip shows O'Rourke, 46, wearing a protective green bib as Diana removes an electric polishing tool from his mouth after cleaning his pearly whites. "Even for me, this is Too Much Instagram," complained one user.

O'Rourke may well have sought to improve his brand image, but the visit also brought up the issue of dental coverage. "Beto better have an answer now about dental care," said American University communications professor Scott Talan.

How much is too much?

Lawmakers were not always so revealing. But Talan says a new generation of tweeters and Instagram users in Congress are revealing their daily lives more than ever. Talan says voters should expect more everyday life clips from presidential hopefuls, pushed to the screens of millions of Americans who never log off. But the transparency is mostly illusory, with the risk of coming off as inauthentic. When Warren, 69, recently livestreamed herself drinking a Michelob Ultra, it unleashed a provocative debate. "This is where you get into serious questions about... politicians overreaching," Talan said. "Even a beer opening on Instagram has risks and can ring inauthentic."

But it nevertheless can ring in big money. Instagram is owned by Facebook, and the megasite is likely optimized to comb through enormous data sets gathered from the millions of users who watch Warren, O'Rourke, Booker, Bernie Sanders, Kamala Harris, Joe Biden, and other politicians on Instagram. So even if Beto's teeth-cleaning was cringeworthy and substance-free, it could help his campaign target Facebook ads or messages at the thousands of users who watched his livestream.

These political messengers are seeing their followings grow with every personable clip. But how intimate will politicians' postings get? "We won't know how much is too much until we reach it," Talan said. — AFP

In this file photo taken on Jan 1, 1979, Iranian demonstrators hold a poster of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini during a demonstration in Tehran against the shah. — AFP

Passions ran high as last shah fled Iran

For months before the last shah fled Iran ending 2,500 years of royal rule, shopkeeper Ahmad Sheikh-Mehdi witnessed the fervor sweeping his country, heralding the arrival of the Islamic revolution. Forty years ago, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who had dubbed himself the "King of Kings", flew out of Iran on January 16, 1979 after mass uprisings across the country. His departure paved the way for the triumphant return on February 1, 1979 of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini from exile in France, and was ultimately to usher in the Islamic Republic.

"Everyone was transformed by the revolution. We felt hopeful," said Sheikh-Mehdi, who at the time was a shopkeeper's assistant in Tehran's Grand Bazaar. The bazaar was one of the hotbeds of support for the revolutionaries, a bastion of tradition closely allied to the clerics who opposed what they saw as the shah's Westernising and secularizing project. Sheikh-Mehdi remembers that time vividly, but what sticks most in his mind is the dervish - an Islamic mystic - who strode the bazaar's long corridors in the months before the shah fled, repeatedly chanting what amounted to a prophecy. "Nothing will be good until we are good. Before long, the tables will turn on this age," Sheikh-Mehdi, now 76, recited. "And the tables did turn," he added.

'People had passion'

The shah and his wife flew to Egypt, beginning 18 months of wanderings which led them as far as the United States and Mexico before Pahlavi wound up back in Cairo where he died from cancer on July 27, 1980 at the age of 60. The shah's power had begun to crumble before he left the country, when in January 1978 Etelat daily newspaper was ordered to publish an article seen as insulting to Khomeini. Demonstrations by theology students were violently crushed and the funerals of the victims sparked a cycle of fresh protests and repression.

Unrest mounted through 1978 and the bazaar frequently shut down in support of the protesters. "A young man would run into the bazaar, let out a sharp whistle and shout 'They're here!', and we'd all close shop and go join the protests," remembered 77-year old Ebrahim Almasi, who still runs a suit stall. He misses that burning revolutionary spirit, inspired by Khomeini's charisma. "People had passion back then. Blood was flowing," he said. Sheikh-Mehdi recalled how he would buy eggs for striking workers, part of the widespread solidarity felt at the time. "People would come and ask if we were short and give us money... We helped people as much as we could," he said.

'Life is short'

Educated in Switzerland, Pahlavi ascended the throne on Sept 16, 1941 at the tender age of 21. The insecure young king did not gain real authority until 1953 when a CIA-backed coup removed his highly popular prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, who was trying to nationalize the country's oil. Flush with the country's petrodollars, the shah became one of the best customers of the US defense industry and a bulwark against Soviet influence.

But his Western-inspired reforms triggered tumultuous social change that angered the clergy, while his consolidation of power and brutal secret police earned him a reputation as a tyrant. Opposition to the shah and the aura of corruption around the Tehrani elite brought together an unlikely but powerful coalition of radical Islamists, who opposed the quietism of the traditional clergy, and left-wing students motivated by anti-colonial movements around the world.

The 40th anniversary of the shah's departure comes at a difficult time for Iran and Tehran's iconic bazaar as renewed US sanctions and poor management have plunged the country's economy into recession. Sheikh-Mehdi said this was precisely the time to return to the religious roots of the revolution. He still draws inspiration from Imam Ali, a son-in-law of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). "We all need to remember life is short, and we will be judged," he said. — AFP

Czech student Palach set himself alight for freedom 50 years ago

Jan Palach was a student activist who burnt himself to death 50 years ago this week to protest at the Soviet-led occupation of then Czechoslovakia. "He loved history and he was also interested in philosophy," Ivana Zizkova, who went to school with Palach, told AFP of the young man, an introvert always immersed in books and magazines. "He was good-looking. Very close to his mother," added Zizkova, who was in the same class as Palach at the school in the Czech town of Melnik just north of Prague. "And what was unusual during the Communist era: He dared to argue with the professors when he disagreed with them," added the now 70-year-old pensioner.

Three years after they passed their school-leaving exams, Palach, studying philosophy at Charles University in Prague, set himself alight in the central Wenceslas Square on Jan 16, 1969. He wanted Czechoslovaks to resist a new hardline regime absolutely loyal to the Kremlin, following the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 which crushed a liberal movement called the Prague Spring. With burns to 85 percent of his body, Palach died on Jan 19, aged 20. His funeral in Prague was attended by 100,000 silent mourners.

Mobilize the nation

"I was travelling from Prague to Melnik and in the newspaper I saw a tiny story: 'Student JP set himself alight in Wenceslas Square,'" recalled Zizkova. "Then I learnt that it was Honza. Of course I was shocked," she added, calling Palach by the diminutive of his first name. "He had something of a genius in him. He could see farther than the rest of us. He tried to mobilize the nation." "I admire him, and I still have goose bumps. He sacrificed his life so young," she said.

Palach was born to a modest family in the village of Vsetaty near Melnik. His father, who died in 1962, was a confectioner whose shop had been confiscated by the Communists, while his mother was a shop assistant at a kiosk at the local railway station. "In 1967 and 1968, Jan took part in voluntary work camps in the Soviet Union," says Jana Beranova, head of the Vsetaty-based Jan Palach Society.

"He was shocked by the contrast between Soviet reality and the propaganda," she told AFP. "He refused to succumb to the lethargy that gradually overtook society after the occupation. He called for a general strike - in vain. And then he made his decision," Beranova said. At dawn on Jan 16, 1969, Palach took a train from Vsetaty to Prague. In his dormitory room, he reviewed his manifesto. It demanded that the regime drop censorship and ban the Zpravy magazine, which had been distributed since August 1968 by the Soviet occupation forces and was spreading fake news.

In this file photo taken on Jan 24, 1969, flowers and candles by people of what was then Czechoslovakia pay tribute to Jan Palach (portrayed) in Wenceslas Square in downtown Prague. — AFP

Taking responsibility

At noon he bought two plastic buckets and four litres of petrol in a street adjacent to Wenceslas Square and bearing the name of Jan Opletal, a student killed by the Nazis three decades earlier. At half past two, Palach arrived at the National Museum at the top of the busy square, poured the petrol over his body and struck a match. "There are moments in history when you have to do something," he later managed to murmur in his hospital bed. Several "human torches" followed his example across eastern Europe, including two Czechs - student Jan Zajic on Feb 25 and technician Evzen Plocek on April 4 of the same year.

Twenty years later, anti-Communist dissident Vaclav Havel was detained as he laid a flower at the top of Wenceslas Square to commemorate Palach on January 16, 1989, sparking the so-called Palach Week of anti-Communist protests. Havel became the country's president after the peaceful Velvet Revolution finally overthrew the Communist regime later in 1989, four years before Czechoslovakia split into the Czech Republic and Slovakia. — AFP

Justice at last for Kosovo's 'second class victims'?

Twenty years after the war for Kosovo's independence, victims of alleged war crimes committed by ethnic Albanian guerrillas have all but given up hope of justice. Now, finally, relief may be on the horizon. Kosovo's press is speculating feverishly that an EU-backed international court, based in The Hague, could this week issue its first indictments for Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) veterans who led the 1998-99 independence war.

Tiny Kosovo's Albanian population suffered most in the conflict against much-stronger Serbia, which ended with an 11-week NATO bombing campaign. But a section of Kosovo's ethnic Albanian population, as well as the territory's minority Serb and Roma, were targetted by the KLA and feel their suffering has been forgotten. They refer to their fallen as "second-class victims". "This tribunal presents the last chance to shed light on the assassinations in Kosovo," said Beriana Mustafa, a 36-year-old journalist in Pristina, whose father was murdered outside his house after criticising rebellion commanders.

The world's attention has focused on atrocities committed by Serbian forces under strongman Slobodan Milosevic, who died in prison in The Hague in 2006 while awaiting trial on 66 counts of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. While leaders on the Serbian side have been judged and sentenced by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), no KLA leaders have been sentenced. "Hope is always the last to die," said Natasa Scepanovic, 54, who leads an association of Serb victims still holding out for justice. Her own father's body was discovered in 2003, years after he was killed. Her mother is one of about 1,700 people still listed as missing.

Kosovo's prime minister, Ramush Haradinaj, was acquitted by the ICTY for alleged crimes committed when he was a KLA commander. The court also exonerated ex-commander Fatmir Limaj, who heads a political party now in Kosovo's governing coalition - a slap in the face for many KLA victims.

The Kosovo conflict left more than 13,000 dead, including some 11,000 ethnic Albanians, 2,000 Serbs, and about 500 Roma. The territory of some 1.8 million people unilaterally declared independence from Serbia in 2008, but Belgrade still regards Kosovo - recognized as a state by over 100 UN members - as its southern province. In 2008, crimes allegedly committed by the KLA were highlighted in a book published by former ICTY prosecutor Carla del Ponte. — AFP

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

TUESDAY, JANUARY 15, 2019

Business

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13 Sharp fuel hike sparks protests across Zimbabwe

14 Infiniti Al-Babtain announces a special package on Infiniti QX50

DETROIT: The NAIAS Car of the Year press conference is seen during the first day of the 2019 The North American International Auto Show yesterday at the Cobo Center in Detroit, Michigan. — AFP

Carmakers grapple with uncertainty in 2019

Auto industry gathers in Detroit amid concerns over global economy

DETROIT: The auto industry gathered Sunday in Detroit, on the eve of the last winter edition of North America's premiere auto show, as carmakers grapple with a contracting market and uncertainty in the year ahead.

Concerns over the health of the global economy and a US-China trade war loomed over the North American International Auto Show, as it prepared to open with the first five days dedicated to the media and industry insiders. The show opens to the general public on January 19.

While a number of major announcements were expected-including an anticipated strategic alliance between Ford and Volkswagen-there will be fewer automakers and new car unveilings, making it more subdued. "This is a transition year for the Detroit show," said analyst Michelle Krebs of Autotrader. "It's kind of emblematic of where the industry is. We're in a transition in the industry."

GM kicked off the string of new car unveilings by debuting its new Cadillac XT6 — a mid-size crossover in line with similar SUVs from competing luxury car makers. GM aimed squarely at Tesla in releasing concept photos for a future Cadillac electric SUV. The company said the luxury brand would be the first to employ an upcoming electric vehicle platform, the time frame for which was not specified.

"Cadillac, being a leader in technology and innovation, it's very important that as we take it to the next level, we lead with Cadillac," GM CEO Mary Barra told reporters.

After a 10-year boom, analysts expect North American auto sales to contract in 2019, as consumers face pressures and carmakers grapple with multiple uncertainties. Rising interest rates and car prices have squeezed car buyers, and fewer of them are able to afford increasingly pricey, technology-heavy cars. Kelley Blue Book predicted the average new-car price was up about three percent in 2018 to more than $36,000.

Tariffs cause uncertainty

Meanwhile, tariffs on imported steel and aluminum products and a potentially intensifying trade dispute between the Donald Trump administration and Beijing has automakers spooked, analysts said. "Tariffs already had an impact in 2018," said Cox Automotive chief analyst Jonathan Smoke, adding that 47 percent of the vehicles sold in the US in 2018 were imported.

"We believe about two percent of today's prices are because of the tariffs that were already implemented." The US is considering additional tariffs of 25 percent. Should it announce such a move by the February 17 deadline, it could have a substantial impact on the industry and stock markets, Smoke said. "We believe that they are likely to move forward with some form of that tariff, because it becomes then a lever for them to force... further negotiations."

Should tariffs raise car prices further, analysts said it could substantially depress the new car market. Consumers would flock to relatively cheaper used cars, which are in ample supply.

The auto dealers association which organizes the show also was contending with the uncertainty of the show's very relevance. Almost all German carmakers abandoned the show this year, as more and more important announcements are made at other gatherings.

Next year, the Detroit show will move from January, when it has been held for some 40 years, to June.

Doug North, the chairman of the 2020 show told AFP that the aim is to provide a more interactive experience for the nearly one million attendees who come to Detroit for the event. "Warmer weather, ride and drives, hill-climbs maybe, all sorts of kind of exhibitions, dynamic opportunities for people to be in and out of the cars, ride in them, for the manufacturers to show what they couldn't previously do inside," North said.

Goodbye winter

Among the few notable unveilings this year will be from Ford, which is expected to display a redesigned Explorer SUV and a more powerful version of its iconic Mustang sports car under the name Shelby GT500. SUVs and trucks will once again be the highlight, indicative of US consumers' drift away from sedans and small cars. Trucks and SUVs made up a majority of new purchases in the US last year.

"The SUVs have become cars with SUV bodies sitting on top of them," said Karl Brauer of Kelly Blue Book. Detroit's big three automakers have been ending production of almost all of their sedans and small cars, succumbing to the pressure of falling demand. — AFP

Second Gulf entrepreneurship forum kicks off in Kuwait

By Faten Omar

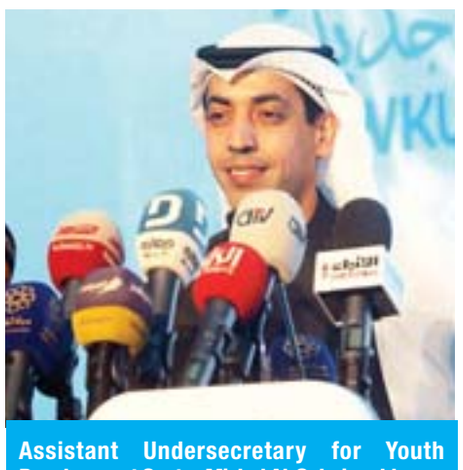
KUWAIT: The second Gulf entrepreneurship forum kicked off yesterday at Four Seasons Hotel in Kuwait City. The forum was organized by the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs and New Kuwait under the slogan "The most important steps to success".

During his speech in the opening ceremony of the Forum, Assistant Undersecretary for Youth Development Sector Mishal Al-Subaie said that the forum aims to educate Gulf youth in the field of entrepreneurship, how to establish companies and manage optimally and how to achieve sustainable development.

He added, "The forum also aims to involve young people in leadership issues, strengthen their skills in entrepreneurship, strengthen relations between Gulf people, exchange experiences among them to contribute to the renaissance of the Arab nation and improve its civilization."

Ministry's entrepreneurship section chief Hessa Al-Ayar

On her part, the ministry's entrepreneurship section chief Hessa Al-Ayar said in her speech during the opening session, that there is a renewed interest in the Gulf countries in the youth to properly qualify them in order to take leadership positions and actively participate in achieving sustainable development in the Gulf countries. "Entrepreneurship steps and relevant factors of success will be atop the agenda of the event. The conferees are expected to explore how to capitalize on the available tools of young people who are willing to get engaged in the realm of entrepreneurship," she added.



Assistant Undersecretary for Youth Development Sector Mishal Al-Subaie addresses the forum. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

Ayar noted that the forum aims at empowering young people to develop their awareness of entrepreneurship and raising their skills to participate in the labor market. "Today, youth represent 72 percent of the people. Encourage their talents and give them the opportunity to express, innovate, and release their energies are the most important responsibilities of the State. We are delivering that in coordination with all institutions of the State and civil society, through the presentation of positive models, successful experiences and the provision of many specialized and cultural programs." The event featured eight workshops and four seminars with the participation of a number of Gulf delegations, by five specialists in the field of entrepreneurship for each delegation, in addition to the owners of entrepreneurship existing projects.

NBK Economic Report

Global economic uncertainty weighs on MENA outlook; markets volatile

Lower oil prices expected in 2019-20 as OPEC bids to rebalance market

KUWAIT: This edition of the MENA Outlook occurs against a backdrop of increased global economic uncertainty and financial market volatility. The IMF, in its October 2018 WEO, revised down its global economic outlook by 0.2 percent to peg world output growth at roughly 3.7 percent over the next two years, a decent enough pace, but noted that the balance of risks is tilted to the downside. These are dominated by escalating trade protectionism, which has been sparked by the unresolved US-China trade tariff dispute and continued US monetary tightening-the US Federal Reserve hiked rates four times, by 25 bps each time, in 2018-with ramifications for emerging market economies and those with currencies pegged to the US dollar in terms of increased capital outflows and higher borrowing costs.

Policymaking uncertainty, at least in advanced economies, is further complicating the picture. From the Trump administration's partial shutdown of the federal government and likelihood of further legislative impasse in the face of a Democrat-controlled congress to the UK's Brexit woes and President Macron of France's tax reversal in the face of the 'gilet jaunes' (yellow vests) street protests, 2018 ended on a bad note.

The financial markets plunged into bear territory during the last quarter of 2018, with the S&P 500 and MSCI EM indices closing the year down 6.2 percent and 12.3 percent, respectively. GCC stock indices, in comparison, fared relatively well, with Saudi's Tadawul gaining 8 percent, Abu Dhabi's ADX 11.7 percent and Qatar's QE a region-leading 20.8 percent (though from a low base).

Oil prices

The outlook for oil prices has changed considerably over the last six months, with the balance of risks in 2019-2020 skewed to the downside. We envisage prices (Brent) averaging $65/bbl in 2019 and 2020, down from 2018's average of $71.6/bbl. Amid a mÈlange of bearish catalysts, from rampant US shale production and burgeoning OPEC+ output to President Trump's decision to offer six-month sanctions waivers to Iran's largest customers and weakening global economic growth, Brent crude, the international benchmark, plunged almost 38 percent in the last three months of 2018 to $54/bbl by year's end. Brent had been as high as $86/bbl in early October. Oil's price drop prompted OPEC to reconvene in December and reinstitute production cuts of at least 1.2 mb/d for 2019 in order to stabilize oil prices.

GCC growth

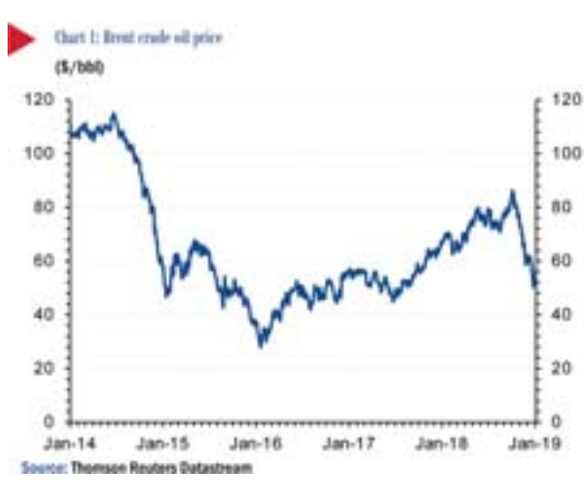
For the GCC oil producers, with the likely exception of Qatar, the softer oil price outlook for 2019-2020, coupled with production cuts, will likely delay the process of fiscal balancing and, in the process, place added pressure on the non-oil sectors to drive revenue growth and real output gains. Qatar's decision last December to withdraw from OPEC frees it from production cut obligations, while its fiscal account (and current account) was on track in 2018 to record a first surplus in three years.

Regional governments will continue with their ambitious infrastructure and development projects, backed by expansive public spending plans, with Saudi Arabia's record SR1.1 trillion ($293bn) budget the most eye-catching.

Private sector stimulus programs and productive infrastructure investments will, by and large, support non-oil growth over the forecast period. Reforms to stimulate the business environment and incentives to attract long term foreign investment were also introduced, most notably in the UAE, which reduced fees in several sectors, including real estate and tourism (Dubai), offered mainland licenses for businesses operating in free trade zones (Abu Dhabi) and, at the federal level, approved the issuance of residency visas to skilled expatriates for up to ten years and raised foreign ownership limits of companies operating outside of free trade zones to 100 percent from 49 percent. We expect GCC non-oil growth to improve from 2.9 percent in 2018 to 3.3 percent in 2019 and 3.5 percent in 2020.

On the hydrocarbon side, GCC governments' oil and gas expansion plans will continue apace, despite OPEC+ production cut obligations and the prospect of lower oil prices. The UAE is on the verge of meeting its oil production capacity target of 3.5 mb/d, having identified close to $145bn of new upstream and downstream investments over the next five years.

Both Qatar and Bahrain have commenced projects to significantly increase their oil and gas output-Bahrain after discovering sizeable offshore tight oil and gas deposits and Qatar after deciding to expand LNG production capacity by 43 percent to 110 mtpa. Kuwait, for its part, intends to capitalize on its burgeoning non-associated gas production and light condensate output-it sold its first shipment of the super light crude, which isn't subject to OPEC+ quotas, in 3Q18-and forthcoming expanded refinery capacity, with the $12bn Clean Fuels Project close to completion.



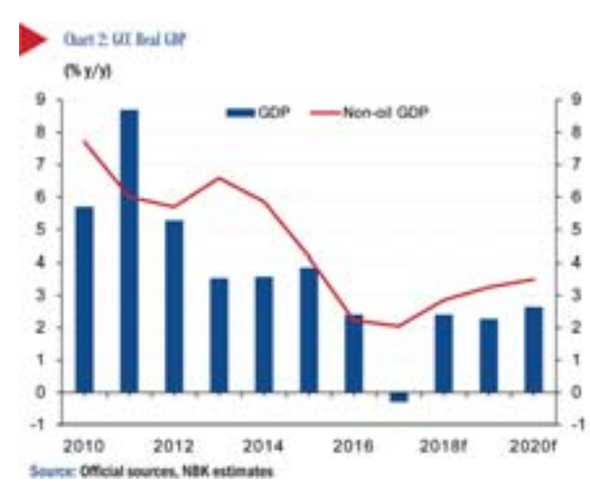


Table 1: Key GCC economic indicators

		2017	2018e	2019f	2020f
Nominal GDP	USD tn	1.5	1.6	1.7	1.7
Real GDP	% y/y	-0.3	2.4	2.3	2.6
- Oil	% y/y	-3.4	-2.0	0.7	1.2
- Non-oil	% y/y	2.1	2.9	3.3	3.5
Inflation	% y/y	0.7	2.4	2.1	2.0
Budget balance	% of GDP	-7.3	-4.6	-3.1	-3.4

Source: Official sources, NBK estimates

Apart from oil prices, risks to the outlook include still-lackluster credit growth in an environment of rising costs of borrowing linked to US monetary tightening (especially in the case of Saudi Arabia) and lower oil prices with their impact on consumers' confidence and spending. Overall, we expect headline growth in the GCC to average 2.3 percent in 2019 and 2.6 percent in 2020, from an estimated 2.4 percent in 2018.

Inflationary impulses, meanwhile, appear to be restrained, weighed down by falling real estate/rental prices and still-subdued demand. The introduction of VAT in the UAE and Saudi Arabia in 2018 was the predominant contributor to the increase in prices in those countries, but its effects have worn off. Inflation should rise by no more than 2.0 percent by 2020.

Reforms boost Egypt's economy

In Egypt, economic growth has been relatively strong, reaching 5.3 percent in 2017/18 and supported by IMF funds and associated fiscal reform measures, which have also trimmed the deficit. Tourism and exports are recovering, helped in part by a cheaper currency, remittances have increased substantially, and unemployment has begun to fall (to 10 percent in 3Q18 from 11.9 percent in 3Q17). We expect growth to continue at roughly the same rate over the forecast period, supported by investment spending, gains in the tourism sector and continued increases in natural gas production.

China-N Korea trade battered by UN sanctions

BEIJING: China's trade with North Korea plummeted last year, data showed yesterday, as harsh UN sanctions batter the nuclear-armed country's economy. Beijing is a key ally of the isolated state and its main source of trade and aid-but in 2017 it backed United Nations measures to punish Pyongyang over its nuclear and ballistic missile activities.

The sanctions on trade in North Korea's most valuable commodities sent bilateral trade plunging 52.4 percent last year compared to 2017. China's imports from its neighbor dropped 88 percent in 2018 year-on-year to 1.42 billion yuan ($210 million), while its exports slumped 33.3 percent to 14.7 billion yuan ($2.18 billion), according to customs administration spokesman Li Kuiwen.

"For trade between China and North Korea, we are strictly implementing the resolutions of the (UN) Security Council," Li told reporters. The trade sanctions seek to cut off the North's access to hard currency by banning its main exports-coal and other mineral resources, fisheries and textile products.

They have pummeled the country's economy, which contracted 3.5 percent in 2017 — its worst showing in two decades-South Korea's central bank said last year.

The North's mining industry slumped 11 percent in 2017, the Bank of Korea said, after growing 8.4 percent in 2016. Manufacturing output also fell 6.9 percent that year-down from 4.8 percent growth-while agriculture and fisheries slipped 1.3 percent, after also expanding in 2016.

China and Russia have both said the UN should consider relaxing sanctions on Pyongyang, while Washington is demanding the North give up its nuclear arsenal before any relief from sanctions is granted. Last week North Korean strongman Kim Jong Un made his fourth visit to China, with Chinese President Xi Jinping backing him in the deadlocked nuclear talks with the US while insisting the two sides should meet "halfway". —AFP

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 13th January 2019 announcing the names of its winners for the week from the 6th January till the 10th January 2019, in which five winners will receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

- Turki Maiah Ali Saleh
- Ebtehal Abdullah Ahmad Alramadhan
- Abbas Fakhr Aldin Tawala
- Ghalyh Qasi Ahmed Aldrwesh
- Mohammad Abdulredha Hussain Aleem

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

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

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2019 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

Citigroup profits up but revenues dip in Q4

NEW YORK: Lower expenses helped boost Citigroup's fourth-quarter earnings but heavy volatility dented revenues in some trading divisions, the bank reported yesterday. Citigroup, the first US banking giant to report results, said fourth-quarter net income was $4.3 billion, compared to a loss of $18.9 billion a year ago, when results were affected by a one-time accounting loss from US tax reform.

Revenues dropped 2.1 percent to $17.1 billion, below analyst expectations for $17.6 billion.

Revenues in Citigroup's global consumer banking were about flat with the year-ago period while revenues in institutional clients group dipped one percent. Declines in bond trading more than offset the gains in increased equity trading, the company said. "A volatile fourth quarter impacted some of our market sensitive businesses, particularly Fixed Income," said Chief Executive Michael Corbat. The bank notched a three percent increase in total loans compared with the year-ago level. Earnings translated into $1.61, six cents about analyst expectations. Citigroup shares fell 0.7 percent to $56.30 in premarket trading in New York. —AFP

EU economy chief says 'difficult' to get digital tax deal

PARIS: The EU's Economic Affairs commissioner said yesterday that it will be "difficult" for the bloc to agree unanimously on an EU-wide tax on high-tech giants by a self-imposed March deadline.

Speaking to reporters in Paris, Pierre Moscovici also said he would submit to his commission colleagues a proposal ending a veto that national governments hold on tax matters, which gives any government the power to torpedo even the least ambitious proposal on tax matters.

The veto provision had become "an obstacle" to dealing with global challenges, he said.

Ireland, Denmark and Sweden are opposed to Moscovici's proposal for an EU directive taxing internet company's turnover to ensure that global tech platforms like Facebook and Google pay their fair share.

France has been backing the idea as has Germany, with qualifications, but that will not be enough under the current system. "It is clear that the French-German accord presented last December did not win unanimous support, neither on the day itself nor in the following days, so we must assume that while a joint solution is not impossible, it will be difficult to achieve by March," Moscovici said.

Paris has argued the measure would be a vote-winning accomplishment for mainstream EU politicians ahead of the European Parliament elections in May, in which anti-Brussels populists could do well.

But Ireland, which hosts the European headquarters of several US tech giants, leads a small group of otherwise mostly Nordic countries that argue the tax will also punish European companies and stoke Washington's anger. Several EU countries, including France, Britain and Italy, are working on their own, national versions of a digital tax, a development the EU fears could result in a patchwork of schemes across the continent rather than a unified EU strategy. —AFP

Sharp fuel hike sparks violent protests across Zimbabwe

Country battles worst gasoline shortage in decade

HARARE: Angry protesters barricaded roads with burning tires and rocks in Zimbabwe yesterday after the government more than doubled the price of fuel in a bid to improve supplies as the country battles its worst gasoline shortages in a decade.

Protesters turned back drivers and blocked buses from carrying passengers in Zimbabwe's two main cities of Harare and Bulawayo as the main labor federation called for three-day nationwide strike.

Soldiers were deployed at a shopping center in Bulawayo's township of Entumbane where protesters looted shops. Demonstrators in the second city had attacked minibuses heading to the city center and used burning tires and stones to block the main routes into town while some schools were turning away pupils fearing for their safety.

Shops closed in downtown Harare as riot police patrolled the streets and a military helicopter flew over the capital. President Emmerson Mnangagwa on Saturday night announced a more than 100-percent rise in the price of petrol and diesel in a move he said would end fuel shortages.

"We have suffered enough," author Philani Nyoni who was part of the protest in Bulawayo. "The government is now aware that we are not happy with their stupid policies like the fuel price increase," said Nyoni, calling on the president who is on a tour of Europe, to return home to "sort out things".

'We have suffered enough'

"We want Mnangagwa to know our displeasure in his failure," said another Bulawayo protester, Mthandazo Moyo, 22.

"Mugabe was evil but he listened," he added, referring to former autocratic and long-time ruler Robert Mugabe, who was ousted in November 2017. Residents in Epworth, a poor suburb east of the capital Harare, yesterday woke up to find boulders blocking roads and the protesters set ablaze a tent at a police post. "It's tense since early morning," Nhamo Tembo, an Epworth resident said.

Zimbabwe's economy has been in a slump for more than a decade, with cash shortages, high unemployment and recently a scarcity of staples such as bread and cooking oil.

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

Petrol prices rose from $1.24 a liter to $3.31 (2.89 euros), with diesel up from $1.36 a liter to $3.11 starting Sunday - one of the highest pump prices in the world.

The main labor alliance, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) has called for a three-day stay-at-home strike as it said the government had shown a clear lack of empathy for the already overburdened poor. Government has accused the strike organizers of pushing a political "regime change" agenda and of "subversive political activities". "It has become obvious that there is deliberate plan to undermine and challenge the prevailing constitutional order," said government spokesman Nick Mangwana in a statement late Sunday night.

He warned that government will "respond appropriately" against "all those who have been conspiring to subvert peace, law and order in the country". 'Subversive political activities' -

He accused unnamed opposition parties of disguising themselves as civic groups and of sponsoring civil unrest. Opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Nelson Chamisa said: "We have a national crisis which is descending into a humanitarian crisis".

Mnangagwa took over from Mugabe following military intervention before winning the disputed election in July. He has announced a package of measures to help state workers after strikes by doctors and teachers over poor pay.

Doctors in state hospitals went on a 40-day strike beginning early December demanding salaries be paid in US dollars and improved work conditions.

Teachers unions called a strike last week for better pay but their calls went largely unheeded. Mnangagwa announced "a package of measures to cushion government workers." He also warned government would come down hard on "elements bent on taking advantage of the current fuel shortages to cause and sponsor unrest and instability in the country."

When he took over from Mugabe, Mnangagwa pledged to revive the moribund economy and end the country's international isolation. —AFP

HARARE: Angry protesters barricade the main route to Zimbabwe's capital Harare from Epworth township yesterday after announced a more than hundred percent hike in fuel prices. —AFP

SUVs, trucks and sports cars take center-stage

DETROIT: SUVs, trucks and sports cars were set to take center stage yesterday as a subdued Detroit auto show kicked off with fewer carmakers and more uncertainty.

With compact cars and sedans an ever-shrinking portion of the North American market, auto makers have all but abandoned them, as evidenced by what they chose to emphasize in Detroit.

Trucks, SUVs and high-performance vehicles dominated the new debuts scheduled for the US's premier auto show. The exception was Volkswagen, which was to unveil a new Passat sedan.

"Car companies are acknowledging that the crossover, sport utility vehicle boom is continuing," said analyst Michelle Krebs of Autotrader. For those looking for an alternative, carmakers were emphasizing sporty cars with nostalgic pasts. Ford's redesigned Explorer SUV, debuted in Detroit on Friday, is on public display for the first time, with a high-powered version of the Mustang sports car called the Shelby GT500 also to be unveiled.

Toyota was also scheduled to show off a new Supra-a refresh of a beloved sports car the firm stopped producing more than 16 years ago. Meanwhile, Fiat Chrysler was to unveil redesigns of its larger versions of the popular Ram truck. Aside from VW, German carmakers abandoned the Detroit show this year, amid competition from events in New York, Miami and Las Vegas where increasingly tech-centered car announcements were presented.

At the Detroit show, the hope was that larger and more profitable vehicles would help the industry weather any economic storms. Analysts predicted slowing sales in 2019, following a decade of growth.

"We believe that the future is increasingly looking less positive for the industry," said Jonathan Smoke, chief analyst for Cox Automotive, whose firm has forecast 16.9 million new car sales in 2019, down from 17.3 million in 2018.

"The market itself is adjusting to a slightly smaller volume but they happen to be more expensive, higher quality vehicles," he said. Small cars and conventional sedans accounted for less than a third of last year's new car purchases-down four percent from 2017.

The industry has invested heavily in SUVs and trucks, making them more luxurious and high tech, analysts said. Meanwhile, small car and sedan production has been downsized or abandoned by many companies. GM has announced plans to close underused US plants that make smaller cars. Ford planned similar cost-cutting moves in Europe. —AFP

DETROIT, MI: Jim Farley, Ford Motor Company Executive Vice President and President of Global Markets, reveals the 2020 Ford Mustang Shelby GT 500 at the 2019 North American International Auto Show during Media preview days yesterday in Detroit, Michigan.—AFP

DETROIT, MI: The General Motors Cadillac XT6 three-row crossover SUV is revealed at the Garden Theater. —AFP

China's US trade surplus hit record in 2018 but tariffs bite

BEIJING: China's trade surplus with the United States hit a record high last year but the country's imports and exports fell in December as the long-running trade war begins to bite in the world's number two economy, data showed yesterday.

The surplus with the US is a major source of anger within the Trump administration, which imposed tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars worth of Chinese goods last year and has warned of more to come.

Despite the levies, exports to the United States grew 11.3 percent last year while imports rose 0.7 percent, expanding the surplus to a record $323.3 billion from $275.8 billion in 2017, customs data show. However, in a sign that the White House's measures are having an impact, China's exports to the US sank last month.

The figures come after a US delegation held three days of talks in Beijing last week in the first face-to-face meeting since Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping in December pledged a 90-day truce to resolve the crisis.

Trump wants Beijing to buy more American goods to narrow the yawning trade gap and allow foreign players better access and protection in the Chinese market.

China traditionally imports vast quantities of American soybeans in the second half of the year, long making it the most valuable import from the US.

Subdued import growth

But the buying fell off last year after China imposed a 25 percent retaliatory tariff on the commodity in the summer. Total imports of soybeans fell 7.9 percent last year to 88 million tons, customs data showed, with December imports down 40.1 percent from a year earlier. "The overall development of China-US trade in 2018 was still relatively normal, but the trade surplus did expand slightly," said Li Kuiwen, spokesman for the customs administration. The country's commerce minister told state media on Friday that China will work to straighten out trade frictions with the US this year.

China's exports to the world fell 4.4 percent in December from a year earlier, while imports dropped 7.6 percent, reflecting sluggish demand at home and abroad.

"With global growth set to cool further this year, exports will remain weak even if China can clinch a trade deal that rows back Trump's tariffs," said Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics.

The trade slowdown sent Chinese stocks lower yesterday. Rapidly falling exports could point to rising unemployment, said Nomura economist Lu Ting. "Beijing will perhaps be more eager to strike a trade deal with the US ... policymakers will need to take more aggressive measures to stabilise GDP growth," Lu wrote in a note.

QINGDAO: Workers prepare a container at the port in Qingdao, China's eastern Shandong province, yesterday. China's global trade volume rose last year but its surplus fell again as its imports outpaced its exports, official data released yesterday showed amid a bruising trade war with the United States. —AFP

'Hidden concerns'

China's global trade volume rose last year but its surplus with the world fell 16.2 percent to $351.76 billion in 2018, as imports rose 15.8 percent while exports gained 9.9 percent. The customs administration will work to "improve the country's business environment and expand foreign trade... in order to keep employment, the financial sector, foreign trade, foreign investment" stable, Li said, adding there are some "hidden concerns" and "uncertain external factors" for development.

With US tariffs in place, the gloomy export picture has reinforced the need for Beijing to rely on its legion of consumers to grow its economy.

But a slew of bad data has added to concerns about China's economy, which is expected to have grown around 6.5 percent in 2018, down from 6.9 percent in 2017 and at its weakest rate in almost three decades. China's annual passenger car sales fell last year for the first time in more than 20 years, as the trade war with the US rocked consumer confidence and Beijing reined in car financing channels. —AFP

China trade shock hits global stocks, commodities

LONDON: Global stock markets and commodities took a hit yesterday after a shock contraction in Chinese trade pointed to deepening cracks in the world's second-largest economy and sparked fears of a sharper slowdown in global growth.

Data from China showed imports fell 7.6 percent year-on-year in December while analysts had predicted a 5 percent rise. Exports dropped 4.4 percent, confounding expectations for a 3 percent gain. For an interactive version of the following chart, click here https://tmsnrt.rs/2SRopIf. The data reinforced fears U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods were starting to hit China's cooling economy, while softening demand has been felt around the world with sales of goods ranging from iPhones to automobiles slowing, prompting profit warnings from Apple among others.

Adding to the gloom were weak industrial output numbers from the euro zone, which posted their largest fall in nearly three years. The index of Europe's leading 300 shares fell 0.9 percent by noon in London. Germany's DAX and France's CAC were down over half a percent and 0.9 percent respectively, with shares in European luxury goods companies and the automotive sector suffering some of the biggest declines.

The falls in Europe followed hefty declines in Asia where MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific ex-Japan shares lost around 1 percent from Friday's 1-1/2 month high - its biggest single-day percentage drop since Jan. 2. Chinese and Hong Kong shares suffered the worst hits.

"December's (China) trade data were soft, but the data for the preceding months were surprisingly strong and show exports to the US growing at a decent pace, which may reflect producers trying to front-run any future escalation in tariffs," wrote Neil Shearing, group chief economist at Capital Economics in a note to clients. US futures showed no let-up on the horizon, with Nasdaq e-mini futures pointing to falls over 1 percent for tech stocks while industrials looked set to open 0.9 percent softer.

Commodities suffer

The prospect of slowing global growth also roiled commodity markets, with oil prices slipping over 1 percent . Industrial metals copper and aluminium lost ground in London and Shanghai.

Safe-haven trades benefited from the equity pullback with US 10-year Treasury yields falling to as low as 2.6690 percent - their lowest level in a week - while gold prices gained. The world's two largest economies have been in talks for months to try and resolve their bitter trade war, with no signs of substantial progress. Some analysts expect China's latest data to provide impetus to Beijing to resolve the trade dispute with Washington.

Though Citi analysts said even with the rising probability for both sides to reach an agreement, the tariff and trade disruption appears to have already rippled through the global economy. "Regional trade growth appears to have slowed substantially after front-loading effect diminished," they said. In light of the trade dispute, China's policymakers have already pledged to step up support this year, following a raft of measures in 2018 including fast tracking infrastructure projects and cuts in banks' reserve requirements and taxes. —Reuters

Infiniti Al-Babtain announces a special package on Infiniti QX50

Deal accompanies purchase of Infiniti QX50 at Al-Rai showroom

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, announces the launch of an exclusive package deal that accompanies the purchase of the new Infiniti QX50 at the Al-Rai showroom.

When buying the new Infiniti QX50, customers can be guaranteed a benefit package of a two-year full insurance, free maintenance or 60,000 KM, 5-year warranty open mileage, 24/7 road side assistance, a replacement car and free registration and 3rd party insurance.

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Developed on an entirely new platform, the QX50 features the sophisticated and assuring INFINITI Intelligent All-Wheel Drive. Drive Assist technologies react instantaneously to critical driving situations, supporting the drivers with a range of empowering 'co-pilot' features, and enabling them to always be in total control.

Driver-centric, yet passenger-minded, the QX50 offers a package of technologies to enhance the driving experience, while a calm, connected, and relaxing cabin features an asymmetric layout - designed to meet different needs of the driver and the passengers.

Infiniti Al-Babtain encourages its customers to explore the advantage of the exclusive deal by visiting the designated showroom located in Al-Rai.

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The Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co and Trading and Contracting Company is the authorized agent and distributor of many Japanese, Chinese, and European (French) vehicles in Kuwait such as Nissan, Infiniti, Renault, Citroen.

Pound hits 7-week high on eve of vital Brexit vote

LONDON: The British pound yesterday hit a seven-week high against the dollar as UK Prime Minister Theresa May delivered an upbeat speech on the eve of a key Brexit vote which she is expected to lose, dealers said. Sterling bounced as high as $1.2879, a level last seen in late November, after May issued a last-ditch plea for lawmakers to back her European Union divorce deal today. The European single currency dropped to 88.96 pence to the pound, the lowest level since early December.

World stock markets meanwhile buckled as investors seized on poor Chinese economic data which stoked renewed fears of a global slowdown. "We all have a duty to implement the result of the referendum," May said in an address to factory workers in Stoke, a Brexit-backing city in central England. The embattled British leader, who is widely expected to lose the House of Commons vote by a considerable margin, said failure to deliver Brexit would be "catastrophic" for British democracy.

'Highly skeptical'

"The pound has moved up... and is now not far from the $1.29 handle," said XTB analyst David Cheetham. "However, the markets remain highly sceptical as to whether May can get the required support in the Commons tomorrow evening and a heavy defeat would likely see her deal dead in the water."

"Recent developments have seen the consensus make a marked shift away from the probability of a no-deal but there remains a nagging doubt that this is being dismissed out of hand all too readily.

"If traders start to fear that it could realistically happen once more then the pound is vulnerable to a swift swoon lower." Meanwhile, London's benchmark FTSE 100 stocks index sank 1.0 percent in early afternoon deals, while the Frankfurt and Paris markets shed 0.6 percent and 0.8 percent respectively.

In Asia, Hong Kong stocks spearheaded a sell-off as profit-takers also moved in following a six-day rally.

Reigniting slowdown fears

"Disappointing trade data from China overnight served to reignite fears of a global economic slowdown," said AxiTrader analyst James Hughes. Data yesterday showed China's imports and exports fell last month, signalling that US tariffs are beginning to bite in the world's number two economy.

The customs bureau also said China's trade surplus with the US — a major source of anger for President Donald Trump — widened 17.2 percent last year, as US companies rushed to buy goods ahead of more tariff hikes.

"European markets have started off the week in somewhat downbeat fashion," said IG analyst Joshua Mahony.

"The release of Chinese trade data has done little to help sentiment around both the Chinese growth story and prospects of talks between the US and China." With few catalysts to drive buying, equities were ripe for selling after last week's healthy gains, with the US government shutdown — now in its fourth week and showing no sign of ending soon — adding a sense of unease. —AFP

NBK extends its 10% cashback campaign until end of January

KUWAIT: Following the great success of its 10 percent Cashback campaign that has benefited over 20,000 customers since its launch, National Bank of Kuwait extended the duration of the campaign until the end of January. Customers will enjoy up to 10 percent cashback on purchases made using their NBK Visa Credit Card.

The success of the 10 percent cashback campaign was measured by the response of customers to the features of the campaign, which came as part of the ongoing rewards and offers launched in 2018. The Cashback campaign gave customers the chance to earn 10 percent back from purchases made locally or internationally using the eligible NBK Visa Credit Cards .

The campaign runs for customers holding the NBK Visa Platinum Credit Card, NBK Visa Signature Credit Card or NBK Visa Infinite Credit Card, and is valid on purchases made at retailers in the following categories: duty free, restaurants, airlines and hotels.

NBK Customers can also benefit from the campaign when they use their card to pay for their telecom bills, and entertainment services such as cinemas, OSN, BeIN and Netflix.

Customers get up to 10 percent cashback when they use their card locally and internationally on selected merchants as follows: Telecom bills 10 percent, entertainment services 5 percent, duty free 3 percent, restaurants 1 percent, airline 1 percent, and hotels 1 percent.

Hanadi Khazal

Commenting on the extension of the campaign, Hanadi Khazal, Chief Marketing Officer, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said, "Our Cashback campaign has received great success from over 20,000 customers since its launch a few months ago, and the number continues to increase daily. This is why we are extending its duration until the end of month of January to continue rewarding our customers and enable them to benefit from the great cash backs on purchases made with their NBK Visa Credit Card at select retailers.

Khazal added, "We are glad to see the level of success and customer satisfaction this campaign has gained and promise our customers to continue introducing new campaigns and rewards throughout the year, ensuring we exceed their needs and aspirations."

Khazal further highlighted the many features and benefits of NBK Visa Credit Cards, saying that they have been designed to complement the lifestyles of various segments of customers. The Cards enable them to enter the NBK Rewards Program in which they earn points on purchases made in leading local and international retailers, in addition to exclusive promotions and offers launched by the bank during the year.

Therefore, NBK Visa Credit Cardholders benefit from the NBK Rewards Program with more than 800 partner outlets across Kuwait, access to lounges in worldwide airports, free travel insurance, NBK Secure Shopping, free valet parking, concierge service in addition to exclusive promotions.

Bangladesh garment workers reject wage hike, walk off job

BANGLADESH: Thousands of Bangladeshi garment workers downed tools and walked out of clothing factories yesterday, refusing to end a week-long strike over wages and rejecting government efforts to end the standoff.

Police said thousands of laborers marched off factory floors for an eighth consecutive day, disrupting Bangladesh's $30-billion-a-year industry spinning clothes for major western brands.

Unlike previous days, there were no reports of violence. One worker was killed last week after police fired rubber bullets and tear gas at some 5,000 protesters. In Ashulia, near the capital Dhaka, armoured personnel carriers and hundreds of police guarded factories in the country's largest garment hub.

A message broadcast over loudspeakers urged protesters to return to work: "A list is being prepared of those who are roaming around. No violence will be tolerated."

As the strike entered a second week Sunday, the government brokered a deal between unions and manufacturers to end the dispute, agreeing to raise wages for mid-tier tailors.

But some received hikes of little more than 20 taka ($0.25) a month, angering many tailors who churn out boutique clothing for high-end fashion lines overseas. "I think the wage hike was unjust," Ruhul Amin, executive president of the Garment Trade Union Centre, said.

Some workers joining Monday's protests expressed anger over the heavy-handed police response last week and accused factory bosses of withholding pay from those who joined the strike.

"We're not getting paid for the last week, that's why we walked out," Mitali Begum, another labourer, told AFP. The protests are the first major test for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina since winning a fourth term in the December 30 elections, which were marred by violence and allegations of vote rigging and intimidation.

An estimated four million Bangladeshis work in the country's 4,500 garment factories.

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

Roughly 80 percent of Bangladesh's export earnings come from clothing sales abroad, with global retailers H&M, Primark, Walmart, Tesco and Aldi among the main buyers. Last year, Bangladesh was the second-largest global apparel exporter after China. It has ambitious plans to expand the sector into a $50-billion-a-year industry by 2023. —AFP

Weak China data, looming Brexit deal vote, prompt rush to eurozone bonds

LONDON: Eurozone bond yields extended falls yesterday after weak Chinese data added to a gathering storm of risk aversion while investors awaited further clarity from today's Brexit vote in Britain's parliament. Concerns about the German economy and the government shutdown in the United States, as well as the threat of a new election in Greece, added to the bid for safe haven assets across the bloc and 10-year bond yields fell as much as five basis points.

Asian and European shares led the fall yesterday after China's exports unexpectedly fell the most in two years in December. After a muted start, the bid for safe haven eurozone bonds gathered momentum, tracking a move by US Treasuries in which 10-year yields fell 3.4 basis points to 2.66 percent .

Germany's 10-year government bond yield, the euro zone benchmark, fell three bps 0.207 percent, lower on Friday's close but bolstered by new supply last week.

Matt Cairns, a rates strategist at Rabobank, said that signs of weakness in Europe's hitherto strongest economy were also driving down Bund yields. Data yesterday showed eurozone industrial output fell in November by more than expected. "What is also feeding in is some discussion that there may be additional tax cuts required to prop up the German economy," said Cairns. "The possibility that the European Central Bank can engineer higher rates...is really failing."

Legislators from Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU), meeting at the weekend, discussed introducing new tax cuts when the governing coalition reviews its work towards the end of this year, the party's leader said. Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, who succeeded Merkel as party leader late last year, told Welt television that tax cuts should be used as stimulus to pre-empt a possible downturn. Earlier, Finance Minister Olaf Scholz had said there was space for tax cuts if the economic outlook darkened.

German data has disappointed of late, pointing to a slowdown in economic growth which ECB policymaker Ewald Nowotny said on Saturday could be a lasting phenomenon caused by structural problems, particularly in its car industry, rather than a one-off.

The future path of Britain's exit from the European Union is uncertain as parliament is likely to vote down Prime Minister Theresa May's deal today. Possible outcomes include a last-minute deal, a disorderly exit, a new referendum or remaining in the bloc. The threat of new elections in Greece meanwhile kept upward pressure on its bond yields with its 10-year government bond yield two bps higher at 4.30 percent. —Reuters

Chilean Patagonia: An open-air lab to study climate change

Scientists study whales, dolphins to predict climate change

SENO BALLENA, Chile: In one of the most inhospitable places on Earth, the southernmost part of Chile's Patagonia region, scientists are studying whales, dolphins and algae in order to help predict how climate change will affect the world's oceans. For the study, four researchers from the Austral University of Chile embarked from Punta Arenas for the remote Seno Ballena fjord.

The fjord currently produces the kind of conditions that should be seen in other marine systems in the next few decades, when dramatic changes are expected in the environment due to increased carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere and the melting of glaciers."This place is like an actual experiment in nature because it allows us, without needing to conduct experiments in the lab, to know what will happen without imagining it," marine biologist Maximiliano Vergara told AFP.

Reaching the fjord is no easy task-they had to negotiate the treacherous Strait of Magellan that connects the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans for a day and a half aboard a small raft adapted for scientific research, with winds exceeding 100 kilometers per hour and glacial temperatures. On site, they take readings from a system of sensors that provide a constant stream of data from water samples taken every three hours.

The researchers are analyzing the chemical, physical and biological variables of the waters, which show lower levels of pH, salinity and calcium, especially in the most shallow areas, as a consequence of climate change."What we're doing at the moment is establishing our information baseline," Vergara said.

Dire consequences

Seno Ballena gets its name from the humpback whales that feed in the area after travelling down from the warmer waters of Central America, where they breed. The chilly fjord waters provide one of the most productive marine habitats in the world, where sardines and krill can be found in huge numbers. But climate change poses a threat to its ecosystem as the melting of a glacier on Santa Ines island and increased rainfall have led to rising levels of freshwater. If that continues, it would have dire consequences for whales as the plankton they feed on could disappear. "A change in the microalgae could generate changes in the secondary structure (of the marine system) or the animals that feed on these," marine biologist Marco Antonio Pinto told AFP. Under normal circumstances, when there is an abundance of microalgae, these provide food for the zooplankton that subsequently nourish the food chain all the way up to whales, said Pinto.

The expedition members are taking samples from eight stations around Seno Ballena to measure the effects of the melting glacier on Santa Ines, which has accelerated to such an extent that rocks have appeared that weren't visible during their last trip in April. "The waters of high latitudes, both in the northern and southern hemispheres, contain a huge amount of biological and physiochemical information that can be used as a basis to take crucial decisions for environmental preservation projects in developed countries," said biologist Maximo Frangopulos, a professor at the University of Magellanes and leader of the expedition. The scientists are worried about the potential for a red tide-a phenomenon brought on by excessive numbers of microorganisms that absorb a huge amount of oxygen and produce toxins, resulting in the deaths of much marine life.

'It's like a puzzle'

For now, researchers have noted a slight drop in the number of humpback whales but an increase in other species such as sea lions, which previously were not present in that region, and dolphins. They also found a lower concentration of calcium carbonate, something which can affect the shells of marine organisms such as mollusks or krill, a staple of a whale's diet. "It's like a puzzle that we're trying to put together... to see how climate change can affect not just the baseline marine system, but also the large mammals, something that would have a social and economic impact on the region," said Pinto. The crab, a species vital to the economy of the region around the strait, is another that could be affected as it needs calcium to harden its shell. The scientists are set to return to the area during the Southern Hemisphere winter to obtain new samples-and to see what other secrets the waters in this area of Chilean Patagonia can reveal. — AFP

CHILE: Humpback whales dive into the waters of Seno Ballena fjord at Santa Ines island in Punta Arenas, Magallanes region, southern Chile. — AFP

Panda celebrates first birthday in Malaysian zoo with ice cake

KUALA LUMPUR: A giant panda born in a Malaysian zoo celebrated her first birthday yesterday with a cake made of ice in front of adoring visitors. The youngster looked around shyly as a zookeeper carried her to a platform in her enclosure where the cake, which had a large number "one" on top, was waiting. After nibbling at some carrots used to decorate the creation, the panda-who has not yet been named-seemed to tire of the celebrations, and fell asleep.

Currently weighing 34 kilos, she is the second cub born to Liang Liang and Xing Xing since they were sent from China to Malaysia in 2014, on a 10-year loan. The first, Nuan Nuan, was born in August 2015 and sent back to China in 2017. Beijing and Kuala Lumpur have agreed that cubs born in captivity must go back to China at the age of two. The pandas are kept at the national zoo's panda centre outside Kuala Lumpur. It's estimated there are some 1,800 giant pandas left in the wild, living mainly in bamboo forest in the mountains of western China, according to environmental group WWF. — AFP

KUALA LUMPUR: A female one-year-old panda cub sits next to her birthday cake during a celebration at Malaysia's national zoo in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP

Iran to launch two satellites in 'coming days'

TEHRAN: Iran's president said yesterday the Islamic republic plans to launch two domestically made satellites into orbit in the "coming days" to gather information on the country's environment, state TV reported. "In the coming days we will launch two satellites into space," President Hassan Rouhani said during a trip to the northeastern Golestan province. "Both the Payam satellite and its carrier rocket are made in our own country and by the youth of this nation," he added.

Payam would orbit the earth at about 600 kilometers above its surface, according to state TV. Rouhani did not name the second satellite, but said both were manufactured at Tehran's Amirkabir University of Technology. Iran's telecommunications minister Mohammad Javad Azari Jahromi said Wednesday that Payam and a second satellite called Doosti had been successfully tested and that there would be "good news" soon, the conservative Tasnim news agency reported.

Doosti would be tasked with the same purpose as Payam, with a focus on agriculture, and would orbit at an altitude of 250 kilometers, he added. Earlier this month, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Iran's plans for sending satellites into orbit would violate a 2015 UN Security Council resolution which endorsed an international accord on ending Tehran's nuclear program. Resolution 2231 called on Iran to refrain from any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. "The United States will not stand by and watch the Iranian regime's destructive policies place international stability and security at risk," Pompeo said in a statement on January 3. — AFP

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New offers, discounts at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa's special Room Stay offer gives guests lavish breakfast, alongside 20 percent off in several restaurants. The offer delivers an opportunity for guests to not only experience the mouth-watering cuisine of Kuwait's idyllic resort, but also the luxurious feel of its rooms. The offer is applicable to a variety of restaurants.

For seafood and international food lovers, the delectable variety in Salt restaurant will appeal to guests, whereas lovers of diversity would enjoy an authentic Italian meal in Olio. For those who would love to indulge in a tender steak that would melt in their mouths, award-winning restaurant Pepper Steakhouse is perfect for individuals with fine taste for meat. Garden Cafe's live cooking stations and Mint's relaxing vibes and snacks will also be available for guests.

"Room Stay offer is the kind of offer we like to give our guests as a thank you for those who visited us and as a welcome to those who are yet to experience the luxury of Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa," said Director of Sales & Marketing, George Akar, in regard to the Room Stay offer and the rationale behind it. The room stay offer is valid until February 2, 2019, providing a memorable experience in which guests are welcomed with an open heart and given luxurious services.

ACK students win Huawei ICT finals

Four students from the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) earned the 1st and 2nd places in the recent Huawei ICT competition and were selected to compete in the International Competition in China. The Huawei ICT competition is held annually by Huawei with different regional sections. Students from different universities competed within regional divisions where only the top 25 in each country were selected to compete against each other in China.

Two ACK students represented Kuwait in the Middle Eastern division of the competition. ACK management would like to thank Huawei for giving students such a great opportunity to compete nationwide and internationally and is also happy to announce that the College won the "Huawei Excellent Academy Award for the Middle East" for 2018, among all other universities in Kuwait.

McDonald's Kuwait introduces Spicy Chicken range

McDonald's Kuwait is celebrating its fans' love for both chicken and spicy food with its mouth-watering Spicy Chicken range, which now includes the new, limited-time Spicy Chicken McNuggets. The McDonald's Spicy Chicken range offers four equally delectable menu items with just the right kick of spice, all made using 100 percent pure, Halal chicken.

On the sandwich side, the range includes the Grand Chicken Spicy, featuring a deliciously juicy chicken patty topped with Dijon mustard sauce, ripe tomatoes, shredded lettuce, and Emmental cheese, generously stacked together in between a soft bun. There is also the Spicy McChicken - a tasty breaded spicy chicken patty, topped with creamy mayonnaise, shredded lettuce, and cheddar cheese, all packed between a toasted sesame seed bun.

And for a spicy take on a popular classic, the Spicy Chicken burger will also be available through the range. The Spicy Chicken range also introduces a sure-to-be instant fan-favorite, with the limited-time-only Spicy Chicken McNuggets. Made with 100 percent white meat marinated chicken, breaded, and coated with a tasty tempura mix with chilly and parsley flakes, these spicy munchies are sure to be a crowd-pleaser for lovers of chicken and spicy food alike.

The entire McDonald's Spicy Chicken range is available at all McDonald's restaurants across Kuwait, as well as through all available delivery services. Exclusive offers for the Spicy Chicken range are also available through the McDonald's App, which can be found on the App Store and Google Play.

PERI Kuwait opens new stockyard

PERI Kuwait celebrated the 5th anniversary of its stockyard with the opening of new premises on December 11, 2018. The new stockyard is 27.500 m2 and it includes a showroom. In 2019 a training center will be implemented for the clients. Under the patronage of the German Embassy to Kuwait and with the presence of around 200 guests and employees, the Deputy Head of Mission of the German Embassy to Kuwait Ruediger Zettel, represented His Excellency the Ambassador of Germany to Kuwait.

PERI's sponsor in Kuwait, Abdul-Kareem Al Mutawa honored the event with his presence and a short speech. The Managing Director of PERI Kuwait, Josef Palme, handed over a present to Al Mutawa. In addition, the Market Unit Director of PERI, Johan Cilliers, travelled from South Africa specially to attend this event. He brought a video with a message from Alexander Schwoerer, who is a part of the owner's family. This was one of the highlights of that outstanding opening ceremony PERI will be celebrating the 50th anniversary in 2019 worldwide and its operating in Kuwait since 2013.

St Stephens Orthodox Church celebrates harvest festival

St Stephens Orthodox Church, Kuwait celebrated 'Harvest Festival 2019' on Friday at Nottingham British School, Abbassiya. Parish vicar Fr Sanju John presided over the public meeting that was held as part of the festival. Kolkata archdiocese head of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church Dr Joseph Mar Divanniyos Metropolitan inaugurated the celebration by lighting the lamp.

Parish secretary V T Varghese welcomed the guests, parish members and gathering while Very Rev Samuel Cor Episcopa and St Gregorios Parish Vicar Fr Jacob Thomas, Associate vicar Fr Jiju George, St Thomas Orthodox Old Church Vicar Fr Anil Varghese, NECK secretary Roy Yohannan, St Peters Knanaya parish vicar Fr Thomaskutty and Bhadrasana Council member Alex delivered felicitation speeches.

Dr Joseph Mar Divannyos Metropolitan was honored on the occasion who completed ten years of service as the metropolitan of the church. Harvest festival turned out to be a big success with huge participation of parish members and the public. Parish members staged several cultural programs as part of the festival. Well-known payback singers Najeem Arshad and Mridula Warrier staged a dazzling musical program. Several food stall and game stalls for children were set up on the campus creating an atmosphere of bonhomie and celebration.

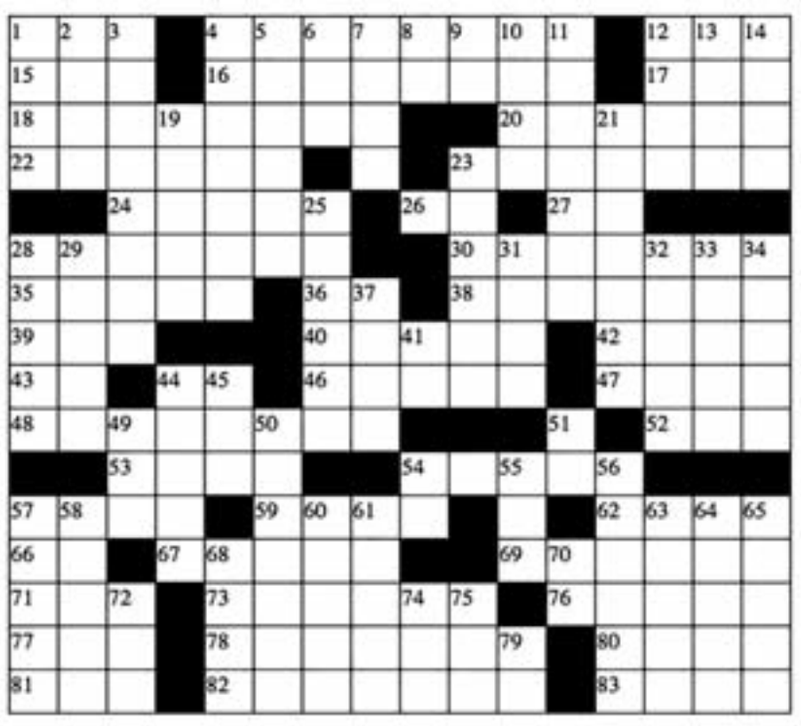
IEI Kuwait Chapter opens conference on engineering challenges in Gulf

The Institution of Engineers (India), Kuwait Chapter on Saturday opened a conference titled an "International Conference and Exhibition on Engineering Challenges in Gulf Countries - 2019" at Radison Blu Hotel. Dr M Mahendhran, Chairman IEI Kuwait Chapter welcomed dignitaries and guests in his welcome address. Dr S Neelamani, well-known scientist from Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and conference chairman gave a brief note on the international conference.

Engineering exhibition was inaugurated by Hannalore Graf, Chairman German British Council and Engr Sisir Banerjee, former chairman IEI India. Event was attended by a large number of industry experts, guests from Oil & Gas and energy companies, ministries, engineering associations and members. The conference concluded yesterday and witnessed a large number of presentations by Kuwaiti and international speakers.

Stars

CROSSWORD 2110



ACROSS

1. Electrical conduction through a gas in an applied electric field.
4. German anatomist (1829-1905).
12. Standard time in the 6th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 90th meridian.
15. Chiefly perennial grasses of cool temperate regions.
16. With the edge forward or on, by, or toward the edge.
17. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
18. Chipmunks of western America and Asia.
20. An ancient town on a promontory in western Greece.
22. A squeezer with a conical ridged center that is used for squeezing juice from citrus fruit.
24. Division of a usually pinnately divided leaf.
26. An honorary degree in science.
27. A Russian river.
28. Caused to show discomposure.
30. The largest city in Pakistan.
35. An Eskimo hut.
36. The eleventh month of the civil year.
38. Excellent and delightful in all respects.
39. Any of various long-tailed rodents similar to but larger than a mouse.
40. Wild or domesticated South American cud-chewing animal related to camels but smaller and lacking a hump.
42. Surrealist Spanish painter (1904-1989).
43. Before noon.
46. A manner of speaking that is natural to native speakers of a language.
47. Goddess of spring and wife of Bragi.
48. A person who eats human flesh.
52. A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
53. A city in northern India.
57. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
59. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
62. Carbon fuel produced by distillation of coal.
66. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
67. Any of various perennial South American plants of the genus Loasa having stinging hairs and showy white or yellow or reddish-orange flowers.
69. Shaped to fit by or as if by altering the contours of a pliable mass (as by work or effort).
71. A coenzyme derived from the B vitamin nicotinic acid.
73. Make certain of.
76. Small compact-bodied almost completely aquatic bird that builds floating nests.
77. Inquire about.
78. A huge destructive wave (especially one caused by an earthquake).
80. The biblical name for ancient Syria.
81. A human limb.
82. Causing hurt.
83. A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

1. Someone who copies the words or behavior of another.
2. A dissolute man in fashionable society.
3. A device that launches aircraft from a warship.
4. A reminder of past events.
5. A city in northwestern Turkey.
6. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
7. A strong-smelling plant from whose dried leaves a number of euphoriant and hallucinogenic drugs are prepared.
8. The compass point midway between south and west.
9. A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
10. (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
11. An official residence provided by a church for its parson or vicar or rector.
12. Stiff coarse fiber from the outer husk of a coconut.
13. Flesh of fish found in colder waters of northern Atlantic coast of the United States.
14. Flat and uninspiring.
19. Pertaining to or containing any of a group of organic compounds of nitrogen derived from ammonia.
21. Italian operatic soprano (born in 1922).
23. A member of a people inhabiting the Arctic (northern Canada or Greenland or Alaska or eastern Siberia).
25. A port city in southwestern Turkey on the Gulf of Antalya.
29. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
31. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
32. A group of biological taxa or species that share features inherited from a common ancestor.
33. (anatomy) A depression or fissure where vessels or nerves or ducts enter a bodily organ.
34. The formation of frost or ice on a surface.
37. Large lipoproteins rich in triglycerides.
41. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
44. Spiritual being attendant upon God.
45. (Irish) The sea personified.
49. Tag the base runner to get him out.
50. Tall feather palm of northern Brazil with hard-shelled nuts yielding valuable oil and a kind of vegetable ivory.
51. A ductile malleable reddish-brown corrosion-resistant diamagnetic metallic element.
54. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
55. (computer science) A computer that is running software that allows users to leave messages and access information of general interest.
56. Scarabaeid beetle considered divine by ancient Egyptians.
58. Lower in esteem.
60. An ancient Assyrian city on the River Tigris and traditional capital of Assyria.
61. Aggravation by deriding or mocking or criticizing.
63. A drama set to music.
64. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
65. Swelling from excessive accumulation of serous fluid in tissue.
68. Profane or obscene expression usually of surprise or anger.
70. A heavy silvery toxic univalent and bivalent metallic element.
72. 10 grams.
74. The airforce of Great Britain.
75. Any of various systems of units for measuring electricity and magnetism.
79. Being nine more than forty.

Yesterday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK

Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may have discovered you are giving more than you are receiving. You have a tendency to give too much of yourself to others. This is a time you may need to turn your focus on you. Get serious about your health and mental well-being. Remember taking care of you is a necessity. You tend to see this as being selfish. Remember if you do not take care of you, you will not be able to continue the constant care you give to others. Feed your soul, spoil yourself, but most of all, learn to relax. Today is the day to take a deep breath, grab a quick nap, and face the world with a new refreshed attitude, Aries. Learn to put yourself first.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today you may feel led by your heart maybe even more loving and emotional than usual. Today is a great day to spend time with someone you love. This closeness is something you long for. Intimacy and love are driving factors for you today. You could be extremely sensitive and emotionally unable to express your feelings to someone very close to you. This is something unfamiliar to you as your words usually flow with grace and style, Taurus. This may leave you feeling somewhat vulnerable.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

When the heavens are in certain positions, you could feel different sensations and sense noticeable, but unseen, changes to your environment. Such are the positions now, you decide to go with the flow and let events unfold as they will. Your confidence levels are high, even when things don't appear to be working; this shows that you can't always go by what you see with the physical eyes! Being first in line doesn't always mean being served first! Accepting where the cards fall is an indication of a spiritual warrior; working with what you're given reveals your power and abilities. Spending some time alone could help with a decision that affects more than one person.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are fiercely independent, especially today. You have drive and ambition. You may be focused on a goal but may be drawn to accomplish it in a less conventional manner than you normally would. You are bored with your usual routine and seeking a bit of change. Thinking outside the box may lead to some exciting new experiences. This may also lead to recognition for your creative thinking from those around you. The choices you make today will be clear and concise. These choices will also clearly be the correct ones and will be reap great rewards in the future from decisions made today. Cancer, today is full of opportunity and your mood is perfect to grasp each and every one.

Leo (July 23-August 22)

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.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Leave the major decisions for later, frustration and other obstacles may seem to be in your way today. You seem to find yourself wanting to be more social. A desire to hit the town. You find pleasure in surrounding yourself with friends. Choose your company wisely as you could find yourself in conflict with someone close to you. You seem to know what to say and when to say it. Others are seeking your company, and this would be a great time to spend time with your siblings or neighbors. Today is a great day for an escape. Take in a movie or curl up with a book.

Libra (September 23-October 22)

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

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

As clearly as you can see what direction you want to be headed, you are also able to see the past today. Memories of days gone by seem to flood in. You have come to appreciate the obstacles life has put in your path. You know that the struggles you have faced have only made you stronger. You may develop a strong bond with someone younger today. Your wisdom and life experience will be very beneficial when helping them with a situation they are dealing with.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may be facing a very emotional issue in your life today. It may seem your desire to be respected by others is very strong. You may find yourself even demanding this from others today. You may find yourself becoming very organized and structured. A strong will takes hold. You may discover you may not only have a knack for organizing things, but you have one for organizing people as well. This makes you a great leader and this quality could be acknowledged in the workplace today. Your ability to work with haste and little emotion makes you a natural in a position of leadership or management. You may find that you are not as appreciative of those around you.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may have been so focused lately you have been missing out on a social life. Today is a great day to get out and about. Hit the town but choose your company wisely as not to experience any conflict while doing so. Surround yourself with like-minded friends. Choose friends who are positive and share your love of life. You may find yourself experiencing a real spiritual awakening and the desire to share this with others. You should be pleasantly please at how receptive your friends are. A great day for you where the lines of communication open in all aspects of your world.

Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You will tell on yourself by the company you keep. If all your friends look, talk, and think like you, you may want to seek out some new relationships. You can learn from children as well as elderly, and everyone in between. Cultivate people of different races and cultures, from different social and economic backgrounds. Don't avoid those whose religion is different from yours. When you feel secure about yourself, you can enjoy diversity, and your life will be enriched by each relationship.

Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Prepare for a major event. This may put an end to your old way of life. You may find independence is a necessity now rather than a choice. You are on your own and this may mark a time of increased responsibility and accountability. Some soul searching may be in order to face this new life. Take your time and spend sometime meditating or relaxing to access your new situation. Do not ask yourself, Why me? You know why. Because you can handle any obstacle that is put in your path.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Restaurant

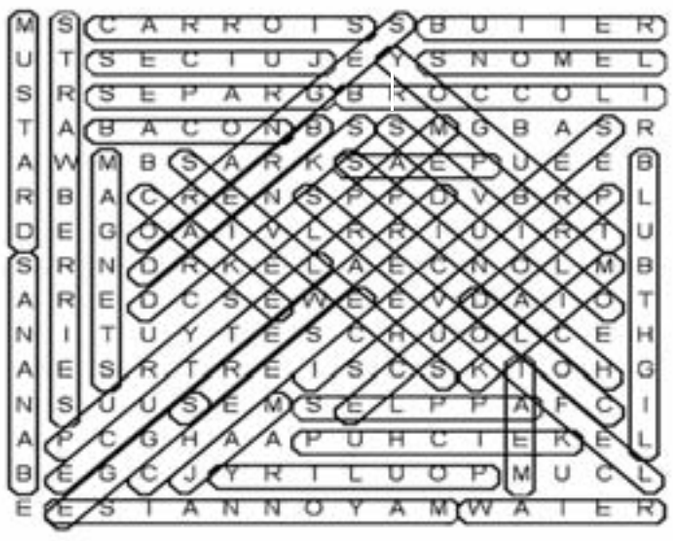
Find and circle all of the Restaurant words that are hidden in the grid.
The remaining letters spell an additional word.

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

APERITIF, APPETIZER, BILL, BUSBOY, CASHIER, CHAIRS, CHEF, COFFEE, COOKS, CUPS, CUSTOMER, DESSERT, DISHWASHERS, DRINKS, ENTREE, FORK, GLASSES, KNIFE, MANAGER, MEAL, MENU, NAPKINS, ORDER, PLATES, SALAD, SAUCERS, SERVERS, SPOON, TABLECLOTH, TABLES, TEA, TIP, WAITER, WAITRESS, WATER, WINE

Yesterday's Solution

Refrigerator



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

The hidden message is: BARBECUE SAUCE

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Kuwait Times
Established 1961

Lifestyle

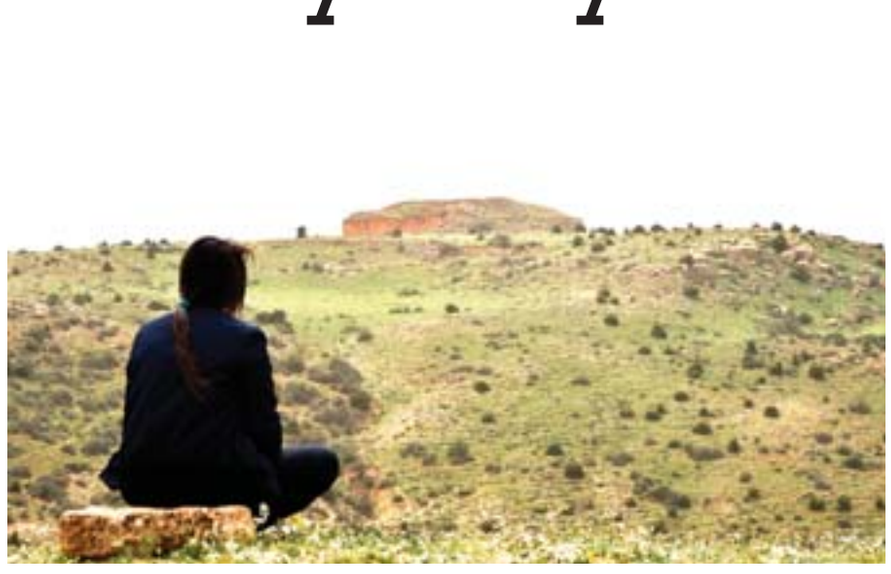
Twenty-year-old Japanese women dressed in kimonos take a ride on a roller-coaster after their 'Coming-of-Age Day' celebration ceremony at Toshimaen amusement park in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Algeria's ancient pyramid tombs still shrouded in mystery

Dating back centuries, Algeria's pyramid tombs are unique relics of an ancient era but a dearth of research has left the Jeddars shrouded in mystery. The 13 monuments, whose square stone bases are topped with angular mounds, are perched on a pair of hills near the city of Tiaret, some 250 kilometers (155 miles) southwest of the capital Algiers. Constructed between the fourth and seventh centuries, the tombs are believed by some scholars to have been built as final resting places for Berber royalty-although nobody knows who truly laid within. But Algerian authorities and archaeologists are now pushing to get the Jeddars listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, in the hope of assuring their preservation and study.

Gaining such status is a lengthy process and the culture ministry said Algeria's application to the UN body "will be filed during the first quarter of 2020". Experts from the National Centre for Prehistoric, Anthropological and Historical Research have for more than a year been preparing their case for the Jeddars. The goal is to "preserve this heritage, which is of immeasurable value and an ancestral legacy", said Mustapha Dorbane, a professor at Algiers 2 University's Archaeology Institute. When the Jeddars were built, Berber kings ruled the area in small fiefdoms whose history is poorly known and of which few traces were left. It was a period of great unrest for the former Roman province of Numidia, as Rome's western empire collapsed, Vandal and Byzantine troops invaded, and Arab forces stormed across North Africa. For centuries these far-flung monuments sat largely ignored, delivered to the ravages of time and looters.

Experts and students from Algiers University's Archaeology Institute work on one of the Jeddars pyramid tombs.



A woman observes one of the Jeddars pyramid tombs, near the city of Tiaret.

Experts and students from Algiers University's Archaeology Institute work on one of the Jeddars pyramid tombs, near the city of Tiaret, some 250 kilometers (155 miles) southwest of the Algerian capital. — AFP photos

'Wonders'

But more recently a group of around 20 archaeology students and their teachers has been working at the monuments. Moving slowly, they noted vandalized spots and used water and brushes to gently clean stone-engraved symbols before measuring them. A meticulous task, each entry may take upwards of two hours. Algerian archaeologist Rachid Mahouz, who has spent five years on a doctoral thesis about the tombs, deplores the lack of research devoted to the country's "wonders". "The French archives on the Jeddars are not available and the objects and bones found during the colonial era were taken to France," said Mahouz, who was born and raised nearby.

Archaeology was not taught at Algerian universities until the early 1980s, and until now, no specialty on funerary monuments is offered. The research team has been working on Jeddar A, which sits on Mount Lakhdar along with monuments B and C. The remaining Jeddars are on a hilltop some six kilometers away, Mount Arouri, and are known by the letters D through M.

Each contains at least one room, with the largest mound giving way to a labyrinth of 20 compartments, including funerary chambers. Some rooms are equipped with benches, areas researchers believe may have been used for worship. Inside the tombs, traditional Christian symbols as well as hunting scenes and animal figures are carved above the doors. Traces of inscriptions believed to be Latin mark the walls, but time has rendered them unreadable. Among the layers of history, researchers say they have also found Greek letters-although others dispute this.

Looting, deterioration

The Jeddars were built several centuries after other imposing pre-Islamic funerary monuments, which are found in present day northern Algeria, making them the last of their kind to be erected before the arrival of Islam. "The most distinctive feature of the Jeddars is by far the date of their construction," said Mahouz, the archaeologist. The monuments show the evolution of burial practices in the area. From simple mounds of earth and stone, known as tumuli, to stone-walled tombs called bazinas. But with some reaching heights of 18 meters (60 feet), some researchers say the size of the Jeddars put them in a category of their own.

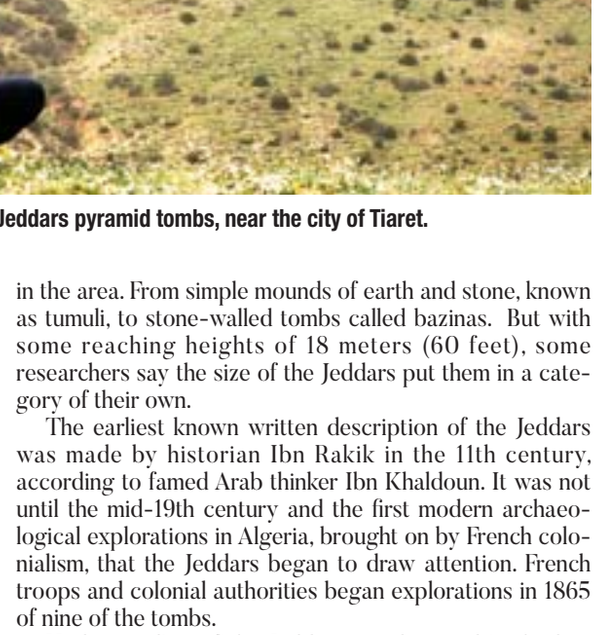
The earliest known written description of the Jeddars was made by historian Ibn Rakik in the 11th century, according to famed Arab thinker Ibn Khaldoun. It was not until the mid-19th century and the first modern archaeological explorations in Algeria, brought on by French colonialism, that the Jeddars began to draw attention. French troops and colonial authorities began explorations in 1865 of nine of the tombs.

Understanding of the Jeddars was boosted in the late 1960s by Algerian archaeologist Fatima Kadra's three-year study of Jeddars A, B and C-the oldest of the 13 and the only ones to be explored since Algeria's independence. But several of the structures have never been entered, as gravity and time have brought mounds of dirt and stone crashing down on the tombs within. Looting and deterioration have worsened an already difficult task for modern-day researchers with little backing. — AFP

Top Bollywood director Hirani denies sexual assault allegations

Renowned Bollywood director Rajkumar Hirani has denied allegations that he sexually assaulted a subordinate over a period of six months in 2018. Hirani, known for feel-good, comedy films that have grossed record numbers at the Indian box-office, was named in a Huffington Post India story on Sunday. It quoted an unnamed woman, nearly 30 years younger than Hirani, who alleged the 56-year-old director sexually assaulted her on more than one occasion. In a statement late on Sunday, Hirani denied all allegations. "I want to very strongly state that this is a false, malicious and mischievous story being spread with the sole intention of destroying my reputation," Hirani said in a statement sent to journalists by his publicist.

Reuters was unable to reach him directly for further comment through text messages and phone calls. The identity of the woman could not be immediately ascertained. Hirani is one of the industry's most respected directors, and his last film, a biopic on Bollywood actor Sanjay Dutt, was one of the highest-grossing films of 2018. He is the most high-profile Bollywood figure to face allegations since India's #MeToo movement gathered pace online last September, leading to a series of accusations by women of sexual harassment or assault against actors, entertainers, editors and politicians, among others. — Reuters



Director Rajkumar Hirani

(From left) Nicolas Celis, Alfonso Cuaron, Yalitza Aparicio, Adam Gough, Marina De Tavira, Jeff Skoll, and Eugenio Caballero accept the Best Picture award for 'Roma' onstage during the 24th annual Critics' Choice Awards at Barker Hangar in Santa Monica, California. — AFP photos

Alfonso Cuaron accepts the award for Best Director onstage during the 24th annual Criticsí Choice Awards.

Christian Bale accepts the award for Best Actor In A Movie onstage.

Cuaron's 'Roma' a top winner at Critics' Choice Awards

Glenn Close (left), winner of Best Actress for 'The Wife', and Lady Gaga, winner of Best Actress for 'A Star Is Born,' pose in the press room.

Hollywood's award season was in full swing late Sunday, with Alfonso Cuaron's "Roma" - an ode to the director's childhood in 1970s Mexico City - the big winner at the Critics' Choice Awards. "Roma" won trophies for best picture, best foreign-language film, and for both director and cinematography for Cuaron. "This bunch of Mexicans are not as bad as sometimes they are portrayed," said Cuaron, a reference to President Donald Trump's hardline rhetoric on immigration. Shot in black and white, and filmed in Spanish and the indigenous Mixtec language, "Roma" is a semi-autobiographical chronicle of a year in the life of Cuaron's family and his childhood nanny.

"Roma" - the title a reference to a posh Mexico City neighborhood-earlier won two Golden Globes and is a leading contender for an Oscar at the Academy Awards ceremony in February. Christian Bale, who portrayed former US vice president Dick Cheney in "Vice," won awards in the Best Actor and Best Actor in a Comedy categories, while Glenn Close ("The Wife") and Lady Gaga ("A Star is Born") jointly won in the Best Actress category. Mahershala Ali ("Green Book") walked away with a Best Supporting Actor win, while Regina King ("If Beale Street Could Talk") won for Best Supporting Actress.

'Crazy Rich Asians' wins

Offbeat 18th century royal romp "The Favorite," which entered the ceremony with 14 nominations, won the award for Best Acting Ensemble, while its star Olivia Colman won the Best Actress in a Comedy award. "Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse" won the Best Animated Feature award, beating out stiff competition from Pixar-Disney's "The Incredibles 2," Disney's "Ralph Breaks the Internet," and director Wes Anderson's quirky "Isle of Dogs." Tom Cruise vehicle "Mission: Impossible-Fallout" won the Best Action Movie award, beating Marvel-Disney box office blockbusters "Black Panther" and "Avengers: Infinity War."

The multi-nominated "Black Panther" however won awards for Best Visual Effects, Best Costume Design and Best Production Design. "Crazy Rich Asians" won in the Best Comedy category, beating out "The Favorite" and "The Death of Stalin," among others, while John Krasinski's hair-raising post-apocalyptic movie "A Quiet Place" won in the Best Sci-Fi/Horror Movie category. In the music categories, "Shallow" sung by Lady Gaga in "A Star Is Born" won Best Song, while Justin Hurwitz won in the Best Score category for "First Man." The film "Mary Poppins Returns" was nominated for awards in several categories, including the latter two, but walked away empty handed.

Seen as a barometer for the Oscars, the Critics' Choice Awards also includes prizes for the best of television. "The Americans" took the award for Best Drama Series, while "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" took the Best Comedy Series award, with its star Rachel Brosnahan winning in the Best Actress in a Comedy Series category. The annual event is was held by the Broadcast Film Critics Association and the Broadcast Television Journalists Association. The Sunday show was hosted by actor Taye Diggs. — AFP

Regina King accepts the award for Best Supporting Actress (Film).

Best actress and Best Song winner Lady Gaga pose in the press room.

Actress Elsie Fisher winner the award for best young actor/actress.

Barry Jenkins, winner of Best Adapted Screenplay for 'If Beale Street Could Talk'.

Mike Jackson, and John Legend winners of the Best Movie Made for Television award for "Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert".

Mahershala Ali (right) accepts the award for Best Supporting Actor with Kris Bowers onstage during the 24th annual Critics' Choice Awards.

(From left) Jeff Skoll, Adam Gough, Nicolas Celis, Gabriela Rodriguez, Yalitza Aparicio, Marina De Tavira, and Eugenio Caballero, winners of Best Picture for 'Roma,' pose in the press room.

Ruth E Carter, winner of Best Costume Design for 'Black Panther.'

Rachel Brosnahan, winner of Best Actress for 'The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel.'

Best supporting actress winner for 'Vice' Amy Adams.

Finn Wittrock, Edgar Ramirez, Judith Light, Cody Fern, and Darren Criss, winners of Best Limited Series for 'The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story'.

Sandra Oh, winner of Best Actress in a Drama Series.

Best Actor in a Movie/Miniseries Darren Criss.

Winners

FILM:
BEST PICTURE
Roma
BEST ACTOR
Christian Bale, Vice
BEST ACTRESS
Glenn Close, The Wife
Lady Gaga, A Star Is Born

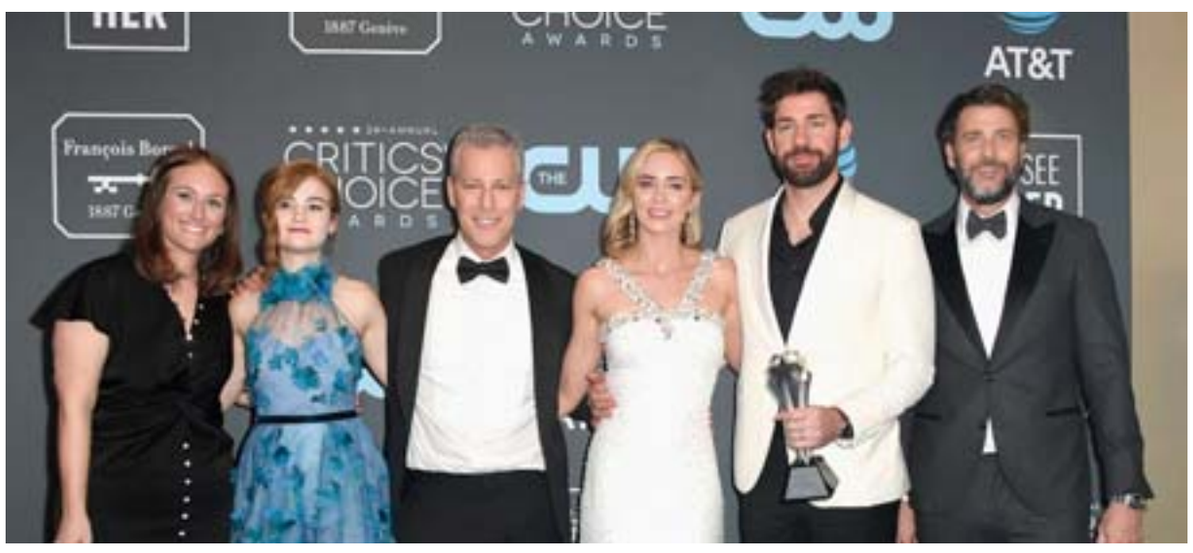
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR
Mahershala Ali, Green Book
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS
Regina King, If Beale Street Could Talk
BEST YOUNG ACTOR/ACTRESS
Elsie Fisher, Eighth Grade
BEST ACTING ENSEMBLE
The Favorite
BEST DIRECTOR
Alfonso Cuaron, Roma
BEST ORIGINAL SCREENPLAY
Paul Schrader, First Reformed
BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY
Barry Jenkins, If Beale Street Could Talk
BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
Alfonso Cuaron, Roma
BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN
Hannah Beachler, Jay Hart, Black Panther
BEST EDITING
Tom Cross, First Man
BEST COSTUME DESIGN
Ruth Carter, Black Panther
BEST HAIR AND MAKEUP
Vice
BEST VISUAL EFFECTS
Black Panther
BEST ANIMATED FEATURE
Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse
BEST ACTION MOVIE
Mission: Impossible - Fallout

BEST COMEDY
Crazy Rich Asians
BEST ACTOR IN A COMEDY
Christian Bale, Vice
BEST ACTRESS IN A COMEDY
Olivia Colman, The Favourite
BEST SCI-FI OR HORROR MOVIE
A Quiet Place
BEST FOREIGN LANGUAGE FILM
Roma

BEST SONG
"Shallow," Lady Gaga & Bradley Cooper (A Star Is Born)
BEST SCORE
Justin Hurwitz, First Man

TELEVISION:
BEST COMEDY SERIES
The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel
BEST ACTOR IN A COMEDY SERIES
Bill Hader, Barry
BEST ACTRESS IN A COMEDY SERIES
Rachel Brosnahan, The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A COMEDY SERIES
Henry Winkler, Barry
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A COMEDY SERIES
Alex Borstein, The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel
BEST DRAMA SERIES
The Americans
BEST ACTOR IN A DRAMA SERIES
Matthew Rhys, The Americans
BEST ACTRESS IN A DRAMA SERIES
Sandra Oh, Killing Eve
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A DRAMA SERIES
Noah Emmerich, The Americans
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A DRAMA SERIES
Thandie Newton, Westworld
BEST LIMITED SERIES
The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story
BEST MOVIE MADE FOR TV
Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert
BEST ACTOR IN A MOVIE MADE FOR TV OR LIMITED SERIES
Darren Criss, The Assassination of Gianni Versace: American Crime Story
BEST ACTRESS IN A MOVIE MADE FOR TV OR LIMITED SERIES
Amy Adams, Sharp Objects
Patricia Arquette, Escape at Dannemora
BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR IN A MOVIE MADE FOR TV OR LIMITED SERIES
Ben Whishaw, A Very English Scandal
BEST SUPPORTING ACTRESS IN A MOVIE MADE FOR TV OR LIMITED SERIES
Patricia Clarkson, Sharp Objects
BEST ANIMATED SERIES
BoJack Horseman

(Second left to right) Ken Jeong, Nico Santos, Awkwafina, Michelle Yeoh, Constance Wu, Gemma Chan and Harry Shum Jr poses in the press room holding the Best Comedy trophy for 'Crazy Rich Asians'.



(From left) Allyson Seeger, Millicent Simmonds, Brad Fuller, Emily Blunt, John Krasinski, and Andrew Form, winners of Best Sci-Fi/Horror Movie for 'A Quiet Place'.

The cast and crew of 'The Americans', winner of Best Drama Series.

(From left) Awkwafina, Michelle Yeoh, Constance Wu, and Gemma Chan, winners of Best Comedy Movie for 'Crazy Rich Asians'.

(From left to right) Kunal Nayyar, Mayim Bialik, Melissa Rauch, Jim Parsons, Simon Helberg, Kaley Cuoco, and Johnny Galecki present the Creative Achievement Award onstage.

Chuck Lorre (left) accepts the Creative Achievement Award onstage.

Projectors light the sky during the European Capital of Culture 2019 opening ceremony in the south-central Bulgarian town of Plovdiv. — AFP photos

Fireworks light the sky during the European Capital of Culture 2019 opening ceremony in the south-central Bulgarian town of Plovdiv.

A man takes a picture of 'David Bowie and Iggy Pop's Portraits' (2016) by French artist Jef Aerosol painted on a section of the Berlin Wall, as part of the exhibition 'Art Liberty - From the Berlin Wall to the Street Art', in the south-central Bulgarian town of Plovdiv.

People look at a Trabant, a former East German car, painted by French artist Thierry Noir, as part of the exhibition 'Art Liberty - From the Berlin Wall to the Street Art'.

A picture shows through an opening in a wall the building of the Ethnographical museum in the old town of the Bulgarian southern central city of Plovdiv.

People walk in the city center of the Bulgarian southern central town of Plovdiv.

A man walks in the streets of the old town of Bulgarian southern central city of Plovdiv.

A picture shows the building of the Ethnographical museum in the old town of the Bulgarian southern central city of Plovdiv.

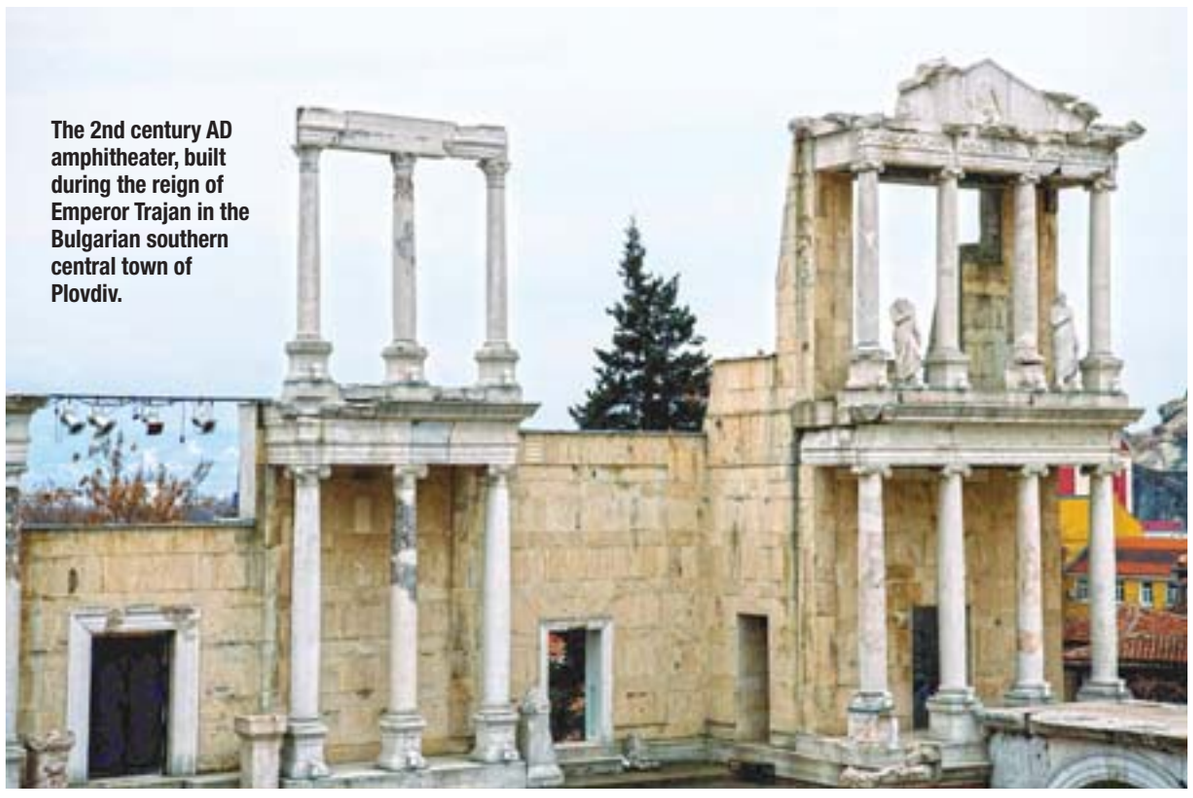
A photo shows the 2nd century AD amphitheater, built during the reign of Emperor Trajan in south-central Bulgarian town of Plovdiv. — AFP photos

Bulgaria's Plovdiv launches capital of culture festivities

The Bulgarian city of Plovdiv was on Saturday inaugurated as one of two ancient cities to share the honor of being a European capital of culture for 2019. Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second city, whose origins date back to the 12th century BC, is known for its Thracian, Roman, Medieval, Ottoman and communist heritage. In a nod to this latest period of history, an exhibition featuring fragments of the Berlin Wall painted by international artists opened on Saturday, kicking off a year of cultural events. Thirty years after the fall of the wall "presenting this new collection in Plovdiv makes a lot of sense", in particular against the backdrop of fresh divisions in Europe, curator Sylvestre Verger said.

People walk in the streets of the old town of Bulgarian southern central city of Plovdiv.

Hundreds of visitors were able to see around 30 fragments of the wall covered in "street art" or portraits of singers such as David Bowie, Iggy Pop and Lou Reed Others featured images of the Trabant car, considered a symbol of former East Germany, painted by artists Thierry Noir, Christophe-Emmanuel Bouchet and Kiddy Citny. A city of 350,000, the southern Bulgarian city will host dozens of other exhibitions and shows during the year, including a concert in June in which local Roma artists will take part.



The 2nd century AD amphitheater, built during the reign of Emperor Trajan in the Bulgarian southern central town of Plovdiv.

The city will also invite artists from other Balkan countries to showcase the cultures of southeastern Europe. Plovdiv shares this year's title of European Capital of Culture with another ancient city in southern Italy, Matera, which is known for its cave dwellings. While the Bulgarian Black Sea coast attracts most of the tourists to the country, Plovdiv hopes to double the number of visitors this year. In the old town, renovated in recent years, visitors will find cobbled streets featuring many traditional 18th and 19th century houses, elaborately decorated by traders who prospered in the city. And the city also boasts a number of fine mosaics. — AFP

Finns with fins make a splash at 'mermaiding' classes

At a pool in Espoo, near Finland's capital Helsinki, Maija Mottonen is teaching adults to swim like mermaids in a class that combines fantasy with fitness. Since August, more than 200 women and men have attended the classes run by Mottonen, a former kindergarten teacher who is Finland's first professional mermaid instructor. "It's my childhood dream-come-true," the 28-year-old told Reuters. "When I was a kid, I always wanted to be a mermaid or a dolphin. But I think it's easier to become a mermaid because it's half-human."

Would-be mermaids and mermen wear "tails" that combine a monofin flipper with fabric from the waist down. "It's kind of magical," said construction worker Markus Parviainen, 29, describing the feeling of diving with the green tail he bought online for 170 euros ($195). Parviainen, who also enjoys cheerleading, said his new hobby was a good way of keeping fit, but acknowledged it had raised some eyebrows among his co-workers. "People think, or mostly men, are thinking that this is only for girls or women. But I disagree, this is for everyone ... as long as you love swimming," he added.

Mottonen, whose own tail is bright pink, teaches her pupils how to undulate their entire body from head to toe, "like a snake" as she describes it, followed by a dolphin kick with the monofin flipper to move forward. More experienced students like Parviainen practice tricks such as flapping their tail on the surface while hanging with their head down underwater. "When I had tried this once, I was hooked. I feel real powerful in water," said Annika Ihatsu, who had driven for 40 minutes on icy roads from her home in Hyvinkaa to attend the class.

While few people would want to make a splash during the cold Finnish winter, instructor Mottonen said the country's roughly 180,000 lakes were better for mermaiding in summertime than beaches with salty seawater that would make her tail float. "We have a lot of lakes so it's easy in summer," she said. — Reuters

Classifieds

Tuesday, January 15, 2019

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

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

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

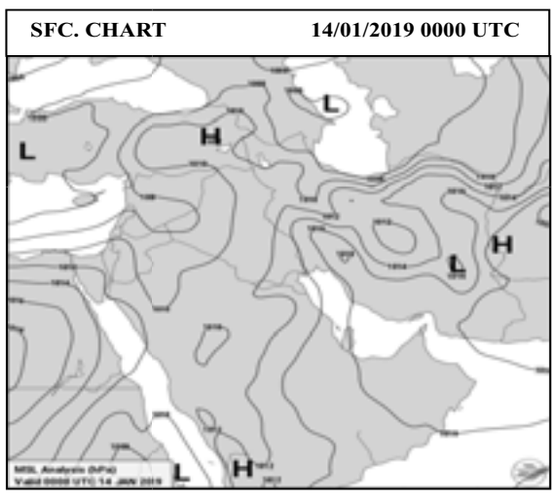
BY DAY: Cool with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for scattered rain later on.

BY NIGHT: Cloudy and Cold with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind changing to south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 42 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	20 °C	18 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	22 °C	16 °C
ABDALY	19 °C	17 °C
BUBYAN	--- °C	-- °C
JAHRA	21 °C	16 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	18 °C	16 °C
SALMIYAH	20 °C	17 °C
AHMADI	19 °C	17 °C
NUWAISIB	23 °C	16 °C
WAFRA	22 °C	14 °C
SALMY	22 °C	14 °C

SFC. CHART 14/01/2019 0000 UTC



4 DAYS FORECAST

DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures MAX.	Temperatures MIN.	Wind Direction	Wind Speed
Tuesday	01/15	Partly cloudy and with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	19 °C	12 °C	NE-SE	15 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	01/16	Partly cloudy and Cool with a chance for scattered rain with a chance for fog forming at	20 °C	11 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Thursday	01/17	Dusty and Cold	15 °C	08 °C	NW	25 - 50 km/h
Friday	01/18	Cold causing rising dust	14 °C	06 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	05:20
Sunrise	06:44
Zuhr	11:57
Asr	14:51
Sunset	17:11
Isha	18:32

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP.0

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	21 °C
MIN. Temp.	09 °C
MAX. RH	85 %
MIN. RH	28 %
MAX. Wind	SE 50 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

2019/01/14 09:44 UTC V1.00 T2.4 ق.ت.خ.ع/1-2

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Government of Canada / Gouvernement du Canada — Canada

The Embassy of Canada in Kuwait seeks a full time

Trade Commissioner

The applicants must speak English, and Arabic and be legally residing in Kuwait.

please consult our website
www.kuwait.gc.ca

for more information and instructions on on how to apply prior to the
closing date: 21 / 1 / 2019

Please note that only those chosen for further consideration will be contacted.

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya 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 Tuesday 15/1/2019

JZR	254	Amman	00:05	KAC	774	Riyadh	14:00	
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:15	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	
THY	766	ISL	00:30	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25	
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	KAC	286	Dhaka	14:30	
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40	
JZR	722	Alexandria	00:55	KAC	618	Doha	14:40	
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:45	
KAC	102	London	01:20	KAC	692	Muscat	14:55	
DLH	625	Dammam	01:25	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:05	
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10	
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15	
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	FEG	441	Asyut	15:25	
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	JZR	222	Riyadh	15:30	
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35	
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	562	Amman	15:35	
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	304	Mumbai	15:40	
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	JZR	732	Cairo	15:50	
JZR	1736	Cairo	03:00	SYR	341	Damascus	16:00	
RBG	211	Luxor	03:05	JZR	152	Mashhad	16:00	
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:05	
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	118	New York	16:05	
MSR	612	Cairo	03:05	KAC	516	Tehran	16:20	
LMU	5510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	502	Beirut	16:30	
QTR	1076	Doha	04:00	KAC	542	Cairo	16:30	
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	QTR	1072	Doha	16:35	
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	FDB	051	Dubai	16:40	
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	612	Tbilisi	17:10	
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	JZR	114	Doha	17:10	
FDB	069	Dubai	05:00	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:45	
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	
THY	770	Istanbul	05:10	FDB	063	Dubai	18:15	
KAC	284	Dhaka	05:15	JZR	124	Dubai	18:20	
JZR	112	Doha	05:25	QTR	1080	Doha	18:30	
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	05:30	MSR	2620	Cairo	18:30	
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	RJA	640	Amman	19:00	
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	KAC	744	Dammam	19:00	
KAC	362	Colombo	06:10	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25	
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	RBG	555	Alexandria	19:25	
THY	6376	Istanbul	06:30	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:30	
KAC	678	Dubai	06:55	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30	
BAW	157	London	07:05	NIA	0161	Cairo	19:30	
JZR	708	Luxor	07:15	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	
KAC	358	Kochi	07:35	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50	
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:50	
FEG	241	Alexandria	07:40	JZR	106	Bahrain	20:00	
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	166	Rome	20:10	
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	620	Doha	20:15	
JZR	102	Bahrain	08:25	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	546	Cairo	20:30	
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	674	Dubai	20:35	
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	QTR	1088	Doha	20:35	
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:45	
IRA	675	Lar	09:40	KAC	174	Munich	21:15	
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:15	
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ICV	675	Luxembourg	21:15	
JZR	410	Delhi	10:00	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20	
IRC	6507	Shiraz	10:30	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	168	Paris	21:30	
KAC	624	Doha	10:40	UAE	859	Dubai	21:35	
JZR	122	Dubai	11:20	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	
QTR	1074	Doha	11:35	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50	
JZR	216	Jeddah	11:45	KAC	564	Amman	21:55	
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	JAI	574	Mumbai	22:00	
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:25	AZQ	565	Baku	22:00	
MSC	411	Asyut	12:30	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05	
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15	
JZR	714	Sohag	12:35	AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25	
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	RBG	213	Sohag	22:30	
JZR	142	Al Najaf	12:50	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:45	
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00	
MSR	610	Cairo	13:10	JZR	128	Dubai	23:15	
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	MSC	405	Sohag	23:30	
QTR	1078	Doha	13:35	JZR	254	Amman	23:40	
QTR	8511	Doha	13:55	FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	

Departure Flights on Tuesday 15/1/2019

AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05	QTR	1075	Doha	13:00	
MSC	502	Alexandria	00:05	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30	
FDB	072	Dubai	00:40	MSC	412	Asyut	13:30	
JZR	409	Delhi	00:50	KAC	545	Cairo	13:30	
JZR	707	Luxor	01:00	JZR	113	Doha	13:30	
JAI	571	Mumbai	01:15	JZR	123	Dubai	13:40	
JZR	111	Doha	01:45	MSR	611	Cairo	14:10	
KAC	677	Dubai	01:50	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15	
KAC	285	Dhaka	01:55	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15	
KAC	417	Manila	02:20	QTR	1079	Doha	15:00	
DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:25	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10	
THY	773	Istanbul	02:30	QTR	8512	Doha	15:25	
PGT	859	Istanbul	02:55	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25	
IGO	1758	Kochi	02:55	KAC	673	Dubai	15:40	
THY	767	ISL	03:05	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45	
ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50	
UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	KAC	743	Dammam	15:55	
RBG	212	Sohag	03:45	KNE	530	Jeddah	16:00	
KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:05	
OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	KAC	619	Doha	16:10	
THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	563	Amman	16:10	
QTR	1087	Doha	04:00	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20	
KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:00	FEG	342	Sohag	16:25	
ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:30	
MSR	613	Cairo	04:15	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35	
LMU	5511	Cairo	05:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:40	
IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:45	
JZR	101	Bahrain	05:20	JZR	105	Bahrain	16:55	
QTR	1077	Doha	05:30	SYR	342	Damascus	17:00	
FDB	070	Dubai	05:50	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40	
JZR	215	Jeddah	06:00	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45	
KAC	303	Mumbai	06:10	QTR	1073	Doha	17:50	
JZR	713	Sohag	06:15	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00	
JZR	121	Dubai	06:35	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00	
THY	771	Istanbul	06:40	JZR	733	Cairo	18:10	
KAC	623	Doha	06:50	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15	
KAC	167	Paris	07:10	JZR	253	Amman	18:15	
RJA	643	Amman	07:15	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20	
GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	JZR	127	Dubai	18:35	
KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:10	JZR	501	Lahore	18:40	
KAC	165	Rome	08:20	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:40	
KAC	173	Munich	08:20	KAC	381	Delhi	18:55	
THY	6376	Dubai/Istanbul	08:35	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20	
FEG	442	Asyut	08:40	JZR	721	Alexandria	19:20	
FDB	054	Dubai	08:50	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30	
KAC	501	Beirut	09:00	MSR	2621	Cairo	19:30	
KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05	QTR	1081	Doha	19:55	
KAC	613	Bahrain	09:05	RJA	641	Amman	20:00	
JZR	731	Cairo	09:10	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05	
BAW	156	London	09:15	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05	
KAC	691	Muscat	09:20	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15	
JZR	141	Al Najaf	09:25	JZR	1735	Cairo	20:20	
KAC	541	Cairo	09:30	NIA	0162	Cairo	20:30	
KAC	561	Amman	09:40	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35	
KAC	741	Dammam	09:45	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:55	
ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:55	
KAC	101	London	09:45	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:55	
KAC	671	Dubai	09:45	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00	
JZR	151	Mashhad	09:50	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20	
UAE	856	Dubai	10:00	DLH	624	Dammam	21:30	
KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00	
ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10	
FDB	056	Dubai	10:35	KAC	1543	Cairo	22:15	
KAC	617	Doha	10:35	KAC	205	Islamabad	22:15	
IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20	
IRA	674	Lar	10:40	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25	
KAC	155	Istanbul	10:45	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30	
QTR	1071	Doha	10:45	KAC	383	Delhi	22:30	
SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00	ICV	675	Hong Kong	22:45	
JZR	611	Tbilisi	11:10	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50	
IRC	6508	Shiraz	11:20	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55	
KAC	117	New York	11:25	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00	
GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25	JAI	573	Mumbai	23:00	
JZR	221	Riyadh	12:00	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:00	
KAC	515	Tehran	12:00	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05	
JZR	213	Jeddah	12:00	RBG	214	Sohag	23:10	
MEA	405	Beirut	12:55	KAC	795	Madinah	23:15	
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:25	

Squabble over venue latest hurdle in Taleban-US talks

KABUL: Efforts to negotiate a peace deal to end the 17-year war in Afghanistan, already beset by disagreement about the agenda, are facing a new hurdle over the venue for the talks. Last week, Taleban leaders called off a fourth round of talks with US officials in the Arab Gulf state of Qatar due to an "agenda disagreement", and refused to allow "puppet" Afghan government officials to join.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the US special envoy for peace in Afghanistan, is holding talks with regional powers and was expected to meet the Taleban in the coming days. But diplomatic sources said differences over the venue had caused a delay. "Saudi Arabia and the UAE (United Arab Emirates), have made it clear that they will not participate in the peace talks if the meeting takes place in Qatar. But the Taleban insists on holding them in Qatar," said a Kabul-based diplomat whose country shares a border with Afghanistan.

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab nations severed ties with Qatar in 2017, alleging that Doha funded militants and had close ties to Iran. Qatar denied funding militants, but restored diplomatic relations with Iran after the crisis with its neighbors. Washington has pushed the Gulf nations to end their dispute at a time when their support is crucial in talks with the Taleban. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who stopped in Doha on Sunday during a Middle East tour, said the rift between Qatar and its Gulf neighbors had gone on for too long.

The Taleban this month pushed to shift the venue for the talks from Saudi Arabia to Qatar in a bid to fend off Riyadh's bid to include the Afghan government in them. "Differences between Saudi Arabia and Qatar have in fact damaged our peace process. The Saudis unnecessarily put pressure on us to announce a ceasefire which even the US delegation didn't pursue," a Taleban leader, who declined to be named, told Reuters. The Saudi and UAE embassies in Kabul declined to comment.

The Afghan government said yesterday that attempts to introduce bilateral rivalries were an added complication for the peace process. "Unfortunately, the kind of rivalry which has started between the regional countries about the peace process has proved harmful to Afghanistan," Mujiburrahman Rahimi, a spokesman for Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah was quoted as saying by Tolo News, Afghanistan's largest private broadcaster.

The tensions underscore what diplomats say is a lack of consensus among powers in the region, whose support is crucial for long-term peace in Afghanistan. "There is a whole load of posturing. They are not monolithic," a Western diplomat in Kabul said of Afghanistan's neighbors. A senior Iranian diplomat said holding the peace talks in Saudi Arabia would be unacceptable to Tehran. "The US officials want the venue to be in Saudi Arabia, but we are not comfortable," he said.

Taleban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid declined to confirm the date or location of the next meeting, though a senior Taleban source told Reuters it could take place today. The Taleban regards the United States as its main adversary in the Afghan war and views direct talks with Washington as a legitimate effort to seek the withdrawal of foreign troops before engaging with the Afghan government.

"Even though there are a number of discussions, there's nothing particularly formal or structured or substantive to them," said Michael Kugelman, a South Asia specialist at the Woodrow Wilson Center. "It's very easy to get sidetracked, and it's easy for the Taleban to back out when it feels any one discussion doesn't serve its interests," he said. — Reuters

Pakistan university rebrands Valentine's Day as 'Sister's Day'

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani university is rebranding Valentine's Day as "Sister's Day", and debating marking the holiday widely seen as a Western import by handing out headscarves and shawls to its female students. The University of Agriculture in Faisalabad (UAF), in central Punjab province, said the change was taken to promote "eastern culture and Islamic traditions among the youth". "In our culture, women are more empowered and earn their due respect as sisters, mothers, daughters and wives," UAF vice chancellor Zafar Iqbal is quoted as saying on the institution's website.

"We were forgetting our culture, and Western culture was taking root in our society," he continued. "UAF was mulling a plan to distribute scarves, shawls and gowns printed with the UAF insignia among female students" on February 14, the statement on the website added. University spokesman Qamar Bukhari told AFP yesterday that UAF is seeking donations as it aims to give headscarves to at least 1,000 of its 14,000 female students. "These scarves will be distributed by the university administration and not their fellow male students," he added, saying that the goal is to ensure respect for women.

Valentine's Day is increasingly popular among younger Pakistanis, with many taking up the custom of giving cards, chocolates and gifts to their sweethearts to mark the occasion. But the country remains a deeply traditional Muslim society where women have long struggled for their rights, and many disapprove of the holiday as a Western import. Pakistan's President Mamnoon Hussain told a crowd of students in 2016 that the day had no place in the Muslim-majority nation and urged young people to focus on their studies instead.

A rising Pakistani social media star, Qandeel Baloch, responded by posing in a plunging scarlet dress and posting a video message refuting his call. Baloch, whose provocative selfies deeply polarized Pakistan, was murdered by her brother later that year. In 2017, the Islamabad High Court prohibited Valentine's celebrations in public spaces and government offices across the country, while last year the country's media regulator warned TV and radio stations against promoting the holiday. On social media many rejected the UAF initiative - some joking that "Sister Day" could also be seen as a reference to the Hindu festival of Raksha Bandhan, in which brothers vow to protect their sisters. Pakistan sees neighboring India, where Hinduism is the dominant religion, as its archenemy. — AFP

15 killed in Iran plane crash...

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The Amir extended his condolences in a cable he sent to Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, saying he was distraught over the tragic loss of life caused by the aircraft mishap. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar messages to the Iranian president. National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim also sent a cable of condolences to Speaker of Iran's Shura Council Ali Larijani expressing his sincere grief.

The charred remains of a plane's fuselage with Iranian Air Force colors, its nose wedged through the wall of what appeared to be a house, were seen in photographs obtained by AFP. Wreckage including a landing gear and a mangled jet engine were scattered nearby. "A (Boeing) cargo 707 place carrying meat took off from Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan and had an emergency landing at Fath airport this morning," the army said earlier in a statement on its website. "It exited the runway during the landing and caught fire after hitting the wall at the end of the runway."

Fath airport is in Alborz province, just northwest of Tehran. The Fars news agency, considered close to the military, earlier said there were 16 people onboard and that only the flight engineer had survived. State broadcaster IRIB showed footage of burning wreckage. Investigators found a black box from the plane, which will provide more details about the crash, deputy Alborz governor Azizollah Shahbazi told Tasnim news agency. Pictures published by local media showed the charred carcasses of the animals on board, still smoldering inside one of the buildings the plane smashed into. Fars carried a video showing emergency teams cutting through the aircraft's nose, which had penetrated what it said was an empty residential complex.

Iran's ageing air fleet has had a string of crashes in recent years. Iran's Aseman Airlines was ordered to ground its fleet of ATR planes in February last year after one of them crashed in the Zagros mountains, killing all 66 people onboard. Iran has been subject to tough US sanctions for years, hindering the purchase of new aeroplanes and critical spare parts for the US-made planes in its air force, civilian flag carrier Iran Air and domestic airlines. Hopes for a change in the situation were dashed last May when Washington pulled out of a landmark 2015 deal over Iran's nuclear program, reimposing sanctions that had been lifted as part of the multilateral accord.—Agencies

Pompeo postpones Kuwait visit to...

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Pompeo walked a diplomatic tightrope on his second politically sensitive visit to Saudi Arabia since Khashoggi's murder as he demanded that all those involved in the crime be held accountable. The king and crown prince "both acknowledge that this accountability needs to take place", Pompeo said in Riyadh following talks with them. "They reiterated their commitment," he added. Relations between Riyadh and Washington have remained strained after journalist Khashoggi was murdered on Oct 2 inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul, which Riyadh said was carried out by "rogue" Saudi agents. Pompeo's meeting with the crown prince lasted around 45 minutes. The US diplomat appeared more reserved than his previous visit at the height of the Khashoggi affair, when his broad smiles with the crown prince outraged many Americans.

Riyadh prosecutors have announced indictments against 11 people and are seeking the death penalty against five of them. US President Donald Trump has said Washington wants to preserve the alliance with the oil-rich kingdom, which he sees as a bulwark against common foe Iran and a lucrative buyer of US arms. Furious over the murder, US lawmakers have demanded Washington pull back its support to the Saudi-led military campaign against Houthi rebels in Yemen.

But backing the Saudi position, Pompeo accused the rebels of failing to comply with a truce agreement for the lifeline port city of Hodeida reached last month at UN-sponsored talks in Sweden. "The work that was done in Sweden on Yemen was good, but both sides (need) to honor those commitments," Pompeo said. "Today, the Iranian-backed Houthis have chosen not to do that." Pompeo yesterday said he discussed human rights issues with the Saudis, including the plight of women activists, without giving any details.

Pompeo was in Riyadh as part of an extensive week-long trip to the Middle East, which included stops in Amman, Baghdad, Cairo, Manama, Abu Dhabi and Doha. After Riyadh, Pompeo wrapped up his Middle East tour with a trip to Muscat. Pompeo met Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on Sunday in Doha, where he refused to comment on reports Washington had recently considered military action against Tehran.

RIYADH: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo meets with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at the Royal Court yesterday. — AFP

He also called on Qatar and other Gulf Arab countries to end their worst political rift in years, which has seen Doha diplomatically and economically isolated by neighboring former allies for the past 19 months. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt - all US allies - cut ties with Qatar in June 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorist groups and seeking closer ties to Saudi archrival Iran. Qatar - also a US ally - denies the allegations and accuses the countries of seeking regime change. "As for the GCC... we are all more powerful when we're working together when we have common challenges in the region and around the world," Pompeo said, referring to the six member nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council. He added that "President Trump and I both believe the ongoing dispute in the region has gone on too long". Mediation efforts by the United States, which at first appeared to back the boycott of Qatar, have stalled, as highlighted by the recent resignation of US envoy Anthony Zinni. For Washington, turning the page on the crisis is essential for the successful launch of the Strategic Alliance of the Middle East (MESA), a NATO-style security pact that includes Gulf countries as well as Egypt and Jordan. — Agencies

Turkey vows not to be intimidated...

Continued from Page 1

Turkey views the YPG as a "terrorist offshoot" of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has been waging an insurgency against the Turkish state since 1984. The PKK is blacklisted as a terrorist organization by Ankara, the United States and the European Union. Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said Ankara would "continue to fight against them all", referring to IS and the YPG. Kalin added it was "a fatal mistake to equate Syrian Kurds with the PKK".

There has been growing friction between Turkey and the US over the fate of the YPG, especially after Pompeo this month said Washington would ensure Turkey would not "slaughter" Kurds. And before a visit to Ankara last week, White House National Security adviser John Bolton said the US retreat was conditional on the safety of the Kurdish fighters, provoking angry retorts from Turkish officials. The threat of new sanctions hit the Turkish lira which weakened before 1400 GMT to reach 5.49 to the US dollar, a loss of nearly one percent in value on the day.

Washington previously hit Ankara with sanctions last August over the detention of an American pastor in Turkey, causing a dramatic fall in the lira's value. But to Turkey's relief, the US sanctions were later lifted after Pastor Andrew Brunson was released by a Turkish court in October. Turkey previously launched military offensives in northern Syria in 2016 and 2018 respectively against IS and the YPG. In early 2018, Syrian rebels backed by Turkish military forces captured the YPG's northwestern enclave of Afrin.

Ankara, which supports Syrian opposition fighters, is also involved in the last rebel bastion of Idlib, where Turkey has agreed a buffer zone deal with Damascus ally Russia. But the deal has not stopped an assault by militants in Syria. Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham (HTS), an alliance led by militants from Al-Qaeda's former Syrian affiliate, last week extended its administrative control over the whole of the Idlib region.

Syria's National Coalition, the leading opposition body, on Sunday called for a "radical solution" to put "an end to its (HTS) presence" in Idlib. "If Idlib is a terrorists' nest, those responsible are not the Syrians who live in the region or Turkey but the regime and the countries which support (Damascus)," Cavusoglu said, claiming that the statements that HTS took 50 percent of Idlib are "not true". Cavusoglu added the Idlib deal was being "successfully applied" and that "our teams are working together to solve the minor issues".

The head of HTS yesterday voiced support for Turkey's plans to attack Kurdish forces. Abu Mohammad Al-Jolani did not offer direct military support but made clear he supported the YPG's removal from eastern Syria. "We consider the PKK to be an enemy of this revolution. It controls areas inhabited by large numbers of Sunni Arabs," he told the HTS-affiliated Amjad media outlet, referring to the YPG. "We are in favor of this region being liberated from the PKK," Jolani said. "We would not stand in the way of an operation against an enemy of the revolution."

Jolani has tried to cast himself as a leader of the anti-regime camp but many opposition factions blame him for tarnishing the image of the rebellion against the rule of Syria's President Bashar Al-Assad and ultimately causing its failure. Since Russia threw its military might behind him in 2015, Assad has reclaimed much of the ground lost in the first years of Syria's conflict. —Agencies

Qatar rejects ties with Assad...

Continued from Page 1

Sheikh Mohammed added that Damascus under Assad should not be allowed back into the Arab League - its membership was suspended in 2011 - as "the Syrian people are still under bombardment... by the Syrian regime". His comments come after Gulf neighbors the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain announced late last month they reopened their Damascus embassies. The UAE's foreign minister Anwar Gargash tweeted that his country was doing so in part because of the influence of Iran and one of Qatar's strongest allies, Turkey, in Syria.

Tehran has been a staunch supporter of Assad's government and has expanded its military footprint in Syria throughout the course of the conflict. That move also emphasized the foreign policy differences between the three Gulf states. For the past 19 months Qatar has been in a deep diplomatic dispute with the UAE and Bahrain, in part over the direction of Doha's regional foreign policy in recent years. Qatar has been instrumental in the Syrian civil war supplying weapons to rebel groups, according to institutions such as the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. Syria's opposition leader Nasr Al-Hariri has pleaded with Arab leaders not to rebuild relation with Assad as his government now controls almost two-thirds of the country following military backing from Russia and Iran. Sheikh Mohammed was speaking at a press conference announcing Qatar had agreed to commit $20 million to an African Union fund to help cover costs to return illegal African refugees stranded in crisis-hit Libya in north Africa to their home countries.

AU chairman Moussa Faki Mahamat said the money was vitally needed. "I hope this is the beginning for a solution to a very, very difficult issue," he said. "Since last year, we have brought back 30,000 migrants from Libya to their own countries, but the number is bigger than that." The issue of migrants departing from Libya, particular to Europe, has become a major political and social headache for several countries. Italy's interior ministry said this month that some 23,270 people landed in Italy in 2018, most of whom had set off from Libya. — Agencies

Jordan king visits Iraq for first...

Continued from Page 1

In 2013, they agreed on a 1,700-km pipeline linking Iraq's oil-rich Basra province to Jordan's Aqaba port, but the Islamic State group's sweep across nearly a third of Iraq put a screeching halt to the plan. Last year, Jordan approved a framework to revive it, but did not give a timeframe for the line's construction.

The two states have also discussed plans for Iraq to import around 300 megawatts of electricity from Jordan to cope with widespread power shortages. Currently, Baghdad relies heavily on its eastern neighbor Iran, importing around 1,300 megawatts of electricity and 28 million cu m of natural gas to feed power plants. Washington, which sees Tehran as its top foe in the region, is keen to break those ties.

It reimposed tough sanctions on Iran in November but has granted Iraq a temporary waiver on energy imports, while urging it to partner with US firms instead. "Everyone is looking to Iraq as a virgin land requiring more investment by regional and international powers," said Iraqi political analyst Issam Al-Faily. "Jordan has a real desire to stretch an oil pipeline from Basra to the Aqaba port because it would fulfill its fuel needs," he told AFP.

Iraq has witnessed a revolving door of diplomatic visits since Trump went in late December. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo made a surprise stop in Baghdad on his regional tour last week, followed by Iran's oil minister then top diplomat Mohammad Javad Zarif. Zarif landed Sunday and met with Abdel-Mahdi yesterday, according to the premier's office. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian also met Abdel-Mahdi yesterday morning and said the two countries had entered "a new stage" in their ties. The premier said he appreciated France's "support" to Iraq and hoped for greater economic cooperation.

Fanar Haddad, an Iraq expert at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute, said the flurry of visits showcased Iraq's "major advantage". "From Iran to the United States, Saudi Arabia to Turkey, Syria to Qatar, Iraq can speak to everyone in a region that is otherwise deeply fractured by several strategic fissures," Haddad told AFP. But it also leaves Baghdad vulnerable to regional power struggles. "One of the most potent threats to Iraqi stability today is the danger of US-Iranian tensions escalating and playing out in, and at the expense of, Iraq," said Haddad.

That could thwart Iraq's plans to rebuild after three gruelling years recapturing urban strongholds from IS. Yesterday, two shepherds were found dead after being kidnapped by IS near Tikrit, around 175 km north of Baghdad, according to police sources. It came a day after seven Iraqis were sentenced to death for "terrorism"-related charges. — AFP

Battling Murray crashes out as Federer, Nadal fight on

Wozniacki through to second round with win

MELBOURNE: A battling Andy Murray bowed out of the Australian Open at the first hurdle yesterday, but it was business as usual for ruthless Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal who joined Caroline Wozniacki in round two. The Scottish five-time Melbourne Park finalist gave it everything he had and showed glimpses of the form that won him three Grand Slams, but his ailing body let him down during a gutsy 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (5/7), 6-7 (4/7) defeat to 22nd seed Roberto Bautista Agut.

Murray tearfully revealed before the tournament that he was in constant agony from a hip injury and planned to retire this year. The 31-year-old hopes to end his career at Wimbledon, but has admitted the Australian Open could be his last event, unless he has a late change of heart.

"Amazing. That was incredible, thank you so, so much to everyone that came out tonight," he said after being given a rapturous send-off. While his tournament ended in despair, Swiss master Federer, six years older than Murray, continued his march towards a record seventh Australian Open title.

He swept past Uzbek Denis Istomin 6-3, 6-4, 6-4 said he was in "disbelief" that he was the double defending champion at his age and vowed to give his all to make it three in a row.

"I'm going to try everything possible (to win again) and leave it all on the court," said the world number three. His long-time rival Nadal, who cut short his 2018 season to have surgery on a foot injury, showed no mercy to Australian wildcard James Duckworth in his opening round clash.

The 17-time Grand Slam winner cruised through 6-4, 6-3, 7-5 and said it was an important victory. "Not easy to come back after a lot of months, especially against a player playing super aggressive on every point," said the 2009 Australian champion, who showed no sign of any injury worries. "The energy I feel in this place is fantastic."

The second seed is bidding to become the first man in the Open era, and only the third in history along with Roy Emerson and Rod Laver, to win each Grand Slam on two or more occasions. Fifth seed Kevin Anderson progressed, as did NextGen Finals champion Stefanos Tsitsipas. But ninth seed John Isner became the first top seed to crash out.

World number three Wozniacki, who made her Grand Slam breakthrough in Melbourne last year, opened her defence with a convincing 6-3, 6-4 win over Belgium's Alison van Uytvanck. It was an emotional win for the Dane who is struggling with rheumatoid arthritis and she was in tears afterwards.

"Last year I had some special memories and just to be able to be back out here on Rod Laver Arena is something extremely special and emotional," she said.

GOOD TEST

Second seed and 2016 champion Angelique Kerber was also impressive, breezing past Slovenia's Polona Hercog 6-2, 6-2. Maria Sharapova, a winner at Melbourne in 2008, signalled her intent with a rare 6-0, 6-0 double bagel demolition of Britain's Harriet Dart.

Playing in her 15th Australian Open, the three-time finalist said she was pleased to go through so easily as she battles back from injuries. "I'm still working through some painful days. But, you know, I felt like I did all the right things today in order to get through that match," said the Russian.

Fifth seeded Sloane Stephens, the 2017 US Open champion who struggled in her warm-up tournaments in Brisbane and Sydney, got back to business with an easy two-set win against fellow American Taylor Townsend.

MELBOURNE: Denmark's Caroline Wozniacki hits a return against Belgium's Alison Van Uytvanck during their women's singles match on day one of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Eleventh seed Aryna Sabalenka, widely tipped as a potential future champion, also safely negotiated round one on a hot day. But Germany's 14th seed Julia Goerges was knocked out, as was former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko.

Britain's Katie Boulter, meanwhile, created a slice of history by becoming the first woman to win in a third set tiebreak-a new rule introduced to the Open this year, beating Russia's Ekaterina Makarova 6-0, 4-6, 7-6 (10/6). — AFP

Sharapova says passion undimmed as she makes point

MELBOURNE: Maria Sharapova said her passion for tennis remained undimmed yestrday after a serving a 6-0, 6-0 "double bagel" to Britain's Harriet Dart in the Australian Open first round yesterday.

The veteran five-time Grand Slam winner, who has struggled with injury since returning from a doping ban in 2017, showed glimpses of her old ruthless self to dispatch Dart in just 63 minutes.

Dart left the court in tears but Sharapova was unapologetic when asked if she empathised with the young qualifier. "There is no time for that, I'm sorry to say," she said. "(Not) when you're playing the first round of a Grand Slam."

The 31-year-old Russian arrived at Melbourne Park as the 30th seed but said she still had the desire to succeed at a tournament she has won once, in 2008, and made the final a further three times. "There is nothing like going out and playing a match, especially in a Grand Slam, the feelings, the nerves, anticipation of a first round," she said. Sharapova, who won her first major at just 17, added that she was feeling positive after "tough times" in her career and was not ready to make way for a new generation.

'NOT IMMORTAL'

"The youngsters are coming up and they'll eventually take our place but not just yet, we want a little more time," she said. "I still really have the passion for this. I enjoy seeing the effort that I'm able to put in, and I think that hard work will always ultimately come to the surface."

The former world number one said Andy Murray's announcement that this year's tournament Down Under would be his last had underlined her determination to make the most of her time in the spotlight.

"You realise that you're not immortal, you're never going to play this forever, even though we've done it as long as we can think of," she said. However, she conceded her thoughts at times had turned to life after tennis. "At one point, life goes on and there's a lot of things to look forward to," she said. "You have family, children, other business ventures. To me, that doesn't make me sad, that makes me excited."

Sharapova was far from perfect against Dart, committing three double faults and eight unforced errors, but was never threatened by the 22-year-old Londoner. Dart made a hesitant start against her childhood idol.

Sharapova pounced on the Briton's weak second serve to repeatedly break her opponent, bringing up the first set bagel after 31 minutes. The second set followed the same pattern, with Dart finally put out of her misery trying to save match point when she hit a return wide despite having an open court before her.

"Despite my opponent not having the best day, you still have to get the job done," Sharapova said. Sharapova has served up double bagels at least five times on tour, including two in a row at the 2013 Australian Open against fellow Russian Olga Puchkova and Misaki Doi of Japan in the first two rounds of the tournament. She was on the wrong side of the ledger when American Lindsay Davenport beat her 6-0, 6-0 at Indian Wells in 2005. — AFP

MELBOURNE: Russia's Maria Sharapova serves against Britain's Harriet Dart during their women's singles match on day one of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. — AFP

Halep faces tricky test against Kanepi in Melbourne opener

MELBOURNE: Simona Halep begins her Australian Open campaign against Kaia Kanepi today in a rematch of their US Open meeting which the world number one lost in raights sets. The Romanian has struggled for form and fitness since that first-round defeat at Flushing Meadows last year and comes into the year's first Grand Slam short of preparation after a back injury ended her 2018 season prematurely.

Defeat to local hope Ashleigh Barty in the opening round of the Sydney International last week means Halep has played only one match ahead of a potentially tricky test against world number 71 Kanepi.

The top seed has recovered fully from a herniated disk that she aggravated at the China Open in September, but said that she was feeling a bit behind the curve. "I'm motivated. But it's a little bit different because last year I had about 10, 15 matches before Melbourne; now I have one, which I lost," said Halep, who reached the final at Melbourne Park last year.

"I took the risk staying home a little bit longer. I rested because I felt like I'm exhausted after those tournaments and also the year that I had." Kanepi will be out to prove that her victory over the French Open champion was no fluke but the 33-year-old could be short of match practice herself, having not featured since reaching the fourth round in New York after aggravating an existing injury. Serena Williams, who resumes her quest for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title, plays unseeded German Tatjana Maria at Rod Laver Arena in the second match today. Top seed Novak Djokovic, who made a spectacular return to form last year and won the last two Grand Slams, takes on American Mitchell Krueger in the evening session. — Reuters

Islanders jump on Lightning early in win

BROOKLYN: The New York Islanders scored three times in the first five minutes, the fourth line scored twice, and Thomas Greiss made 38 saves in a 5-1 win over the Tampa Bay Lightning in Brooklyn, N.Y., on Sunday. Brock Nelson, Cal Clutterbuck, Devon Toews, Casey Cizikas and Josh Bailey scored for the Islanders, who won for the 11th time in 14 games, moved to 17-7-4 against the Eastern Conference and became the first Metropolitan Division team to beat Tampa Bay in 13 games this season. Greiss earned his 13th win, Matt Martin had two assists, and linemates Cizikas and Clutterbuck added assists as the Islanders broke a stretch of playing in five straight one-goal contests. The Islanders are 6-0-0 in the second game of back-to-backs. Ryan McDonagh scored Tampa Bay's goal, and Andrei Vasilevskiy made 23 saves. The Lightning had their three-game winning streak end and are 21-3-1 in their last 25.

HURRICANES 6, PREDATORS 3

Sebastian Aho scored a hat trick as Carolina thumped visiting Nashville, snapping the Predators' seven-game point streak. The result gave first-year Carolina coach Rod Brind'Amour a win in his first game at the helm of the Hurricanes against Nashville coach Peter Laviolette, who was behind the Hurricanes' bench when Brind'Amour was captain of the 2006 Stanley Cup championship team. Saku Maenalanen, Justin Williams and Lucas Wallmark also scored for the Hurricanes, who've won seven of their last eight games. Filip Forsberg scored twice and Colton Sissons had a goal for Nashville. Roman Josi had two assists.

JETS 4, DUCKS 3 (OT)

Bryan Little scored with 11 seconds left in overtime to lift Winnipeg over visiting Anaheim. Blake Wheeler, Patrik Laine and Ben Chiarot also scored for the Jets, and Connor Hellebuyck made 28 saves. The Ducks lost their 11th straight game (0-7-4). They have led in six of the past eight losses, including three times by multiple goals. Carter Rowney assisted on all three goals for the Ducks, as Brian Gibbons, Rickard Rakell and Andrew Cogliano scored.

FLAMES 7, COYOTES 1

Mark Giordano collected two goals and one assist to move into the top 10 on the franchise's all-time points list in host Calgary's rout of Arizona. In his 800th career game, Giordano moved ahead of Jim Peplinski on Calgary's all-time point list with his 425th. Goalie Mike Smith made 22 saves for the Western Conference-leading Flames, who are riding a five-game winning streak and snapped Arizona's three-game winning streak. Matthew Tkachuk scored twice and Johnny Gaudreau and Sean Monahan both netted one goal and one assist for the Flames, while Jordan Osterle scored Arizona's only goal. Coyotes goalie Adin Hill, who grew up in Calgary, made 19 saves.

BLUE JACKETS 7, RANGERS 5

Cam Atkinson scored the tiebreaking goal with six minutes left in the second period, Nick Foligno scored twice and Columbus held on against visiting New York. Atkinson snapped a 2-2 tie when he scored his 26th goal on a deflection of defenseman Zach Werenski's shot from the right point. It was one of three goals in the second period for the Blue Jackets, who improved to 11-3-1 in their last 15 games and 8-3-1 in their last 12 games against the Rangers. Mats Zuccarello scored twice for the Rangers, who lost for the sixth time in seven games.

COLUMBUS: Nick Foligno #71 of the Columbus Blue Jackets celebrates after beating Alexandar Georgiev #40 of the New York Rangers for a goal during the second period on Sunday at Nationwide Arena in Columbus, Ohio. Columbus defeated New York 7-5. — AFP

CANUCKS 5, PANTHERS 1

Ben Hutton's goal at 7:20 of the third period sparked Vancouver over visiting Florida. Hutton gave the Canucks a 2-1 lead as he one-timed Troy Stecher's long rebound past Florida goaltender Roberto Luongo. The Canucks then added three more goals en route to their first win in four games. Loui Eriksson led the Canucks with a goal and two assists. The Panthers, who got their goal from Frank Vatrano, bore their sixth straight loss. — Reuters

Fiery Olivier leads S Africa to series sweep of Pakistan

Seamer Olivier finish series with 24 wickets

JOHANNESBURG: Fiery fast bowler Duanne Olivier took key early wickets as South Africa wrapped up a clean sweep of their series against Pakistan with victory by 107 runs on the fourth day of the third and final Test yesterday. Pakistan resumed their second innings needing a further 228 for victory with seven wickets in hand, but their chances faded when Olivier removed the dangerous Babar Azam (21) and captain Sarfraz Ahmed (0) in consecutive balls.

The home side chipped away at the wickets to bowl the visitors out for 273, with Olivier (3-74) and Kagiso Rabada (3-75) the pick of a hostile South African attack that has been key to the team's success.

The teams begin a five-match one-day international series on Saturday with the first game in Port Elizabeth. They will also play three Twenty20 matches.

"I'm extremely proud, a 3-0 series win is just what we asked the guys for," stand-in South Africa captain Dean Elgar said at the post-match presentation.

"It's a good way to start the year, we have set our goals and are halfway there with one more test series against Sri Lanka to come."

"Our fast bowlers know what they want to do, which makes your life easier as a captain. They have worked out their game-plans and know how to execute," he added. Olivier was asked to open the bowling on the fourth morning and took his wicket tally in the series to 24 with two quick scalps.

The pace and bounce proved too much for Azam, who could only fend a vicious delivery to wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock.

Pakistan's in-form captain Sarfraz was bowled the very next ball, a double-strike that appeared to take the fight out of the visitors.

Faheem Ashraf (15) and Mohammad Amir (4) both steered Rabada deliveries to Aiden Markram at gulley, while Hasan Ali (22) became the latter's third victim when he was caught and bowled.

Shadab Khan (47 not out) was impressive as he took the attack to the South Africans with some excellent stroke-play, but was denied a fourth test half-century when number 11 Mohammad Abbas (9) was run-out trying to pinch a quick single.

Olivier's tally over the three games, the second highest by a South African in a three-match series, is just one behind record-holder Buck Llewellyn, who took 25 wickets against Australia in 1902.

"We were in a nice position after the first day (having bowled South Africa out for 262), but could not capitalise on that with our batting," Sarfraz said.

"Their bowlers played really well and are very difficult on these wickets. Well done to them.

"Shan Masood played really well (with the bat) and Babar showed his class. Shan and Babar were the positives (from the series)." South Africa won the first two tests by six and nine wickets respectively, their seam attack leading the charge to victory on wickets that Pakistan's vulnerable batting line-up found too spicy for their liking. — Reuters

JOHANNESBURG: South African bowler Duanne Olivier (R) celebrates the dismissal of Pakistan batsman Sarfraz Ahmed (CL) during the fourth day of the third Cricket Test match between South Africa and Pakistan at Wanderers cricket stadium yesterday in Johannesburg. —AFP

SCOREBOARD

Final scores on the fourth day of the third and final Test between South Africa and Pakistan at the Wanderers Stadium yesterday:

South Africa, first innings, 262
Pakistan, first innings, 185
South Africa, second innings, 303

Pakistan, second innings (overnight 153-3)

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 c Elgar b Philander	65
Babar Azam c De Kock b Olivier	21
Sarfraz Ahmed b Olivier	0
Shadab Khan not out	47
Faheem Ashraf c Markram b Rabada	15
Mohammad Amir c Markram b Rabada	4
Hasan Ali c and b Rabada	22
Mohammad Abbas run out (Markram)	9
Extras (lb2, nb1)	3
Total (65.4 overs)	273

Fall of wickets: 1-67 (Imam), 2-74 (Masood), 3-104 (Azhar), 4-162 (Azam), 5-162 (Sarfraz), 6-179 (Shafiq), 7-204 (Ashraf), 8-208 (Amir), 9-242 (Hasan)

Bowling: Steyn 20-2-80-2, Philander 14-4-41-1, Olivier 15-2-74-3 (1nb), Rabada 16-2-75-3, Elgar 0.4-0-1-0.

Result: South Africa won by 107 runs
Series: South Africa won the three-match series 3-0

Kipchoge to run 2019 London Marathon, faces Farah test

LONDON: Kenya's world record holder and defending champion Eliud Kipchoge will return to the London Marathon this year, setting up a mouth-watering clash with Britain's Mo Farah. Kipchoge made it three wins from as many appearances at the London Marathon last year, finishing more than two minutes clear of European record holder Farah, who came third in his first year since retiring from the track to focus on marathon in 2017. While Farah went on to win his maiden marathon title in Chicago, Kipchoge shattered the world record by 78 seconds as he completed the Berlin Marathon in two hours, one minute and 39 seconds.

"It is always a great honour to come and race the Virgin Money London Marathon and I'm excited to be returning in 2019," Kipchoge, who will be favourite to win his fourth London title on April 28, said in a statement.

"I had a memorable 2018, winning the Virgin Money London Marathon and then setting a new world record at the Berlin Marathon. I'm hoping that 2019 is just as good to me. "I am looking forward to racing Sir Mo Farah again. He is a great champion and proved in Chicago that he can win a major marathon so I relish the battle with him and also the many other great athletes that I'm sure will once again be on the start line in London." Kipchoge, 34, and Farah, 35, are currently joint leaders of the World Marathon Majors Series XII and could seal the title with a victory in London. "We will see two absolute legends of distance running competing over 26.2 miles of roads in the greatest marathon in the world," London Marathon's event director Hugh Brasher said. "I cannot wait until Sunday 28 April to see who comes out on top." — Reuters

Eliud Kipchoge

14 all out: China cricket hopes stumped by record T20 loss

BANGKOK: Cricket's governing body has long dreamed of spreading the game to China, but the latest performance by its women's team is unlikely to inspire many in the world's most populous nation to take up the bat and ball.

China were skittled out for just 14 runs at a tournament in Bangkok on Sunday-the lowest ever score in a Twenty20 international match, for men or women.

In reply to the United Arab Emirates' massive 203 for 3, China were bowled out in under an hour and with 10 overs to spare at the Thailand T20 Smash. Hin Lili led their fleeting resistance to the UAE's unsparing attack, top-scoring with four.

The Thailand T20 Smash includes fellow cricketing underdogs Malaysia, Indonesia and Myanmar. It is not the first embarrassment to befall Chinese cricket against Asian nations who Beijing dominates in economic and political terms, but struggles to match on the wicket.

In October last year, China's men made a dismal 26 against Nepal at a World Twenty20 qualifier, a total bested in just 11 balls. China is a newcomer to world cricket, having fielded its first international team at the 2010 Asian Games.

Its women's team is ranked 25th of 47 countries playing women's T20, according to the International Cricket Council website. China's men and women play mainly low-ranking T20 events against regional Asian sides, most of whom are also minnows on the global cricketing stage.

The ICC has previously described China as a "strategic priority", and said it is working with the China Cricket Association on ways to "achieve sustainable growth in one of the most complex and competitive sports markets in the world". — AFP

Ibaka lifts Raptors over Wizards in double-OT win

WASHINGTON: Serge Ibaka's 3-pointer with 15.2 seconds remaining lifted the visiting Toronto Raptors to a 140-138 double-overtime win against the stubborn Washington Wizards on Sunday. Washington rallied from 19 points down in the third quarter to force overtime and took a 138-136 lead on Thomas Bryant's short jumper with 31.8 seconds left in the second overtime. Kawhi Leonard missed on a drive on the ensuing possession but got his own rebound and passed out to Ibaka, who hit from 28 feet. Washington's Otto Porter Jr. then missed a 3-point attempt, and Toronto's Danny Green added a free throw with 2.8 seconds left. With no timeouts, the Wizards were unable to get off a final shot. Leonard registered 41 points and 11 rebounds for the Raptors, who have won five straight to improve their NBA-best record to 33-12. Pascal Siakam had 24 points and 19 rebounds before fouling out.

WARRIORS 119, MAVERICKS 114

Stephen Curry scored a game-high 48 points — 24 in each half-and dropped the game-winning 3-pointer to allow Golden State to escape Dallas with a victory. Curry, who scored 16 points in the first quarter, made 11 3-pointers and scored the final seven points for the Warriors in a game the Mavs led 113-108 with 3:51 to go in the game. Kevin Durant scored 28 points and Klay Thompson had 16 on an abysmal shooting night in which he went just 2 of 11 from beyond the arc. Rookie of the Year favorite Luka Doncic led Dallas with 26 points, making 5 of 10 from beyond the arc and adding five assists and six rebounds. Forward Harrison Barnes scored 22, but as he was trying to get off a game-tying 3-point attempt with five seconds to go, Barnes lost control of his dribble and helplessly watched the ball roll out of bounds.

NUGGETS 116, TRAIL BLAZERS 113

Nikola Jokic had 40 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists, Jamal Murray shook off an injury to score 24, and Denver snapped visiting Portland's four-game win streak. Jokic and Murray-who left the game briefly in the first half after an inadvertent shot to the mouth-combined for eight points in the final 67 seconds to put the Nuggets ahead for good after a tie at 108. Damian Lillard scored 26, and CJ McCollum had 18 points for the Blazers. McCollum drained a corner 3-pointer with 27.7 seconds left to make it 114-113, but Lillard's 33-footer at the buzzer missed.

76ERS 108, KNICKS 105

Ben Simmons totaled 20 points, a career-high 22 rebounds and nine assists as visiting Philadelphia never trailed, survived a shaky second half and extended its winning streak over New York Knicks to seven games. Simmons finished with his 28th double-double this season and just shy of his eighth triple-double. Joel Embiid returned from missing Friday's loss to Atlanta due to a sore right ankle and led the 76ers with 26 points while adding eight rebounds and a season-high six blocked shots. Rookie Kevin Knox scored a career-high 31 points, but the Knicks lost for the 17th time in 19 games and dropped their eighth straight home game.

MAGIC 116, ROCKETS 109

With Aaron Gordon leading early before several others stepped up late, Orlando rallied past visiting Houston in the fourth quarter, capping wins on consecutive nights against title contenders. Terrence Ross, Evan Fournier, and D.J. Augustin sank 3-pointers on successive possessions to key a 16-2 run for a 114-107 lead with 1:21 left. Gordon and Nikola Vucevic scored 22 points each, as the Magic claimed a fourth consecutive home win, rallying from a 12-point deficit after doing the same in beating Boston on Saturday. Rockets guard James Harden scored 38 points to match Kobe Bryant with his 16th consecutive 30-point game, the most in the NBA since 1972-73. However, Harden struggled mightily with his perimeter shooting, missing 16 of 17 3-point attempts. He shot 11 of 32 overall.

CAVALIERS 101, LAKERS 95

Cedi Osman scored 20 points, and Rodney Hood added 18 as visiting Cleveland ended its 12-game losing streak at the expense of struggling Los Angeles. Tristan Thompson had 15 points and 14 rebounds, while Alec Burks had 17 points and 13 rebounds in Cleveland's first win since Dec. 18 at Indiana. The Cavaliers are just 9-35 this season and remain the only NBA team that has not reached double digits in victories. Kyle Kuzma had 29 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, as injured Los Angeles forward LeBron James watched his current team face his former team while nursing a groin injury. Brandon Ingram had 22 points for L.A.

BUCKS 133, HAWKS 114

A night off worked wonders for Giannis Antetokounmpo, who scored 33 points to lead visiting Milwaukee over Atlanta. Antetokounmpo was given Friday night off to help him deal with ongoing right quad soreness and a left hip contusion. He returned to lead the Bucks in scoring, shooting 9 for 17 from the field and surpassing the 30-point mark for the 18th time this season. The win was the 30th of the season for the Bucks, who remain the only team in the league without back-to-back losses, now 12-0 in games following a loss. The Bucks have won 12 of their last 15 and won their sixth straight meeting against Atlanta. — Reuters

WASHINGTON: Otto Porter Jr. #22 of the Washington Wizards steals the ball from Patrick McCaw #3 of the Toronto Raptors in the second half at Capital One Arena on Sunday in Washington, DC. — AFP

Attiyah extends Dakar lead

SAN JUAN DE MARCONA: Qatar's Nasser al-Attiyah closed in on a third Dakar Rally title on Sunday despite nine-time world rally champion Sebastien Loeb taking the race's sixth stage honours on the same stretch of sand where his 2018 challenge perished.

Al-Attiyah, the Dakar champion in 2011 and 2015, has an overall lead of 37min 43sec after taking his factory Toyota to second place on Sunday's run from Arequipa to San Juan de Marcona. "We did a great job all day long, but we made a blunder in the final 15 kilometres," said al-Attiyah as he reflected on a navigational error when he missed a waypoint.

"We went down the wrong valley, and then it took us a long time to backtrack and get back on the right track. It cost us several minutes, but I'm still happy with our position." Loeb, behind the wheel of a private entry Peugeot, claimed his third stage win of this year's Dakar and 13th of his career after reaching the finish more than two minutes ahead of the 48-year-old Qatari.

French driver Loeb also snatched second place in the overall standings from 13-time champion Stephane Peterhansel who finished almost 12 minutes behind al-Attiyah and the best part of 19 minutes back from Loeb. "It went well, but we made mistakes. We saw Nasser make the same blunder, so we both lost two minutes," said Loeb, who was relieved to survive the same run from Arequipa to San Juan de Marcona where he was forced to retire last year.—AFP

Inter into Coppa quarters at San Siro closed after racist chanting

Two late goals from Chiesa as Fiorentina beat battling Torino

MILAN: Inter Milan cruised into the quarter-finals of the Coppa Italia on Sunday after beating second-tier Benevento 6-2 in a match played behind closed doors following the racist abuse of Senegal defender Kalidou Koulibaly last month.

Inter ran riot in a San Siro left empty as part of the punishment the club received for the monkey chants directed at Koulibaly during their 1-0 Boxing Day win over Napoli. "That wasn't a real match tonight," said Inter coach Luciano Spalletti. "The protagonists of the game are the fans, who should come and have fun watching the show on the pitch.

"We can't deprive good people of enjoyment because others disturb the match (with their behaviour). We need to reward that type of fan, who needs to take a stand against the chants they don't want to take part in."

Spalletti's side were two up inside seven minutes thanks to a roaring start that saw Mauro Icardi open the scoring from the spot following a foul on Antonio Candreva, who was on hand to crash home after striker Icardi hit the post from a corner to double the hosts' lead.

The tie was put beyond doubt in first-half stoppage time when Dalbert collected Ivan Perisic's pass and thumped in the third, and Croat Perisic was on hand again shortly after the break to cross for Lautaro Martinez to make it four with his head.

Benevento forward Roberto Insigne smashed home a free-kick that his brother Lorenzo, in action later for Napoli against Sassuolo, would have been proud of, but Martinez scored again in the 66th minute to mean that Filippo Bandinelli's goal for the away side was nothing more than a second consolation.

Candreva's second deep into added time was the cherry on the cake for Spalletti's side, who in the quarters will take on Lazio, embroiled in a racism scandal of their own. Their 4-1 thumping of third-division Novara at Rome's Stadio Olimpico on Saturday was sullied by racist and anti-Semitic chanting dismissed by the club as a "psychosis focusing on a minority or non-existent incidents".

Lazio's notorious hardcore ultra fans aimed a series of ugly barbs at their bitter city rivals Roma as their side ran up a four-goal lead before half-time, taunting them with chants of "Yellow, red and Jewish" and "This Roma that looks like Africa".

Lazio spokesman Arturo Diaconale blasted reports of the chanting by a small section of the crowd as "a psychosis", and said that "98 percent" of the crowd did not even hear them. Napoli will take on AC Milan in the last eight after goals from Arkadiusz Milik and Fabian Ruiz saw off Sassuolo at the Stadio San Paolo in Naples on Sunday. Milan beat Sampdoria 2-0 on Saturday.

Earlier on Sunday two late goals from Federico Chiesa saw Fiorentina beat battling Torino, who were the more dangerous side throughout the match but were knocked out thanks to a brace in the final three minutes from the Italy international.

The Viola will host one of Roma or Virtus Entella from third-tier Serie C, who play today after Cagliari and Atalanta face off in an all-Serie A clash. On Saturday, Juventus booked their place in the last eight with a 2-0 win at Bologna. —AFP

NAPLES: Napoli's Senegalese defender Kalidou Koulibaly acknowledges the public at the end of the Italian Tim Cup round of sixteen football match Napoli vs Sassuolo on Sunday at the San Paolo stadium in Naples. —AFP

Australia union seeks help for detained Bahraini refugee player

DUBAI: The head of the Australian soccer players union wants the sport's regional governing body to help secure the release of a Bahraini refugee footballer arrested in Thailand in November over a prison sentence in his homeland.

Hakeem Al Araibi, who played in Australia but had flown out for his honeymoon, was arrested in November in Bangkok on an Interpol notice issued at Bahrain's request. The former member of Bahrain's national soccer team, a critic of the government, was convicted of vandalising a police station and sentenced to 10 years in prison in absentia.

He has denied wrongdoing. John Didulica, chief executive of Professional Footballers Australia (PFA), said the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), whose head is a member of Bahrain's ruling family, should intervene for his freedom.

Didulca said Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim al-Khalifa, as AFC president, was obliged to safeguard footballers' rights, but he had seen no evidence of action. "That's a huge failure on their behalf and must be remedied," he told Reuters at a hotel in Dubai on Sunday while attending the Asian Cup.

Sheikh Salman could not be reached for comment. When asked by Reuters to respond, an AFC spokesman said: "The AFC is working with many stakeholders including FIFA, and as this work is ongoing we will make no further comment."

A Bahrain government spokesperson said there was no threat to Araibi's life and he could appeal if he returned. "The two people convicted with him appealed against their convictions and were found not guilty under due legal process by Bahrain's independent judiciary," the spokesperson said.

Union head Didulica said failure to work towards Araibi's return to Australia, where he was granted asylum in 2017 after fleeing Bahrain three years earlier, could make Sheikh Salman's candidacy for AFC re-election "untenable".

Araibi was a vocal critic of Sheikh Salman, a cousin of Bahrain's king, when he contested the FIFA presidential election in 2015. During the campaign, which he lost to Gianni Infantino, Sheikh Salman was strongly criticised by some rights groups.

Sheikh Salman denies he was involved in investigating and prosecuting athletes active in Bahrain's 2011 protests. Activists have called on authorities to "show humanity" to Araibi in the same way they did to an 18-year-old Saudi woman who fled from her family to Thailand.

Human Rights Watch said Araibi was tortured by Bahraini authorities because of his brother's political activities during the Arab Spring uprising in 2011. Bahraini authorities deny allegations of torture. —Reuters

Hakeem Al Araibi (centre)

Solskjaer basks in win against Spurs but has work to do

LONDON: Manchester United's victory against Tottenham is a statement win for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer but the team's reliance on David de Gea's heroics in goal show the interim boss still has work to do. Solskjaer had won all five of his games as interim United boss before Sunday's Premier League match at Wembley, seen as the first major test of his reign.

The Norwegian got his tactics spot on in the first half of a match billed as a face-off between the two favourites for the full-time job at Old Trafford, with Mauricio Pochettino in the opposition dugout.

Spurs dominated possession in the opening minutes but United's fleet-footed trio of Marcus Rashford, Anthony Martial and Jesse Lingard looked to counter-attack at every opportunity. The approach paid off just before half-time when the impressive Paul Pogba delivered a raking cross-field ball for Rashford to run onto and the England man drove the ball emphatically past Hugo Lloris, leading to wild scenes of celebration on the bench.

But the second half was a different story as Spurs came forward in relentless waves, only to find De Gea in unbeatable form. Former United defender Gary Neville hailed the impact his former Old Trafford teammate Solskjaer has had since he replaced the sacked Jose Mourinho last month.

"Ole Gunnar Solskjaer is picking the profile of player Manchester United need and that's players who have the energy to get from box to box quickly and counter-attack with quality," the Sky Sports pundit said on his podcast.

"You've seen that in the last few weeks. At Wembley, it was the acid test. It was the moment where people said could he live in a big game and could he live against the big managers. Second half I thought it was about spirit, desire and hanging on a little bit. The players were playing for the manager."

SOLSKJAER FAVOURITE?

The hard-fought victory at Wembley certainly boosts Solskjaer's chances of staying at Old Trafford beyond the end of this season and some British bookmakers now make him the favourite ahead of Pochettino.

The Norwegian has done little wrong since he took over an unhappy club from Mourinho, reinvigorating Pogba and Rashford and tightening a leaky defence-the clean sheet against Spurs was just United's fourth of the Premier League campaign.

Solskjaer hailed De Gea as "the best goalkeeper in the world" after the Spaniard's 11 saves and praised his defence but he acknowledged it was tough going after the break. —AFP

Guardiola in hunt for 'new' Fernandinho

MANCHESTER: Pep Guardiola has acknowledged finding a long-term replacement for Fernandinho is becoming a matter of increasing urgency for Manchester City. The 33-year-old Brazilian has become one of the most important players in City's line-up during Guardiola's three seasons at the club, with his hard work and passing ability as a holding midfielder providing both security in front of the defence and scope for the team to attack.

Reigning champions City have lost just one of the 19 Premier League matches in which Fernandinho has played, whereas they have been defeated in both of the games he has missed. Guardiola does not appear to have a deputy of the same quality-John Stones, normally a centre-back, struggled in the role when Crystal Palace won at the Etihad Stadium on December 22, while Ilkay Gundogan has not been entirely convincing either.

City have been linked with a move for Frenkie de Jong from Ajax at the end of this season, but the Dutch midfielder is attracting significant interest from other clubs too. Guardiola acknowledges he cannot expect Fernandinho, signed from Shakhtar Donetsk in 2013, to play as much for City as he gets older, adding a solution has to be found for next season.

"It's not easy to find the specific quality of the players," said Guardiola. "Maybe there aren't many, but there are players who can play in that role." The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss added: "Specifically with Fernandinho's role, it's so difficult to find. He knows the Premier League, after three years together here, he knows everything and that's so important.

"But, of course, for the next season it's an important target to find. He'll be 34 and he cannot play every few days." There have been reports in British newspapers suggesting Wolves' Portuguese midfielder Ruben Neves may be a long-term replacement for Fernandinho, although their roles are slightly different.

Neves, whose Wolves side visit the Etihad, tends to play as one of two holding midfielders, whereas Fernandinho performs that role on his own in the City line-up. "Ruben Neves is an excellent player," said Guardiola, whose second-placed side will be looking to cut Liverpool's seven-point lead at the top of the table.

"The system at Wolves involves playing with two holding midfielders, not just one. But he's an excellent player. "There are many clubs in the world, many holding midfielders in the world, and most of them can play here. That's not the point. The point is that most of them are under contracts."

MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola gestures on the touchline during the English FA Cup third round football match between Manchester City and Rotherham United at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. —AFP

But Guardiola insisted, for all City's wealth, there were limits to even their transfer budget.

"A month ago, I started reading: 'Ruben Neves, £100 million ($129 million, 112 million euros)'. That is not going to happen. We are not going to pay £100 million for a holding midfielder. "Of course, all departments in the club, we have in every position four or five or six options (potential targets) — depending on age, what we believe and, of course, the price."

Despite the likelihood of losing out on De Jong, Guardiola has no qualms over the work being done by City director of football Txiki Begiristain and his team to bring in top-class players. "I would say they are incredible, top at what they are doing. It looks simple but it's not simple. It looks easy but it's not easy," said Guardiola.

"I am in touch quite often with Txiki, especially, because he is close to my door. I know exactly what they do, with the (City) academy, with the first team and they are doing it really well." "But sometimes it doesn't depend on us," said the Catalan manager.

"You have to pay the club, pay the family and talk with the players, and with the agents, it's nuts. It's complicated, so, so complicated." —AFP

Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

FRENCH LEAGUE

SCO Angers v FC Girondins de Bordeaux beIN SPORTS	21:00

ASIAN NATIONS CUP 2019

Australia v Syria beIN SPORTS	16:30
Palestine v Jordan beIN SPORTS	16:30

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Sport Times

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25 Battling Murray crashes out as Federer, Nadal fight on

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SHARJAH: India's midfielder Ashique Kuruniyan (L) fights for the ball with Bahrain's midfielder Kamil Al Aswad during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup group A football match between India and Bahrain at the Sharjah Stadium in Sharjah yesterday. —AFP

Bahrain dumps India out of Asian Cup

UAE cement their place as group winners after draw with Thailand

SHARJAH: India suffered late heart-break yesterday after an injury-time penalty saw the cricket-mad nation lose 1-0 to Bahrain and be denied a historic spot in the Asian Cup knockout stages. Meanwhile hosts and India's Group A rivals United Arab Emirates cemented their place as group winners after a 1-1 draw with Thailand in Al Ain that also saw the Thais progress.

India were moments away from reaching the knockout phase for the first time before Jamal Rashed scored a dramatic penalty to cruelly shattered their dreams and sneak Bahrain through. After the defeat, India's English coach Stephen Constantine announced he would step down after completing his second spell in charge.

India stunned Thailand 4-1 in their opening game for their first Asian Cup win in more than 50 years but a 2-0 defeat by UAE made for a nervous encounter in Sharjah. Television showed cut-aways of India's substitutes biting their fingernails throughout the match, while Constantine prowled the touchline in dark suit and sunglasses barking instructions to his players.

India were indebted to centre-back Sandesh Jhingan, who was being compared on Twitter to Liverpool's Virgil van Dijk by their legions of fans watching on TV back home. The giant, bushy-bearded defender was immense, putting out fires all game to keep India's clean sheet intact. But the Blue Tigers began to creak as the game wore on and survived a scare when substitute Mohamed Jasim Marhoon's header rattled the post after 71 minutes.

India were clinging on for dear life by the end, at one point packing all 11 players on their own goal line to defend an indirect free kick.

Veteran striker Sunil Chhetri, who overtook Lionel Messi in international goals during the win over Thailand, flew out to get the crucial block.

Just as it looked like India would hold on for a famous point, Pronay Halder committed a rash foul and Rashed stepped up to smash the ball down the middle to knock India down to the bottom of the group and out of the tournament.

UAE finished with five points, one more than Thailand and Bahrain, who go through as one of the best third-placed teams. It looked like being an easy night for the Emiratis when striker Ali Mabkhout, top-scorer at the 2015 tournament, netted after just seven minutes in Al Ain.

As the white shirts poured forward, Ismail Al Hammadi's chipped shot came back off the bar and Mabkhout perfectly placed to nod home the rebound. Lightweight Thailand were often outmuscled but were dangerous when they had a sight of goal-as seen when Adisak Kraison forced a smart, low save from Khalid Eisa.

And four minutes before half-time, "Thai Messi" Chanathip Songkrasin's ball into the box caused panic, rebounding off defender Mohamed Ahmad and leaving Thitiphan Puangjan with a tap-in.

The pace slowed after the break and the second half proceeded with barely any serious attempts on goal as both sides looked happy to settle for the draw. —AFP

'Monstrous' Messi scores 400th La Liga goal, sends Barca five points clear

MADRID: Lionel Messi scored his 400th La Liga goal on Sunday, a total his coach Ernesto Valverde called "monstrous", as Barcelona terrorised Eibar to reclaim their five-point cushion at the top of the table. Messi drove the ball into the bottom corner after being teed up by Luis Suarez, who added two goals to his own tally either side of the Argentinian marking another historic record at the Camp Nou.

"It's monstrous," said Valverde, after the 3-0 victory. "It's easy to say but you have to score them one after the other, it's a long-term job. "His numbers are stratospheric, incredible. He is from another galaxy."

Victory saw Valverde's side restore their advantage over Atletico Madrid, who had briefly cut the gap to two points after beating Levante earlier in the day. "There is a lot of time left," Valverde said. "It is a good cushion but nothing is done yet."

Real Madrid won too, beating Real Betis, to ensure Spain's big three all prevailed in the same round for only the fourth time this season. Real remain 10 points adrift of Barcelona. Messi, meanwhile, extends his own hefty lead as the division's all-time top scorer, which currently stands at 89 goals, ahead of Cristiano Ronaldo.

Ronaldo, now at Juventus in Italy, owns a better goals-to-game ratio, with his 311 strikes coming in 292 matches. Messi's quadruple century arrived in his 435th. In fact, it was one of Messi's quieter nights in terms of performance and in another team it might have been Suarez or Philippe Coutinho picking up the plaudits.

Suarez assisted Messi, applied a classy finish and was on the end of a scintillating team move for Barca's first.

Coutinho was the provider for that one and delivered a sparkling display to appease those doubting his future at the club. The Brazilian has endured a spell out of Valverde's preferred starting line-up but he converted a penalty against Levante in the Copa del Rey on Wednesday, and was arguably man of the match here.

He alone supplied three passes in the build-up to Suarez's opener. Arthur Melo started it, playing a one-two with Coutinho and then into the feet of Sergio Busquets. Busquets pinged the ball left to Coutinho, who twice exchanged with Suarez before the Uruguayan, off balance, found the far corner.

Messi's moment came in the 53rd minute and it was Suarez who started it, stealing back possession after a heavy touch from Anaitz Arbilla. He bounced it off Coutinho and found Messi, who touched and rifled in.

Barca were enjoying themselves as Coutinho flicked the ball over one opponent's head and Suarez did the same through another's legs. The third goal was simple, however, Sergi Roberto taking a quick throw and freeing the scuttling Suarez. With the goalkeeper out, he looked up and chipped the ball into the net.

The pressure had been cranked up a notch after Antoine Griezmann's second-half penalty earned Atletico a 1-0 victory over Levante. Griezmann has now scored all of Atletico's last six goals and his latest one proved the difference in a cagey contest at the Wanda Metropolitano. —AFP

BARCELONA: Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi shoots to score his team's second goal during the Spanish League football match between FC Barcelona and SD Eibar at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Sunday. Lionel Messi scored his 400th goal in La Liga against Eibar. —AFP