

**4** Kuwait marks 28th 'versary of Operation Desert Storm



**13** Vietnam's newest airline Bamboo takes first flight



**19** Sadu House working to promote creative weaving



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# EPA chief says climate change behind rain that deluged Kuwait

## Finance ministry denies limiting compensation to KD 1,000 for rain-hit car owners

### Constitutional court to review Tabtabaei objection next week

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The constitutional court set next Monday to review an objection filed by MP Walced Al-Tabtabaei regarding the implementation of a ruling by the court declaring a key article of the National Assembly's internal charter as unconstitutional. The court last month ruled that article 16 of the Assembly charter was unconstitutional, which means that the memberships of Tabtabaei and MP Jamaan Al-Harbash are scrapped.

The National Assembly in October voted on the basis of article 16 to retain the membership of the two opposition

lawmakers after they received a final jail term for storming the Assembly. Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem had delayed a parliamentary debate on the court ruling last week until after the court issues an opinion regarding the objection. Some opposition MPs have charged that the court ruling represents an interference in the Assembly's affairs and called for legislation to curtail such interference.

On another issue, Ghanem said yesterday that the Assembly's priority issues committee has not been abolished and continues to carry out its work despite appointing a new panel to accelerate the

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KUWAIT: Climate change has become a "serious" issue in Kuwait given the bursts of heavy rain that soaked the state recently, a Kuwaiti official said yesterday. The international community is working to meet the objectives of a landmark 2015 global deal to tackle climate change, Director General of Kuwait's Environment Public Authority (EPA) Sheikh Abdullah Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said. During a ceremony to promulgate Kuwait's rulebook for implementing the Paris climate agreement, he said the environmental body is currently studying the new rules agreed upon by nearly 200 countries during talks in Poland last month.

The effects of climate change have begun to spill over into Kuwait, he explained, citing rising sea levels and record precipitation as factors that could impede future development projects. Kuwait has coped well with the effects of climate change, according to the UN Environment's West Asia Office develop-

ment coordinator Dr Abdulmonem Mohammad, who said necessary measures should be taken to keep climate change in check. The 2015 Paris agreement aims to limit a rise in average world temperatures to "well below" two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial times.

Meanwhile, Finance Ministry Undersecretary Saleh Al-Saraawi yesterday denied media reports that the compensation body will allocate a maximum of KD 1,000 (\$3,300) in compensation for owners of vehicles affected by the recent downpours. The compensation committee is still studying requests submitted by people in this regard to compensate those entitled in three categories - real estate, personal damage and cars, Saraawi told KUNA.

Compensations will be given to eligible persons after studying all cases carefully so as to achieve justice for all people, he noted. The Cabinet assigned in November a team to follow up and address the repercussions of



Sheikh Abdullah Al-Humoud Al-Sabah

the rains and receive requests for compensations. The team was divided into four groups to achieve the task. — KUNA

### News in brief

#### \$1.5m aid for Syrians in Lebanon

KUWAIT: On directives from HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, urgent aid worth \$1.5 million is on its way to Syrian refugees in Lebanon, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) announced yesterday. The aid is to ease the suffering of Syrian refugees in Lebanese camps, especially Al-Rukban refugee camp, which witnessed massive destruction due to harsh cold and blizzards, said KRCS chief Dr Hilal Al-Sayer. He told KUNA that this generous donation stemmed from HH the Amir's humanitarian empathy towards the tens of thousands of refugees there. — KUNA

#### Pompeo to visit Kuwait soon

KUWAIT: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Tuesday he was looking forward to visit Kuwait "in the coming days" to hold the 3rd strategic dialogue session with Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Pompeo, in a phone call with Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, said he was compelled to postpone his visit to Kuwait due to the passing away of a family member. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed deepest condolences to Pompeo and his family. The two ministers reiterated deep relations at all levels, and expressed mutual desire to promoting ties to new heights. — KUNA



Mike Pompeo

#### Iqama renewals to go online

KUWAIT: An informed security source said the residency affairs department will soon introduce residency renewals online, and the process will start with article 20 (domestic help) residencies. The source said citizens will be able to renew residency permits of their helpers online after the department implements procedures to speed up the process. Meanwhile, the Farwaniya residency affairs department officially resumed its activities in Riggae following a trial of over 350 transactions. — Al-Anbaa

#### Istanbul real estate fraud claims

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti citizens affected by an Istanbul tower project real estate fraud case are urged to file their financial claims within two working days in order to preserve their rights, the foreign ministry said yesterday. Claims must be filed as soon as possible through one of the accredited law firms in Kuwait, said the consular department of the ministry in a statement yesterday. It added that Turkish authorities had set a time limit till the end of this month (January) to enlist claimers. The number 22225555 ext 7021 is available for any inquiry on the matter, it pointed out. — KUNA

### IS attack kills US forces in northern Syria

QAMISHLI, Syria: A suicide attack killed US servicemen in northern Syria yesterday, causing the United States to suffer its worst combat losses in the war-torn country since 2014 as it prepares to withdraw. The bombing claimed by the Islamic State group comes after US President Donald Trump's shock announcement last month that he was ordering a full troop withdrawal from Syria because the militants had been "largely defeated". The US-led coalition fighting IS said "US service members were killed during an explosion while conducting a routine patrol in Syria" yesterday, without giving a death toll.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said 20 people were killed in the bomb attack in the northern city of Manbij near the Turkish border, including five US troops.

Continued on Page 24



MANBIJ, Syria: An image grab taken from a video shows US armored vehicles at the scene of a suicide attack in this northern Syrian town yesterday. — AFP

### Kenya says all five gunmen killed; Amir condemns attack

NAIROBI: Kenya said its forces yesterday ended a terror attack on a luxury hotel complex that claimed 14 lives, after a 20-hour operation that rescued hundreds of people and left all five assailants dead. The attack was claimed by the Al-Qaeda-linked Somali group Al-Shabaab, which has targeted Kenya since it sent its army into Somalia in Oct 2011 to fight the group. At least one suicide bomber

blew himself up and others traded gunfire with security forces as the assault on DusitD2, a complex which includes a 101-room hotel, spa, restaurant and offices, unfolded on Tuesday.

"There were five terrorists and all of them are no more," Kenyan police chief Joseph Boinnet told AFP. "It is a clearing exercise now going on there." For many Kenyans, news of the attack revived traumatic memories of a 2013 Shabaab raid on Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall that left 67 dead - a siege played out over four days that led to sharp criticism of the authorities' response. But this time, local media heaped praise on the security forces for their intervention, which Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said entailed the evacuation of some 700 civilians.

Continued on Page24



NAIROBI: Relatives and mourners bury the body of Faisal Ahmed Rashid, who was killed the previous day in an attack on a Nairobi luxury hotel complex, during his funeral service at the Langata Muslim cemetery yesterday. — AFP

### Crocodile mauls woman to death in Indonesia

MINAHASA, Indonesia: An Indonesian woman has been mauled to death by a huge pet crocodile on the island of Sulawesi, officials said yesterday. Deasy Tuwo, the head of a laboratory at a pearl farm in Minahasa in North Sulawesi, was killed by the 4.4-m reptile last Thursday, authorities said. The 44-year-old's badly mauled body was found by colleagues the following morning, Hendrik Rundengan, from the local conservation agency, told AFP. "The indication is that she fell into the crocodile's enclosure," he said, adding

the incident was still being investigated by police.

The crocodile, named Merry, had eaten one of the woman's hands and most of her abdomen was missing, Rundengan said. "These parts may still be inside the crocodile now," he added. The giant reptile was sedated and removed from its enclosure Monday in a three-hour operation that involved dozens of people, including conservation officials, the army and police. The reptile, which was owned illegally, will be transferred to a conservation area, Rundengan said.

The Indonesian archipelago is home to a vast array of exotic wildlife, including several species of crocodile that regularly attack and kill humans. In April 2016, a Russian tourist was killed by a crocodile in the Raja Ampat islands, a popular diving site in the east of the archipelago. — AFP



MINAHASA, Indonesia: A 4.4-m-long crocodile named Merry is secured before being taken out of its enclosure in North Sulawesi on Jan 14, 2019, after a woman was mauled to death in the reptile's enclosure. — AFP

## Local

# Conference correlates between 'New Kuwait,' UN Sustainable Development Goals

## Sessions held as part of International Anti-Corruption Conference

By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The Public Anti-Corruption Authority's (Nazaha) official spokesperson and Secretary General for Corruption Investigation Mohammed Bozabr told Kuwait Times that an international anti-corruption conference in Kuwait focuses on the correlation between the 'New



Mohammed Bozabr

Kuwait' vision 2035 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 2030 to define Kuwait's efforts in promoting integrity, providing a global platform to support these efforts and stimulating international dialogue on corruption risks and ways to address them in order to contribute to the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

The conference, titled 'Integrity for Development,' is being held under the auspices of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre. Bozabr said the session on the first day discussed the new generation of national anti-corruption strategies, successful corruption prevention practices in the public sector and the importance of integrity for competitiveness and the business environment.

"On the second day, the first session discussed 'Transparency and its Role in Enhancing Citizens' Trust in State Institutions' moderated by Sheikh Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah, former governor of the Kuwait Central Bank, along with speakers from Lebanon, France and the United

States. The 'Current State of the Indicators on Integrity and Corruption and the Way Forward' session will shed light on the importance of indicators in measuring the performance of countries and their role in promoting integrity and transparency. Experts are here to expand the role of



### Promoting a combating corruption strategy

these indicators, measurements and follow-up to reach the best and appropriate arrangement for the country," Bozabr noted.

Bozabr added that the last session discussed 'Safeguarding the Sustainable Development Goals against Corruption Risks,' which confirmed the importance of supporting the sustainable development of Kuwait and how development is the main goal to achieve the 2035 vision of Kuwait. He revealed that the end of the conference will have a declaration to highlight Kuwait's efforts in promoting transparency, integrity and competitiveness in state institutions. Kuwait is aiming to promote a strategy in the future in several conferences to raise awareness on the risks of corruption and means to address them, as well as promoting the role of society and civil society organizations in combating corruption.



**KUWAIT:** A session held during the conference titled 'Integrity for Development' and moderated by Sheikh Salem Abdulaziz Al-Sabah. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

## Kuwait's democratic experiment extolled

**KUWAIT:** Secretary General of the Arab Maghreb Union's (AMU) shura council Said Moqaddam commended yesterday Kuwait's democratic experiment shown by the National Assembly which has been playing a vital and key role on local and international arenas. The democratic practice at the National Assembly is an example for other Arab parliaments to follow, Moqaddam told Al-Dustur news network. He also appreciated the National Assembly's effective contributions to the sessions of the

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) that have shown Kuwait's parliamentary diplomacy which moved to international levels, describing it as 'effective and influential.'

The Kuwaiti parliament has been committed to defending the Palestinian cause and proven the efficiency of Kuwait's parliamentary diplomacy on international levels, he said. He also lauded National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem's firm stance in defending continually the Palestinian cause, describing it as 'honorable.' He said that his visit came upon an invitation by Chairman of Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments (ASGP) Allam Al-Kandari that aims to discuss the Association's resolutions taken during a meeting on June 12 in Cairo. He referred to forming a committee to prepare a functional guideline to unify the legislative drafting in all Arab countries. —KUNA

## Former ministers appointed to Supreme Petroleum Council

**KUWAIT:** An Amiri decree was issued to appoint new members in the Supreme Petroleum Council for three years effective Jan 15, 2019. According to decree number 19/2019, the council will include former finance minister Mustafa Al-Shamali, former social affairs minister Hind Al-Sabeeh, former oil minister Essam Al-Marzouq and Abdul Hadi Al-Awwad, in addition to Essam Al-Bahar, Abdul Mohsen Al-Haneef and Abdul Aziz Al-Ibrahim from the previous council. The dismissed members include Suleiman Al-Omani, Mohammed Al-Dowaihees, Essa Al-Mazeedi and Mohammed Humoud Al-Hajeri.



Mustafa Al-Shamali

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah issued a number of decisions on reshuffling and appointing a number of senior police commanders. The minister's decisions included appointing Maj Gen



Hind Al-Sabeeh



Essam Al-Marzouq

Fuad Al-Athari as the Capital security commander, Maj Gen Saud Al-Khodor as facilities security commander, Maj Gen Mahmoud Al-Tabbakh as criminal evidence director, Maj Gen Wael Al-Roumi as coordination director, Maj Gen Abdullah Al-Hajeri as backup and maintenance director, Maj Gen Abdullah Al-Ali as Farwaniya security commander, Brig Abdullah Al-Saffah as Mubarak Al-Kabeer security commander, Brig Khaled Al-Kandari as Hawally security commander, Brig Ali Al-Ahaimar as Ahmadi security commander, Brig Hamad Al-Barrak as traffic director, Brig Ismail Al-Yaseen as IT director and Brig Hamad Al-Saad as force affairs director.

Sheikh Khaled also ordered transferring Maj Gen Saleh Mutar and Maj Gen Abdeen Al-Abdeen, Brig Abdullah Al-Wehaib and Brig Hammad Al-Enezi and Lt Col Bader bin Najem to MoI headquarters. He also referred Maj Gen Shehab Al-Shemmari to retirement. — Al-Anbaa

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## KFH participates in Horeca Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel praised the role of Kuwait Finance House (KFH) in the national economy, hailing its efforts in supporting the youth and the small and medium enterprises SMEs. "This contributes in diversifying economy and achieving the comprehensive development in the country," she added.

The Minister's statement was made on the sidelines of opening the hospitality and foodservice Horeca Kuwait 2019 exhibition that brought together major players in the hospitality, catering and food industry sectors in Kuwait and beyond.

Senior Manager Media and Government Relations at KFH Mohammed Alfaris received recognition shield from the Minister, affirming KFH's commitment towards supporting the initiatives that add value to the economy while improving entrepreneurship environment. KFH participated in Horeca Kuwait in efforts to increase communication with its customers in different places



**KUWAIT:** Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel honors Senior Manager Media and Government Relations at KFH Mohammed Alfaris.

and occasions. KFH demonstrated its financial products and services to the exhibition visitors and the participating companies. The exhibition lasted for 3 days at Kuwait International Fairground in Mishref.

## ABK celebrates nine employees' graduation from IBS

**KUWAIT:** Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently celebrated the graduation of nine employees who successfully passed professional courses held at the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS). The graduation ceremony took

place at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce on January 15, 2019. Graduates were from IBS's Certified Bank Branch Manager (CBBM), Certified Credit Management (CCM), Certified Manager (CM), Professional Selling Skills, Strategic Management Performance System and Learning Needs Assessments.

ABK is committed to investing in its employees and ensuring that they have every opportunity to fulfill their career potential. The bank is a keen supporter of IBS's specialized training programs which offer high caliber internationally accredited programs designed to specifically address the needs of Kuwait's banking sector.



Local

# Amir commends cultural performance for documenting 80s period of arts

Amir accepts invitation for Arab summit in March



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the team tasked with 'The Return of the 1980s' cultural performance. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace head of administrative and financial affairs and the executive committee managing cultural centers at the Emir Diwan Abdalaziz Ishaq as well as the team tasked with 'The Return of the 1980s' cultural performance.

The performance was held as part of cultural and artistic events at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. His Highness the Amir commended those responsible for this distinguished performance that covers some artistic topics which document this period, which is full of everlasting media, artistic and cultural events for the upcoming generations. His Highness the Amir wished them further success and progress.

**Important period**

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received the team tasked with the cultural performance. His Highness the Crown Prince commended their efforts and wished them further success and progress. Furthermore, Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met with the team members and extolled their key role. The performance, which embodies an important period of Kuwait's history and culture, also represents a big part of the Kuwait National Library, which includes everlasting artworks. His Highness the Premier also expressed his pride for efforts made by the Kuwaiti people to preserve heritage.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. His Highness the Amir met with His Highness the Prime Minister, as well as Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the Prime Minister, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

**Arab summit**

In other news, His Highness the Amir accepted an invitation by Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi to take part in the Arab League Summit in Tunisia on March 31, 2019. In a statement to the press yesterday, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tunisia Ali Al-Dhafaeri said he had delivered His Highness the Amir's letter of acceptance to the head of Tunisia's Presidential Diwan Minister Salma Rekik on January 6. Rekik hoped the summit will be an opportunity to strengthen the Kuwaiti-Tunisian ties and cooperation on all levels, he added. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah is eager to resolve all issues facing Arab states and boost joint Arab work, Dhafaeri noted. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the team tasked with 'The Return of the 1980s' cultural performance.



Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the team tasked with 'The Return of the 1980s' cultural performance.

## Speaker meets Kuwait's envoy to the US

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday met with Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah met with Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait Abdulhamid Abdawi on bilateral relations and the latest regional and international developments. Jarallah then received Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait Saqr Abushtal and discussed bilateral cooperation and the current situation at regional and international levels. The meeting's were attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Deputy Foreign Minister's Office Affairs Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar. — KUNA



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Algerian Ambassador to Kuwait Abdulhamid Abdawi.



Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah meets with Jordanian Ambassador to Kuwait Saqr Abushtal.

## WHO hails Kuwait's contribution to its Yemen, Syria programs

GENEVA: The World Health Organization (WHO) hailed Kuwait's contribution to the organization's programs in countries affected by conflicts and crises. The Kuwaiti contribution plays a big role in the execution of WHO's projects and programs in Yemen, Syria and other countries in need, WHO's Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus said after his meeting with Kuwait's permanent representative to the UN Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim yesterday. He hoped that his upcoming visit to Kuwait will create further cooperation between the two sides in aiding people in need. Meanwhile, Ambassador Ghunaim said that Kuwait continuously supports WHO in providing health care to Syrians especially refugees in neighboring countries in such extremely cold weather. The meeting discussed providing medicine and medical equipment, as well as vaccinating children as part of Kuwait's contribution, he noted. — KUNA



GENEVA: WHO's Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus meets with Kuwait's permanent representative to the UN Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim. — KUNA

## Local

# Two Mangaf Co-op Society employees accused of embezzling KD 36,000

## Initial approval to allow bedoons to perform hajj and umrah

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Manager of Mangaf Co-op Society Mohammed Al-Fadhli suspended two Egyptian employees and referred them to the public prosecution over charges of embezzling KD 36,000. Fadhli explained that one of the suspects was caught red-handed stealing goods worth KD 2,600 from the co-op's warehouses, adding that the suspect had also forged the signature of a supply company representative for goods returned to the supplier of a total value of KD 24,000. Fadhli said that further investigations revealed the involvement of another employee in one of the co-op's branches.

### Hajj and umrah

Minister of Awqaf and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahd Al-Shola announced Saudi Arabia's initial approval to allow bedoons (stateless) to perform hajj and umrah. Shola added that the ministry is keen on facilitating bedoons' hajj and umrah and that he had contacted his Saudi counterpart in this regard. He added that he

ordered rehiring bedoons who had been terminated from the ministry. Shola noted that he will preside over the first meeting of the supreme planning committee on Jan 28 to discuss various related concerns.

**Allowances' demands**  
Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW)



### Injured footballer flown to US

machinery technicians at the main power plants again demanded noise and pollution allowances like those given to peers working in other govern-

mental bodies. Notably, MEW's assistant under-secretary for grids Jassem Al-Nouri had contacted the ministry's administrative affairs department asking it to contact the Civil Service Commission (CSC) in this regard in April, but the allowances were not approved although the technicians are subject to pollution, noise and toxic gases in oil facilities and industrial areas. In another concern, MEW listed a new water supply project in this year's fiscal plan with the aim of improving water storage capacity at Doha water plant, adding the total daily capacity to 220 million imperial gallons by the end of 2021.

### Medical evacuation plane

Jahra sports club's media coordinator Saleh Al-Jenfawi said His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak instructed Health Minister Dr Basel Al-Sabah to follow up on the condition of the club's football player Saad Al-Waleed, who is suffering from quadriplegia after being injected at a private hospital to treat a neck disc problem, and provide a medical evacuation plane to fly him to the US for treatment.



### Legalese

## Freedom of speech



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Freedom of speech is a principle that has been discussed on multiple occasions in Kuwait. In fact, Kuwait has been the center of attention when it comes to freedom of speech in the MENA region, as we have always had and continue to have more rights than our neighbors when it came to expressing our opinion. But what does freedom of speech mean? Freedom of speech is an idea that a person or a group of people can express their opinions and ideas without the fear or being punished or condemned. The constitution of Kuwait states in Article 36: "Freedom of opinion and scientific research is guaranteed."

### Tweeting

**Question:** Recently a famous personality was coming to Kuwait but he was stopped because so many people tweeted against him. Wouldn't these people get punished or are their tweets criminalized?

**Fajer:** It depends what they were tweeting. If they were just expressing their opinion that they did not want to attend this person's music

“ Freedom of opinion and scientific research is guaranteed ”

show, that's fine. But if they tweeted accusing this person of a certain trait, or questioned this person's ethics, or cursed the organizers, then yes, they can be punished depending on what has been tweeted and the damage of that tweet.

### Retweeting

**Question:** I have read that there is a new law where the person retweeting is not responsible anymore for that retweet - only the person that tweeted a criminalized tweet is to be punished.

**Fajer:** It is not a new law but officials have stated that they will no longer punish those who are retweeting a tweet for the words included in the tweet. I am yet to see a judgment to such an effect and my opinion is that this defeats the purpose of the law. If someone tweets a tweet that is illegal in Kuwait and someone else retweets it, then we are spreading those words.

I am a strong believer in freedom of speech and believe that people should have the right to tweet whatever they want, but I really hope that we can all be kind to each other and not project our opinions on others. Whether punishable by law or not, let's proudly own our social media pages and use our words wisely - let's be kind, let's inspire others.

For questions or queries, please email us at [info@tl-legal.com](mailto:info@tl-legal.com).

## Kuwait marks 28th anniversary of Operation Desert Storm



KUWAIT: On the morning of January 17, 1991, warplanes and helicopters of a UN-authorized international coalition launched massive air attacks on Iraqi targets to signal the start of a military campaign, code-named Operation Desert Storm, to evict Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. The operation came after the failure of all diplomatic means to persuade Iraq to pullout troops and end illegal occupation of Kuwait which started on 2 August, 1990.

On the same day of the Iraqi invasion, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), upon a request from Kuwait and the United States, held an emergency meeting to discuss the Iraqi move and passed Resolution 660 condemning the invasion and demanding Iraq withdraw immediately and unconditionally to positions as they were on August first, 1990. On November 29, 1990, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 678 which gave Iraq until January 15, 1991 to withdraw from Kuwait and empowered states to use 'all necessary means' to force Iraq out of Kuwait after the deadline. Three days before the end of the UN ultimatum to Iraq, the US Congress passed on 12 January a joint resolution authorizing the use of US military force to expel Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

### 1,200 sorties

In the first day of Operation Desert Storm, the coalition jets conducted 1,200 sorties, including 302 by Saudi and Kuwait aircraft, destroying almost half of the Iraqi airpower. The US aircraft carriers launched 100 Tomahawk missiles against Iraqi sites and forces in Iraq and Kuwait. US F-17 aircraft struck numerous targets in Baghdad and hit Iraqi communication networks. British Tornado bombers attacked Iraqi airports, and French and Italian jetfighters pounded the Iraqi missile launching sites. Kuwaiti fighters attacked Iraqi targets inside Kuwait.

After suppressing the Iraqi air defenses and communication centers, the coalition aircraft bombed Iraq's Scud missile launchers, military research centers, navy ships, and forces inside Kuwait. Later, the coalition forces struck Iraq's TV and Radio build-



ing and started throwing circulars on Iraqi forces demanding them to quit the battlefield or surrender to the coalition forces. On February 22, Iraq agreed on a Soviet Union proposal for withdrawing forces from Kuwait in three weeks under the supervision of the United Nations, but the US rejected it and announced 24 hours ultimatum to Iraqi forces to completely pullout of Kuwait or face a ground operation.

### Ground operation

On February 24, the ground operation commenced when coalition forces advanced and attacked Iraqi forces in Kuwaiti cities and in southern Iraq. The United States had contributed 1,800 jetfighters, 1,700 helicopters and 100 warships including six aircraft carriers to the international coalition for the liberation of Kuwait. Nearly 500,000 American personnel participated in

Kuwait's liberation war, making up almost two thirds of the total number of the coalition forces, estimated at 750,000. The Arab forces in the coalition were estimated at 200,000 and the British and French forces were 30,000 and 13,000 respectively.

Kuwait's air forces had played a significant role in the liberation war as it assumed the responsibility of attacking Iraqi forces inside Kuwait in an effort to protect Kuwaiti people's valuable possessions. It also targeted airports used by Iraqi forces, artillery sites and Iraqi forces assembly areas. On February 26, at dawn, the Iraqi army started pullout from Kuwait after setting ablaze Kuwaiti oilfields. On February 27, 1991, US President George HW Bush announced end of the military campaign and the liberation of Kuwait after 100 hours from the start of the ground operation. — KUNA



### News in brief

#### Kuwait repatriates 484 Filipino children

KUWAIT: After the Philippines said it will assist Filipino children born out of wedlock abroad, an official at the embassy in Kuwait said 484 such children were repatriated to Manila last year, adding that this was done in cooperation with Kuwaiti interior ministry.

#### Seven hours

The social affairs ministry said decision no. 2/2018 of the Civil Service Commission which set working hours from 8 am to 3 pm will be implemented from Sunday. But the workers' union at the ministry said the decision by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) is not fair and doesn't consider employees' circumstances. It said that it consulted ministry undersecretary, who promised to contact the CSC to reconsider its decision.

#### Expats' camping

An official source at Kuwait Municipality said the spring camping committee reconsidered the mechanism of granting licenses to expatriates, by allowing the expat to book, then refer to the Municipality to complete the procedures with undertaking from the sponsor. The source said field tours revealed that many camps are registered in the names of Asians who do not know what goes on inside, so patrols were increased in all governorates. He said the spread of liquor and immoral acts are not limited to unlicensed camps, but also include the licensed ones, which calls for security action besides municipal efforts.

#### Forgery suspects arrested

Residency Affairs detectives arrested three people (Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi) for forging driving licenses, civil IDs and official documents. Ready IDs and forging equipment were found with them. The suspects were charging large amounts of money for their work.

#### Smuggling foiled

Airport customs officers arrested an Indian man with 38 joints of cannabis weighing 250 gm. They also arrested a citizen who arrived from the US with a marijuana joint. Both were sent to concerned authorities. Meanwhile, Abdaly customs officers foiled a Syrian driver's attempt to smuggle 8,000 Captagon tablets, and he was sent to the drugs control general department. Officers found the illicit tablets in four rolls hidden under the fan in a highly professional manner.

#### Salmiya brawl

Police broke up a fight between two citizens over a girl and each smashed the window of the other's car. Police received a call about the fight on Salmiya's restaurants street, so they went there and controlled the two, who were competing for a girl's attentions. Both face legal action.

— Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: An angler casts his line during a spectacular sunset at Sharq pier. — Photo by Abdullah Al-Muhareb (KUNA)

## Cultural day for Kuwaiti students in Sri Lanka

KANDY, Sri Lanka: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) collaborated with Kuwait's Ministry of Education (MoE) on Tuesday to organize a cultural trip for Kuwaiti students to Sri Lanka. The trip started at the rural village of Hiriwadunna, three hours away from Kandy city, where they learned about various types of plants and birds, participating in activities such as bull riding, river cruising and preparing traditional food. While staying at Hiriwadunna village, Fajer Al-Shammari said that she learned about the customs and traditions of Sri Lankan people and how they strived for a better life. Then the students traveled to Sigiriya city, located in central Sri Lanka and is about 180 kilometers away from capital Colombo, to visit the Sigiria Rock, a 337-meter-high ancient rock fortress. Rayan Al-Refai said that her visit to the Sigiriya rock enlightened her and increased her knowledge about the rock's history, which is one of its most vital landmarks.



Sigiriya is listed as the World Heritage Sites of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The student's next stop is to the Kalu Ganga Project, one of the projects of KFAED in Sri Lanka. — KUNA



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Australian towns among hottest spots on Earth as heatwave sizzles

Terrified civilians hide, send their farewells, during Nairobi siege



LONDON: A video grab from footage broadcast by the UK Parliament's Parliamentary Recording Unit (PRU) shows Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May (3R) reacting as opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn (bottom L) suggests she has been 'acting in the interests of her own Party', whilst he moves a motion of "No Confidence" against the Government, in the House of Commons. —AFP

# 'Zombie PM' May battles on alone

## Toxic Brexit issue is dissolving traditional political bonds

LONDON: Isolated British Prime Minister Theresa May once again proved her stoicism by battling on in the face of humiliating defeat for her Brexit deal, but she is running out of allies in her epic political struggle. May suffered the biggest government defeat in modern British history when the House of Commons rejected by 432 votes to 202 the deal she struck with Brussels last year after 18 months of negotiation.

Moments later, she vowed to limp on and fight a parliamentary no-confidence vote, scheduled for Wednesday at 1900 GMT. May has already survived a party no-confidence vote in December, displaying characteristic determination when backed into a corner. She has also been protected by the inability of any serious challengers to form alliances and depose her, with the toxic Brexit issue dissolving traditional political bonds.

May made it her mission to carry out the wishes of voters who backed the Brexit referendum in June 2016 when she became premier the following month. But Brexit backers have always been suspicious of having a Remain supporter — which May was before the referendum — leading negotiations. And MPs who

opposed Brexit want her to stick tighter to the EU or call for a second referendum that could potentially nullify the first one's result.

Despite carrot-and-stick attempts to cajole her colleagues to back her, she was on Tuesday once again forced into a making a chastening address after her humiliating defeat. Shortly before Christmas, she was forced to acknowledge the weakness of her position, telling Conservative colleagues she would not fight the next scheduled election in 2022 as she uncomfortably defeated the internal coup.

It was a rare concession by a prime minister praised by her supporters as resilient but accused by critics of ploughing on oblivious to the changing circumstances around her. The party challenge came shortly after she had to tell the House of Commons that the vote on her deal was being postponed as the scale of potential defeat became clear. Critics from all sides rounded on the leader on Tuesday, with Remain supporting journalist Matthew Parris calling her a "zombie prime minister", and the Leave supporting Daily Telegraph warning that she was "out of allies, out of time".

### 'Difficult woman'

May took over after her predecessor David Cameron quit following the shock vote for Brexit in June 2016, winning by default after her rivals fought among themselves or withdrew. She had campaigned to stay in the EU, but has repeatedly stressed the importance of implementing the verdict. Yet her plan's provision for a 'backstop' to prevent a hard Irish border, which could keep Britain indefinitely tied in a customs union with the EU, has angered Brexit supporters.

Despite the near constant criticism, May has kept at it and compares herself to her cricketing hero Geoffrey Boycott, who was a byword for doggedness as a batsman. The vicar's daughter has also gleefully seized on a putdown by a party elder that she was a "bloody difficult woman". May eschews gossip and networking, proving herself through hard work, spending six years in the tough job of interior minister before entering Downing Street. But her reserved nature often makes for stilted relations with world leaders and voters, while her style of repeating phrases and avoiding direct

questions earned her the media nickname "Maybot".

### 'Goody two shoes'

May, 62, described herself in a 2012 interview as a "goody two shoes" whose Protestant faith defined her upbringing. She knew she wanted to become a politician when she was just 12, and once said the naughtiest thing she had done was running through a field of wheat. May studied geography at the University of Oxford, where she met her husband Philip, who became a banker, after reportedly being introduced by future Pakistan premier Benazir Bhutto.

The couple never had children and May devoted herself to a life of public service that saw her become Conservative Party chairwoman in 2002. The apparent ease with which May positioned herself to become prime minister after the referendum drew praise for her political skills — but this evaporated the following year. Faced with an apparently unassailable poll lead, she called a snap election in June 2017 to bolster her position and Brexit plan — only to lose the Conservatives' majority in the Commons. —AFP

## Syria buffer zone: A creation long sought by Turkey

BEIRUT: Since the start of the Syrian conflict, Turkey has pushed for the creation of a buffer zone on its border to protect refugees and prevent the emergence of an autonomous Kurdish region. The "safe zone" or "security zone" would be on the Syrian side of the 900-kilometre (560-mile) Syria-Turkey frontier. After receiving backing from US President Donald Trump, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said this week that Turkey would go ahead with the plan, prompting angry reactions from both the Kurds and Damascus. Here is some background.

### Humanitarian protection

In November 2011, just months into Syria's devastating conflict, Turkey's foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, said a buffer zone could be imposed on the border, with international backing, in case of a massive outflow of refugees. The idea had already been proposed in the Turkish media as a means to protect civilians from a harsh crackdown by forces backing President Bashar Al-Assad. The Syrian National Council, the

main opposition coalition, had also mooted a no-fly zone or secure area to protect civilians.

### Against the Kurds

In July 2012, the Syrian army withdrew from certain parts of the country's north where Kurdish militants were deployed. Erdogan accused Damascus of "allotting five provinces to the Kurds", posing a threat to Turkey, and threatened to respond by creating a border security zone. Turkey sees Syria's main Kurdish force, the People's Protection Units (YPG) as a "terrorist" offshoot of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) which has for decades waged a deadly insurgency in Turkey. But the YPG has been a key US ally in the fight against the Islamic State (IS) group, leading a coalition that ousted the jihadists from key parts of northern Syria including Manbij, Raqa and the border town of Kobane.

### Civilian safe havens

In August 2012 Davutoglu urged the UN Security Council to set up civilian safe havens inside Syria, saying Ankara was struggling to cope with the thousands of people crossing into Turkey each day. "The UN should initiate the establishment of IDP (internally displaced people) camps within Syria without delay. Needless to say these camps should have full protection," Davutoglu said. But UN officials and major powers said such camps would face major diplomatic, legal and military hurdles.

### Free of 'terrorism'

Turkey's next foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu, said in 2014 that a buffer area inside Syria was needed in order to defeat IS as well as for humanitarian reasons. But the proposal met with a guarded international response. In 2015 Erdogan again called on world leaders to rally behind "a safe zone cleared of terror," implying it would be rid of both IS and Syrian Kurdish fighters. In February 2017, he said the aim was to establish an area of at least 4,000 square kilometers "free from terrorism".

### Under Turkey's control

In January 2017, incoming president Trump raised the idea of "safe zones in Syria for the people" in an interview with ABC News. Turkey welcomed his shock December 2018 announcement that US troops would be withdrawn from Syria, but the two NATO allies quickly fell into a row over future of US-backed Kurdish forces. Trump later proposed setting up a 30-kilometre safe zone along the border, but did not say who would create, enforce or pay for it, or where it would be located. On January 14, Trump spoke to Erdogan, who later said he had reaffirmed that a 20-mile security zone along the Syrian border "will be set up by us". It would be "controlled by Turkey", his spokesman added. Syrian Kurds rejected the idea, Damascus denounced Ankara's "language of occupation and aggression", and regime backer Russia said the Syrian government must have full control of its north. —AFP

## Egypt university overturns expulsion of student over hug

CAIRO: An Egyptian university has overturned its decision to expel a male student over hugging his female friend on campus, in an incident that sparked controversy in the conservative country. The young man appeared in a video carrying a bouquet of flowers kneeling before a woman and then hugging her, in what was meant to be a marriage proposal.

The footage was widely circulated online earlier this month and initially prompted the expulsion of both students from their respective universities. But late Tuesday the Mansoura University in northern Egypt, where the video was shot, reversed its decision to exclude the male student for two years. The student's appeal against the expulsion included "his apology for the act committed, a pledge to not repeat it and to commit to the university's values and ethics," a university statement said.

It cited the student's young age, concern for his future and his unfamiliarity with the university's rules, deciding instead to ban him from taking the semester's exams. On Sunday he was interviewed by telephone by a prominent talk show host on channel MBC Masr, and said that he had brought the flowers to propose to the woman. "We were supposed to be engaged but after what happened her parents are refusing this completely," said the young man, a first year law student who was identified only by his first name Mahmoud.

A day later, Al-Azhar university in Cairo scrapped the expulsion decision against the young woman who appeared in the video. The move followed the intervention in her favor of Egypt's top Muslim cleric, Ahmed al-Tayeb, who is the institution's grand imam. Issuing a lesser penalty, the university said the female student would be prevented for taking the first half of her exams. Al-Azhar is the most prestigious seat of Sunni Islamic learning in Egypt, a predominantly Muslim country which is largely a conservative society. Al-Azhar is touted as standing for Islamic moderation, but critics often accuse the institution of failing to modernize its teachings in order to counter extremism. —AFP

International

# 'Three Billboards' campaign targets gay conversion therapy in China

Unusual protest about raising and questioning unresolved issues

SHANGHAI: A Chinese artist and a gay policeman have launched an unusually bold public protest campaign in which bright-red trucks bearing slogans denouncing homosexual "conversion therapy" are being paraded through several major cities. Artist Wu Qiong said the rolling protest was inspired by the 2017 film "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri", in which Frances McDormand gave an Oscar-winning performance as a woman who uses billboards to call attention to her daughter's unsolved rape and murder.

"Three Billboards' was about raising and questioning unresolved issues. We wanted to also use this format to raise doubts (about conversion therapy)," Wu, 28, told AFP. Wu, who is based in the southern city of Shenzhen and says he is not gay, adds that the campaign will be staged in eight cities. It began last weekend in Shanghai. His policeman associate declines to reveal his name. China removed homosexuality and bisexuality from an official list of "mental illnesses" in 2001, but official terminology still includes vague references to "sexual orientation disorders".

Some parents are known to pressure gay children to "correct" their orientation, including through conversion therapy. The trucks bear slogans saying the therapy was being used on a "non-existent disease". Others say: "'Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders' still includes 'sexual orientation disorder'", and "It's been 19 years, why?"

The method is widely considered phony, and in 2017, a court in central China ordered a psychiatric

hospital to compensate a gay man who was forced to undergo conversion therapy. But many Chinese clinics still offer it. "Treatment" has reportedly included electroshocks, confinement, threats of violence, and pressuring patients to take unidentified medications.

Softening opposition

The first trucks toured around Shanghai last Saturday before the campaign moved to nearby Nanjing on Monday. An appearance in Beijing is planned later. Separate vehicles are hired in each location due to restrictions on inter-city trucking. Such campaigns are rare in China, where authorities quickly shut down most public protests to prevent them from snowballing. But Wu said the project has encountered no obstructions yet. Its Chinese social media hashtag remains unblocked by censors and had six million views as of Wednesday.

Many gay Chinese report softening social opposition to homosexuality, but authorities still routinely block gay-themed events. Activists complain of a hardening government line amid a broader campaign to purge social media and entertainment content deemed "unwholesome". "The space for public opinion on LGBT-related topics in China is getting smaller and smaller. We want to... become a channel to connect with the public," Wu said.

Wu said the project has raised about 20,000 yuan (\$3,000) in donations. He hopes to raise triple that to pay for drivers and fuel. "Our ultimate goal is for more people to talk about this," said Wu. The reception in Nanjing this week has been "quite inclusive",



NANJING: This photo taken on January 14, 2019 shows an activist (R) waving a rainbow flag near three trucks with slogans opposing "gay conversion therapy". —AFP

he added. "We stopped near a shopping mall and a security guard came out to ask what 'sexual orienta-

tion disorder' meant. After we explained it to him, he supported us." —AFP

## More women barred from flashpoint Indian temple

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Hindu devotees barred yesterday two more women from entering one of India's holiest temples, police said, two weeks after two others made history and sparked uproar by praying inside. The Sabarimala shrine in the southern state of Kerala has emerged as a burning issue after India's Supreme Court ruled in September that women of menstruating age — deemed as those between 10 and 50 — could enter.

The ruling sparked anger among traditionalists, including supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ahead of elections later this year. On January 2, after protestors prevented other attempts, two women managed to sneak inside just before dawn, prompting days of unrest that left one man dead and led to several thousand arrests. The fresh attempt by two other women yesterday was unsuccessful, however.

"The women were given police protection but could not continue their journey owing to intense protests by other devotees," a Kerala police officer posted in the area told AFP. "Since their security was at stake, the police had no other option but to bring them back to Pampa (the base camp) from where they were sent (back to the nearest town)," he added. Local media reports said that they were part of a larger group which also included a 13-year-old girl and five men. —AFP

## Indian opposition seeks scrapping of 1870 sedition law

NEW DELHI: India opposition politicians and media called for a colonial-era sedition law to be scrapped yesterday, accusing authorities of trying to suppress dissent after it was invoked against students marking the execution of a Kashmiri militant. Police used the 1870 law against 10 people, including a student organizer, for the 2016 rally at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University where police say anti-India posters were raised.

The students denied the allegations and critics said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government was trying to curb free speech and pander to his Hindu nationalist base ahead of his re-election bid in a few months. "There is no need for a sedition law in today's times, it is a colonial law," said Kapil Sibal, a senior leader of the main opposition Congress party. "Many who merely speak or tweet against the government have sedition charges imposed against them: it is being misused by the centre just to keep citizens in check."

Kanhaiya Kumar, the student leader, attended the rally questioning the execution of the Kashmiri separatist convicted of an attack on parliament in 2001, but his lawyers said he rejected the use of violence and made no incendiary comments. Instead, his supporters said he criticized a right-wing student fraternity and a Hindu-nationalist umbrella group to which Modi's ruling party belongs.

"The fact that the charges are being made three years after the alleged use of 'anti-national slogans' by JNU students in February 2016, and on the eve of the general elections, suggests that their motive is political," Manoj Joshi, a fellow at the New Delhi-



A Rohingya refugee receives an oral cholera vaccine from a Bangladeshi volunteer at the Thankhall refugee camp in Ukhlia district. —AFP

based think tank Observer Research Foundation, wrote in Mail Today. India is sensitive about Kashmir, its only Muslim majority state, where it is struggling to put down a decades-old revolt. India and Pakistan have fought three wars since independence from Britain in 1947, two of them over Kashmir, which they both claim in full but rule in part.

Hindu nationalists tied to Modi's party have long advocated a tough posture on Kashmir and say any policy of appeasement undermines India's security. The sedition law carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. "Independent India should have the

confidence to scrap the anachronistic sedition law suited for the police state that existed before 1947, and let free speech flourish without fearing its own citizens so much." The Economic Times said. Police in the remote northeastern Indian state of Assam said last week they were also investigating an academic, a journalist and a peasant leader for possible sedition for publicly opposing a proposal to grant citizenship to non-Muslims from neighboring Muslim-majority countries. "This law now needs to go. A mature, liberal democracy cannot fight its own citizens," the Hindustan Times said. —Reuters

## Rohingya exodus from India to Bangladesh hits 1,300: Official

COX'S BAZAR: At least 1,300 Rohingya Muslims have crossed into Bangladesh from India since the start of the year, an official said yesterday, as fears of deportation to Myanmar spark an exodus. New Delhi has faced sharp criticism for turning members of the persecuted minority over to Myanmar in recent weeks, despite the army there being accused of atrocities against the Rohingya. The United Nations and rights groups accused India of disregarding international law and returning the Rohingya to possible danger in Buddhist-majority Myanmar. India, which is not a signatory to the UN Refugee Convention, arrested 230 Rohingya in 2018 — the most in years as Hindu hardliners called for the displaced Muslims to be deported en masse.

The round-ups in India, and fear of deportation to Myanmar, have driven even more of the stateless Muslims into Bangladesh, where a million Rohingya live in giant refugee camps in the country's southeast. Nayana Bose, a spokeswoman for the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG), which includes UN agencies and other foreign humanitarian organisations, said the pace of new arrivals had escalated since January 3. "Some 1,300 individuals from 300 families have arrived from India to Bangladesh until today," she told AFP. The new arrivals were being housed in a UN transit centre, she added.

UNHCR spokesman Firas Al-Khateeb said the UN refugee agency was "aware of the situation". Those crossing the border in recent weeks have been detained by police and sent to Cox's Bazar, a southern district home to the world's largest refugee camps. Some 40,000 Rohingya have been living in India. Police said those who arrived were living in India for years. Rohingya for decades have faced persecution and pogroms in Myanmar, which refuses to recognize them as citizens and falsely labels them "Bengali" illegal immigrants. —AFP

## International

# Ghana compelling its people of African heritage to 'come home'

## 'You feel freer, you feel more open to being who you are'

ACCRA: Sicley Williams was ready to escape what she found an unfriendly climate in the United States and take a leap of faith, leaving her native Chicago for Ghana. She had previously visited the West African nation on holiday and when she returned in 2017 found work practicing yoga and offering spa services. "The climate of the US was just really negative, especially the racial climate," said Williams. In Ghana, that tension disappeared almost entirely, she added.

"It's much more pleasant to be in a place where you feel more accepted, you feel freer, you feel more open to being who you are and, of course, you are around people who look like you." Williams has become an unofficial ambassador of a growing movement encouraging other African-Americans to move to Ghana. President Nana Akufo-Addo has designated 2019 the "Year of Return" both to commemorate the resilience of Africans forced into slavery and to encourage their descendants to "come home".

"We know of the extraordinary achievements and contributions they (Africans in the diaspora) made to the lives of the Americans, and it is important that this symbolic year, 400 years later, we commemorate their existence and their sacrifices," he said last September. His timing was based on the first recorded landing of a ship carrying Africans in Virginia in August 1619, said by historians to be an English warship that had plundered a Portuguese slaver. Celebrities including supermodel Naomi Campbell and actors Idris Elba and Rosario Dawson kicked off the year-long program by attending the Full Circle Festival in Accra in late December.

## UKIP leader joins Le Pen's EU group

STRASBOURG: The head of British eurosceptic party UKIP and two more of its MEPs have joined a European parliamentary group led by French far-right leader Marine Le Pen's National Rally. Previously the UKIP delegation to the Strasbourg parliament under former leader Nigel Farage had been a member of the populist Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy group. But Farage, while still an MEP and chairman of the EFDD, has resigned from UKIP, criticizing what he sees as new leader Gerald Batten's association with toxic far-right figures such as anti-immigration activist Tommy Robinson.

## 'Upskirting' becomes illegal across the UK

LONDON: British lawmakers have outlawed the practice of "upskirting" — secretly taking pictures up women's skirts — following an 18-month campaign by a victim. Those found guilty face up to two years in jail, leading campaigner Gina Martin to praise the bill as "politics and society at its best". Members of the upper House of Lords on Tuesday gave the bill the final seal of approval, and it now only requires the formality of Royal Assent.

Prime Minister Theresa May personally backed the legislation, saying the practice left victims "feeling

degraded and distressed". The bill was briefly held up last year when a single MP blocked it by shouting "Object!" during a parliamentary vote. Christopher Chope, a member of May's Conservative Party, claimed he was objecting to the manner in which the bill was introduced, but was met with cries of "shame" from MPs.

Martin tweeted that she was "over the moon" about the vote, adding "I AM EXHAUSTED AND SO HAPPY!" From Liverpool in northwest England, Martin was attending a music festival in London's Hyde Park when a man rubbed against her while his friend lurked nearby. "Five minutes later, I saw that his friend... was watching a picture taken very close to a woman's crotch," she said earlier. "I knew it was me immediately." Martin grabbed the phone and showed the image to police officers, but "they said 'we can't really help you'." She then decided to campaign to make it illegal, collecting more than 100,000 signatures of support in an online petition. — AFP

## Facebook to tighten political ad rules for 2019 elections

PARIS: Facebook said Tuesday it will tighten rules for political ads in countries with elections scheduled in the first half of the year, building on transparency efforts already underway in the United States, Britain and Brazil after a series of scandals. "As we prepare for major elections around the world this year, we're continuing our focus on preventing foreign interference and giving people more information about the ads they see across our platforms," the social media giant said in a post on its Business page.

In the US, Britain and Brazil political

advertisers must confirm their identity and location before they can run Facebook ads, which are also housed in a public, searchable library for up to seven years. "By shining a light on political ads, news organizations, regulators, watchdog groups and people anywhere in the world can hold advertisers and us more accountable," it said. For upcoming elections in Nigeria and Ukraine no foreign electoral ads will be accepted, Facebook said.

In India, the network will launch an Ad Library and enforce authorizations before spring elections, it said. In the EU, it is to roll out "transparency tools" in the runup to European Parliament elections in May. By the end of June, Facebook said it would provide a set of these tools to advertisers around the world. Facebook was forced to admit last year that Cambridge Analytica, a political firm working for Donald Trump in 2016, had hijacked the data of tens of millions of its users. — AFP

### 'Year of Return'

Ghana is still dotted with dungeons and castles established during the slave trade, which serve as a powerful reminder of the past to educate citizens and foreign visitors about slavery. US former president Barack Obama and his family visited the Cape Coast Castle in 2009 and described it as a place of "profound sadness". "It reminds us that as bad as history can be, it's also possible to overcome," he told reporters during the tour of the landmark, with its infamous "door of no return" in the dungeon. Akufo-Addo's invitation isn't the first from Ghanaian presidents.

In 2000, Ghana passed legislation designed to make it easier for people from the African diaspora to live and work in the country. Akufo-Addo has pledged to simplify the visa process. Tourism Minister Catherine Abelema Afeku is organizing music and culture festivals, including Ghana independence celebrations in March. There will also be Panafest, a theatre festival aimed at bringing together Africans on the continent and in the diaspora "around the issues of slavery".

### Support and development

Christabel Dadzie hopes that 12 months of celebration will inspire Ghanaians in the diaspora to move back. After a decade working in the United States, Dadzie founded the Ahaspora Young Professionals to help those in the diaspora make the transition to Ghana. With a network of about 2,000 people, Dadzie and others help field questions like how to get a job, where to recruit a babysitter or even buy household goods.

The group also offers community services such as



ELMINA: This file photo taken on February 4, 2008 shows an inside view of Elmina Castle near Cape Coast, Ghana. Ghana is calling all those of African descent in the diaspora to "come home" to the West African nation in 2019, to mark 400 years since the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in the United States. — AFP

mentoring high school students in professional development and has raised funds and donations for disaster relief. Seeing those in the diaspora coming to Ghana "will be great for our tourism and camaraderie, getting

to know other people who are related to the country," said Dadzie, who is planning one of the events of the celebration. "They come home and do amazing entrepreneurial things so actually thrive here." — AFP

## Terrified civilians hide, send their farewells, during Nairobi siege

NAIROBI: When an explosion and gunfire rang out at an upmarket hotel complex in Nairobi, people hid under desks, covered in bathrooms or hunkered down in their cars, some of them all through the 20-hour siege. Here are some of the stories from survivors of the attack claimed by the Somali Islamist group Al-Shabaab on an upmarket hotel complex in the Westlands district of the Kenyan capital.

### Saying goodbye

"Please tell my family I love them," 38-year-old Ronald Ng'eno wrote on Twitter in what he believed was his final goodbye. Ng'eno, who was rescued after 11 hours in hiding, told AFP he was in his office where he worked as a communications officer for the Commission on Revenue Allocation when he heard "a massive blast followed by unending gunshots". He and his colleagues tried to flee but quickly realized the gunmen were already inside.

"They started firing directly towards us and that was when we changed course and ran into the bathrooms located on first floor. Upon entering the bathroom I saw a small opening on the ceiling and that's where I hid momentarily." First he sent a tweet to police to ask for help. "But as the gunshots continued to grow louder and louder my hope of seeing my family again faded by the minute and that is when I decided to tweet my last message to my wife and two sons," he said.

## Putin accuses West of 'destabilizing' Balkans

BELGRADE: Ahead of today's visit to Belgrade, Russian President Vladimir Putin has blamed Western countries for "destabilizing" the Balkans, returning an accusation often lobbed in his direction. "As for the situation in the Balkans, a serious destabilizing factor there is the policy of the US and some other Western countries aimed at securing their dominance in the region," he told the Serbian Vecernje Novosti newspaper in an interview published on the Kremlin website.

The Balkans are often cast as a battleground between Eastern and Western powers, though all countries in the region aspire to join the European Union and most are already allied with NATO. However Serbia, while also an EU candidate, remains a staunch Moscow ally and is set to welcome Putin with a parade today.

The two countries share Slavic roots and the Orthodox Christian faith, which Putin described as their "spiritual and cultural kinship". They are also united over the issue of Kosovo — the former Serbian province whose independence Belgrade refuses to acknowledge. Moscow has supported Serbia on this front and can use its veto to block Kosovo from the United Nations. The



NAIROBI: An injured woman is evacuated from the scene of an explosion at a hotel complex in Nairobi's Westlands suburb. — AFP

"If I die I love the Lord and believe I will go to heaven please tell my family I love them. I love you Caleb, Mark and Carol." Ng'eno's tweet read. After a while he climbed down from the ceiling to join about six others also hiding in the bathroom. He continued to communicate with the police until his battery died at around 11 pm, when the siege was still going on. "Luckily, police had told that they would knock on the door in a specific way so as to identify themselves and at 2.30 am on Wednesday we heard the knock and we knew help had finally come."

### Saved by a flat battery

Brian Gatimu, a tour operator based inside the sprawling office park, which includes a luxury hotel and restaurants, credits his car's battery dying for his survival. "I had left the lights on. Talk of God's doings," Gatimu told Capital FM News. He said he was leaving his office and was delayed in the rooftop parking

lot as he looked for someone to help him jumpstart his car. Two minutes after his car's engine was ready, he heard a loud bang. "I saw huge smoke billowing from the entrance." He said he hid in his car for two hours, calling for help on Twitter, before police officers came to rescue him. "My car is tinted. I stayed inside hoping all is well. I was shaken," he said.

### Barista to the attackers

Reuben Kimani, a barista working at the hotel, said he recognized at least one of the attackers, having served him coffee in the run-up to the assault. "I knew one of them because he had a big scar on one of his hands," he said. "I saw them. They shot six of my friends, four didn't die but two succumbed." He said the attackers yelled out "why are you killing our brothers and sisters in Somalia?" before opening fire. He was rescued after several hours trapped inside the hotel. — AFP



BELGRADE: A picture shows a mural depicting Russian President Vladimir Putin and bearing Cyrillic writing reading "Kosovo is Serbia". — AFP

US, a strong ally to Kosovo, has frequently accused Russia of meddling in the affairs of the region, including in last year's referendum in Macedonia to change its name, a prerequisite for joining NATO.

Putin however accused the West of pressuring Macedonia and Montenegro, a new NATO candidate, against the will of their people. The NATO expansion efforts are drawing "new dividing lines on the European continent," he told the newspaper Politika. In Moscow, Russian Foreign

Minister Sergei Lavrov also questioned the "legitimacy" of the Macedonia name-change referendum, which is an effort to end a long-running row with Greece.

"We do not oppose the name that has been proposed, we only question...the willingness of the United States to lead all Balkan states into NATO as soon as possible and to remove any Russian influence in this region," he said. "We cannot agree with those who say that Russia has no place in the Balkans," Lavrov added. — AFP



International

# Australian towns among hottest spots on Earth as heatwave sizzles

Past four days among the country's top 10 warmest on record

**SYDNEY:** Australian towns were among the hottest places on Earth this week as a severe heatwave hit the continent's southeast, with forecasters warning of more record-breaking temperatures before the weekend. The past four days were among the country's top 10 warmest on record, with temperatures nearing 50 degrees Celsius (122 degrees Fahrenheit) in some spots, the Bureau of Meteorology said yesterday.

"With South Australia breaking some all-time records yesterday, it would certainly put this region as one of the warmest parts of the world yesterday, if not the warmest," the bureau's senior meteorologist Philip Perkins said. "The places that broke records yesterday are already warmer at this time today as they were yesterday." High temperatures are not unusual in Australia during its arid southern hemisphere summer, with bushfires a common occurrence. But climate change has pushed up land and sea temperatures and led to more extremely hot days and severe fire seasons.

Among the towns in South Australia state experiencing their hottest temperatures on record Tuesday was tiny Tarcoola in the region's far north, which reached 49 degrees Celsius. The city of Port Augusta recorded a temperature of 48.9 degrees Celsius, almost one degree higher than its previous record set on February 7, 2009 — the same day Victoria state endured the devastating "Black Saturday" bushfires

that left 173 dead in the nation's worst natural disaster.

**'Pressure cooker'**

The desert town of Coober Pedy — where some residents live underground to escape the harsh conditions — equaled its temperature record of 47.4 degrees Celsius. In the state's capital Adelaide, where cycling's Tour Down Under and the cricket One Day International between Australia and India were being held, athletes sweltered through a maximum temperature of 41.9 degree Celsius.

Overnight temperatures were also set to remain high, before a rapid change to cooler conditions from late Thursday when a cold front currently over the Southern Ocean sweeps across southern Australia, Perkins said. "Everything's sort of a bit of a pressure cooker at the moment, and everything's getting hotter and more humid and we're all doing a slow clap waiting for this change to come through," he added.

Australia's creatures, already battered by a drought plaguing the east of the vast continent, are also feeling the heat. Up to one million fish are believed to have died along the banks of a major river system, with authorities warning of more deaths to come as temperatures soar. The New South Wales state government said it would install aerators in some waterways to keep the levels of oxygen up for fish to reduce the likelihood of more mass deaths. —AFP



MELBOURNE: A child is carried in front of a mist fan to cool down from the heat on day one of the Australian Open tennis tournament. — AFP

## Canada asks China for clemency for drug trafficker

**MONTREAL:** Canada urged Beijing on Tuesday to grant clemency to a Canadian sentenced to death for drug trafficking, after his sentence reignited a diplomatic dispute that began last month. Ottawa has warned its citizens about the risk of "arbitrary enforcement" of laws in China following a court's sentencing of Robert Lloyd Schellenberg, 36, to death on Monday, increasing a previous 15-year prison term.

The sentence came during a clash between Ottawa and Beijing over Canada's arrest in December of Meng Wanzhou, chief financial officer of telecom giant Huawei, on a US extradition request related to Iran sanctions violations. "We have already spoken with China's ambassador to Canada and requested clemency" for Schellenberg, Canada's Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland told reporters in Sainte-Hyacinthe, Quebec.

Earlier, Beijing said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had made "irresponsible remarks" for saying China chose to "arbitrarily apply" death penalties. Freeland recalled Canada's long-standing opposition to capital punishment. "We believe it is inhumane and inappropriate, and wherever the death penalty is considered with regard to a Canadian we speak out against it," she said. Asked if Beijing would consider the clemency request,



DALIAN, China: This photograph taken and released by the Intermediate Peoples' Court of Dalian on January 14, 2019 shows Canadian Robert Lloyd Schellenberg (C) during his retrial on drug trafficking charges in the court. — AFP

the foreign ministry said China is a rule of law country.

Citing the Chinese constitution, ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters yesterday that the court and procuratorate "exercise independent judicial authority and prosecutorial power according to the law and will not be interfered with by other administrative organs". Human rights groups say Chinese courts are not independent and can be influenced by the Communist Party.

Beijing had earlier said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had made "irresponsible remarks" for saying China chose to "arbitrarily apply" death penalties. In a move observers see as retaliation over the Huawei

case, Chinese authorities detained two other Canadian citizens — a former diplomat and a business consultant — on suspicion of endangering national security.

The timing and swiftness of Schellenberg's sentence, and the inclusion of new evidence, raised suspicion among observers. Human Rights Watch executive director Kenneth Roth said China was "playing hostage politics." In response to Canada's travel advisory on China, Beijing issued a similar response, urging its nationals to "travel cautiously." China executes one or two foreigners every year — nearly all for drug offences, according to John Kamm, director of the US-based Dui Hua Foundation rights group. — AFP

## One in three UN employees are harassed: Survey

**UNITED NATIONS:** A third of United Nations employees have reported experiencing sexual harassment at the world body over the last two years, according to the findings of the first-ever survey on such misconduct released Tuesday. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told staff in a letter that the study contained "some sobering statistics and evidence of what needs to change" to improve the workplace at the United Nations.

One in three respondents, or 33 percent, reported at least one instance of sexual harassment in the past two years, but that figure climbed to 38.7 percent for those who reported some form of sexual harassment during their time at the United Nations. The most common type of sexual harassment were sexual stories or jokes that were offensive, or offensive remarks about appearance, body or sexual activities.

UN employees were also targeted for unwelcome attempts to draw them into discussion about sexual matters, offensive gestures and touching, according to the survey carried out by Deloitte in November. Two out of three harassers were men and one in four were supervisors or managers. Nearly one in 10 harassers were senior leaders, according to the survey. The survey had a moderately low response rate of 17 percent, with some 30,364 staff providing answers to a confidential questionnaire on line.

In a letter to staff, Guterres said the survey findings on the prevalence of sexual harassment were comparable to other organizations, but that the United Nations, which champions equality, dignity and human rights, must set a high standard. In February, the United Nations launched a 24-hour helpline for staff to report sexual harassment and UN investigators were tasked with addressing all complaints. Guterres has vowed to enforce a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment. The head of the UNAIDS agency, Michel Sidibe, last month announced he was stepping down after a review of his management style found that he had enabled a culture of harassment, including sexual harassment, at the Geneva-based UN agency. — AFP

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## Analysis

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## Fathers of child brides trapped in debt bondage

For his 16-year-old daughter's wedding last year, Makhanlal Ahirwal bought Bhawani saris, bangles and anklets, got her in-laws a water cooler, a bed, and utensils as dowry and threw a feast for 500 people in his village in central India. The celebrations added 200,000 rupees (\$2,800) to an unpaid debt of about 100,000 rupees that he'd already taken on for the wedding of another daughter. To repay the original debt he had travelled 800 km to Delhi the previous year, where he was lured by a promise of good pay at a construction site. Instead, he was held against his will and denied wages and food for three months before he was rescued.

His experience is not uncommon in India, which is home to 8 million of a global estimated total of 40 million slaves - and where many poor families take out loans to cover marriages and then fall into modern slavery while trying to repay the money. "I worked over 12 hours and lived in a tent, but wasn't paid a penny," Ahirwal said, sitting outside his clay hut in Dharampura village in the central state of Madhya Pradesh. "I had taken that loan to get my elder daughter married. She was 14 then. But I did not get paid. I had another four daughters to marry, so I took one more loan last year," he said. "There is no way I can repay the loan if I don't migrate and look for work again."

Landless, and at the bottom in the hierarchy of the Indian caste system, the Ahirwals in Dharampura lean on local landlords who lend money at 4 percent interest. Villagers take loans for major expenses, which in most cases are related to healthcare and or their daughters' marriages. With no work in villages, many migrate to cities and send earnings home to repay the money lenders, campaigners say.

But in many cases, unscrupulous employers dupe them into working long hours with the promise of good money, knowing they have debts to repay. Bosses sometimes withhold pay - a practice that can trap villagers for years and is widely seen as a form of slavery. Makhanlal Ahirwal was among the 22 people from Dharampura who were rescued from bondage two years ago and are entitled to government benefits such as cash compensation and housing. Each of them had outstanding loans when they migrated. "Most of us had taken loans for weddings of our children. One daughter's marriage means four years of debt," said Nirmal Ahirwal, who was trapped in bondage along with Makhanlal.

### Underage and overleveraged

Many parents in Dharampura plan debt cycles around their daughters' ages, ensuring the older ones are married before the younger ones attain puberty to avoid clustering wedding loans. Despite being illegal, nearly 27 percent of girls get married before they turn 18 in India, accounting for the highest rates of child marriages across South Asia. The practice is especially prevalent among the poorest and the most marginalized and officials said they lean on awareness drives to enforce the law as action against the parents would further victimise families.

Madhya Pradesh is among India's poorest states and in Chattarpur district - home to Dharampura village - more than half the women were married before 18, government data shows. Weddings cost up to 200,000 rupees and in many cases push entire families into modern slavery even as young girls are pulled out of schools and pushed into adulthood. "Both parents and their daughters are victims in these cases ... they are both bonded in different forms of slavery," said Nirmal Gorana, convener of the National Campaign Committee for Eradication of Bonded Labour. "Workers we rescue from bondage often cite loans they took for their child's marriage for taking up the work," he added.

### Voiceless

Bhawani, Makhanlal's 16-year-old daughter, comes across as a coy new bride as she walks into her parents' home, dressed in a pink sari and faux gold bangles, a streak of red vermilion along the parting of her hair and her eyes lined with kohl. "I never liked dressing up. But now I do what they (her in-laws) like," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "I wanted to study. I never said I wanted to get married. But people start talking of even 15-year-olds as 20."

Teenage girls in the village fetch water, cook, and clean and roll "beedis" (traditional cigarettes) to supplement family income. Most drop out of school young and are wed soon after. Child marriage without consent is a form of slavery as it pushes children into sexual and domestic servitude, experts say. "We don't ask our parents anything. We do as they say," said Rekha Ahirwal, 14, who dropped out after the ninth grade.

Many parents do not see a future for their young daughters so take loans to marry them off, said Bhuvan Ribhu, an activist with the non-profit Kailash Satyarthi Children's Foundation. "Besides, the girl's marriage is a moment of pride for the family in the village as they discuss with the community what all they did, what they gave her," he said. Awareness drives have checked the practice, but only to some extent, according to activists and officials. "We explain there are cash incentives if they get their daughters married after 18, but parents believe the right age ... is 12," said Ramesh Bhandari, Chattarpur district head. — Reuters



This picture taken on Tuesday shows a taxi driving past high-density apartment blocks in the central district of Hong Kong. — AFP

## Hong Kong red-hot property market cools

For young Hong Kongers like Wilson Leung getting a foothold on the city's property ladder has long been a near impossible task but with the notoriously overpriced housing market facing a downturn, they now have a chance of realizing their dream. The cramped financial hub regularly tops the list of cities with the least affordable housing in the world, with even cheap apartments out of the reach of most regular workers. However, after a decade of near continual growth Hong Kong is about to join a global downturn that is buffeting markets including London, Vancouver, Sydney and Shanghai.

And the good news for first-time buyers like Leung, who works in sales and lives with his parents, most analysts believe the trend will continue into 2019 as the China-US trade dispute rumbles on and the Chinese economy stutters. "Now the price range is OK for me," Leung, 30, tells AFP, a sentiment not often heard in a city where many young people save for years under their parents' roofs in cramped flats well into their thirties. "I am not waiting for the market to drop even more, but waiting for a wider selection to show up. Once I find an ideal place, I'll spring into action."

Leung, who plans to marry later this year, might do well to wait some more on the property hunt. Many analysts are predicting further dips, fuelled by the fallout of the US-China trade war, the slowing mainland economy, a weakening yuan and the prospect of further interest rate rises. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) last month said property prices declined for two consecutive months while sales volumes have been down for four

months straight, the longest losing streak since 2008 at the height of the global financial crisis.

### Micro-flats

Demand from buyers in mainland China - a cash-rich demographic that has been a key driver of the bubble, much to the frustration of Hong Kongers - has also been negative for the past four months. "Against this backdrop, expectations for prices and sales volumes remain firmly rooted in negative territory over the next three months and 12 months," RICS wrote. Iris Pang, ING's Greater China economist, said residential prices have fallen by as much as 15 percent in some areas.

She said jitters over the trade war were having the most significant effect given the "potential impact on the Hong Kong economy, including job security, wage growth and asset price trend in general". "This makes the market sentiment negative currently, and will continue to be so unless we see significant progress from the trade truce," she told AFP, predicting a further 10-15 percent drop in prices in 2019.

Until recently, the financial hub's property has provided handsome returns for the wealthy - prices have doubled since 2008. The city became notorious for selling parking space-sized "micro-flats" for around HK\$2.85 million (\$360,000). The only time prices dipped was during a brief period in 2015-16 when moves to discourage mainland buyers snapping up multiple properties coincided with a brief stock market plunge. But it didn't last long. RICS senior economist Sean Ellison said the current drop looks more long term

as the trade war bites. "This time feels different because there's multiple catalysts," he told AFP.

### Bubble concerns

So is the world's least affordable property market headed for a crash? UBS ranked Hong Kong at the top of its league table for being the most overpriced and most at risk of a bubble. The September report said a "skilled worker" needed 22 years of income to afford a 60-sq-m flat, up from 12 years a decade ago, with salaries staying largely the same since 2008. But many analysts are wary of predicting a burst bubble because of Hong Kong's unique situation - the densely populated city of seven million has a massive housing shortage, which means huge demand.

"You would need a pretty strong exogenous shock to the market to really send it lower," said Ellison, who predicts a less dramatic five percent fall in prices over the next year. Historical examples he gives that have sent the market plunging are the 1997 Asian financial crash and the 2003 SARS outbreak. One potential alarm bell is if Washington and Beijing fail to make a breakthrough in their trade talks by their March deadline - triggering a massive increase in tariffs from the Trump administration. "The knock-on effects there could be significant," he warned. Many sellers are now adopting a wait and see approach. "I'm still quite uncertain and worried," said Bonnie Chan, who has her 450 sq ft flat on the market for HK\$8.5 million (\$1 million) - down from its highest valuation of HK\$9 million. "I've listed my flat for sale, but I still haven't made up my mind to sell it." — AFP

## Romeo and Juliet: Last hopes to save Bolivia frog



Juliet, a Sehuencas water frog rediscovered in the wild in Bolivia, is seen during her quarantine as she acclimates to her new environment at the Museo de Historia Natural Alcide d'Orbigny in Cochabamba, Bolivia. — AFP

Almost a year after conservationists sent out a plea to help save a species of Bolivian aquatic frog by finding a mate for the last remaining member, Romeo, his very own Juliet has been tracked down deep inside a cloud forest. Not only did the wildlife conservation team return with a potential mate for Romeo, who had been 10 years a bachelor, but also another four members of the Sehuencas water frog species, boosting hopes to save the tiny amphibians from extinction.

After previous failed expeditions to the same area over the last decade, a joint expedition between Global Wildlife Conservation (GWC) and the Alcide d'Orbigny Natural History museum finally scored a success in the Bolivian wilderness. And the good news came about after securing funding following a Valentine's Day appeal last year to help find Romeo his Juliet.

"It is an incredible feeling to know that thanks to everyone who believes in true love and donated for Valentine's Day last year, we have already found a mate for Romeo and can establish a conservation breeding program with more than a single pair," said Teresa Camacho, the museum's chief of herpetology and the expedition leader. Romeo had been found in that same cloud forest a decade ago and it was feared that he was the last survivor in his species. With a lifespan of 15 years, time was running out to find Romeo a mate to ensure the survival of the species, although the frog himself never gave up hope, continuing to call out for a mate during his 10 years in captivity.

### 'Now the real work begins'

In a statement, GWC said "the bachelor's luck is about to change drastically". "Now the real work begins: We know how to successfully care for this species in captivity, but now we will learn about its reproduction, while also getting back into the field to better understand if any more frogs may be left

and if so, how many, where they are, and more about the threats they face," added Camacho. "With this knowledge we can develop strategies to mitigate the threats to the species' habitat, while working on a long-term plan to return Romeo's future babies to their wild home, preventing the extinction of the Sehuencas water frog."

The group of frogs has been placed in quarantine at the museum's K'ayra Center for Research and Conservation of Threatened Amphibians of Bolivia to help them acclimate to an environment that replicates the conditions they would face in the wild. "They will also be treated for the deadly infectious disease chytridiomycosis, which is partly responsible for the steep decline of this species and other amphibians in streams where they were once found," said GWC. Only then will Romeo meet his Juliet.

The priority now is to ensure that Juliet, who measures 55 mm, makes a good impression on her beau, who is brown with dark spots and slightly larger at 62 mm. "We want to ensure the perfect conditions for his blind date," an excited Camacho told AFP. "To reproduce natural conditions, we've been taking temperature and water quality measurements from the sampled streams to reproduce them in the breeding environments." Reproduction is the primary goal, but Camacho says the team is in no hurry. "We hope it will be love at first sight, but if that doesn't happen, we'll eat ice cream, watch 'The Notebook,' and try again!" Either way, the conservationists couldn't simply sit back and do nothing, said GWC's Central America and Tropical Andes coordinator Chris Jordan. — AFP

## Pressure mounts on ICC after Gbagbo blow

As prosecutors failed to land the scalp of yet another former national leader accused of crimes against humanity, the question echoed in the hallways of the International Criminal Court: is it fit for purpose? The acquittal on Tuesday of former Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo over post-electoral violence that killed 3,000 people was the latest in a series of blows for beleaguered ICC prosecutors. The court in The Hague was set up in 2002 to try the world's worst crimes, after years when the only route to justice for atrocities in countries like Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia was separate tribunals.

Hamstrung from the start by the refusal of the United States and Russia to join, the court has since faced criticism for the fact that it has mainly taken on cases from poorer African nations. But the biggest challenge to the court comes from apparent overreach - trying and failing to add top level leaders like Gbagbo to its trophy cabinet. "It compromises the faith in the ability of the Prosecution to bring cases against the most responsible in atrocity contexts and to satisfy expectations of victims and survivors," Carsten Stahn, professor of international criminal law at Leiden University, told AFP.

Last year, former DR Congo warlord and ex-vice president Jean-Pierre Bemba was acquitted on appeal for crimes allegedly committed by his militia in the Central African Republic in 2002-2003. Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta also saw charges of crimes against humanity over electoral bloodshed dropped by the ICC's prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, in 2014. The spotlight

particularly falls on Gambia's Bensouda as the Gbagbo trial was the first real fruit of her own work at the ICC since taking over from previous prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo. "Kenyatta and Bemba were warning shots. Gbagbo confirms the picture," added Stahn. "A clear lesson from these experiences is that there is a need for more thorough investigations leading to a sequence of cases per situation. Going immediately after high-ranking officials creates a strong risk of losing cases."

### 'Serious questions'

The court has had more success targeting lower level war crimes suspects such as Congolese rebel warlords Thomas Lubanga and Germain Katanga, and Malian jihadist Ahmad al-Faqi al-Mahdi, found guilty of attacks on Timbuktu's fabled shrines. But Mark Kersten of the University of Toronto said the Gbagbo case would leave "serious questions about the ability of the ICC to successfully target and prosecute state actors."

"No single case will make or break the ICC or the prosecutor's office," he said, adding however that "the prosecutor's office needs to convince the Court's constituencies - especially victims, survivors, and states - that their personal, financial, and political investments into the ICC are worth it." Marta Bo, an international law researcher at the Hague-based Asser Institute warns "one should refrain from basing an opinion about the Court based only on this one decision."

Perhaps the only bright spot in the Gbagbo debacle was that it would undermine one abiding public conception about the ICC, analysts said. "One positive that the prosecutor may be able to take from this is that it undermines the notion that the ICC unfairly targets ousted African leaders," said Kersten. Stahn agreed that "the decision makes it harder to claim that the ICC is biased against Africa. It is demonstration of the application of high fairness standards towards the defendants." — AFP

## Business

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zain



NEW DELHI: Indian butchers organize meat as they wait for costumers at their shops at a meat market in the old quarters of New Delhi yesterday. —AFP

# Modi govt doles out sops ahead of elections

## India lost 11 million jobs in 2018; farmers grapple with low crop prices

**NEW DELHI:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party is in favor of an expansionary economic policy and does not consider the government's plan to keep the fiscal deficit to 3.3 percent of GDP as "sacrosanct", a party spokesman told Reuters.

Ahead of a general election that must be held by May and after a string of losses in recent state polls, the government run by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has announced several stimulus measures for the countryside where millions of farmers are grappling with low crop prices. Other fiscal moves have been aimed at helping small businesses.

The measures are likely to be a drain on finances in Asia's third-biggest economy, though the Modi administration is expected to get the Reserve Bank of India to agree to transfer an interim dividend of 300-400 billion rupees (\$4.32 billion-\$5.8 billion) to the government by March, Reuters reported last week quoting sources.

Weak consumer spending and the fragile farm sector have already been a drag on economic growth, creating a headache for Modi as he struggles to meet ambitious job creation targets.

India lost 11 million jobs last year, with around 83 percent in rural areas, according to independent think-tank

the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, as operational costs surged for small businesses. Those costs were boosted by the launch of a national sales tax in 2017 and the economic impact of an earlier ban on high value currency notes.

"There's a demand, there's a debate - all my colleagues are saying what's the need of keeping the fiscal deficit in check when there is a distress in a particular sector," said Gopal Krishna Agarwal, the economic affairs spokesman for the Hindu nationalist BJP, referring to the farm sector.

"Even think-tanks associated with us are talking in this sense. Very few people domestically are talking about fiscal prudence. Only foreign think-tanks are talking fiscal prudence, fiscal prudence. I strongly believe an expansionary policy can benefit the party," he said in an interview on Tuesday night. India's 10-year benchmark bond yield rose 4 basis points to 7.53 percent after the news, its highest since Jan. 8 on worries about the fiscal deficit. The rupee also weakened to 71.23 to the dollar from its previous close of 71.03.

Agarwal, a chartered accountant who is a director at state-run Bank of Baroda and a member of a government committee on small and medium-sized businesses, said Modi was aware of his party colleagues' thinking but that

no final decision had been taken.

D S Malik, a spokesman for the Ministry of Finance, did not respond to calls and emails seeking comment. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, who is in the United States for a medical check-up, said in a Facebook post on Tuesday that India's "fiscal discipline during the past five years has been amongst the best as compared to any preceding period".

### Need to reach landless

Agarwal said the government understands that farmers are in distress and that directly transferring money to their bank accounts was an option to help them out. He said the government was, however, trying to figure out how to distribute funds to landless tillers to make sure any such transfer program was effective and didn't just benefit those with land.

The government is studying a program launched by the eastern state of Odisha under which farmers with landholdings of up to 5 acres would get cash assistance to buy seeds, pesticides, fertilizers and pay for labor. Sharecroppers, who cultivate rented land will also get the benefits, which include life insurance coverage.

Agarwal said Modi and many financial institutions

were not in favor of waiving farm loans, as done by states recently won by the main opposition Congress party, because doing so mainly helps banks and not so much farmers in duress. "There's definitely a suggestion to give interest-free loans to farmers. Banks won't have to pay, it has to be incorporated into the budget," he said.

"And what's the so sacrosanct issue about keeping the fiscal deficit at less than 3.5 percent? If you don't adopt an expansionary economic policy, then the government alone can't create demand by just spending on infrastructure. It has to come from both public and the private sector. The economy will grow only when demand will be created."

He said increasing the income tax exemption limit for individuals was also being considered for the interim budget to be presented on Feb 1 by Jaitley. William Foster, vice president at Moody's Investors Service, said that it expects the country's fiscal deficit to slip to 3.4 of GDP this fiscal year ending March 31 due to revenue shortfalls from goods and services tax, lower excise duty and below-target receipts from sale of government assets. "Increased expenditure on income transfers, farm loan waivers or other forms of subsidies would weigh further on government finances," Foster said. — Reuters

## China's growth data may mask economic risks: Research group

**BEIJING:** China's GDP growth may be significantly slower than official estimates suggest and its economy more vulnerable to external shocks than widely believed, a global business think tank has warned. Data due next week is expected to show the world's number-two economy expanded around 6.5 percent last year, its slowest rate in almost three decades as a global slowdown and the US trade war bite.

But even that is well above the 4.1 percent the US-based Conference Board, which provides research to member-businesses and organizations worldwide, says its methodology indicates.

Economists in China and abroad have long suspected data is massaged upward,

often noting that full-year gross domestic product hits Beijing's pre-set targets with suspicious regularity.

The governor of northeastern Liaoning admitted in 2017 that the industrial province had falsified data for years. Even current Premier Li Keqiang said in 2007, when he was Liaoning's top political official, that results were often "man-made" and he used his own calculations to guide provincial policymaking, according to a confidential memo released by WikiLeaks.

The Conference Board, whose research is widely tracked by investors and policymakers, began making its alternative China figures public in 2014. David Hoffman, its senior vice president for the Asia-Pacific, said Chinese data reporting problems do not factor into the Board's calculations.

### Heightened vulnerability

Its numbers differ mainly because it looks at industrial output and service-sector growth using different methodologies intended to reduce distortions in official pricing mechanisms.

Its data indicates growth in China, now a vital component of the world economy, may

have been more volatile and vulnerable to outside factors than official readings let on. For example, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) says growth dipped to 7.8 percent in 1998 during the Asian financial crisis, from 9.2 percent in 1997.

But The Conference Board's calculations show 1998 growth may actually have been 2.3 percent, half that of the previous year. Subsequent shocks may also have been smoothed over, most recently the 2014-2015 oil and commodity price deflation cycle. The Conference Board estimates 2015 growth fell to 3.8 percent, from 6.3 percent the previous year. Official numbers, however, show a relatively small dip to 6.9 percent, from 7.3 percent.

Economic growth is a sensitive topic for the Communist Party, which has based its ruling legitimacy largely on delivering constant expansion and rising living standards.

Hoffman said if the Board's numbers are correct, "it makes the case for substantive economic reforms (by China) all the more urgent, especially in the face of intensifying external factors such as trade conflict and slowing global demand".

Some believe China's growth may be even



BEIJING: A vendor prepares food to sell at a market in the center of Beijing yesterday. China's GDP growth may be significantly slower than official estimates suggest and the economy is more vulnerable to external shocks than widely believed, according to a global business think-tank. —AFP

lower. Xiang Songzuo, a finance professor at Beijing's Renmin University and former chief economist of China Agriculture Bank, said in a lecture last month that 2018 growth may

have been as low as 1.67 percent, or even contracted. Video of Xiang's lecture was widely circulated online until government censors moved to block it. —AFP

## Business

# Gulf Bank shares expertise with Fikra Program entrepreneurs

## Training session to equip Kuwaiti youth with essential business skills

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank employees shared their expertise with Fikra Program entrepreneurs during a training session on Sunday at Al-Hamra Business Tower. Fikra Program was designed to equip Kuwaiti youth with the essential business skills and knowledge required to transform their ideas into businesses, with the goal of creating a generation of innovators and entrepreneurs.

The two-hour training session was led by Gulf Bank's Rania Rasheed, Assistant General Manager of Consumer Banking and Hamad Bin Awadh, Relationship Manager, Business Banking. The session covered a range of topics, with a focus on understanding the techniques needed to conduct analyses of and make informed strategic directions about how to establish their businesses. Participants were provided with a range of knowledge and tools, from the factors to focus on in the establishment stage and SWOT analytics, to creating marketing plans. The session ended with a mini competition, with prizes awarded to the top performers.

Commenting on the session, Ahmed Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communication, Gulf Bank, said: "As a Gold Sponsor of the 4th edition of Fikra Program, Gulf Bank is proud to share the expertise and knowledge of our employ-

ees with Kuwait's younger generations. The business potential among the youth of Kuwait is exponential, and we are honored to support and guide them towards their business aspirations, and we wish them luck and success in the future."

Mariam Al-Rayes, Fikra Program Manager at Cubical Services, added: "There is great potential amongst Kuwait's aspiring entrepreneurs, and Fikra Program empowers them to turn their creative and innovative ideas into reality. Gulf Bank's collaboration with us in Fikra Program is of great added value in providing participants with the steps to successfully build their business ventures, and we thank them for their ongoing support."

Fikra Program was launched in 2015 as a corporate social responsibility program. It is an intensive entrepreneurship training program open to aspiring entrepreneurs with creative business ideas. Providing one-to-



Ahmad Al-Amir



one mentorship for guidance and support as well as business training through workshops and field trips.

Fikra Program is under the kind patronage of Khaled Al-Roudan, Minister of Commerce & Industry, and supported by Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, The National Fund for SME Development, Al-

Hamra Real Estate Company, Gulf Bank, Markaz Financial Center, KFAS (Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences) and KUWAITNET, and Grand Cinemas. Fikra Program is organized and managed by Cubical Services Business Incubator.

Fikra Program's three previous editions

combined witnessed over 550 applications, 45 business ideas, 57 training sessions and 76 trained entrepreneurs. Following the third edition of Fikra Program which ended in May 2018, over 40% of the participating entrepreneurs have successfully established their businesses and are now fully operational.

## Lebanese CB targets stable pound; deposits rose in 2018

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon's central bank aims to keep the exchange rate of its pound currency stable in 2019, the bank's governor said yesterday. Riad Salameh also said Lebanese bank deposits climbed by 3.5 percent in 2018. The comments were his first in public since remarks by the finance minister last week about Lebanon's public debt triggered concerns that the debt might be restructured, leading to a sell-off in the country's dollar-denominated sovereign bonds.

The government issued a statement yesterday saying it had "absolutely" no plans to restructure the debt, helping the bonds to recover. The pound has been pegged against the dollar at its current level for more than two decades.

"For 2019, our goals will always be for the stability of the Lebanese pound exchange rate," Salameh said. "Our view of interest rates is stable."

He said the notable thing about the increase in deposits "was in the deposits in foreign currencies while the deposits in Lebanese pounds remained at the same level, raising dollarisation to 70 percent in the Lebanese markets." The veteran central bank governor did not refer to last week's market turbulence in his comments to the Arab economic gathering in Beirut.

Lebanon's public debt is one of the biggest in the world compared to GDP at around 150 percent.

Salameh said Lebanon's economic growth in 2018 was around 1 percent to 1.5 percent according to central bank studies and compared this to growth of around 2 percent in the region.

"We could have done 2 percent if the government had been formed at the appropriate time," he said. Political deadlock is still blocking the formation of a new cabinet more than eight months after a national election. Salameh said recent instructions to money transfer firms to pay in Lebanese pounds were related to compliance to combat money laundering "and not as some tried to frame it as either to prevent transfers or to support the Lebanese pound". —Reuters

## Vacant offices plus housing crunch: US cities try to solve a riddle

**WASHINGTON:** From his office in downtown Washington, D.C., half a mile from the White House, architect Michael Wiencek can see something most people cannot: vacancies. "The 1970s building across the street, the four floors I see are all vacant," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"I'm looking at another building across the street which has been half-vacant since I've been in this office." While someone walking the streets of the capital would be hard-pressed to recognize it, this region has in recent years experienced the highest commercial vacancy rates in the country, according to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC), a non-profit.

And in those empty blocks, Wiencek sees something many do not: opportunity - and a way to help alleviate Washington's housing shortage. A September report from MWCOC warned that by 2045 the region would need to build 100,000 more homes than are already planned.

Across the country, "no state has an adequate supply of affordable rental housing for the lowest income renters," according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, a non-profit.

Over the past dozen years, Wiencek and his firm have been involved in numerous projects in and around Washington to convert empty office space to housing, particularly for low-income residents.

The economics can be surprisingly feasible, Wiencek said - in part because flat complexes have become so expensive to buy, but also because tearing down and constructing a new, large building is cost-prohibitive. Converting disused office space also brings residents back to what are often run-down parts of the city, he said.

Fifteen years ago such conversions were a new idea. Today there are more of them, though "not nearly as much as there could be".

### Vacant 'surplus'

Wiencek has noticed significant interest in conversions from developers across the country. Policymakers are also paying attention: since October, an official task force in Washington has looked at how the city can encourage developers to convert vacant office space, with the explicit intention of addressing the lack of low-income housing.

Its recommendations are expected early this year. Washington is something of a bubble because it is a "federal town", said David Whitehead, a housing activist with Greater Greater Washington (GGWash) - a non-profit advocating for walkable urban communities, and a member of the task force.

Commercial real estate owners have for decades been able to charge high rents to government entities, contractors and non-profits seeking high-class office space downtown, he said.

Yet recent years have seen major changes in the demand for office space, fuelled by the rise of remote working and coworking, and because the federal government has decreased in size. "The need for office space is shrinking," a planner with MWCOC warned in 2017.

But, said Whitehead, many commercial real estate owners had yet to accept this new reality. Meantime, city tax penalties for vacant commercial space remain low and hard to impose. That goes to explain why Washington has a large surplus of office space, Whitehead said - roughly equivalent to two Pentagons, or at least 13 million square feet. Meanwhile, an official count last year found there were nearly 7,000 homeless people in the city. Most were living in emergency shelters. Nearly half that number were families. "We have this sitting surplus of office vacancy and draining of affordable housing, so why can't we figure that out?" he said, although he admitted the task force faced big challenges.

"It's not an easy thing to convert vacant commercial space to housing in general, and beyond that, we're now also talking about converting and subsidizing," he said.

### 'Big box' conversations

According to the US Energy Information Administration, a government agency, the country had about 88 billion square feet of commercial floor-



space in 2016. It expects that number will reach about 123 billion square feet by 2050. According to real estate consultancy CBRE, the national commercial vacancy rate currently stands at about 13 percent.

Which is why, even as Washington assesses its vacant office space, other states are looking at theirs - including fast-emptying commercial spaces such as groceries and "big box" stores that have been hit by the rise of the internet economy. A pilot project in Florida is looking to convert a former St. Petersburg grocery store - which sat vacant for four years - into housing and a venue where low-income entrepreneurs could start a retail business.

Commercial property owners across Florida are finding it increasingly difficult to keep retailers in "large format" stores, the project's organizers said. That is particularly acute in low-income communities.

"The idea came through thinking about places I pass by quite a bit that stood vacant," said Ashon Nesbitt of the Florida Housing Coalition (FHC), a non-profit.

"In a lot of low-income communities there are these resources of buildings. Instead of looking at them as liabilities, we need to see them as resources that need to be redeployed in a different way," he said.

In addition to a "severe lack" of

affordable rental housing, Nesbitt said, Florida has experienced widespread closures of retail and grocery stores.

With a grant from the national mortgage-backer Fannie Mae, the FHC is drafting a blueprint that could be used by local governments, developers, housing finance authorities and others across the country for similar conversion projects, said the FHC's Ben Toro-Spears.

Few models exist in the United States for this type of project, he said, which meant the concept of adapting the building for a different use was new for its owner - a national property owner.

Toro-Spears said the firm was keenly awaiting the proposal.

And, he added, the rising number of vacant commercial spaces - on which owners must still pay taxes, utility bills and other expenses - meant there was potential to scale up the project nationwide.

"These are really large organizations, and if we can demonstrate early on that this can be successful, I think they'll adopt it pretty quickly," Toro-Spears said. Already the two have been inundated with interest from across the state, including from cities and civic groups. "They continue to ask what's going on: 'We have a site. Can you look at this site?'" said Nesbitt. "It's definitely something that caught folks' attention, and people want to see similar things happen in their communities." —Reuters

## Turkey keeps main interest rate unchanged

**ANKARA:** Turkey yesterday kept its main interest rate unchanged for a third time since a dramatic hike in September, in line with market expectations and helping the lira rally against the dollar.

The central bank said in a statement on its website that the one-week repo rate would remain at 24 percent. Inflation in Turkey remains in double-digits. The Turkish lira, which has been trading at more than 5.5 against the dollar in the past couple of weeks, gained over one percent to 5.3 after the announcement at 1100 GMT. The consensus had been for the rate to stay at 24 percent amid fears a cut would cause further weakness in the lira. The bank said its policy committee "decided to maintain the tight monetary policy stance until the inflation outlook displays a significant improvement".

It added that "if needed, further monetary tightening will be delivered".

Consumer price inflation hit 25.24 percent in October, the highest level since 2003, before falling to 20.3 percent in December. Turkey suffered a currency crisis in August during a diplomatic spat with the United States over the detention of an American pastor, later released, as well as concerns over domestic monetary policy under Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Erdogan has railed against high interest rates, describing them as the "mother and father of all evil". At one point during the US-Turkey row, the lira traded to lows around seven against the dollar.

But after the lira's dramatic fall in the summer, the bank made an aggressive rate hike in September of 625 basis points (6.25 percentage points) to 24 percent. Economists including Inan Demir of Nomura expected the central bank to keep the rate constant but London-based Capital Economics had warned of a potential 50 bps cut. Demir said before the announcement the case for a cut had been "weakened" by fresh US-Turkey tensions over a Washington-backed Syrian Kurdish militia Ankara views as terrorists. Although the dispute has since eased, US President Donald Trump on Sunday warned Washington would "devastate Turkey economically" if Ankara attacked the Kurdish People's Protection Units militia (YPG) in Syria. —AFP



ISTANBUL: Construction labourers work on the top of a new mosque next to a statue representing Mustafa Kemal Atatürk at Taksim square in Istanbul on Tuesday. —AFP

Business

# US bank execs warn government shutdown adds to economic risks

## Analyst sees disconnect between financial markets and consumers

**NEW YORK:** Bank executives said Tuesday that economic conditions remained solid but warned that weakening sentiment amid a lengthening US government shutdown could kill growth.

Uncertainty about the shutdown—now the longest in US history—further dims the outlook at a time when questions about trade wars and Federal Reserve policies also are clouding plans, executives said.

"Some would estimate that if it goes on the whole quarter, it can reduce growth to zero," said JPMorgan Chief Executive Jamie Dimon as the partial shutdown entered its 24th day.

"The shutdown is not going to help the economy," Dimon said in a conference call.

"The underlying statistics of the economy globally are not bad," he said. "There's clearly a slowdown, particularly in Japan, China and Germany and the US but there's still global growth. And the consumers in good shape." Dimon's remarks came as JPMorgan and Wells Fargo reported mixed results for the fourth quarter, following a similar report Monday from Citigroup. Citigroup Chief Executive Michael Corbat said the company could "make adjustments" to plans if conditions weakened.

He described a "disconnect" between the growth fears that have disrupted financial markets in recent weeks, and the tight labor markets, good consumer confidence and other anecdotal signs of health.

"Right now we see the biggest risk in the global economy is one of talking ourselves into the next recession as opposed to the underlying fundamentals taking us there," Corbat said.

Net income at JPMorgan surged 67 percent to \$7.1 billion, with the year-ago period hit by one-time

accounting costs from US tax reform. Revenues rose four percent to \$26.8 billion.

JPMorgan's earnings got a lift from higher net interest income following four Federal Reserve interest rate hikes last year, with the bank generating higher income from credit cards and auto leases. The bank also notched an increase in overall loans.

But the results translated to \$1.98 a share compared with the expected \$2.21, a rare miss for the US giant, due in part to increased technology spending and weakness in US Treasury bond trading amid market turbulence at the end of 2018. JPMorgan also set aside increased funds for bad loans. Chief Financial Officer Marianne Lake described the extra provisions for credit losses as due to "select" loans and not indicative of "systemic problems" with credit.

### Wells Fargo earnings slip

Wells Fargo reported that fourth-quarter earnings slipped 1.4 percent to \$6.1 billion behind a 4.9 percent drop in revenues. Net interest income rose during the quarter, but the bank saw a drop in overall loans compared with the year-ago period, with declines in consumer loans more than offsetting higher commercial loans.

The results again suggest Wells Fargo is continuing to face residual skepticism from customers following a fake accounts scandal in which the bank opened credit card and other accounts for customers without their knowledge. Wells Fargo Chief Executive Tim Sloan said he was proud of "transformational changes" at the bank, adding that "we have made meaningful improvements to how we manage risk across the company."



WASHINGTON: People walk past the US Department of the Treasury during the 23rd day of the US government shutdown in Washington, DC. —AFP

Shares of JPMorgan reversed early losses and ended up 0.7 percent at \$101.68, while Wells Fargo fell 1.6 percent to \$47.67. Citigroup jumped 4.2 percent at \$61.38. —AFP

## Al-Sayer Medical Co diamond sponsor of 6th scientific conference of dental management

**KUWAIT:** Al-Sayer Medical Company, a subsidiary of Al-Sayer Holding, sponsored the 6th Scientific conference of the Department of Dentistry at the Ministry of Health, which was held under the patronage and presence of Dr Basil Al-Sabah, Minister of Health.

The conference was attended by 2000 doctors with many of the world's most renowned specialists and professors in various dental sciences. Lectures and workshops ranging from cosmetic dentistry, orthodontics, surgery, dental implants and root canal treatment. The conference also provided an opportunity to learn about the latest products in these disciplines through the exhibition.

A large booth of Al-Sayer Medical Company showcased its extensive range of the latest dental products from the world's leading medical companies. The booth attracted visitors, that inquired about the company's various products and services to clarify the information and technical details of these products.

On this occasion, the General Manager of Al-Sayer Medical Company, Dr Hossam Afify said: "At the outset, we would like to congratulate H.E. Dr. Basil Al-Sabah, Minister of Health and the Assistant Undersecretary for Dental Administration and the President of the Conference, Dr Yousef Al-Duwairi, which contributes to the development of dental services in Kuwait, and gives the opportunity for workers in this field to exchange experiences and everything new in the field of dentistry."

He added that our participation in the conference comes from Al-Sayer Holding keenness to carry out its social responsibility to support the continuous



development of health care in all specialties and the efforts of the Ministry of Health to develop services provided to citizens and residents in line with Al-Sayer Medical strategy in finding integrated medical

solutions through our partnership and we represent many international medical companies that offer the highest level of product quality, technical and scientific support.



## Global economy is headed for recession: Analyst

**LONDON:** Global growth is slowing and the world economy is headed for a recession in 2019 unless something happens to give it renewed momentum. The OECD's composite leading indicator fell to just 99.3 points in November, its lowest since October 2012, and down from a peak of 100.5 at the end of 2017.

Growth momentum has been easing for some time in Britain, Canada, France and Italy and there were tentative signs of slackening momentum in the United States and Germany in November.

The composite indicator is likely to fall even further when data for December are published next month, given the weakness already revealed in equity markets and business surveys.

The OECD composite leading indicator has been weakening consistently for the last year and now points unambiguously to a contraction ahead.

### Recession reading

In the last 50 years, whenever the index has fallen below 99.3, there has almost always been a recession in the United States (1970, 1974, 1980, 1981, 1990, 2001 and 2008). The one exception was the weakening of the index in 1998, when the United States continued to grow, despite the weakening global economy in the aftermath of the Asian financial crisis.

Even in this case, however, the interest-rate setting Federal Open Market Committee noted "the economy has been holding up but is now showing clear signs of deterioration." "When we feed this information into our various models, they inevitably, as we might expect, engender a quite considerable softening." The observations are contained in the transcript of an unusual, out-of-cycle conference call held by the Federal Open Market Committee in September 1998.

One week later, the Federal Reserve responded to signs of a weakening economy by cutting US interest rates.

### Freight slowdown

Most of the world's major economies outside the United States showed clear signs of slackening growth in the fourth quarter of 2018. Even in the United States, the Institute for Supply Management's manufacturing index for December showed the sharpest deceleration in growth since the recessions of 2008 and 2001. Global trade volumes showed signs of slowing towards the end of 2018 after strong growth in 2017.

Air freight through Hong Kong International Airport, the world's busiest air cargo hub and a proxy for global trade, was down 1.6 percent year-on-year in the fourth quarter. Air freight volumes in Hong Kong were down by a massive 5 percent in December compared with the same month a year earlier, according to the Civil Aviation Department.

### Hard landing?

Most economists now forecast a period of slower growth in 2019 but policymakers have expressed hope for a soft landing rather than an outright recession. Policymakers almost always aim for a soft landing, in an effort to maintain business and consumer confidence, but there are good reasons to be sceptical about the scenario.

Experience shows the economy is characterized by a significant number of positive feedback mechanisms which amplify booms and slumps. Expansions tend to accelerate as business investment, employment, incomes, consumer spending and equity prices reinforce each other. —Reuters

## Vietnam's newest airline Bamboo takes first flight

**HANOI:** Vietnam's newest commercial carrier Bamboo Airways took flight yesterday, officially entering Southeast Asia's crowded aviation sector where it will face stiff competition from established players. Air travel in the region has boomed in recent years as appetites—and budgets—for travel have soared among spendthrift flyers.

Bamboo is hoping to tap into the saturated market by offering routes to lesser-known destinations in Vietnam currently underserved by

heavy-hitters like Vietnam Airlines and budget carrier Vietjet.

"Bamboo Airways will become a five-star airline to serve domestic and international passengers," Bamboo owner Trinh Van Quyet said at Hanoi's Noi Bai airport after the inaugural flight landed from Ho Chi Minh City yesterday morning.

Born poor in northern Vinh Phuc province, Quyet is best known in Vietnam for building a vast real estate empire FLC Group, which has built luxury hotels, golf courses and condominiums across the country and is the parent company of Bamboo. The property tycoon told AFP in an interview last year that he hopes to offer customers integrated travel packages to his resorts at affordable prices. But analysts have warned that travellers are moving away from package deals and prefer to tailor their own trips online. Bamboo will operate eight

domestic routes daily, with plans to fly from Hanoi to Japan, South Korea and Singapore later this year and eventually to Europe.

Vietnam's aviation sector is surging, with passenger numbers jumping to 62 million last year from 25 million in 2012. Regional and domestic airlines are scrambling to keep up with that growth as Vietnam's airports strain to accommodate an increasing number of flights and passengers.

National carrier Vietnam Airlines and Vietjet, infamous for its bikini-clad air hostesses, currently dominate international and domestic travel.

Bamboo is not the only carrier looking to edge into the sector. Last month, Malaysian budget airline AirAsia signed an agreement with a Vietnamese travel firm to launch a low-cost carrier in Vietnam, though a timeline for takeoff was not provided. —AFP

## Business

# Zain Platinum sponsor of Kuwait's annual 'Auto Works Show 2019'

## Company keen on supporting Kuwait's entrepreneurial community

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its Platinum Sponsorship of Kuwait's Annual International Auto Products and Services Show (Auto Works Show 2019). The event, held at Kuwait International Fair - Halls 5 & 6 in Mishref, commences today (Thursday) and continues until 19 January under the patronage of the Historic, Vintage, and Classic Cars Museum and the attendance of the Amiri Diwan's Administrative and Financial Chief Abdulaziz Saud Ishaq.

Zain's support to the event comes in line with its keenness to dedicate more efforts into supporting and empowering Kuwaiti entrepreneurs, as well as taking part in such initiatives that contribute to infusing cre-

ativity within the entrepreneurial community through partnering with entities that aim at its development, especially within the automotive sector that witnesses great popularity in Kuwait.

Auto Works Show 2019 is one of Kuwait's first specialized events dedicated to the automotive market. The event aims at meeting the needs of Kuwaiti consumers by gathering large, medium, and small businesses that specialize in offering automotive products, services, and parts for various vehicles, including cars and motorcycles. In addition, the event also features car accessory providers, car care products and services, motorsports companies, and more. The event also has a dedicated

section for the authorized governmental entities that facilitate commercial relations with external companies and organizations.

Zain is aware of the important role private sector companies play in encouraging such initiatives that support the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) segment, especially that it is one of the leading national companies in the private sector. Zain's participation at this event further reflects its keenness in developing the Kuwaiti entrepreneurial community, which bursts with young talents who have vibrant ideas that offer viable solutions for the market needs.

Zain's support to this event comes in line with its core



objectives that aim at shouldering the advancement of the community as a whole on all levels, where the company reaffirms the principal of partnership through similar efforts with the aim of contributing to the further progress of national economy.

## Al-Najma draw on grand prize of KD 1 million & half and draw on salary campaign

**KUWAIT:** Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the organization of the mega draw on Al-Najma Account Prize in the Avenues Mall tomorrow (Friday 18/1/2019) at 7pm. The Bank's customers and non-customers are eagerly awaiting to see who will win the largest cash prize ever offered by a local bank in Kuwait and the world for KD 1,500,000. The Bank will also hold draws on "Your Salary and More" Campaign specially designated for Salary Account holders and which includes draws on "Double your Salary with Al-Tijari" prize and the luxuries Velar the new car by Range Rover.

The festival will include a number of surprises, international shows, fun activities and contests for the attendees and visitors where the Bank intends to set a Guinness World Record title for the Largest prize-linked bank account payout in the world namely Al-Najma Account and to announce the lucky winner in Al-Najma Account Draw who will win the grand prize of KD 1 million and half as well as announcing the winner in "Your Salary and More" campaign. The bank wishes the best of luck to all Al-Najma Account holders and invites its customers and the public in general to attend the festival and enjoy the shows, surprises and fun activities accompanying the announcement of the winner of the Grand Prize of Al-Najma Account and the winners in "Your Salary and More" campaign.

## Sri Lanka asks IMF to revive \$1.5bn bailout

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka has appealed to the International Monetary Fund to revive a \$1.5-billion bailout suspended during the island nation's political crisis late last year, the finance ministry said yesterday.

In October, President Maithripala Sirisena sparked weeks of high political drama, even featuring brawls in parliament, by sacking Ranil Wickremesinghe as prime minister and dissolving the legislature.

Courts and the parliament subsequently held that the president's actions were unconstitutional and restored the status quo after more than seven weeks of upheaval that alarmed the international community. The crisis prompted three international credit rating agencies to downgrade Sri Lanka and the IMF to suspend its bailout program that began in 2016 — just as it was about to disburse another instalment. —AFP

## New retail tools aim to solve e-commerce profit dilemma

**NEW YORK:** Conventional wisdom in the Amazon era holds that the lowest price wins the battle of the retailers, leading many to just about give away items to make a sale.

Yet some data suggest a more nuanced reality: while 76 percent of retailers aim to sell goods at the lowest price, only 17 percent of shoppers say price is a dealbreaker, according to Forrester Research.

That discrepancy creates an opening for retailers to recover some of their long-lost profit margins, with new software to track prices and preferences to make sure the customer gets what they want hassle-free. Consumers "want a fair price and it's not the lowest price," said Cheryl Sullivan, chief marketing officer for software company Revionics.

Revionics offers programs using artificial intelligence and data analysis to help retailers identify the best price to avoid money-losing promotions. These new tools are among the wares on display at the National Retail Federation's "Big Show" that has packed in some 37,000 visitors this week at the Jacob Javits Center in midtown Manhattan.

The annual event comes on the heels of a strong holiday shopping season that saw solid sales, but profits suffered because of the reliance on heavy promotions and free shipping. Retail share prices were pummeled last week after holiday sales reports by Macy's, Target and Victoria's Secret's

## Panasonic makes cutting and blending effortless with MX-S401

**KUWAIT:** Panasonic's latest kitchen essential is sure to make home cooking effortless and fun - the MX-S401 Hand Blender. Powered by an 800-watt motor, the MX-S401 boasts an innovative four-blade blending system, which effectively cuts and churns the toughest ingredients, thus easily taking the hassle out of preparing a wide variety of dishes, including nutritious baby food.

Using Panasonic's advanced blade technology, the MX-S401's four-blade system delivers outstanding results at all times with its ability to finely cut ingredients.

The durable, stainless-steel blender wand can easily reach into deep bowls, pots and jars - safe for hot or cold food and beverages. Designed with safety and comfort in mind, the wand can be immersed directly into the pot

or pitcher for savory, creamy soups and even velvety smoothies.

Katsuki Nishimura - Manager, PMMAF said, "The MX-S401, with its unique four-blade blending system and handy attachments, is a must-have kitchen tool designed to help busy consumers in Kuwait reconnect with the joys of home cooking. From soups, snacks, and salads to entrees, side dishes, desserts and even baby food, preparing multi-course meal is now possible with just a single appliance."

"Panasonic has always been known for kitchen appliances with high-quality Japanese craftsmanship and the MX-S401 is a great addition to the brand's product range. It is a brilliant combination of elegant design and powerful functionality with its innovative features," commented Omar Massouh - Director, Corporate Marketing & Public Relations at Easa Husain Al-Yousifi Company.

Built for high-performance and reliable blending, the MX-S401 carries other top-notch features, among them:

- Handy Attachments - The Chopper attachment easily cuts vegetables and minces meat while the Whisk is perfect for whipping cream, cake batter and more. There is also the Cutter Holder, which serves as a cover when the blender is not in use, and as a holder while cooking.

## Al-Hamra and COFE App join forces to foster coffee community in Kuwait

**KUWAIT:** Al-Hamra Luxury Center and COFE App, a Kuwait-based coffee-centric marketplace app, announced yesterday a collaboration aiming to foster Kuwait's growing coffee community. The initial phase of this collaboration will include organizing a Latte Art Competition at Al-Hamra Luxury Center starting January 29, 2019.

Aligning with the growing market demand on coffee in Kuwait, the "Al-Hamra COFE Competition", a latte art championship, is part of the larger coffee celebration organized over 3 days, from January 29 till 31, 2019 by Al-Hamra Luxury Center and COFE App. Contestants can register for the competition through COFE App's website (www.cofeapp.com). The winner of the championship will receive KWD 1000 cash. The event will provide coffee lovers with a unique opportunity to discover a whole new dimension of coffee making through a series of activities with mixologists and coffee specialists.

"Coffee is not just a beverage, it is a culture. There is so much to discover about coffee in addition to just consuming the beverage. In the recent years, we have witnessed tremendous growth in Kuwait, both in terms of new and exciting coffee houses, as well as people's interest in this market. The "Al Hamra COFE Competition" is our way of bringing this growing coffee community together," said Founder & CEO of COFE App, Ali Al-Ebrahim.

While the industry is rapidly growing, coffee consumption in Kuwait is rising and gaining strong attention from the consumer. The recent explosion of local coffee shops in the country has come to show the strength of demand in this market. Studies have shown that the number of coffee shop openings in Kuwait has more than doubled to reach 48 coffee shops in 2016 and 81 coffee shops openings in 2017.

"Launching this competition and partnering with COFE App were prompted by the large demand on the center's coffee shops and direction of the local coffee market. We believe that this partnership will provide a new experience to our visitors and coffee lovers to discover different concepts of this product. We have had a successful partnership with COFE App since its inception and we are sure that this partnership will influence the coffee community in

parent and others that have shifted from traditional brick-and-mortar to so-called "omni-channel" formats. This year's trade show again features the latest and greatest in robots, virtual reality and other gee-wiz gadgetry, but also plenty of tools to try to boost profitability in e-commerce, where margins are leaner than in the glory days when shopping malls ruled.

But digital commerce is no longer novel and customers have become less forgiving of delivery snafus, or promotional misfires, such as sending coupons for rock concerts to classical music fans. It means shifting the spotlight away from the product-the traditional focus of the retailer-to customer experience. "It's no longer about killer apps," said Timothy Bridges, an executive vice president at Caggemini, a consultancy. "It's about a digitally-enabled customer experience."

### Strategic discounting

Revionics's software takes readings in real-time of other e-commerce vendors, analyzes price and customer data, and changes prices for individual products up to a couple of times a day if needed, a technique commonly known as "dynamic pricing."

"The key is to understand which competitor on which items makes a difference," Sullivan said.

She said many promotions fail because they are on goods that are not truly price sensitive, or because they do not lead to sales on related items that make up for the discount. For example, a promotion on a low-margin item like dog food may be wise if it boosts sales of nearby items that are more profitable, such as pet toys, Sullivan said. Software by Canadian company Acceo allows stores to keep track of customers at each stage of the sales process, from communicating with a website to ordering and picking up a product.

The program can be personalized to shoppers-a rising trend-and it tracks inventory so that customers aren't told a product is in stock when it isn't.



- Easy Speed Control - Choose the ideal speed setting - High, Pulse or Low - to match the recipe and the ingredients.

- Child Lock and 2-Step Switch - These functions prevent accidental operation when not in use, or when mounting or removing an attachment.

- Double Motor Protection Devices - For maximum safety, the blender is equipped with a circuit breaker, and it will be activated when it is overloaded. The built-in Thermostat also stops the

appliance's operation when excessive heat is detected due to continuous usage.

- Dishwasher-safe - The stainless-steel shaft, beaker, chopper bowl and whisk are all dishwasher-safe so they can be easily washed, at the same time keep them constantly clean and hygienic.

The Panasonic MX-S401 Hand Blender is now available in Kuwait at all Best Al-Yousifi Electronics Showrooms and authorized distributors.



Kuwait," said the Marketing and PR Manager of Al-Hamra Luxury Center, Abdullah Al-Mansour.

Created by a team of coffee enthusiasts, COFE App has carved itself a niche among coffee lovers and early adopters in Kuwait's market. The startup app was beta launched in February 2018 and has quickly penetrated the market given the unique services it

provides to its users.

COFE App enables customers to order and pay for their coffee, and choose from multiple delivery options, including fast delivery to their office or home, counter pick up, and car pick up service. The entire selection and purchasing process takes place in the app, which offers comprehensive menus and drink customization options.



**NEW YORK:** Retail share prices were pummeled last week after holiday sales reports by Macy's, Target and Victoria's Secret's parent and others that have shifted from traditional brick-and-mortar to so-called "omni-channel" formats.

The program's job is to "look at all the touch points," said Ian Holland, said Acceo vice president for retail solutions. "If at any of these points it fails, then you're having a crummy experience."

One especially crucial area is free shipping, an increasing must-have to many shoppers. A survey presented by NRF found that 75 percent of consumers expect delivery to be

free even on orders under \$50, up from 68 percent last year.

Surveys also show customers increasingly eager to receive goods faster-within two days, not four, or within hours in some cases. Amazon has adapted another strategy, offering incentives-like credits that can be redeemed at Whole Foods-to customers willing to wait longer for delivery.—AFP

Health & Technology

# Ooredoo Kuwait holds internal blood donation campaign

Annual initiative reflects company's Corporate Social Responsibility



This photo shows Ooredoo's CEO Mohammed Bin Abdullah Al-Thani on a tour during the blood donation campaign.



This photo shows Mejbel Al-Ayyoub and Fadl Qa'war with the employees during the blood donation campaign.

KUWAIT CITY: Ooredoo Kuwait organized an internal blood donation campaign for its employees at its headquarters in Kuwait City. The campaign came in partnership with the Central Blood Bank of Kuwait and is an annual initiative that reiterates its commitment towards the Kuwaiti society and stems from its values of caring, connecting, and challenging.

Ooredoo arranged for a special clinic in its headquarters, equipped with the latest medical equipment that meets international standards, in order to collect blood and have it transported safely to the Central Blood Bank of Kuwait to be used in emergency situations once they arise. The campaign received positive feedback and remarkable participation from Ooredoo employees to donate their blood to help those who are in need and to fulfill their commitment towards society.

Mijbil Alayoub, Senior Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait said, "There is no better feeling than contributing to changing other people's lives. We

believe that blood is a vital component to one's being, therefore, in collaboration with the Central Blood Bank, Ooredoo Kuwait has organized this campaign where its employees were given the chance to save lives." Ooredoo Kuwait and its

employees strongly believe in giving back to the community and making a real difference in the lives of people who need it the most. Kuwait and its people remain an integral part of the company's corporate social responsibility strategy.



## CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

248 33 199

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What's On



# Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah to fund annual scholarships



During the Mayor of the City of London, Alderman Peter Estlin and the accompanied delegation's recent visit to Kuwait, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah announced that Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Foundation will be sponsoring a new scholarship program for young Kuwaiti and Arab nationals, in cooperation with the City of London Mansion House Scholarship Scheme. The Abdullah Al-Mubarak foundation will provide grants to enable Kuwaiti and Arab scholars to pursue their studies in the United Kingdom.

This annual joint scholarship program by Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah Foundation and the Mansion House of the City of London will enable two high-achieving Kuwaiti and Arab professionals, a female and a male, to complete and pursue their graduate studies covering various fields at leading British universities. The two organizations have long-track history on promoting educational initiatives. In 1998, Dr Souad Al-Sabah established the Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al Sabah Foundation for sponsoring British-Kuwait Friendship Society Book Prize.

The prize is awarded yearly for books of academic excellence with special consideration for those that serve to increase understanding of Islam and the Middle East among a wider English-speaking readership with focus on the United Kingdom. While, the Mansion House Scholarship Scheme founded in 1997 by the office of the Lord Mayor of the City of London, it helps to fund scholarships for students and young business executives from overseas to travel to the United Kingdom to study or to undertake training or work experience in the financial services sector.

The Mayor of the City of London and the accompanied delegation visited the White Palace, and met with Dr Souad Al-Sabah and Sheikh Mubarak Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. On the occasion of launching this new scholarship program, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah said: "The objective of this scholarship program is to empower young Kuwaiti and Arab students and scholars with a broad base of knowledge and to prepare them as next generation of leaders in the global world."

## IIK Edu Expo 2019 concludes at Crowne Plaza

Large number of Indian students and their parents attended the IIK Edu Expo 2019 on January 11 and 12, 2019. The event was held for two days at Crowne Plaza, Farwaniya, Kuwait from 10 am to 8 pm. The event, organized by Kuwait's popular community portal IndiansinKuwait.com (IIK) was inaugurated by Ranveer Bharti from the Indian Embassy Kuwait in the presence of IIK officials and other invitees. IIK EDU EXPO is the only approved Indian Edu Expo in Kuwait by the Ministry of Higher Education.

The expo gave a good opportunity to the parents and students seeking admissions for higher education in India. More than 20 Reputed Indian Universities, Medical and Engineering colleges participated in the expo and showcased the latest educational opportunities available for the

students. Large number of Indian students and their parents attended the Edu Expo. Parents appreciated IndiansinKuwait.com for organizing such an event, which benefits the Indian community living in Kuwait. This is the sixth Indian Edu Expo organized by IIK in Kuwait.

The platinum exhibitor for the exhibition was Manipal University. Gold exhibitors were SRM University, Amity University-Dubai, Hindustan Institute of Technology & Science, NITTE Education Trust, Vellore Institute of Technology - VIT and American University of Kuwait - AUK. Other exhibitors were Algonquin College - Kuwait, Middlesex University Dubai, AjeenkyaDyPatil University, S P Jain School of Global Management, BMS College of Engineering, RAK Medical & Health Sciences University, British Council, Manipal University- Dubai, MAAS Global Co WLL, Career Links Academy for NEET Coaching, Edu Germany and many more Universities. The exhibitors were happy with the good response at the Edu Expo. They shared their joy and expressed gratitude towards IIK for organizing this event in Kuwait.



## Horeca 2019 concludes with award ceremony



Horeca Kuwait 2019 successfully concluded its third and last day with a big ceremony to distribute the cooking competition awards to winners. The ceremony was attended by participating and sponsoring companies' executives, guests and participants. A statement issued by Leaders Group said that this year's exhibition attracted over 7000 specialized visitors who flocked to Mishref International Fair Grounds since early mornings adding that the eighth cycle of this phenomenal hospitality exhibition truly turned it into an annual marketing and commercial event with 11.6 percent in the number of visitors compared to last year's. The statement added that the total number of exhibitors also increased from 80 to 100, with more contesters as well as increasing the exhibition area to over 7000 square meters.

The third day also witnessed cooking competitions included the best Croissant, the best bakery creation, the best menu, fresh pasta, Asian cuisine, artistic ice formations, bed doing in addition to a special ceremony to award the winners. In addition to entrepreneurs and those interested in hospitality, the exhibition also attracted a large number of visiting delegations including the International Women Syndicate, which included over 30 foreign ladies living in Kuwait including some ambassadors' spouses and businesswomen and the American Women Society.

The exhibition was also visited by a number of diplomats including the Australian ambassador, Jonathan Gilbert, the Dutch ambassador Frans Potuyt and the Hungarian ambassador Istvan Soos in addition to delegations from the National Guards and a number of ministries. On his part, the Australian ambassador threw a dinner banquet to the honor of the Australian companies participating in Horeca Kuwait 2019, which was also attended by Leaders Group general manager Nabila Al-Anjeri, Hospitality Services manager Joumana Dammous, Horeca executive manager Mohammed Najia, diplomats and



heads of the companies sponsoring Horeca Kuwait 2019.

The organizing committee also honored the cooking competitions jury panel, participating companies and sponsors and LOYAC volunteers. Aside from the bee-hive like activities, a seminar was held under the title of Healthy Food & Beverage Trend In Kuwait for speakers Dana Al Muslim, Managing Partner - Re-Store and Farm Manager and Sadeer Farms, Amal Chahine, Managing Partner- Ovo, Me. Dalal Al-Tawheed, Co-

Founder- Clean Eats, Rashid Sultan, Founder & Managing Partner Savor Ventures and that the moderator would be Nada Alameddine, Partner - Hodema Consulting Services.

The seminar focused on the advantages of healthy food from organic, vegetarian, natural and fresh ingredients and the efforts needed to undo the stereotype concept that health food means boredom, dullness and monotony. Speakers also focused on four elements needed to help health food projects succeed in Kuwait.



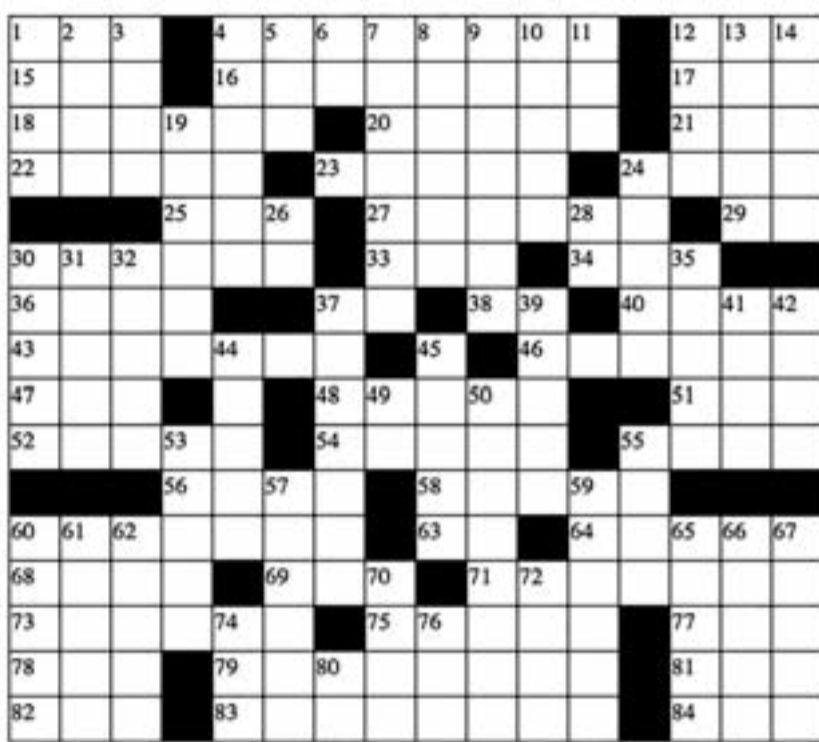
## Notice

Times cordially invites to another session of our series about some prophets and messengers of Allah (SWT) today at 7:00 pm, in which will learn more about Prophet Moses (AS). In this class, we will learn why and how Moses unintentionally killed a Copt, the Islamic ruling regarding manslaughter, and how the news about that incident reached Pharaoh and his

clique. We will also learn about some physical features of Moses (AS), his remorse, what he said in repentance, his pledge to Allah (SWT), a stranger's advice to him, and the precautionary measures he took. Finally, we will discuss how Moses (AS) escaped from Egypt to Midian, and what happened on his way. We will also explore the various benefits of maintaining a positive attitude in all circumstances and elicit many important practical lessons from the events that unfolded in Moses' life during that time.

Stars

CROSSWORD 2112



ACROSS

1. An honorary law degree.
4. Any of several submerged or floating freshwater perennial aquatic weeds belonging to the family Potamogetonaceae.
12. An accountant certified by the state.
15. Be obliged to pay or repay.
16. Pertaining to the tiny air sacs of the lungs.
17. A boy or man.
18. An analgesic for mild pain.
20. Literature in metrical form.
21. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
22. Garlic mayonnaise.
23. An elaborate or deceitful scheme contrived to deceive or evade.
25. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
27. A glass for beer.
29. An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
30. Any member of Athapaskan tribes that migrated to the southwestern desert (from Arizona to Texas and south into Mexico).
33. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
34. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
36. (used especially of vegetation) Having lost all moisture.
38. A radioactive transuranic element.
40. The arch of bone beneath the eye that forms the prominence of the cheek.
43. Tropical American shrub bearing edible acid red fruit resembling cherries.
46. In the same place (used when citing a reference).
47. (British) Your grandmother.
48. A ridge that forms a seam between two parts.
51. A nucleic acid that transmits genetic information from DNA to the cytoplasm.
52. Squash bugs.
54. Of or relating to or involving an area.
56. 100 chon equal 1 won.
58. Give qualities or abilities to.
60. At or to or toward the front.
63. A doctor's degree in religion.
64. Music performed for dancing the polka.
68. Evergreen trees and shrubs having only one-seeded fruits.
69. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
71. Occurring during the middle of the week.
73. Popular music originating in the West Indies.
75. Of or relating to Oman or its people.
77. A master's degree in business.
78. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
79. A wide (ornamented) belt worn over the right shoulder to support a sword or bugle by the left hip.
81. Tag the base runner to get him out.
82. An inflammatory complication of leprosy that results in painful skin lesions on the arms and legs and face.
83. Beetles that prey on other insects.
84. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. A globular water bottle used in Asia.
2. 100 lwei equal 1 kwanza.
3. A visual presentation showing how something works.
4. A person who is rejected (from society or home).
5. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
6. A state in the western United States.
7. The phenomenon of sediment or gravel accumulating.
8. Covered with growing trees and bushes etc.
9. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
10. (of pain or sorrow) Made easier to bear.
11. Free from liquid or moisture.
12. Wearing or provided with clothing.
13. A genus of Ploceidae.
14. Large antelope with lightly spiraled horns of desert regions of North Africa.
19. An alluvial deposit that contains particles of some valuable mineral.
24. Fragrant resin obtain from trees of the family Burseraceae and used as incense.
26. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
28. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
31. Wood of a pecan tree.
32. A particular environment or walk of life.
35. A genus of Pyralidae.
37. South American palm yielding a wax similar to carnauba wax.
39. A piece of land cleared of trees and usually enclosed.
41. A transparent optical device used to converge or diverge transmitted light and to form images.
42. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
44. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
45. Distance travelled per unit time.
49. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
50. In a subordinate position.
53. Lean end of the neck.
55. The sound made by a cat (or any sound resembling this).
57. A severe or trying experience.
59. United States author (born 1932).
61. A naturally occurring glyceride of oleic acid that is found in fats and oils.
62. Belonging to or befitting a supreme ruler.
65. Minute aquatic herbs floating on or below the water surface of still water consisting of a leaflike frond or plant body and single root.
66. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
67. Jordan's port.
70. A blind god.
72. A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
74. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
76. The use of nuclear magnetic resonance of protons to produce proton density images.
80. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Don't be surprised if someone younger turns to you for guidance today. Their admiration of you may be revealed. You may find you have had an impact on their life you didn't even realize. You never know who is watching and living by the example you set. You are an inspiration to others. You have overcome obstacles in your life and others truly admire you for this.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today may find you in a very serious mood dismissing all that you find trivial in this world. You have a no-nonsense attitude and a strong desire to succeed. You may find yourself in an extremely strict and disciplined mode and very ambitious. You are driven and passionate about your career and this is being noticed in the workplace to the point you may be approached to take on a special project. You are an excellent manager of yourself and your time and this may lead to an opportunity to excel as a manager of others. Taurus, you are on a prosperous and successful path. This is a great time for you to surround yourself with friends and family. This may lead to a more relaxed environment for you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A friend will seek your advice today. What she really wants is your approval for what she has decided to do. If you tell her what to do, it may lead to a rift in your friendship. You can give your opinion, but make it clear that she has to make the decision for herself. You might offer some options and point out the possible consequences of each. That mean she takes responsibility for her action. Regardless of how her decision turns out, your friendship will be strengthened. Being the friend to others that you desire a friend to be to you is the key to happiness in your world.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have a special place in your heart for those close to you. You seem to be the one the younger generation in your life look up to and admire. Your advice and guidance maybe sought from someone who looks to you as a mentor. You may feel as if your greatest growth comes when you are helping others. Today may be one of those days you are spinning your wheels getting physical tasks accomplished. Before frustration takes hold, stop and realize your shoulder to lean on and your listening ear and wonderful advice may be a much greater accomplishment that a completing a simple chore. Cancer, be proud of who you are and what you mean to others.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You crave all that is new and different. What has been great motivation to you in the past may seem meaningless. You have been a creature of habit as long as your friends can remember. This new you and the new path you have chosen may catch others off guard. Follow your heart. This is your journey and your journey alone. Do what makes you happy and put yourself first for a change. You can not change the way others see you. Chase your dreams and do what sets your soul on fire.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You have become a more emotional person. Being more in touch with your emotions has led you to nurture and care for those surrounding you. You may find yourself especially drawn to those younger and children. This is mostly driven by an "I knew then, what I know now" type of attitude. You feel as if you could help so many others and wish someone would have been around to mentor and guide you. You may find yourself signing up to volunteer to work with children or find some other role to step in where your knowledge may be beneficial to others. You will benefit in many ways from helping those close to you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

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



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may be faced with a career opportunity that goes against what you value. You have always prided yourself for clearly seeing things in life in black and white. There is no room for a grey area. If an opportunity that presents itself to you seems to good to be true, it probably is. Be sure you are able to lay your head down at night and sleep peacefully. You know right from wrong and this is a time for you to make the right choice. Actions have consequences and these consequences will have a lasting effect on your world. Do what satisfies your soul.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

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



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

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



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Far from reality is where you may find your thoughts today. Dreaming of what the future holds can lead to peace and clarity in your life. Set a goal. Picture yourself accomplishing this goal. Imagine how you will feel once your dream becomes a reality. Make a list of everything you need to do to accomplish this. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Make it happen. Dedication and determination can lead you to the position in life you wish to be. Love to learn and learn to love. The world has much more to offer you. Know this and own it!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may find yourself in a bit of a conflict when it comes to balancing your Home Life and work life. You may find yourself passing an opportunity by at work because it will interfere with time with your family. This may be a hard decision to make at this time, but the payoff with your family will be well worth it. In a time for you to make sure your priorities are straight. You have a strong appreciation of your past. You are able to reflect and realize the obstacles and problems of your past talk to the lessons that made you and you are today. You are able to appreciate hardships and look at them in a more positive manner knowing you will come at a stronger person in the end.

Wordsearch Puzzle

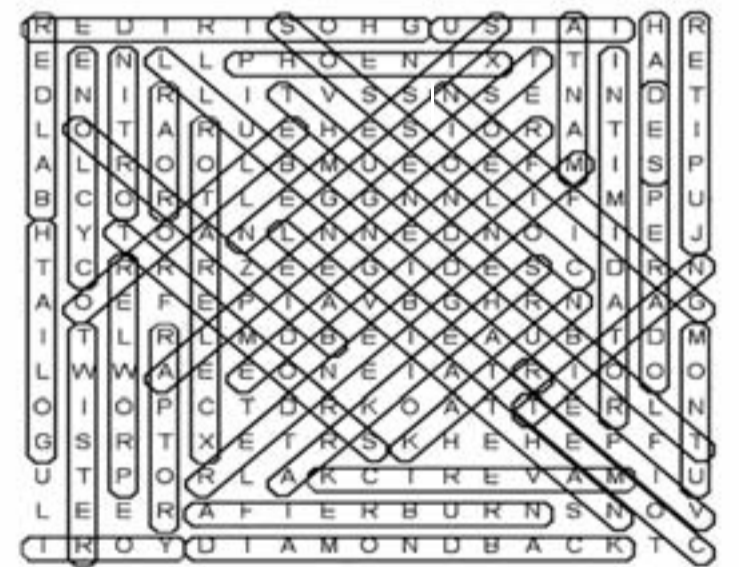
SCUBA Diving

Find and circle all of the SCUBA Diving words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the meaning of the letters of SCUBA.



- |                 |               |             |               |             |
|-----------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|-------------|
| AIR PRESSURE    | CURRENT       | HYPOTHERMIA | RECOMPRESSION | TIDE        |
| ALTITUDE DIVING | DECOMPRESSION | LEEWARD     | REGULATOR     | TOXICITY    |
| ANKXIA          | DEPTH GAUGE   | LEEWARD     | SCOOTER       | TRUNK       |
| ATMOSPHERE      | DIVE COMPUTER | LUNGS       | MASK          | SEA LEVEL   |
| BAD TRAUMA      | DIVE FLAG     | MEMBRANE    | SHEARS        | UNDERSEA    |
| BOOTS           | DIVE MARSHAL  | MOUTHPIECE  | SHOAL         | UNDERSUIT   |
| BOUNCE DIVE     | DRYSUIT       | NARCOSIS    | SILICONE      | UNDERSTOW   |
| BUBBLES         | EDDY          | NEOPRENE    | SNORKEL       | VISION      |
| BUDDY SYSTEM    | EMBOLISM      | NITROGEN    | SPEAR GUN     | VOLUME      |
| BUSTYANCY       | GAS CYLINDER  | NITROGEN    | STROBE        | WATER       |
| C CARD          | GAS MIXTURE   | OCEAN       | SWIM FINS     | WEIGHT BELT |
| COMPASS         | GIANT STRIDE  | OXYGEN      | SWIMMING      | WEIGHTS     |
| COMPRESSOR      | HELOJX        | PANIC       | TANK          | WETSUIT     |
| CORAL REEF      | HOSE          | REBREATHER  | THE BENDS     | WINDWARD    |

Roller Coasters



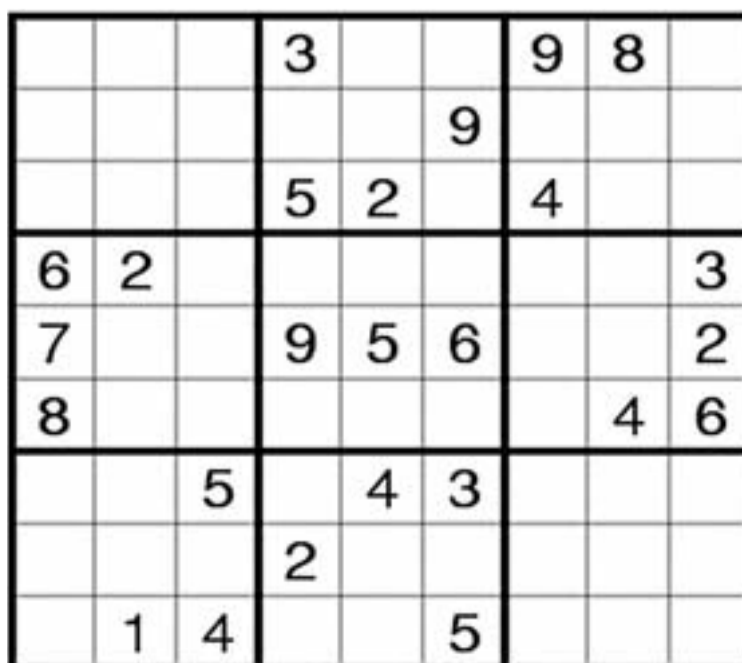
- |             |             |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| AFTERBURN   | GHOSTRIDER  | MIND BENDER | SHEIKRA     |
| ALPENGEIST  | GOLIATH     | MONTU       | TATSU       |
| BALDER      | GRIFFON     | NEMESIS     | THUNDERBOLT |
| BIZARRO     | HADES       | NITRO       | TITAN       |
| COLOSSOS    | INTIMIDATOR | PHOENIX     | TREMORS     |
| COMET       | JUPITER     | PROWLER     | TROY        |
| CYCLONE     | KATUN       | RAGING BULL | TWISTER     |
| DESPERADO   | LEVIATHAN   | RAPTOR      | VIPER       |
| DIAMONDBACK | MANTA       | RENEGADE    | XCELERATOR  |
| EL TORO     | MAVERICK    | ROAR        |             |

The hidden message is: LIVE LIFE TO THE FULLEST

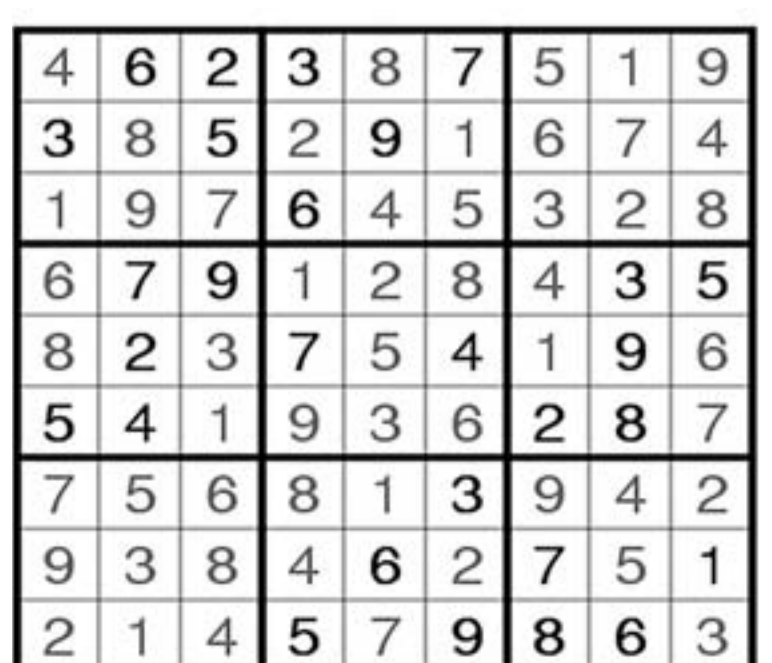
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JANUARY 17, 2019



A model displays a dress by Kuwaiti designer Abdullah Al-Saleh named 'Althafra' inspired by Sadu (traditional Kuwaiti weaving) at a gallery in Kuwait City. 'Althafra' was a term used to describe the most skillful Bedouin female weaver. The piece was created using parts of pillows, constructed, designed and woven from camel hair in Algeria, and threaded with red and black wool, representing the traditional Kuwaiti Sadu. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



## Sadu House works to promote creative weaving

**H**onorary President of Al-Sadu Weaving Cooperative Society Sheikha Altaf Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah said Tuesday the Sadu House is an initiative aiming to encourage talented youth to explore innovative ways to express themselves through traditional knitting. "We work for finding new methods of preserve our heritage and combining traditional weaving and modernity through developing this art which have distinctive aesthetic appeal," she told KUNA on the sidelines of the Sadu art gallery. "The gallery, part of the 25th Qurain Cultural Festival, exhibits textile works of five creative youths, males and females," Sheikha Altaf said, noting that the exhibits include handicrafts that reflect a modern approach to the art of weaving. "Heritage expresses human experience that has to do with not only the past but the present and the future as well," she said, calling on the youth in Kuwait and the Gulf region to draw on beautiful works of the past while developing innovative textiles.

This year Sadu House has launched a training program on how to develop 3-D textiles: it is a six-week course aiming to involve artists from Kuwait and the Arab region," she went on. Sheikha Altaf noted that the House plans to organize this course on an annual basis and launch award for creative artists and designers. On her part, Sheikha Bibi Du'aj Al-Sabah, chairperson of the Society and General Supervisor of Sadu House, said this is the fourth edition of Sadu gallery "where we encourage the participants to focus on the concept of sustainability." The five exhibitors have attended specialized workshops on how to maximize benefit from materials in their artworks," she said in a statement to KUNA. Sheikha Bibi added that the participants were given access to the contents of Al-Sadah library and work jointly with engineers, designers, painters and photographers while doing their innovative weaving. — KUNA



People attend the Sadu House exhibition.

### Sculpture alluding to Saudi Arabia pulled from World Trade Center



A sculpture with the flag of Saudi Arabia (right), part of an exhibit called 'Candy Nations' is pictured outside next to the Oculus, one of the buildings that replaced the original World Trade Center in New York City. — AFP

A display of sculptures is being pulled from the World Trade Center after critics objected to the presence of one that represents Saudi Arabia at the site of the 9/11 attacks. The two-meter polyester resin artwork depicting a giant candy wrapped in the green Saudi flag is part of an exhibit entitled "Candy Nations," representing the G20 nations. Put together in 2011, the installation has already been shown in several countries, as well as elsewhere in New York.

But some observers have been critical of the Saudi flag's presence in the WTC, home to a memorial for the 3,000 Americans killed in the 9/11 strikes. Of the 19 hijackers who commandeered four jetliners and crashed into the twin towers in New York, a Pennsylvania field and the Pentagon in Virginia — 15 were Saudi nationals. A US congressional report on the September 11 attacks laid some blame with the US ally, but those passages were never made public, according to Bob Graham, the former senator who co-chaired the commission that produced the report.

"We have been in contact with the 9/11 Memorial and various stakeholders, and in full collaboration with the artist will relocate the exhibit from its current location," the Port Authority, which manages the site, said in a statement. The entire exhibit is being sent to JFK International Airport, the group added. "We believe this solution respects the unique sensitivities of the site and preserves the artistic integrity of the exhibit," it added. The move will take place this week. — AFP



Models present creations by Fumito Ganryu during the men's Fashion Week for the Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection in Paris. — AFP photos



## REVOLUTION AT GATES OF PROTEST-HIT PARIS MEN'S FASHION



Paris men's fashion week started Tuesday with a tsunami of new talent but with shows also threatened by the "yellow vests" protest movement that has been rocking France. Dior moved its show from Saturday to Friday to avoid the weekly Paris demonstrations which often turn violent after its flagship shop on the Champs Elysees was looted after a march in November. Several other luxury brands have been targeted by "yellow vests" activists, with boarded-up boutiques regularly scrawled with graffiti denouncing the rich.

Japanese label Sacai, streetwear brand Andrea Crews, Namacheko and the American Thom Browne have also rescheduled their Saturday shows to avoid trouble from the populist street movement. But it is the boiling anger of fashion critics that reclusive superstar designer Hedi Slimane will be dreading, after they gave his first outing for Celine a kicking in October. Slimane was accused of thrashing the feminist legacy of his predecessor Phoebe Philo—a charge he is unlikely to face for the first men's collection in Celine's history. Another, quieter revolution is also taking place on the men's catwalks, with an ultra-hip gang of street wear and cult Japanese designers being welcomed into the elite Paris fold for the first time.

### Street cleaner chic

DJ-turned-designer Heron Preston, the son of a San Francisco cop, who has previously taken inspiration from New York binmen and street cleaners' uniforms, opened the packed six-day schedule. An old pal of both the rapper Kanye West and Off-White tyro Virgil Abloh, whose first collection of menswear designs for Louis Vuitton have been a huge hit, he is one of a wave of young designers taking streetwear upmarket.

He set his first Paris show in a fake airport terminal replete with metal detectors, with looks drawn from security guards, transport workers' uniforms and others who frequent "24-hour places". He also purloined the Securitas three-dot logo which he adapted to fit his own "style" tag written in Cyrillic. Preston, 35, first came to notice alongside Abloh at the streetwear brand Been Trill. Like his friend, he has made no secret of his dream to one day lead a big brand, in his case Prada.

### Japanese genius

Two Japanese fashion idols also brought a huge shot of extra fizz to the traditionally sedate opening day. Former Comme des Garçons stalwart Fumito Ganryu made a high-

ly intelligent first Paris bow with rethought oversized duffle coats and hoodies you could imagine particularly stylish Shinto priests wearing. His genuinely unisex black suits, some with trousers and other with skirts, were equally thoughtful, with pom-pom socks that hung over the heel adding a touch of playful fantasy.

Another hero of the Tokyo scene, Takahiro Miyashita, rounded the day off with a show of "survival clothing to get through today's reality" for his The Soloist label. Gone are the psychedelic colors of his late lamented Number (N)ine brand. Instead Miyashita's masked urban warriors wore black and blue and could pass for heavily-styled members of the "Black bloc" anarchist and "yellow vests" demonstrators that regularly clash with French riot police. A similar dystopian air hung over the Shanghai designer Shanguan Zhe's dark Sankuanz line, with a few badass models wearing metallic claws and Robocop vinyl combos that made them look like super-heroes gone to the bad.—AFP



Models present creations by Sankuanz, at the end of the men's Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection fashion show in Paris.

Lifestyle | Features



McCoy Mrubata and the band performing at Salmiya's Abdullhussain Abdulredah theatre.



# McCoy Mrubata live in Kuwait: A look at the life and influences of the famous jazz artist

By Aakash Bakaya

**M**cCoy Mrubata is a renowned, multi-award winning South African saxophonist, flute player and band leader. His childhood was surrounded by African hymns, the sounds of Zion churches and the brassy music of the Merry Macs band that used to rehearse opposite his home. His ambition is to keep jazz music alive and share his South African experiences through music with the rest of the continent and the world. Outside of the music, he considers himself a proud and grounded family man. This legendary jazz musician and his band performed in Salmiya's Abdul Hussain Abdul Redah theatre on Tuesday night. Kuwait Times conducted an interview with him when he was invited by Mzolisa Bona, the Ambassador of Republic of South Africa at his official residence a night before the concert.

**KT: You grew up in a pretty turbulent time in your home country; did those times influence you to become a musician and your music itself?**

**McCoy Mrubata:** It influenced me a lot. I come from a township that was very musical and there was protest in music as well. We use to regularly play in rallies back in the days. It's where I fell in love with music and it's where I told myself "I am going to be a professional musician one day".

**KT: But why jazz in particular? You've spoken about your Zionist influences early on in your career, was jazz and reggae gaining popularity in South Africa during that time?**

**Mrubata:** Yes most definitely. As much as I am known as a jazz musician, I have also played with Lucky Dube who is a reggae musician and Rastafarian and have played in many rock bands. I consider myself an 'open-minded' musician but jazz simply found me. I was surrounded by jazz as my parents played jazz records all the time and I absorbed the music at a very young age.

**KT: Who were the artists that inspired you the most?**

**Mrubata:** Oh there were lots of them. John Coltrane and Wayne Shorter were the main ones I would say - followed by many local musicians like Madoda Gxabeka and Winston Ngozi who were coming up at that time. Although they didn't teach me physically, I still regard them as my teachers. I use to watch them all the time to see how they behaved and how they practiced their craft.

**KT: Speaking of teachers, you also run and teach in a well-established music school. What are the main elements of music you focus on in your classes?**

**Mrubata:** We specialize in wind instruments mainly but we do focus on teaching theory and other instruments as well just to get them to understand the feel and flow of African jazz.

**KT: How do you think African jazz differs from the more commonly known American-infused jazz styles?**



South African Ambassador to Kuwait Mzolisa Bona introducing McCoy Mrubata and the band before the show. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

**Mrubata:** African jazz as a lot of elements of African folk music in it. In South Africa, we try hard to make sure this African-side of jazz sounds stronger than the American-infused kind. By stronger I mean, making sure the sound stays upbeat without swinging too much. There's still a tinge to the sound but you can make out the difference. Whenever we tour the US, people there often tell us how they can hear similarities and how we do it differently - we do it in our own way.

**KT: After such a long, illustrious career, what's your take on the global appeal of jazz today?**

**Mrubata:** It's still huge I feel. Two months ago, I was touring America with my band and the reception was as good if not bigger than it's ever been. I've also gone to several colleges in the US to teach and give lectures and they're still very attracted to the sound and to the instruments especially the saxophone and clarinet. The current generation tends to mix in some electronic elements into the music which we are more than happy to oblige.

**KT: Outside of live performances, have you provided music in other fields?**

**Mrubata:** I have scored a few documentaries and television productions back in my home country. I've also been a part of a musical theatre production in Norway. I acted in a stage show on John Coltrane the great sax player and was also involved in a musical on Bob Marley.

**KT: Bob Marley the Musical, what was that like?**

**Mrubata:** It was a live stage musical on the life of Bob Marley, filled with great acting and live musical performances. We mainly focused on his upbringing, his life in



Photo shows McCoy Mrubata, a multi-award winning South African saxophonist, flute player and band leader.

Jamaica and how he rose to fame.

**KT: Did you cover his assassination attempt as well?**

**Mrubata:** Oh yes that was a part of the show. The playwright was not scared on touching those controversial topics.

**KT: Kuwait has seen quite a few jazz artists come to perform in the last few years and has seen a growing interest for jazz; do you have any personal recommendations or advice for those budding jazz-lovers?**

**Mrubata:** I would say that they should look at jazz from a wider angle. The search for great jazz music shouldn't just end with the USA. If they are interested in my music, from there they could find other artists both in Africa and around the globe. I know America has worked hard to popularize the genre and we're all thankful for that but we too are always working towards widening jazz's reach in the world. I might be too old for open air festivals but I hope I can still be performing 10-15 years down the line and keep the music going.



In this file photo US musician Alicia Keys attends Billboard's 13th Annual Women In Music event at Pier 36 in New York City. — AFP

## R&B star Alicia Keys to host 2019 Grammy Awards

American singer and songwriter Alicia Keys will host the Grammy Awards next month, she announced Tuesday, one year after the gala came under fire over diversity concerns. Keys-herself a 15-time Grammy winner-will be the emcee for music's biggest night, which this year features a diverse slate of women and hip hop artists as leading contenders. "I know what it feels like to be on that stage, and I know what it feels like to be proud of the work that you've put in and to be recognized for it," Keys said in a video posted on social media. "I feel like it's the perfect opportunity for me to give the light back and lift people up-especially all the young women that are nominated," she added. "To me, it feels like sister vibes."

Keys replaces James Corden, the British-late night comedian who has hosted the awards the past two years. Since releasing her blockbuster album "Songs in A Minor" in 2001, classically trained pianist Keys has sold more than 30 million records and become a successful film, television and Broadway producer. Her appointment as Grammy host comes after the Recording Academy-which organizes the event-faced backlash that the show is consistently too male and too white. Academy head Neil Portnow said in May he would step aside when his contract expires later this year, after he triggered outrage after saying women artists should "step up." "A dynamic artist with the rare combination of groundbreaking talent and passion for her craft, Alicia Keys is the perfect choice as host for our show," Portnow said in a statement. Rap superstar Kendrick Lamar is leading the Grammy pack with eight nominations, propelled mostly by his work on the "Black Panther" soundtrack. — AFP

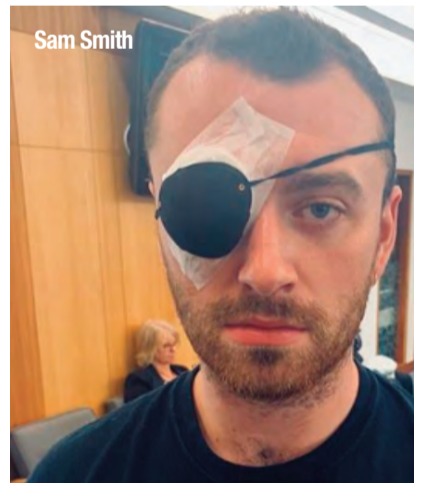
## 'Stye with me': Sam Smith has eye surgery in New Zealand

British pop singer Sam Smith has revealed he underwent an eye operation while holidaying in New Zealand yesterday. He took to Instagram to announce he was about to have surgery for an eye infection in Auckland and then documented the procedure with a series of pictures. Doctors had decided the painful style on his right eye needed to be operated on,

the 26-year-old said. "I'm getting it operated on in 20 minutes... super hyped that I get to wear this pirate patch," he messaged before the procedure. "I'm being super dramatic, it's like a 15 minute operation lol."

Smith's 2014 debut album "In The Lonely Hour" topped the charts in several countries and earned him four Grammy Awards, including Best New Artist and Record of

the Year. He also won Song of the Year for "Stay With Me", the breakout hit Smith harked back to in an Instagram post after a successful operation. "Stye with me," Smith wrote, alongside a snap of the singer sporting his new eyepatch. — AFP



## Rihanna sues dad to keep hands off her Fenty trademark

Rihanna has sued her father for trading on her Fenty brand name and suggesting that a business venture he set up in 2017 is associated with her. The "Diamonds" singer, whose full name is Robyn Rihanna Fenty, filed a lawsuit in US federal court in Los Angeles on Tuesday accusing Ronald Fenty and two business partners of fraud and false advertising over his Fenty Entertainment talent and production company. The Barbados-born Rihanna, who uses the Fenty trademark to sell cosmetics, lingerie and sneakers, asked the court for an injunction to stop her father using the Fenty name, and an unspecified amount of damages. — Reuters

## Cranberries debut single of last album to mark singer's death

Irish band The Cranberries released the first song of its final album Tuesday, exactly one year after lead singer Dolores O'Riordan was found drowned in a London hotel bathtub. The band dropped the new track ahead of the April release of their eighth and last album "In The End," after which the rock group—best known for 90s-era hits including "Zombie," "Linger", and "Dreams"—will split after three decades together. Band members Noel Hogan, Mike Hogan, and Fergal Lawler finished the new 11-song album using demo vocals O'Riordan completed in December 2017, they said on Instagram.

"We remembered how Dolores had been so energized by the prospect of making this record and getting back out on the road to play the songs live, and realized that the most meaningful thing to do was to finish the album we had started with her," the group said. "It was a very emotional process for us," they said. "Knowing that we would never get to play these songs live made it even more difficult." But, they concluded, "we felt that this is what she would want." The lead single has an unmistakable Cranberries vibe, a sorrowful but moving track that features O'Riordan repeating the eerily prescient lyric "It's all over now."

The group is releasing the music with approval from

the family of O'Riordan, who died aged 46. A London coroner ruled that she had died from accidental drowning due to intoxication, but found no evidence of injuries or self-harm. "I can't think of a more fitting way to commemorate the first anniversary of Dolores' passing and to celebrate her life than to announce to the world the release of her final album with the band," the singer's mother Eileen O'Riordan said in a statement. "I have no doubt that she is happy now and would be delighted with today's announcement." — AFP



Lifestyle | Features

# Cows walk on fire in India's harvest festival

Indian devotees led decked-up cows over burning hay to celebrate the Hindu harvest festival in a ritual seeking good fortune and protection from harm. The Makar Sankranti festival marks the advent of spring and is celebrated by kite-flying and other regional festivities in the month of January.

In the southern city of Bangalore famous as the tech-hub of India, men decorated the cows with garlands and bells and walked them over hay set ablaze. The age-old ritual is believed to bring good fortune and keep cows, which are sacred to Hindus, and other livestock and crops from harm's way. — AFP



Indian men lead a cow over burning hay as part of a ritual to seek good fortune and protection from harm during the Hindu Makar Sankranti festival in Bangalore. — AFP photos

## YouTube clarifies rules on pranks as risky memes rage

YouTube on Tuesday clarified rules against posting videos of dangerous pranks, as risky "challenges" prompt people to video themselves doing things like biting into laundry soap or driving blindfolded. The company already forbid content inciting dangerous activities likely to result in serious harm. But the clarifications "make it clear that challenges like the Tide pod challenge or the Fire challenge, that can cause death and/or have caused death in some instances, have no place on YouTube," the company said in a blog post.

"We've made it clear that our policies prohibiting harmful and dangerous content also extend to pranks with a perceived danger of serious physical injury," said YouTube, which like other social networks is trying to show that it is better tackling problematic content. It made clear the updated policies ban pranks that trick people into thinking they are in danger, such as fake home invasions or drive-by shootings. "YouTube is home to many beloved viral challenges and pranks, like

Jimmy Kimmel's 'Terrible Christmas Presents' prank or the water bottle flip challenge," said YouTube, owned by Google's parent Alphabet.

"That said, we've always had policies to make sure what's funny doesn't cross the line into also being harmful or dangerous." While playful or goofy challenges or pranks have become raging trends online, with video shared at YouTube or Facebook, some "memes" have put people in jeopardy. A "Fire Challenge" dared people to put flammable liquid on their bodies then ignite it, while a "Tide Pod Challenge" involved people, typically teens, biting or chewing the encapsulated candy-colored laundry detergent. A "Bird Box" thriller released on Netflix a month ago inspired a challenge for people to do things blindfolded, mimicking characters in the original streaming film.

A US teenager over the weekend crashed while driving with her eyes covered, taking part in a challenge inspired by the hit Netflix show, according to media reports. YouTube policy also bans pranks that cause children trauma, for example the fake death of a parent or severe abandonment, according to the firm. Accounts that post videos violating policies on pranks will get a "strike" that will limit some features such as live streaming. A second strike within three months will result in even more limited use of YouTube, while accounts getting three strikes in that time period will be terminated. — AFP

# 'Naive, reckless' tourists Couchsurfing in war-torn Afghanistan

Seeking an "authentic" experience as he backpacked through war-torn Afghanistan, Dutch tourist Ciaran Barr searched the Couchsurfing website for locals to stay with. He found an astonishing number of potential hosts. Despite the country's decaying security nearly 2,000 Afghans—the vast majority of them men—have signed up to host guests on the social networking platform, which connects travellers around the world with locals who are willing to put them up for free. "You feel like you get a more authentic feel for the city so you don't get trapped in tourist hotspots," Barr, 24, tells AFP in heavily-militarized Kabul, where he spent several nights sleeping on a thin mattress on the floor of his Afghan host's bedroom. "Not that there are any in Afghanistan," he adds wryly.

Once a popular stop on the well-worn hippy trail between Europe and South Asia in the 1970s, Afghanistan has seen the number of foreign travellers crossing its borders dwindle in the past four decades of almost non-stop conflict. But dozens still make the dangerous journey every year, ignoring clear warnings from their own governments to stay away from a country infested with suicide attackers, kidnapers and armed robbers, and which by some estimates is now the world's deadliest conflict zone.

Many take their chances by staying with Afghan strangers they find through the Couchsurfing network, rather than paying for a room in a hotel protected by armed guards and bullet-proof doors. "Staying with people and dressing to blend in a bit makes it possible to travel in Afghanistan with not too big of a risk," says Barr, who—with his dark hair and beard, and dressed in the baggy pajama-style shalwar kameez favored by most Afghan men—stands out less than most foreigners.

### 'You have to be smart'

Couchsurfing's concept is like a modern-day version of Afghanistan's tradition of hospitality, which obliges Afghans to provide food and shelter to strangers. But it is risky. Couchsurfers only have their host's online profile and references to judge their character. In a country where kidnappings remain common and foreigners are highly-prized targets, they have no way of knowing if their host is connected to criminals, who may see a chance to get rich by abducting them or giving them up to militants. "You can end up with the Taliban," says a diplomat in Kabul, who has been involved in negotiations to rescue kidnap victims. "It's naive and reckless."

That is what happened to North American couple Caitlan Coleman and Joshua Boyle, who were kidnapped while backpacking in Afghanistan in 2012. They were freed from the Taliban in 2017, along with their three children who were born in captivity. But Norwegian tourist Jorm Bjorn Augestad, who has couchsurfing in Iraq and the Central African Republic, tells AFP in Kabul that government warnings exaggerate the dangers.

"They are too careful. You have to be smart about a lot of things, having contact with a local is the best way to stay safe," says Augestad, who is on a mission to visit every country in the world, including Syria, before his

30th birthday this year. He adds: "This is part of the cultural experience, seeing how people live and hearing people's life story and getting an understanding of the country that you are in."

### Vicarious travel

Barr and Augestad began their week-long Afghan odyssey in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif, famous for its ancient Blue Mosque and buzkashi, a savage version of polo played with a goat carcass. The pair met through a local travel agent, who found them a taxi driver to take them more than 400 kilometers (250 miles) to the Afghan capital. After reaching Kabul, the deadliest place in Afghanistan for civilians, Barr and Augestad stayed with Couchsurfing host Naser Majidi, 27, who works as a technical adviser for a water utility company.

For Afghans consumed by wanderlust, hosting a foreigner is a chance to travel vicariously through their experiences, as more and more countries make it all but impossible for Afghan passport holders to obtain a visa. "I can make it easier for them to see the beauty of this country," says Majidi, who has hosted six guests since signing up to Couchsurfing in 2016. "It's a good experience for me—I get more friends and I know the world better." But his family worry that he is putting himself in danger.

"They have advised me many times that this is very risky for you and for them (guests)," Majidi says. Elyas Yari, who became a host in 2017 despite the objections of loved ones, says he enjoys listening to his guests' travel "experiences and their ideas". "It's fun for me," says Yari, 19, who has received visitors from Canada, Russia, Mexico and Taiwan. Afghanistan is "not as dangerous as it looks," he says.

But Barr and Augestad are not oblivious to the potential pitfalls of travelling independently in Afghanistan where the Taliban and the Islamic State group terrorize much of the country. "Things can go well nine out of 10 times," says Barr, adding: "It just takes that one time when things go wrong and so far nothing has gone wrong. He concedes: "We also have been lucky." — AFP



In this photo Afghan Couchsurfing host Naser Majidi (center), 27, eats breakfast with his guests Norwegian tourist Jorm Bjorn Augestad (right), 29, and Dutch tourist Ciaran Barr, 24, at a house in Kabul. — AFP photos



Norwegian tourist Jorm Bjorn Augestad looks on as he talks with Afghan Couchsurfing host Naser Majidi (unseen), 27, at a house in Kabul.



Afghan Couchsurfing host Naser Majidi (right) talks with his guests Norwegian tourist Jorm Bjorn Augestad (left) and Dutch tourist Ciaran Barr at a house in Kabul.

# Thiranottam 2019 event to celebrate Mohanlal's 40 years in Indian film history

Thiranottam 2019 is a special event to celebrate the completion of 40 years by south Indian superstar Padmasree Lt Colonel Mohanlal in Indian film history. The program is jointly organized by Texas Kuwait and Uyarangalil enterprises. The event conceived by the great RB initiative will be held at Hawally park auditorium on January 18, 2019 from 6 pm onwards. Many other prominent and popular members of Malayalam film industry will also be present at the event.

Legendary star known as the Marlon Brando of Indian movie industry and hailed many times as the best actor of India by legends like Amitabh Bachchan, Srikant Murali will also be present at the event. Srikant Murali

started his career with film director KG George at the age of 16 who then proved his caliber in many areas such as acting, direction, film making and ad development. He is the creative head of Mindscape Productions, also a well-trained "Kadhakali dancer" reservoir of knowledge on Kerala folk art, music and tradition, who had contributed his valuable ideas for TV and film production companies in south India. He is well known for his latest film "Aby". Mindscape Productions has created some of the best advertising campaigns under the creative leadership of Srikant Murali as he continues to redefine the direction of the advertising business.

Rakesh Brahmanandan, a distinguished voice among

young singers of Malayalam music industry, began his career by singing for an album by his friends at the age of 24, while working in a corporate. He later recorded his voice for great music maestros like Dakshinamoorthy Swami, Illayaraja, Ravindran, Jerry Amal Dev and new age composers like Bijibal and Alex Paul and eventually became a reverberant stage performer.

Rakesh has anchored and performed in prominent TV shows aired in almost all the prominent channels in Malayalam. Apart from film songs, Rakesh has sung almost 500 songs in numerous musical productions. "RB live" - his band from Cochin embracing Indian music culture in an international outfit has performed in vintage music show, Mehfls and semi - carnatic concerts for music lovers of varied interests, and occasions.

Pooja Vija alias Swasika Vijay is one of the popular face and a leading female artist in the Malayalam television industry. She has done three television series in which she was the lead character which fetched her to fame. The current airing series Seetha have crossed 500 episodes and still successfully running is one of the greatest contribution of this star. She has acted in more than 25 movies which includes Kattapanayilae Hrithik Roshan, Ayalaum Njanum Thamill and still continues to act in an ongoing movie. She has also hosted couple of TV reality shows like Katturumbu which gained huge success and is a very well-known dancer, who learned Barathanatyam (Indian classical dancing) at the age of 7.

Arjun Lal is a digital marketer by profession and an artist by passion. Being a trained dancer with expertise in classical and western dance forms, Arjun was a regular participant in the cultural events during his school days. He holds a degree in Psychology and he is the co-founder of a marketing firm named Digiteyes in Bangalore. Arjun Lal, was a teenager when he debuted through the renowned Director Blessy's National Award winning Mohanlal starred Thamathra. He also played the lead in "Asha Black". He is the proud winner of Kerala State Award and Asianet New Face of the year Award. We are honored to welcome these esteemed figures for this huge event in Kuwait.



## Kim Kardashian and Kanye West expecting fourth child

The latest Kardashian to keep up with is on the way, Kim Kardashian said, confirming rumors that she and rapper Kanye West are expecting a fourth child via surrogate. The lifestyle mogul and reality TV superstar told the US program "Watch What Happens Live With Andy Cohen" late Monday that her family's newest addition was a boy, and was due "sometime soon." "It's out there," she said, sitting alongside sisters Kourtney and Khloe. "I got drunk at our Christmas Eve party, and I told some people, but I can't remember who I told."

The new baby joins daughter Chicago, who was born last January via surrogate, daughter North, five, and their first son, three-year-old Saint. Kardashian has been open about her struggles with pregnancy and decision to use a surrogate, as she had previously suffered from placenta accreta—a serious condition where the placenta becomes too deeply attached to the wall of the uterus. — AFP



In this file photo Kanye West and Kim Kardashian West attend the Versace fall 2019 fashion show at the American Stock Exchange Building in lower Manhattan in New York City. — AFP





Sri Lanka Police Special Task Force (STF) soldiers stand during a passing out parade in Katukurunda yesterday, some 40 km south of Colombo. — AFP

## Qatar's beIN targets piracy with 'reveal all' website

**DOHA:** Qatar's beIN media group yesterday stepped up its campaign against alleged Saudi-backed piracy, launching a website exposing what it says is wide-scale theft of its programs. The "reveal all" beoutq.tv website went live with the aim of holding the pirate operation to account, a statement said. "What started out as a concerted and targeted campaign against beIN has now morphed into the largest commercial theft that's ever been seen in the world of sport and entertainment," Tom Keaveny, beIN's managing director in the Middle East region, said in the statement. "This Saudi-supported plague of piracy represents an existential threat to the economic model of the industry."

The website details programs being illegally broad-

cast in more than 20 countries, a timeline of events and points the finger at several prominent Saudi figures under the headline: "The Saudi State-Supported Piracy of World Sport and Entertainment". beIN has previously alleged that since Aug 2017 a vast and sophisticated Saudi bootlegging network known as "beoutQ" had been transmitting its stolen programs via Riyadh-based satellite provider Arabsat.

In October, beIN launched a compensation claim worth \$1 billion against the Saudi piracy channel while Qatar filed an action at the World Trade Organization. But no progress has been reported so far. FIFA and the English Premier League said they were preparing to take legal action in Saudi Arabia against the pirates.

Saudi Arabia has denied the claims and even said the piracy was operating out of Cuba.

beIN's website launch was backed by the Confederation of African Football (CAF) and another service provider, Eleven Sports. The CAF said in a statement that only it holds the rights to matches played in its competitions and "strongly condemned" beoutQ's "major piracy operation". It added it would "take all necessary" steps if any of its matches were pirated. London-based Eleven, which has rights in the UK to football matches from major European leagues including Spain's La Liga and Italy's Serie A, tweeted that it stood "shoulder-to-shoulder" with the Qataris. "Piracy is one of the greatest threats to the future of

the sports and entertainment industry and we stand against it in all forms," said Eleven Sports.

The latest beIN move comes amid a 19-month economic and diplomatic boycott of Qatar by Saudi Arabia and its allies which accuse Doha of backing terrorism and seeking closer ties with rival Iran. Qatar has refuted the claims. The website was launched on the day the Italian Supercoppa is played in Saudi Arabia's Red Sea city of Jeddah, which beIN has called on to be moved elsewhere because of the piracy issue. And on Thursday Qatar and Saudi Arabia meet in a politically charged Asian Cup football match in the United Arab Emirates, which backs Riyadh in the diplomatic dispute. — AFP

## IS attack kills US forces in...

Continued from Page 1

A US official had earlier told Reuters four US troops had been killed and three wounded in the blast. Others said only two had been killed. "The information I have is news pointing toward that there are five US soldiers and 20 died in total," Erdogan said in a news conference with the Croatian president in Ankara. Erdogan said he did not believe the attack would impact Trump's decision to withdraw from Syria - "because I saw honorable Trump's determination on this point," he said.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said two American soldiers, nine Syrian civilians, and five US-backed fighters were killed in the attack on a restaurant in Manbij. Rubble littered the outside of the eatery in the city center and its facade was blackened by the blast, footage from a Kurdish news agency showed. According to Pentagon statistics, yesterday's blast was the deadliest attack for US coalition forces in Syria since they deployed in 2014. The US Department of Defense only reported two previous US nationals being killed in combat in Syria, in two separate incidents. The Britain-based Observatory, which relies on a network of sources in Syria, said it was the first such suicide attack in the city in 10 months.

Speaking at a gathering in Washington of US ambassadors, Vice President Mike Pence did not comment on the attack and just said that the United States would ensure the defeat of IS, also known as ISIS. "We'll stay in the region and we'll stay in the fight to ensure that ISIS does not rear its ugly head again," he said. The bombing comes as Syrian Kurds present in areas around Manbij reject any Turkish presence in a planned "safe zone" to include Kurdish-held areas along the frontier.

Turkey has repeatedly threatened to attack Washington's Syrian Kurdish allies who Ankara views as "terrorists" on its southern flank. Washington, which has relied heavily on the Kurds in its campaign against IS in Syria, has sought guarantees for their safety after Trump's pullout announcement. On Tuesday, Erdogan said Ankara would set up a "security zone" in northern Syria following a suggestion by Trump.

But senior Kurdish political leader Aldar Khalil said any Turkish deployment in Kurdish-held areas was

"unacceptable". He said the Kurds would accept the deployment of UN forces along a separation line between Kurdish fighters and Turkish troops. But "other choices are unacceptable as they infringe on the sovereignty of Syria and the sovereignty of our autonomous region," Khalil told AFP. The Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) have been a key US ally in the fight against IS.

They have taken heavy losses in a campaign now nearing its conclusion, with the militants confined to an ever-shrinking enclave of just 15 sq km. But the militants have continued to claim attacks nationwide and abroad. Ankara has welcomed Washington's planned withdrawal of some 2,000 US troops from Syria, but the future of Kurdish fighters has poisoned relations between the NATO allies. On Monday, Erdogan and Trump had a telephone conversation to ease tensions after the US leader threatened to "devastate" Turkey's economy if Ankara attacked Kurdish forces in Syria, and called for a "safe zone".

Erdogan said he and Trump had a "quite positive" conversation in which they spoke of "a 20-mile (30-km) security zone along the Syrian border... set up by us". The YPG-led forces fighting IS in a statement said they would provide "necessary support to set up the safe zone" - if it came with international guarantees to "prevent any outside interference", in an apparent reference to Turkey.

The Turkish army has launched two major operations in Syria in recent years, with the latest seeing Turkish troops and their Syrian rebel allies seizing the northwestern enclave of Afrin from the Kurds last year. Critics have accused Turkish troops and their proxies of military occupation of Syrian sovereign territory. But while Ankara has spoken of a YPG-free "security zone" under its control, analyst Mutlu Civiroglu said it was not immediately clear what the US president meant by a "safe zone", or who he thought would patrol it.

Analysts were "waiting for a clarification from Washington to see what the president really meant", he told AFP. The US planned withdrawal has sent the Kurds scrambling to seek a new ally in Damascus, which has long rejected Kurdish self-rule. With military backing from Russia since 2015, Syria's regime has advanced against the militants and rebels, and now controls almost two-thirds of the country. A northwestern enclave held by militants and pockets held by Turkish troops and their allies remain beyond its reach, along with the much larger Kurdish region. Yesterday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the Syrian government must take control of the north. — AFP

MP Ali Al-Deqbasi yesterday said that the new early retirement law which is being worked out in the Assembly will make available 15,000 jobs for Kuwaitis. The law allows Kuwaiti male and female civil servants to seek retirement ahead of time but without losing most of their pension benefits. The law is the subject of controversy between MPs and the government over its cost to the pension fund. The statements came as new official statistics revealed that the number of unemployed Kuwaitis has reached 15,000. The report said 101,000 foreigners are employed in the government against close to 300,000 Kuwaitis. MPs are pressing the government to replace a majority of expatriate employees in the government with Kuwaitis.

## Constitutional court to review...

Continued from Page 1

pace of legislation. Ghanem chaired a meeting on Monday of 26 MPs representing heads and rapporteurs of Assembly panels and decided to form a new committee to coordinate to accelerate approving legislation. Ghanem said yesterday the priorities committee will continue to carry out its job and the new panel is not a replacement.

## Nike unveils self-lacing next-gen shoes

**NEW YORK:** In the 1980s, the "Back to the Future" film franchise suggested we would all eventually wear self-lacing sneakers. Then a few years ago, Nike made the movie magic a reality, introducing its first shoe to the public with so-called "power lacing". And on Tuesday, the global sportswear giant took it a step farther - now your shoes will automatically loosen or tighten when you step into them, and then adapt based on your activity.

Wait for it - the Nike Adapt BB shoes, which go

on sale on Feb 17 for \$350 in the United States, are controlled by the touch of a button or a smartphone app. "We picked basketball as the first sport for Nike Adapt intentionally because of the demands that athletes put on their shoes," Eric Avar, Nike VP creative director of innovation, said in a statement. Using a custom motor and gear train, "Adapt" technology enables the shoe to be automatically adjusted to the foot.

The app allows the player to load in different fit preferences - for example, game play versus a timeout. Boston Celtics forward Jayson Tatum is the first pitchman for the new shoe. "That the app allows the ability to put the shoe on and touch the button, change the colors, see the percentage on the battery...it's just cool," Tatum said in a statement. Nike says it plans to bring the system to shoes for other sports. — AFP

## Kenya says all five gunmen...

Continued from Page 1

"I can confirm that... the security operation at Dusit complex is over and all the terrorists eliminated," Kenyatta said in a televised address to the nation early yesterday. "As of this moment, we have confirmation that 14 innocent lives were lost to the... terrorists, with others injured." The Kenyan Red Cross said "at least 30" wounded had been admitted to hospital.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolences to Kenyatta over the attack. Praying for Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon the dead and wishing a speedy recovery for the wounded, HH the Amir expressed Kuwait's utmost condemnation for the ever unjustified terrorism in all its forms. 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 cables to Kenyatta.

George Kinoti, the director of criminal investigations, told AFP that "two principal suspects" had been arrested. One was arrested in the suburb of Eastleigh and the other in Ruaka, northwest of Nairobi, where officers raided a house where one of the attackers lived, he said. "One of the men was identified by locals, who called police, and they have confirmed that he lived there with his wife," a police source said on condition of anonymity.

CCTV footage broadcast on local media showed four black-clad, heavily armed men entering the complex on Tuesday afternoon. A suicide bomb blast signalled the start of the attack. A police source said two attackers were shot dead yesterday morning after a prolonged shootout. "The two have red bandanas tied around their forehead and bullets strapped around their chest with several magazines each," the senior police officer said. "Each had an AK47 which has been secured."

The attack began at about 3 pm (1200 GMT) on Tuesday, with a loud blast followed by gunfire and rapid calls for help spreading on Twitter. Boinnet earlier said the attack began with an explosion targeting three cars in the parking lot and a suicide bombing in the hotel foyer.

Police sources and a mortuary official had previously reported 15 dead. Among the dead was an American citizen, identified by his family as Jason Spindler, whose brother said on Facebook that he had been a survivor of the Sept 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

The British Foreign Office confirmed the death of a British-South African dual national and said another British person was injured. A mortuary official said there were also 11 Kenyan victims, one with no papers. The morgue was also holding an unidentified torso of a male adult, he said. It was a tormented night for families of those trapped as they waited outside the hotel while sporadic gunfire rang out. After dawn, explosions and shooting intensified until the complex was secured mid-morning.

In downtown Nairobi, dozens of people lined up to give blood at a memorial for the US Embassy destroyed in an Al-Qaeda attack in 1998 in which 213 people died. As the first explosion and gunfire rang out in the leafy Westlands suburb, hundreds of terrified office workers barricaded themselves in the complex while others fled. Distraught family members arrived at a nearby mortuary yesterday, where they said they had not been permitted to view the bodies.

"My sister is not in any of the hospitals and the last time we spoke she was a bit calm but suddenly she started crying and shouting and I could hear gunshots and her phone remained on but she wasn't speaking," said a woman who gave her name as Njoki. "We have no doubt her body is here. Let them allow us in", she said, weeping. Francis Magutu, 35, said he had been at the morgue since 6 am. "I am almost certain that my in-law is dead, but I want us to see his body, because we want to be certain."

The attack sparked a wave of outrage abroad, from UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and African Union chief Moussa Faki to the European Union. At home, an editorial in the Daily Nation newspaper said the attack was a stark reminder that Kenya's security challenges were far from over. The last major attack in the country took place in 2015, when Shabaab killed 148 people at the university in Garissa, eastern Kenya. Since then sporadic attacks have targeted security forces mostly in the remote northeastern parts of the country. "Just when we thought that things were calm, the gangs unleashed mayhem. For Kenyans the chilling reality is that the attacks are not ceasing," read the editorial. — Agencies



## Sports

# Federer and Nadal stay on track as Sharapova sets up Wozniacki clash

## Consistent Kerber blasts into Aussie Open third round

MELBOURNE: Roger Federer ground out a tough three-set win to make the Australian Open third round for an incredible 20th straight year yesterday, with long-time rival Rafael Nadal also safely through in his drive towards an 18th Grand Slam title.

Women's defending champion Caroline Wozniacki also progressed to set up a mouth-watering clash next with in-form former world number one Maria Sharapova. But it was curtains for South African Kevin Anderson, who slumped out to young American Frances Tiafoe and became the highest seed, at five, to be sent packing so far.

On an overcast day at Melbourne Park, second seed Angelique Kerber, the 2016 winner, and former US Open champion Sloane Stephens joined the big guns in round three, but the women's side also saw a top 10 player crash.

Ninth seed Kiki Bertens, who raced through the rankings last year after winning three titles, was whipped in three sets by Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova. Federer might be 37 but he's not showing his age, with British qualifier Dan Evans the latest to fall under his spell as he works towards a third successive Australian crown and 21st major victory.

He defeated Evans at Wimbledon last year with the loss of just eight games, but it was a much harder assignment this time, winning 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/3), 6-3 on Rod Laver Arena. "I think if I could have pulled away earlier in the match it might have been easier," said the third seed. "I think he played very well, it was hard to pull away to his credit."

The Swiss star's Australian achievements so far put him on a par with other six-time winners Novak Djokovic and Roy Emerson-although the Australian great's victories all came before the Open era.

He next plays American Taylor Fritz. If he goes on to

win the tournament, he will become the first man ever to claim seven or more titles at two Grand Slams, having already won eight Wimbledon.

Nadal had an easier route to round three, outclassing local hope Matthew Ebden 6-3, 6-2, 6-2. The Spaniard is bidding for his own slice of history by becoming the first man in the Open era, and only the third in history along with Emerson and Rod Laver, to win each Grand Slam on two or more occasions.

"I played a solid match, I was happy with the way I served. I did a few things very well," said Nadal, who next plays Australian Alex de Minaur. "It is an honour to play here. Was a great atmosphere."

Anderson, beaten by Novak Djokovic in the Wimbledon final last year, was sent home by Tiafoe 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, 7-5. The fifth seed struggled with an elbow injury early in the clash and couldn't cope with the 20-year-old's power and finesse.

### COLLISION COURSE

Sixth seed Marin Cilic, who lost in the final to Federer last year, had no such dramas, grinding past American Mackenzie McDonald in four sets and next plays Spanish 26th seed Fernando Verdasco.

Dane Wozniacki, who is battling rheumatoid arthritis, steamrolled Sweden's Johanna Larsson 6-1, 6-3 as she bids to become the first woman to defend the title since Victoria Azarenka in 2013.

It set up a tough clash with five-time Grand Slam champion Sharapova, who blitzed past Sweden's Rebecca Peterson 6-2, 6-1. The Russian is in scintillating form and has dropped just three games in her opening two matches.

"I'm really happy with the way I performed," said Sharapova, adding that she was looking forward to the Wozniacki showdown. "It's a tough third round but I



MELBOURNE: Russia's Maria Sharapova serves to Sweden's Rebecca Peterson during their women's singles match on day three of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne yesterday. —AFP

have set up the challenge and I'm ready to go out there and take it."

Meanwhile, three-time Grand Slam champion Kerber dominated Brazilian qualifier Beatriz Haddad Maia 6-2, 6-3 to stay on a collision course with

Stephens in the quarter-finals. Stephens, who endured a horror run at Melbourne Park since reaching the semi-final in 2013, exiting in the first round in 2015, 2016 and 2018, swatted aside former doubles partner Tímea Babos 6-3, 6-1. — AFP

## Murray can still come back, says hip-hop star Bryan

MELBOURNE: American doubles legend Bob Bryan gave Andy Murray a ray of hope yesterday, saying he believes the former world number one could make a comeback after major hip surgery.

"I personally think he can do it," said Bryan, who was talking after enjoying a winning comeback in his first Grand Slam doubles since undergoing his own hip replacement surgery last summer.

Murray bowed out of the Australian Open on Monday for potentially the last time after saying his hip pain was too much to bear. Earlier he had declared he would call it a day on his storied career after Wimbledon, if he got that far.

"Look, I'm happy to be back," said the 40-year-old Bryan. "I got a metal hip. There was no guarantees I was going to make it back. Going in to get a metal hip implant, there's no one that's come back from that in tennis. I'm happy it's feeling good."

Bryan said Murray, 31, had explored every conceivable avenue trying to find a solution to his chronic hip pain. "I just represent an option for him," he said. "That

guy does everything you can possibly do as far as training and rehab.

"He's talked to a million specialists. But I'm really the only guy to be playing on tour with a metal hip." An emotional Murray opened up about the personal agony of his battered right hip after losing an epic Australian Open five-setter to Roberto Bautista Agut two days earlier. The three-time Grand Slam champion said he hates even simple things like walking his dogs because the pain is so bad.

### FULL METAL PACKET

Murray faces a heart-wrenching dilemma-battle through the pain for an emotional farewell at Wimbledon or undergo major surgery in the next week or so knowing it may mean he can never play tennis again. Bryan gave his view of what Murray might expect under the scalpel and rehab. "It's called a hip resurfacing with an artificial implant," explained Bryan. "It's a full replacement. Has the bar that goes all the way down the femur. I was on crutches a couple days later. I was at the US Open (in September) three weeks after surgery with a cane. We started our training December 5 hitting some balls pretty hard, playing some sets," he revealed.

"Look, I'm showing that it can be done in doubles, but no one's ever come back with this surgery on the singles court," cautioned the holder of a record 16 Grand Slam men's doubles titles alongside brother Mike. "I think he's going to have the surgery. He's probably going to just rehab it as best he can. If he sees



MELBOURNE: File photo shows Britain's Andy Murray waves to supporters after his defeat against Spain's Roberto Bautista Agut during their men's singles match on day one of the Australian Open tennis tournament in Melbourne on January 14, 2019. —AFP

there's a chance to come back, you know... "I personally think he can do it. But, you know, there's no evidence that it's possible in tennis. I mean, so much wear and tear. But I think he could do it." —AFP

## Tsonga walks down memory lane before facing Djokovic

MELBOURNE: Jo-Wilfried Tsonga says the good memories are flooding back as he prepares to take on Novak Djokovic today in a blockbuster Australian Open second-round clash—a rematch of their 2008 final.

Eleven years on he recalls his breakthrough Grand Slam fondly—ranked 38 he beat ninth seed Andy Murray in the first round and romped past number two Rafael Nadal in straight sets in the semi-final, gaining a huge band of new fans along the way.

Djokovic won the decider for his maiden major title but it doesn't detract from Tsonga's memories. "It was great. The stadium was full. A lot of Serbians of course, but also a lot of French and a lot of Australians," Tsonga recalled.

"That was a good final, so I have good memories. Of course for me, it was disappointing to lose. But anyway, it was good memories." It is surprising that the Frenchman has never won a Grand Slam or even reached another major final, given a career that has gleaned 16 ATP Tour titles, a number five world ranking and more than \$21 million in prize money.

"When you come from nowhere, nobody expects you to play that good and everybody's cheering for you. You're new," he said on the ATP website of the 2008 clash, but added that expectations quickly changed.

"All the people say: 'OK, now you're the best or one of the best', and you have to be the best all the time, which is not easy to deal with, of course."

### 'I'M BACK IN 2008'

Tsonga is on the comeback trail after missing seven months of the 2018 season following left knee surgery and seeing his ranking plummet outside the top 200. "It's not very easy because you have to test your mind. You have to really know if you still want to play and make the effort to come back at the best level," said Tsonga, who defeated Slovakia's Martin Klizan in straight sets in the first round.

Now as he climbs back up the rankings he finds himself back where it all began 11 years ago, and will Thursday play Djokovic for the 22nd time since that first clash on Rod Laver Arena.

He has defeated the Serbian number one on six occasions since, including a revenge win in the 2010 Australian Open quarter-finals. "Today it's like I'm back in 2007, 2008. People expect less from me," Tsonga said.

"It's also something good for me. I work on my side and I try to come back and be better on court and I hope I will be able to do good things again." Djokovic had his own issues in 2018, needing elbow surgery, before winning Wimbledon and the US Open to climb back to number one.

"It's funny. I mean, 11 years after our first Grand Slam final here, it feels like a lot has happened for both of us," said Djokovic after beating American qualifier Mitchell Krueger. "He also struggled with injuries lately. It's good to see him playing well. It's good to see him back." — AFP

## FedEx fails to deliver under Serena's spell

MELBOURNE: Roger Federer might be one of the greatest players ever, but even he was bowled over by Serena Williams when they played mixed-doubles at the recent Hopman Cup. The Swiss star admitted he was flustered when serving to the American 23-time Grand Slam winner, saying she had an "aura". "It was a wonderful atmosphere (playing against Serena), one I'd been looking forward for some time," he said after moving into the Australian Open third round. "I had a bad serve percentage against her ... it must have had something to do with Serena's aura. I'm not kidding. She's a wonderful player. But we won in the end so I was happy about that, too!"

### STAR POWER

Young American Frances Tiafoe stated the obvious when asked what it was like when he had the opportunity to play with Serena Williams at the Hopman Cup. "I mean, off the court, she's so chilled and relaxed. Once she gets on, she hates losing. It's unacceptable," he said of the 23-time Grand Slam champion after making the Australian Open third round. Tiafoe is only 20 years old and said it was nerve-wracking when he first teamed up with perhaps the greatest women's player ever. "I was about as nervous as could be. But I think we grew a pretty good relationship."

### FOOT FAULT

Fifth seed Sloane Stephens showed some nifty footwork winning through to the third round but was less sure of herself when stepping off court after her match. The American walked the wrong way from Rod Laver Arena then had to retrace her steps as the centre court crowd looked on. "I thought I was going the right way and was like 'OK bye, see you tomorrow', and nah, that was the wrong way," said the former US Open winner, who reached the semi-finals at Melbourne Park in 2013. —AFP



Winter Sports Club board

## Winter Games Club looking forward to have new integrated sports skating rinks

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Winter Games Club Fuhaid Al-Ajmi said the board of directors is looking forward to have new integrated sports skating rinks in Bayan in the

coming period so it can be used for training its teams. He said this pioneer move will take the sports to broader horizons as the number of players will increase due to the existence of the rink. Al-Ajmi who spoke on the occasion of the general assembly's renewal of their confidence of his list (the founders) to lead the club for the next four years, and said the club made a major achievement in preparing those who play winter sports of both genders of various ages, adding that the sports teams of the club made many achievements regionally and continentally.

He thanked the general assembly for backing his list that worked on developing the club and its players.

The list includes: Khalid Al-Mutairi - Vice president, Mishal Falaitheh - Secretary, Ahmad Al-Amran - Treasurer, Mubarak Al-Omani - Assistant Secretary, Mohsen Al-Maseb - Assistant treasurer and Abdallah Yaqoub member.





**25** Federer and Nadal stay on track as Sharapova sets up Wozniacki clash

**26** Warriors set NBA record with 51-point first quarter

**27** Newcastle survive Blackburn scare, Wednesday earn Chelsea clash



## Iran, Iraq draw at Asian Cup

Proud Son sparks Koreans to win over China, Philippines crashes out



DUBAI: Iran's defender Roozbeh Cheshmi (top) fights for the ball against Iraq's midfielder Ahmed Yasin during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup group D football match between Iran and Iraq at the Maktoum Stadium in Dubai yesterday. — AFP

**DUBAI:** Iran claimed bragging rights over arch-rivals Iraq yesterday as they finished top of their Asian Cup group after an engrossing but goalless draw at a packed Al Maktoum Stadium in Dubai.

The latest instalment in one of football's great rivalries failed to live up to their classic 2015 quarter-final, won by Iraq on penalties, as a raw and uncompromising first half gave way to a more measured second period.

It meant that Iran, Carlos Queiroz's three-time winners, finished top of Group D on goal difference after their 5-0 thrashing of Yemen and 2-0 win over Vietnam. Iran welcomed back Brighton's Alireza Jahanbakhsh, last season's Eredivisie top-scorer, from injury as they set about going unbeaten for a 20th straight game at the group stage.

And in a physical first half in front of a deafening crowd, Iran, Asia's top-ranked side, were largely on top but couldn't make their advantage count.

As the challenges flew in, Jahanbakhsh and Iraq's Safaa Hadi both wiped away blood, and Iranian midfielder Saman Ghoddos was lucky not to see red for a stamp. Iran's Sardar Azmoun came close with a header, Ghoddos saw a powerful drive deflected away and Jahanbakhsh fizzed one over on the rebound. Iran also strongly claimed a penalty when Hadi handled accidentally.

At the other end, Ahmed Yasin's low shot was just off target and 18-year-old forward Mohamad Ali, scorer of a brilliant solo goal against Yemen, glanced a header wide.

Jahanbakhsh withdrew just after the hour mark and Iraq's Ali followed shortly afterwards, following a final attempt which the teenager drove straight down the throat of goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand.

It looked like both sides were happy to settle for a draw before Iraq's Humam Tariq swung a cross to substitute forward Alaa Abbas, whose header was acrobatically palmed away by Beiranvand. However, clear-cut chances were scant in the second half as the former war-time foes saved their energies for the bigger challenges to come in the knockout phase.

Earlier, an effervescent Son Heung-min inspired title-chasing South Korea to a comfortable 2-0 victory over China yesterday to finish top of their Asian Cup group. Hwang Ui-jo and Kim Min-jae were on target as the Koreans, boosted by the arrival of their talisman, ran China ragged in Abu Dhabi.

Son won the penalty converted by Hwang and fizzed in the assist for Kim to help South Korea finish top of Group C with a perfect nine points as they look to end 59 years of Asian Cup hurt. "Of course I'm a bit tired-I didn't

expect to play for so long," Korean captain Son told AFP after completing 87 minutes despite a punishing run of 13 games for Tottenham since the start of December.

"But it's an honour to wear this red shirt and play for the national team. My first game of the tournament, clean sheet, 2-0 — it's a happy afternoon!" Marcello Lippi's China finished as group runners-up having likewise already sealed their place in the last 16 by winning their first two matches.

Spurs forward Son, who played in the London club's 1-0 defeat by Manchester United three days ago, showed quick feet to tempt China defender Shi Ke into a rash challenge 12 minutes. Hwang calmly tucked away the spot-kick to send thousands of Korean 'Red Devils' fans wild at the compact Al Nahyan Stadium.

South Korea, who beat Asian Cup first-timers Philippines and Kyrgyzstan 1-0 in their opening two games, went for the jugular. A Hwang Hee-chan rocket forced China goalkeeper Yan Junling into a fingertip save before Hwang Ui-jo curled an effort against the post.

The Koreans, joint title favourites with Iran, doubled their lead six minutes after the break when Son's corner was met by Kim's thumping header.

But the addition of the mercurial Son has clearly ener-

gised the Taeguk Warriors, who suddenly look a very different proposition. "We are very satisfied with the effort that Son made," said South Korea coach Paulo Bento, who is yet to learn the identity of his team's last-16 opponents.

"What's important in this moment for Son and the rest of the team is to enjoy this result and then go again." China, Asian Cup runners-up in 1984 and 2004, began the competition by edging Kyrgyzstan 2-1 and overpowering the Philippines 3-0.

But they were no match for South Korea and were lucky not to concede further goals in a lop-sided game. "Let's be honest, the Korean team is much stronger than us—they're faster, technically superior and play with greater intensity," shrugged Lippi, whose side face Thailand in the last 16.

"They are one of the favourites to win the tournament—we have to accept that and focus on our next challenge."

Elsewhere in Group C, a Vitalij Lux hat-trick sent Sven-Goran Eriksson's Philippines crashing out and gave Kyrgyzstan hope of progressing as one of the best third-placed teams in a 3-1 victory. German-based Lux struck once in the first half and twice in the second in Dubai before the Philippines grabbed a consolation goal through Stephan Schrock with 10 minutes to go. — AFP

## Japan's only homegrown sumo champ bows out in tears

**TOKYO:** The only Japanese-born grand champion or "yokozuna" in sumo tearfully insisted he had "no regrets" as he announced his retirement yesterday after a disastrous run of form and injury. Kisenosato, the first Japanese-born wrestler to reach the heights of yokozuna since 1998, decided to throw in the towel after three straight losses in the New Year "basho" or tournament. "I feel that I did everything I could," he said, with tears running down his cheek. "I was supported by so many people... I have nothing

but gratitude," he said. With the retirement of the 32-year-old, there will only be two fighters left in the top rank of the ancient sport—Hakuho and Kakuryu, both Mongolians. Top government spokesman Yoshihide Suga described the retirement as "very regrettable." "It's sad," he told reporters at a regular briefing. "I think he captivated many fans as the first Japanese-born yokozuna in 19 years," he added.

Kisenosato won promotion to yokozuna in March 2017, much to the delight of fans eager to see a home-grown champion. He had a promising start, winning his first basho as a yokozuna, but suffered a chest injury that forced him to miss eight consecutive tournaments. He managed to win the autumn tournament last year but was again forced to retire in the basho after that following four consecutive losses. This prompted officials to voice disappointment with his performance, sparking speculation that he needed good results in the New

Year tournament to retain his top-ranked status.

Local wrestlers have been unable to repel a flood of foreigners who have dominated in recent years. The overseas invasion began in earnest with Hawaiian behemoth Konishiki, who was nicknamed "Dump Truck" and tipped the scales at a whopping 285 kilos (628 pounds), and other hulking Pacific islanders in the 1990s.

The subsequent rise of the Mongolians has tormented sumo traditionalists in the absence of a Japanese challenge. Sumo has also been rocked by a series of scandals in recent years, including the 2017 resignation of yokozuna Harumafuji after a brutal assault on a rival wrestler while out drinking.

In 2018, the sport drew accusations of sexism over a long-standing prohibition on women entering the "dohyo" or dirt rings where sumo is practised. The rings are viewed as sacred in the Shinto faith and women—considered to be ritually unclean—are not allowed to enter them. — AFP



TOKYO: Japan's sumo grand champion or "yokozuna" Kisenosato reacts after announcing his retirement at Ryogoku Kokugikan stadium in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP