

Friday Times

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Local

Harassment unpunished



Local Spotlight

By Muna Al-Fuzai

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In the first week of January, Kuwait Times published an important report about harassment in Kuwait. I would first like to thank my colleague Ben Garcia for addressing such a sensitive topic. I read the whole report and felt that there are some points that I need to address today and add my view on the subject as a woman and a Kuwaiti citizen.

I believe that the issue of harassment is kept under silence or not spoken about publicly due to the fact that usually the victim - who is most often a woman or a child - feels ashamed, scared and shocked about what happened to them. So they tend to avoid talking about it and think it will never happen to them again or no one would believe them, especially in the case of rape, and if the rapist is a relative or someone they know from school or work.

According to Ahmed Al-Mutairi, a Kuwaiti lawyer, "rape or sexual harassment cases are mostly unreported, and reported cases don't actually reach to the level of courts because victims consider it shameful or an attack to their dignity/honor." I personally feel that not reporting these crimes is more harmful than reporting them. I believe that not talking about the crime will not hide it and it might happen again, leading the victim to be harmed more, while the rapist will be free to commit the same crime with a new victim, if not the same. The damage will fall on the victim only.

Another issue here is the lack of support by the civil society - we don't have support groups like the West to help those who are abused or raped, for example, to move on with their lives and regain people's trust by not allowing one crazy person or a bad incident to damage their lives. Also, I think the problem in cases of sexual harassment and rape is that the victim is always made to feel that they motivated and provoked the criminal to attack them. A lack of sympathy and understanding is shown.

If the victim is a woman, she may be accused of not being conservative in her clothes, and in case the victim is a child, parents are blamed for not paying enough attention to their kid, because of which they were attacked by a maniac. Eventually, everyone gets blamed, but no one utters a word against the rapist, except that he was offered the right situation! This is unfair and completely unjust, but this is the reality.

About the right situation, let us suppose a woman is raped by a relative, like a brother or father or family friend, whom she trusts; of course she will not be covered in black while dealing with them. Naturally, she will have confidence in her blood relatives. He will only choose the right moment when the woman is alone to attack her. I can't understand how and why she must take the blame! If the victim is a child, then I assume a child normally has full trust in his family circle and the places they may go to daily, like a supermarket and school for example. So there is no way they can encourage a sex maniac to attack them.

Parents usually get enraged when they hear that their child has been raped, and barrage the child with questions about all the details as if they are the guilty one. They don't seek help from specialists like psychologists, and questions by the police can add to the pressure. So I understand the child's reaction to not say a word, especially if they are threatened with harm if they say anything to their parents. In the end, only the child will be harmed all their life.

I know that going to court will not be the end to all sex maniacs around the world, but stopping a criminal will mean that his crime will not go unpunished, and he will not be allowed to do it again or against a new person. It also sends a warning that society will not accept such crimes. The case sometimes takes years for a final court verdict. This may seem a long time for the victim, but saying nothing or accepting financial compensation will most likely mean that the rapist will be free and no one is safe. I refuse any kind of monetary compensation because the harm is already done and no money in the world will make the victim become normal like before.



KUWAIT: A woman takes a picture of a statue depicting 'Hemarat Al-Gayla' by Kuwaiti artist Bader Al-Mansour at a gallery in Kuwait City on January 14, 2019. 'Hemarat Al-Gayla' (afternoon's donkey) is a mythical creature from the Kuwaiti folklore, said to follow children who leave their houses alone during the day. Fearing for their safety, parents used this creature's story to intimidate their children against going outside especially during the blazing-hot summer afternoons when streets used to be almost empty. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait's favorite historical folktales

By Sarah Al-Mukhaizeem

Kuwait's cultural heritage has its share, as in numerous other societies, of mythical folk tales with often frightening central characters that were resorted to in the past by parents to induce the children to comply with parental requests to do certain chores. In the main, parents used these mythical characters, some having human traits, others mostly supernatural, to coax the children to go to sleep at bedtime or to stay home and not go outside to play at certain hours of the day which the parents deemed inappropriate.

Overall these characters were routinely relied on by Kuwaiti adults in the past in spicing up what may be described as spooky camp-fire tales to attract children's attention to these tales. On this subject, Professor of Anthropology at Kuwait University Dr. Mohammad Al-Haddad indicated in an interview that mythical folk tales and mythical boogeymen that deal with the supernatural are very much part-and-parcel of a nation's culture handed down from one generation to another.

Why did adults in Kuwait's past tell their children stories with mythical characters that were beastly and terrifying? Dr. Al-Haddad said it was all done to scare the children into complying to their parents' orders, mainly, not to go outside to play at high noon when the temperature in Kuwait was unbearably sizzling hot and could be a source of danger to children exposed to it. Basically it was the fear of a sunstroke that made the parents tell these awful stories to their offspring to dissuade them from playing outside the house, he said.

The vast majority of the boogeymen in Kuwaiti mythological tales for children were male, the most notorious of them being one known in the Kuwaiti dialect as the "Tantal," a tall black man, of three meters in height, with disheveled hair whose footsteps were audibly heavy. He would roam around in the dead of night, holding a large staff or cane which he would use to strike his victims with. Tantal was sometimes not seen at night because he opted to wander in the night as a ghost, looking to kidnap children. "The mythical character of Tantal has vanished from today's culture, yet the name itself is still used in the Kuwaiti dialect to refer to a man of great height or a woman for that matter," said Dr. Al-Haddad.

Another such mythical character in old Kuwait lore is that of Al-Seolu, which he said was referred to by the Kuwaiti historian Yousef Al-Qenaie in his book "Pages from the History of Kuwait." In it, Al-Seolu is described as a Nubian slave, tall with elongated teeth who kidnaps children and cannibalizes them. In 1910, a lot of people in Kuwait became terrified of Al-Seolu because a little boy drowned by the seashore and was never found again, leading people to believe that he had been eaten by the Al-Seolu, said Dr. Al-Haddad.

Not all mythical characters in Kuwaiti folklore are of evil nature, he said, noting that the character of "Sehaila Um Al-Khalajeen" was thought of as a homeless woman who rummaged in the garbage to salvage old rags which she would hastily retail to fit her physique. The result was often that the clothes were way too big for her and dragged on the ground behind her, making her look unseemly and repugnant.

Another not so evil character is that of Um Al-Sa'af Wa-Alleef, who is a grotesque looking woman, totally unkempt, who can fly using a palm frond, said Kuwaiti heritage researcher Hani Al-Asousi.

A character who is a hybrid human and animal, having the frightening countenance of an old woman and the feet of a donkey is named "Hemarat Al-Gayla" (literally meaning a high noon donkey) who parents referred to in order to scare the children with when they were ornery, he said. "Al-Duaidea" is a mythological character that made a person see a burning cinder that mysteriously changed its location when approached to be picked up, he said. A marine character, called "Bu Darya" was well known by sailors who thought of it as a half-human half-fish creature that roamed the high seas, shrieking in the middle of the night in the guise of someone drowning. When approached for rescue, the creature would grab the rescuer and drown him unceremoniously, said Al-Asousi. He further said all these myths and folk tales and mythical characters spread around the society at a time when illiteracy and ignorance prevailed. With the advent of modern times and the ubiquity of education these old wives' tales have fully receded and children can now go to sleep without being prodded with the tale of a terrifying ogre. — Shared from KUNA archives

Kuwait Times

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Photo Feature

The temporary lakes of Kuwait

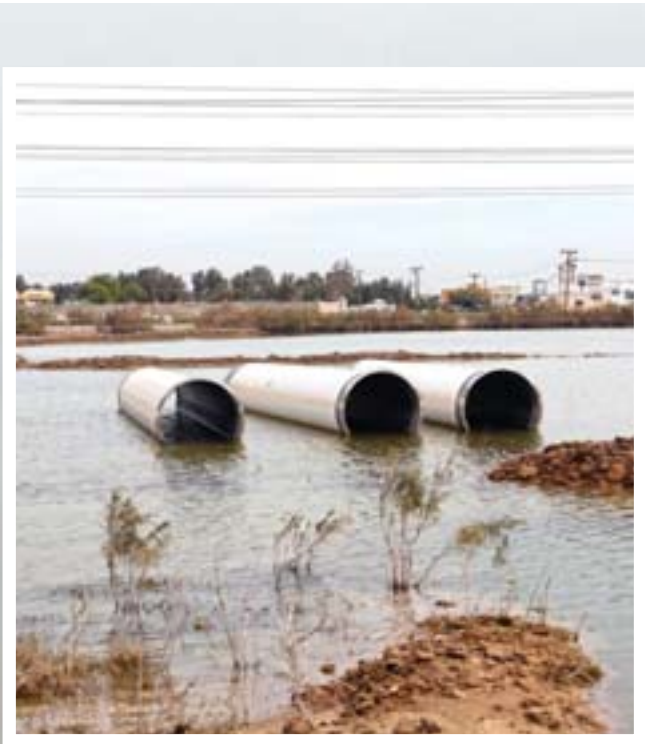


Vast swathes of Kuwait's desert have been swamped with temporary 'lakes' following the heavy rains of November last year. Two months later. Much of the desert is covered with a 'hard-pan calcareous layer (locally called gatch)' that does prevents the absorption of water. As a consequence, many of these lakes will likely remain until warmer temperatures and evaporation pulls out the water.

Examples of these temporary lakes can be found in the far desert areas, near Nuwaiseeb border area, along the road to Wafra and other places. Though some people have set up camps near these bodies of water, they should be viewed with caution as stagnant water can become a breeding ground for mosquitos, parasites and bacteria.

— Photos by Joseph Shagra

Local



Local

Kuwait a treasure trove of recycling opportunities



Artist Romano Roman



By Ben Garcia

One fine day I stumbled upon a colorful pot near a trash bin in Jabriya. It was dumped beside a black bag near a gated home opposite the police station. I noticed it was filthy but colorful, and looked elegant and classy. It was quite attractive to be ignored. I stopped my car near the garbage bin and inspected the vase. It was indeed beautiful and undamaged, so I decided to take it. After arriving home, I immediately took the vase to the bathroom and cleaned it. A few minutes of washing and some polishing revealed the real beauty of the pot!

Welcome to the world of recycling, where outdated household items are reused instead of throwing them away. Kuwait is undoubtedly the best place for recycling products, as it has a place for them - the famous Friday Market in Rai. This market is frequented by customers from all walks of life. You can see various types of used products - from carpets to televisions to washing machines, fridges and gas ranges to shoes and old clothing. If I hadn't taken the pot in Jabriya, it would've surely ended up at the Friday Market.

In Kuwait, you can notice several trucks roaming around the neighborhood picking up household items that are kept to be recycled or thrown in dumpsters by their owners. Just a few weeks ago, I took a beautiful sofa and reused it. These discarded items are usually taken by cleaners and sold at the Friday Market after some washing, polishing and repairs. At the Friday Market, you can literally get whatever you want - you only need to spend a bit of your precious time surfing the sea of old items at the market. The Friday Market is open Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Kuwait Times spoke to some collectors who frequent the market or take stuff from the garbage to use or sell. "If you visit our house, you will see lots of household items I collected from the trash. I also visit the Friday Market occasionally to buy good stuff. I collect things that I like and send them to the Philippines. I particularly search for antique products. Sometimes I take something from the trash and turn it into a beautiful work of art," said Romano Roman, a Filipino artist.

"Honestly, I love collecting old items wherever I go. When I get something, in my mind I have already decided exactly how it will look like when I turn it into a piece of art. I sell some of them,



Recycled planter

but many are just given to my friends," he said.

A Sri Lankan man who lives in Omariya admitted to buying most appliances at his home from the Friday Market. "Most of the heavy furniture in my house is from the garbage bin nearby. I have a car, so I can easily pick up discarded products and recycle them. From the bed to clothing, cabinets, sofas and the refrigerator and washing machine, I took them all either from the Friday Market or from the nearby trash. My principle in life is if it can still be used, don't throw it away. If it needs a bit of repair, I can do it. I usually send to my neighbors in Sri Lanka some of the things I have bought from the Friday Market," he told Kuwait Times.

There are some active recycling groups in Kuwait that will collect your old household items and take them to their recycling area. They normally exchange them with trash bags or containers that allow you to separate paper, plastic and metal. Some recycling groups are even willing to buy used items and then resell them.



Local

Temperatures to plunge at weekend

KUWAIT: Official at Kuwait Meteorological Department Yasser Al-Bolushi said that a gradual improvement in weather conditions is expected, with a significant decline in temperature. Speaking to KUNA, Bolushi said yesterday's weather was affected by strong northwesterly wind exceeding 70 kilometers per hour, causing rising dust and a decrease in horizontal visibility to less than 1,000 m, with sea waves exceeding seven feet. Maximum temperatures were between 14 to 18 degrees Celsius.

Yesterday night, the weather was very cold with light to moderate northwesterly wind with speeds of 15-40 km/h, he added. Today, the weather will be cold by day and very cold at night, with light to moderate northwesterly wind with speeds of 15-35 km/h, and expected temperature is between 15-8

degrees Celsius. Tomorrow will be very cold, especially at night, with moderate northwesterly wind with a velocity of 12 to 35 km/h and temperatures between 16 to zero degrees Celsius, with a chance of frost in some areas.

Maritime operations were stopped at Shuwaikh, Doha, Shuaiba seaports due to the abnormal weather, the Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) said yesterday. KPA said in a statement that operations were suspended at 08:00 am local time. But operations at Kuwait International Airport are still normal despite the dust storm hitting the country, said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) yesterday. Head of aviation at the DGCA Emad Al-Sanousi told KUNA that flights continue to operate at the airport. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A dust storm hit Kuwait yesterday, with northwesterly winds of 70 km per hour and visibility of less than 1,000 m. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Cases against writer shelved

By A Saleh & Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The public prosecution yesterday decided shelving cases filed by local lawyers against media figure Fajr Al-Saeed over her call to normalize relations with the Zionist entity. Commenting on the decision, Saeed tweeted that the complaints filed against her by some lawyers over her new year wish to normalize relations with Israel were shelved over lack of jurisdiction.

Call to shift embassies

Municipal Council member Hamad Al-Medlej urged the foreign ministry to remove all embassies from residential areas inhabited by citizens to avoid what he described as "violation of privacy". "How long do we have to put up with such violations, starting with bachelors and now embassies," he demanded, referring to a recent demonstration by some Bangladeshi workers outside their country's embassy in Khaldiya.

Dead newborn found in trash

The body of a newborn baby was found near a garbage container in Farwaniya. Security sources said the body was referred to forensics to determine the cause of death - whether the baby had died of the severe cold, was still-born or had been killed. Security sources added that detectives will use the surveillance cameras in the neighborhood in an attempt to identify the culprits.

Worshipper dies

A 67-year-old bedoon collapsed during ablution before Isha prayer at a mosque in Doha, said security sources, noting that on arriving at the scene, paramedics found the man had died due to a stroke.

Cig smuggling foiled

Nuwiseeb customs inspectors foiled an attempt to smuggle 300 packs of cigarettes into Saudi Arabia. Security sources said the driver was arrested and the vehicle was impounded pending further investigations.

MoH ready for dust-related emergency cases

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Health ministry's assistant undersecretary for allied medical services Dr Fawwaz Al-Refae announced that hospitals and clinics are ready to receive all emergency cases of people affected by the dust storm in Kuwait. He stressed that MoH's medical services' technical staff and ambulances are available to handle urgent cases and rush them to hospital if needed. Refae also urged all citizens and expats not to hesitate in calling the emergency hotline number 112 to request rescue or ambulances.

Refae said dust can be harmful to some people because it contains microbes and pollen, and accordingly recommended following precautionary measures such as not being exposed to dust unless necessary, closing all windows and doors tightly, wearing air purifying masks and changing them constantly. Refae advised people with tuberculosis to always carry their asthma sprays with them and immediately head to the nearest hospital or clinic if they suffer from severe asthma attacks.

Farwaniya residency dept opens

The interior ministry's relations and security media department said the new Farwaniya immigration department building will open on Sunday, Jan 20, 2019 in Riggae. The department added that the building has been designed to provide services using up-to-date systems that ensure facilitating all transactions for both citizens and expats.

House fire

A fire broke out on the first floor of a citizen's house in Saad Al-Abdullah, said security sources, noting that on arriving at the scene, firemen immediately evacuated the house and managed to control the fire in record time. One of the residents suffered from smoke inhalation and was treated onsite by paramedics. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress to determine the cause of the fire.

Car crashes into pylon

Three citizens were seriously injured when they lost control of their vehicle and it collided into a high-voltage pylon along Layyah road north of Kuwait City. Security sources said rescue



A vehicle that collided into a high-voltage pylon is seen.

forces from Jahra fire brigade rushed to the scene and found the driver and two passengers trapped inside the wreckage. Firemen had to use special equipment to pry open the wreckage and release the three and hand them over to paramedics to be rushed to Jahra Hospital for treatment.

Fire safety violations

The Kuwait Fire Service Directorate's public relations and media department announced that KFSD's prevention sector teams yesterday closed six facilities in Ahmadi for severe violations of safety precautions and fire prevention measures. KFSD deputy director for prevention Maj Gen Abdullah Fahd stressed that KFSD will never hesitate to impose the law on all violators in order to protect lives and property.



KFSD closes a facility in Ahmadi over safety violations.

Local

Excelling male students wind up Tajikistan trip

Female students tour Sri Lanka reservoir

DUSHANBE/KANDY: Distinguished Kuwaiti school students yesterday concluded their tour of Tajikistan that was part of the 10th trip sponsored by Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MoE). Speaking to KUNA yesterday, Head of Press at KFAED's Media Department and Trip Coordinator Ahmad Al-Sarraf said the trip succeeded in enlightening students about Tajikistan's culture.

The students were impressed by Kuwait's contribution to development projects in developing countries, especially after their meetings with Tajikistan officials and their tours of KFAED-bankrolled projects there, he added. He thanked the Foreign Ministry of Tajikistan in organizing students' tour and activities. On his part, Dr Abbas Murad, director of the Kuwaiti MoE's school activities, stressed the positive impact of the trip by familiarizing Kuwaiti students with their country's aid to developing countries.

MoE selected excellent students carefully to go on the trip, with efficient supervisors who did their best to achieve relevant objectives, he explained. MoE's Technical Advisor and Accompanying Supervisor Hamad Al-Bahwa said MoE's activities exemplified the students' knowledge of science and culture. Bahwa thanked KFAED for organizing the trip and KUNA for its daily coverage.

In a statement to KUNA the students said they were impressed by this experience. Student Yousef Al-Mutawa learned about KFAED's role in development projects that reinforced his passion for humanitarian work. Another student, Ahmad Al-Kanderi appreciated KFAED's support, saying it reflects Kuwait's interest in developing countries. The program was launched in 2010 upon an initiative by KFAED and in cooperation with MoE. Under the program, two trips are organized for two overseas countries per year for outstanding high-school students: one for 12 females and another for 12 males. The aim of KFAED's trip is to reward outstanding students and encourage them for more success and excellence.

Meanwhile, a group of distinguished Kuwaiti female students were taken on a tour of the jointly Kuwait-funded Kalu Ganga reservoir project in Sri Lanka on Wednesday. They group was briefed on the economic importance of the \$167 million project, which witnessed its official opening last week, for the welfare of some 3,000 farmers, who up until now had been suffering from a scarce supply of drinking water. KFAED has provided 35 percent of the funds needed for the project, namely \$37 million, with the other benefactors being the Saudi Fund for Development and the Sri Lankan government. In addition to the project's dam are two saddle dams along with four tunnels, which will provide water for irrigation purposes and hydroelectricity generation. —KUNA



KANDY: Distinguished Kuwaiti female students visit the Kalu Ganga reservoir on Wednesday. — KUNA

Envoy stresses role of Arabic in cementing ties

NEW DELHI: The Embassy of Kuwait yesterday held a cultural program in cooperation with the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi to deepen cultural relations through Arabic language. Delivering a keynote address at the program gathering, which was attended by JNU Vice Chancellor M Jagadesh Kumar, teaching staff, members of several diplomatic missions and students, Kuwait Ambassador Jassim Al-Naajem said language plays an important role in the cultural exchange between nations.

He applauded the historic ties between Kuwait and India and underlined that the Arabic language has played and still plays a major role in cementing cultural ties between the two nations and the larger Arab world. Underlining the importance of Arabic language in the current world, the ambassador pledged support of Kuwait for the Arabic center in the university since it is seen as a major hub of excellence and expressed hope that coming days



NEW DELHI: Kuwait Ambassador Jassim Al-Naajem presents an Arabic calligraphy memento to Jawaharlal Nehru University Vice Chancellor M Jagadesh Kumar. — KUNA

would see more cultural programs and events.

Highlighting the importance of Arabic, the ambassador said that no language in the world, except perhaps Chinese, can match Arabic in terms of the number of words. He also drew attention of the audience to the roots of Arabic language in pre-Islamic poetry and how it played an important role as the language of the Holy Quran and explained how its miraculous nature was expressed through Arabic.—KUNA



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah heads a Supreme Petroleum Council meeting. — KUNA

Premier heads SPC meeting

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah headed at Seif Palace yesterday the 121st meeting of Kuwait's Supreme Petroleum Council (SPC). Welcoming the new board, he congratulated the members on the trust bestowed on them by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to set out effective policies that would contribute to boosting the country's national resources. HH the Premier pointed out that the new council's formation comes amidst many regional and international geopolitical changes that have and would definitely and clearly impact the oil industry. Such a matter requires the council to shoulder its responsibility towards achieving aspirations of the Kuwaiti people, Sheikh Jaber told the meeting. — KUNA

Interior minister laments loss of Qatari officer

DOHA: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah extended his condolences over the passing of Qatari police officer Mohammad Al-Houti in a tragic car accident. The sentiments were conveyed during a visit by Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Nahham during a visit to the officer's family in Qatar. Houti had been a fourth year police cadet at Saad Al-Abdullah Academy for Security Sciences before falling victim to a traffic collision along Salmi Road west of Kuwait City. "The academy hails the many virtues and extreme dedication he (Al-Houti) was characterized by during his education in recent years," added Nahham. —KUNA



DOHA: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Nahham pays a visit to the deceased officer's family. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait UN envoy awarded 'Star of Jerusalem Medal'

Otaibi says honor is a tribute to Kuwait

NEWYORK: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas awarded Kuwait Representative to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi the "Star of Jerusalem Medal" in recognition of his outstanding role and diplomatic efforts to support Arab causes. In a statement to KUNA, Otaibi expressed gratitude for being honored by the Palestinian president, and conveyed greetings of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the Palestinian President.

He added that this honor is a tribute to Kuwait and its foreign policy, stressing Kuwait's keenness on supporting issues of the Arab nation. The Kuwaiti ambassador stressed the long-standing supportive stance of the Kuwaiti leaders, government and people towards the fair question of Palestine. He also stressed the importance of continuing efforts to support the Palestinian people in their cause with all available means, to establish their independent state with Jerusalem as its capital.

In this regard, Otaibi praised the high-level coordination between the Kuwaiti and Palestinian delegations in the United Nations. Moreover, the Kuwaiti diplomat congratulated the Palestinian government on the chairmanship of the Group of 77 and China, expressing Kuwait's readiness to support the brothers in Palestine during this important presidency.

For his part, Palestine ambassador to the UN Riyadh Mansour praised the "firm and clear" position of Kuwait towards the Palestinian cause. "Last year, we went through very complex and difficult circumstances, especially in the Security Council, and where Kuwait represents the Arab Group in that period. Ambassador Mansour Otaibi played an exceptional role in defending the Palestinian cause and confronting all attacks against the Palestinian cause," he said. He added that this performance gave an exceptional dimension to Kuwait during its membership in the Security Council. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas awards Kuwaiti Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi the "Star of Jerusalem Medal" in recognition of his outstanding role and diplomatic efforts. — KUNA



GENEVA: Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees meets Kuwaiti Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghuneim. — KUNA

Kuwait contributes \$5m to UNHCR to help Syrian refugees

GENEVA: Kuwait delivered yesterday \$5 million to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to cover costs of relief activities for Syrian refugees in Syria's neighboring countries. Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said in a statement to KUNA that the Kuwaiti financial contribution is of paramount importance for funding relief operations for the refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, particularly now amid harsh weather conditions.

The Kuwaiti donation will also help in coping with problems of the relocated Syrians in their country, particularly those in need for homes, Grandi added. He expressed gratitude to Kuwait, namely HH the Amir, the government and people, for this generous support for the UNHCR programs that address the refugees' needs and issues.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghuneim, Kuwait's Permanent Representative at the UN and international organizations in Geneva, said in a statement to KUNA that the grant was in line with a pledge by Kuwait to "aid the Syrian brothers and soothe their hardships", particularly now amid the biting winter cold. Hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees have taken up refuge in neighboring countries, namely Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Many of them live in tents, thus making this segment of refugees quite vulnerable to the harsh weather. —KUNA

Swiss president lauds Kuwaiti handling of regional issues

BERN: President of the Swiss Confederation Ueli Maurer lauded yesterday Kuwait's policies and handling of current regional issues. This statement came during Maurer's reception of the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Switzerland Bader Al-Tanaib at an annual reception of diplomats in the capital Bern. Maurer commended relations with Kuwait, hoping that the two countries would seek more venues of cooperation. Speaking to KUNA, Tanaib affirmed that his meeting with the president focused on ways to enhance relations on all possible domains and issues of mutual interest. — KUNA



BERN: President of the Swiss Confederation Ueli Maurer receives Kuwaiti Ambassador to Switzerland Bader Al-Tanaib. — KUNA

Kuwaiti ambassador presents credentials to Spanish king

MADRID: Iyada Al-Saeedi presented his credentials as Kuwait's non-plenipotentiary ambassador to King Felipe VI of Spain at the Royal Palace in Madrid yesterday. The newly-appointed envoy carried the greetings and warm wishes of His Highnesses the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. King Felipe, in turn, mirrored these sentiments, praising HH the Amir's role in support of Middle East stability and security and Kuwait's active contribution amid its non-permanent Security Council membership, Saeedi said. —KUNA



MADRID: Kuwaiti Ambassador Iyada Al-Saeedi presents his credentials to King Felipe VI of Spain. — KUNA

International

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 2019



Syria IS attack undermines Trump's victory claims

US shutdown after four weeks - food banks and job fairs

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LONDON: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May delivers a speech to members of the media in Downing Street in London after surviving a vote of no confidence in her government. — AFP

UK PM May reaches out to rivals

Opponents set out list of demands for cooperating

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May faces deadlock yesterday over a new Brexit plan, after narrowly surviving a no-confidence vote sparked by the crushing defeat of her EU withdrawal deal. With the clock ticking, May has appealed to opposition leaders to meet for cross-party talks before she presents an alternative proposal to parliament on Monday.

But her opponents have set out a list of demands for cooperating—including ruling out the possibility that Britain would leave the EU in March without any deal at all. The embattled leader conceded the divorce terms she struck with the EU had been roundly rejected, after MPs delivered the heaviest government defeat in parliament in modern British political history on Tuesday - 432 votes to 202.

"Now MPs have made clear what they don't want, we must all work constructively together to set out what parliament does want," May said in a televised address to the nation on Wednesday evening, after winning a no-confidence vote triggered by the opposition Labor party. She set out a schedule of cross-party talks that began immediately with meetings with the Scottish nationalist, Welsh nationalist and the pro-EU Lib-

eral Democrat leaders. "We must find solutions that are negotiable and command sufficient support in this House," she had told parliament earlier. But opposition Labor leader Jeremy Corbyn said he would only meet May if she could "remove clearly, once and for all the prospect of the catastrophe of a no-deal Brexit". May said she was "disappointed" by Corbyn's decision and stressed that "our door remains open". On Wednesday evening her spokesman said the possibility of a "no deal" was still on the table.

Ian Blackford of the Scottish National Party (SNP) said his party would only participate if she were prepared to consider delaying Brexit, ruling out a "no deal" and the option of holding a second referendum. May has flatly rejected a second vote.

Late-night talks

The prime minister is working to the tightest-possible deadline as Britain prepares to leave the bloc that for half a century defined its economic and political relations with the rest of the world. Her defeat sparked warnings from European leaders that the prospect of "no deal" had increased, with the potential for huge economic

disruption on both sides of the Channel. May must return to parliament on Monday with a Plan B that she and her team intend to negotiate with various MPs through the weekend.

Her offer to meet with the opposition "rings hollow without evidence of her readiness to compromise on the substance of Brexit", the Guardian newspaper said, pushing for a "menu of options" to be presented to parliament. Meanwhile the Daily Telegraph warned that parliament "may be planning a betrayal". "After two-and-a-half years, Plan B is to let parliament take over," the Telegraph said. "At least it is a plan; but is parliament capable of delivering on the referendum result, or is this the start of a great betrayal of that vote?"

Divorce delay?

May survived the no-confidence vote Wednesday thanks to the support of members of her Conservative Party and its Northern Irish allies in the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). But more than a third of the Conservatives and all 10 DUP members of parliament voted against her Brexit arrangements on Tuesday—each for their own reason. May will therefore tread care-

fully as she tries to win over opposition lawmakers—many of whom want to remain in the EU—while also attempting to appease more hardened Brexit-backing coalition partners.

She stuck to two key principles on Wednesday: limiting EU migration and pursuing an independent trade policy. Both points rule out Labor hopes of membership of an EU customs union or its single market. Yet she also hinted at the possibility of delaying Brexit. May said the EU would allow this "if it was clear that there was a plan that was moving toward an agreed deal".

EU officials have said extending the negotiating period could be possible until the newly elected European Parliament meets in July. On Thursday, the pound edged up against the dollar with dealers optimistic that Britain will not leave the EU without a deal in place, despite May's exit plan being thrown out by MPs.

European leaders have repeatedly said they will not reopen the draft withdrawal agreement sealed at a special Brussels summit in December. French President Emmanuel Macron suggested the EU might be willing to tweak a few minor points—but only if they did not alter the bloc's existing position on trade and borders. — AFP

International

Syria IS attack undermines Trump's victory claims

Jihadists claim responsibility for brutal attack in Syria

WASHINGTON: Just four weeks after President Donald Trump declared victory over the Islamic State group, the jihadists claimed responsibility for a brutal attack in Syria that highlighted a very different reality on the ground. Four Americans, including two troops, were among those killed when a suicide bomber hit a restaurant in the key city of Manbij in Syria's north—the deadliest attack against US forces since they first deployed in the war-torn nation four years ago.

Trump claimed on December 19 that the US and its allies had “beaten” IS, and he ordered an immediate troop withdrawal from the war-torn country. While many Americans have cheered Trump's decision, fed up after years of costly and seemingly interminable conflicts, observers said Wednesday's attack shows he was too hasty. Charles Lister, a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, said the attack demonstrated how IS can now conduct a low-level insurgency in Syria.

This is “precisely how this jihadist organization has adapted and gone back on the attack in years past,” Lister said. “Trump's order was reckless and driven far more by domestic political concerns than it was by facts on the ground.” To bolster his argument that IS had been defeated, Trump highlighted how much territory the group had lost since it declared a “caliphate” across swaths of Syria and Iraq in 2014.

But the jihadists still hold small pockets of land in

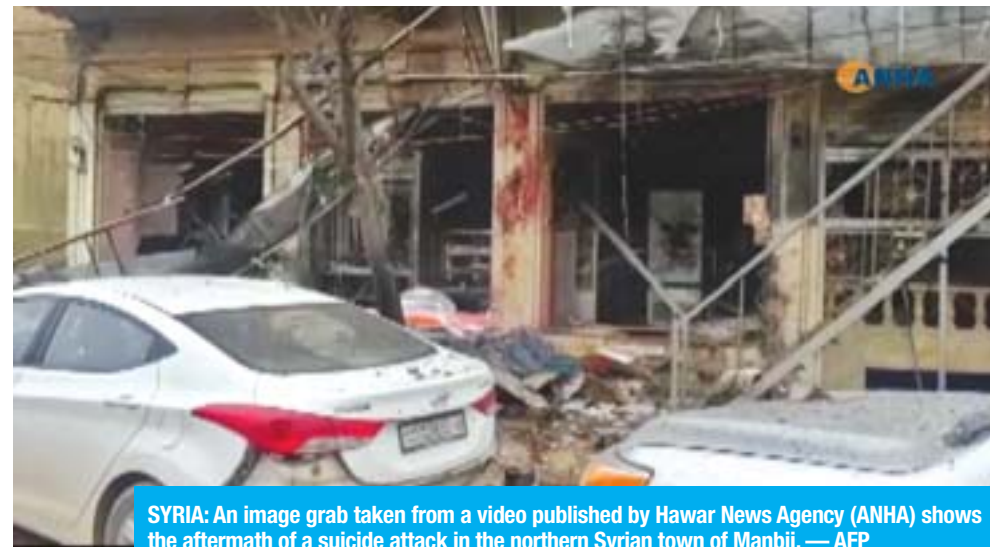
the Euphrates River Valley, and thousands of fighters are thought to remain in Syria. “To suggest ISIS is ‘defeated’ because it no longer controls territory is to fundamentally misunderstand how ISIS and similar organizations seek to operate,” Lister said, using an alternate acronym for the jihadist group.

No time to retreat

Members of Trump's own Republican Party have spoken out against his withdrawal plans, including Senator Lindsey Graham, usually a stalwart supporter. “My concern about the statements made by President Trump is that (he) had set in motion an enthusiasm by the enemy we are fighting,” Graham said. “I would hope the president would look long and hard with where he's headed in Syria. I know people are frustrated, but we are never going to be safe here unless we are willing to help people over there who will stand up against this radical ideology.”

Senator Marco Rubio, another Republican, said IS's claim for the attack serves as a “tragic reminder that ISIS not been defeated and is transforming into a dangerous insurgency.” “This is no time to retreat from the fight against ISIS. Will only embolden & strengthen them,” Rubio said on Twitter. The American president did not immediately react to the US troop deaths, but Vice President Mike Pence doubled down on Trump's declaration that IS was beaten.

“The caliphate has crumbled and ISIS has been



SYRIA: An image grab taken from a video published by Hawar News Agency (ANHA) shows the aftermath of a suicide attack in the northern Syrian town of Manbij. — AFP

defeated,” Pence said. In a statement, he later added: “We have crushed the ISIS caliphate and devastated its capabilities.” Pence added that the American people “can be assured” that the US would never allow ISIS to reestablish “their evil and murderous caliphate.” In the weeks since he gave the withdrawal order, Trump and members of his administration have delivered mixed messages

about the timeline. National Security Advisor John Bolton last week announced conditions for a withdrawal that appeared to slow it for an undetermined amount of time. Adding to the confusion, the Pentagon then said the US has already begun “the process of our deliberate withdrawal” from Syria, but stressed this was only for “non-essential” military gear—and not troops. — AFP

Iran FM says journalist arrest in US ‘tramples free speech’

TEHRAN: Iran's FM Javad Zarif called the detention of one of its journalists in the United States a “political action” that tramples on freedom of speech and demanded her immediate release. “The arrest of Marzieh Hashemi by America is an unacceptable political act that tramples on freedom of speech,” Zarif told state run Al-Alam TV on Wednesday. US-born Hashemi, who works for Iran's English-language Press TV, was arrested on arrival at St Louis Lambert International Airport on Sunday, according to family and friends cited by Press TV.

Zarif said that since Hashemi was married to an Iranian she is considered as an Iranian national and “it is our duty to defend our citizens.” “The Americans must immediately end this political game,” he added, demanding her release. Earlier on Wednesday the head of Press TV said that Hashemi had been detained with her son in the United States on unspecified charges.

“As we know the US, especially on combating terrorism, can arrest anyone with no charges and detain them for weeks. We believe legal action would not be effective for her freedom,” Payman Jabali told reporters in Tehran. “We call on the US to explain her charges,” he said. “This is a scandal for so-called US democracy.” Jabali said she may have been targeted over documentaries she made about US activities in the Middle East, Islamophobia and other issues.

The broadcaster said Hashemi, a Muslim convert who changed her name from Melanie Franklin, had been visiting “her ill brother and other family members”. Jabali said all she had been offered to eat was pork, religiously forbidden for Muslims. He said her son, Reza Hashemi, had also been arrested but was not in detention while he awaited trial. — AFP

Dutch journalist deported over alleged terror links

ISTANBUL: A Dutch journalist based in Turkey was deported yesterday a day after she was arrested on suspicion of links to a jihadist group in Syria, Turkish officials said. The officials insisted Ans Boersma's deportation was not related to her journalistic activity but that Ankara had received a tip-off from the Dutch police that she had links to Jabhat al-Nusra, a former Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria.

Boersma, a freelance journalist based in Istanbul who has contributed articles to the financial newspaper *Het Financieele Dagblad*, also said she had been expelled. “I got arrested yesterday (Wednesday), got deported this morning. Flying out now,” she said in a messaging group for foreign journalists in Turkey.

Fahrettin Altun, communications director at the Turkish presidency, confirmed her expulsion but said it was “in no way related to her journalistic activities during her stay in Turkey.” “The Turkish authorities have recently received intelligence from the Dutch police that Ms Boersma had links to a designated terrorist organisation and a request for information about her movements in and out of Turkey,” he said.

Acted on intelligence

Writing on Twitter, Altun said she was suspected of links to Jabhat al-Nusra operating in Syria. “The Netherlands told Turkey that the reporter, who was

deported today (Thursday), had links to Jabhat al-Nusra,” he wrote. “We acted on intelligence from the Netherlands and took a precautionary measure.” He said it was up to Dutch authorities to explain why they arrived at that conclusion and refused to speculate on the credibility of their intelligence.

A number of groups including the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Islamic State have carried out a spate of attacks in Turkey in recent years. “Due to the seriousness of the threat, we work closely with our friends and allies, including the Netherlands, and rely on their insights to identify and neutralize threats against Turkish and European security,” Altun said.

Until now, the Turkish authorities, with help from their international partners, have blacklisted tens of thousands of individuals with links to terrorist organizations as part of an ongoing effort to combat extremism, he added. Another Turkish official, who wished to remain anonymous, told AFP the authorities would not have issued a press card if they had had “national security concerns” about the reporter. The official said Boersma's press credentials were valid until January 31, 2019.

Human rights defenders have raised concerns over a clampdown on freedom of expression in Turkey under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, with dozens of journalists and civil society activists put behind bars. Turkey is ranked 157th out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders 2018 World Press Freedom Index.

In December, a Turkish court ordered the release from jail of an Austrian student and journalist charged with being a member of a terror group. Max Zirngast, who writes for the far-left German-language magazine *Re:volt*, had been formally arrested by an Ankara court in September. — AFP

International

Sniffer dogs, bomb experts comb through Kenya attack site

Citizens, foreign security forces take part in rescue operation

NAIROBI: Kenyan security forces yesterday resumed their search of the hotel complex attacked by Islamists with sniffer dogs and bomb experts, as information emerged about one of the attackers who killed 21 people. A police source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they were confident there were no more people trapped inside the hotel or surrounding office buildings after the 20-hour assault, during which some 700 civilians were rescued.

"We are confident that we have no more people there," the officer said, "but in a situation like this, you are not done until you are done." "We are back in with sniffer dogs and bomb experts are checking through because yesterday we found grenades left by those people." Police warned the public there may be loud controlled explosions as they continued their sweep of the hotel.

Five gunmen with the Al-Qaeda-linked Somali militant group Al-Shabaab attacked the DusitD2 hotel and office complex on Tuesday afternoon. Chilling CCTV footage showed one of the attackers lingering in front of the terrace of the Secret Garden restaurant before blowing himself up. Four other attackers were shot dead by police during the operation to secure the hotel. Al-Shabaab said it was acting to avenge the decision by US President Donald Trump to declare Jerusalem as Israel's capital, according to the SITE monitoring group.

Attacker planned to move out

Police say one of the attackers was Ali Salim Gichunge, who was also known as Farouk. He was traced through his car, which was used at

the attack, to his home in the Ruaka suburb where he lived with a woman in her twenties named Violet Kemunto Omwoyo. "We are interrogating her to know more about the attack because she is not innocent," according to a detective who took part in the raid on their house. He said police had uncovered a "huge hole dug in one of the rooms where guns were stored." "Neighbors have told us the couple was planning to move out because they had even put up their items for sale through the community's social network." The Standard newspaper said Omwoyo had written: "We are moving out of Nairobi this week" on her ad selling clothes and furniture.

Missing accounted for

Among the victims who died in the attack were two ethnic Somali Kenyans who worked on a project called the Somalia Stability Fund, a Kenyan football blogger and a policeman responding to the scene. An American working for a consulting and investment firm, who survived the 9/11 attacks in the United States, and a dual British-South African development worker were also among those killed. As the attack unfolded, scores of terrified civilians barricaded themselves inside toilets and offices for hours.

Some were killed at the Secret Garden restaurant, while another six bodies were found on the third floor of the hotel, where one of the gunbattles took place. The Red Cross said that 19 people reported missing to them, had since been traced. Several private citizens and foreign security forces took part in the rescue op-



NAIROBI: A woman reacts at the Chiromo mortuary, where the bodies of the victims of an Islamist attack are kept two days prior at the DusitD2 luxury hotel complex, in Nairobi.—AFP

eration. British media reports said a former special forces soldier who was out shopping when the attack happened, jumped in to help Kenyan special forces.

Kenya's Daily Nation newspaper hailed the "sweet victory over terrorism" as praise poured in for the swift and professional response from security services. This stood in stark contrast to the scorn heaped on disorganized police and army officers who staged a chaotic intervention

when Shabaab attacked the Westgate mall in 2013, leaving 67 dead. "There was a sense of triumph despite adversity," read the newspaper's editorial.

"Security teams were well-coordinated under the General Service Unit; there was a centralized chain of command ... clearly lessons have been learned." Al-Shabaab has repeatedly targeted Kenya over the presence of its troops in Somalia.—AFP

Netanyahu set for first-ever visit by Israel PM to Chad

JERUSALEM: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will embark upon the first-ever visit by an Israeli premier to Chad in the coming days as the two countries move to renew diplomatic ties, his office said yesterday. Netanyahu's trip to the Muslim-majority central African nation on Sunday comes after Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno visited Israel in November. The prime minister's office had not yet provided further details on the trip, though it was expected to be only a one-day visit.

Israeli media said it would be the first by a premier. Netanyahu said during Deby's November visit that he intended to announce the resumption of diplomatic ties during an upcoming trip to Chad. The two leaders at the time declined to comment on whether their talks have included arms deals. Chadian security sources say

the country has acquired Israeli equipment to help battle rebels in the country's north. Chad is also one of several African states engaged in Western-backed operations against Boko Haram and Islamic State group jihadists. Pressure from Muslim African nations, accentuated by the Arab-Israeli wars of 1967 and 1973, led a number of African states to sever relations with the Jewish state. But in recent years, Israel has held out the prospect of cooperation in fields ranging from security to technology to agriculture, to improve ties on the continent.

Diplomatic relations between Israel and Chad, a country of some 15 million people, were severed in 1972. Deby is one of Africa's longest-serving leaders. He took over the arid, impoverished nation in 1990 and won a disputed fifth term in April 2016.—AFP

Sudan protests rumble on as Bashir remains defiant

KHARTOUM: One month after protests erupted across Sudan against rising bread prices, anti-government demonstrations have turned into daily rallies against a defiant President Omar al-Bashir who has rejected calls to resign. Protest organizers have called for a march on the presidential palace in the capital Khartoum yesterday, along with simultaneous demonstrations in several other cities.

Authorities say at least 24 people have died since the protests first broke out on December 19 after a government decision to triple the price of bread. Rights group Human Rights Watch has put the death toll at 40, including children and medical staff. The protests have escalated into nationwide anti-government demonstrations that experts say pose the biggest challenge to Bashir since he took power in

an Islamist-backed coup in 1989. "I have been demonstrating and will continue to demonstrate until this regime is overthrown," vowed Adel Ibrahim, 28, who has participated in demonstrations in Khartoum. "We are protesting to save our future and the future of our homeland." Protests initially broke out in the eastern town of Atbara, which has a history of anti-government sentiment, and within days spread to other provinces and then to Khartoum.

Cities like Port Sudan, Gadaref, Kassala and agricultural regions that previously backed Bashir saw protests calling for him to step down, while the western region of Darfur too witnessed rallies against the 75-year-old veteran leader. Using social media networks to mobilise crowds, most protesters have marched chanting "Peace, freedom, justice", while some have even adopted the 2011 Arab Spring slogan—"the people want the fall of the regime".

Crowds of demonstrators, whistling and clapping, have braved volleys of tear gas whenever they have taken to the streets, witnesses said. "There's a momentum now and people are coming out daily," said prominent Sudanese columnist Faisal Mohamed Salih. "Even the authorities are astonished."—AFP

Russia's Putin lands in Belgrade ahead of rock star reception

Vucic to present Putin with Sarplaninac puppy

BELGRADE: Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday kicked off a state visit to Serbia, where he is set to receive a rock star reception in the capital Belgrade which is preparing a parade in his honor. "Welcome honored President Putin, dear friend" read one of many billboards around the city bearing a mix of Russian and Serbian flags. Putin, whose plane landed at Belgrade Nikola Tesla airport shortly after 1200 GMT, was welcomed by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic.

Large crowds are expected to celebrate the Russian leader in a parade later in the day that will weave through Belgrade and culminate at the massive Saint Sava church, one of Orthodox Christianity's largest houses of worship. In recent days vendors have been selling T-shirts, mugs and books bearing Putin's face, while a central Belgrade fountain has been lit up with the red, white and blue colors of the Russian flag.

Although Serbia aspires to join the European Union, it has kept up close ties with Russia, its historical "Orthodox big brother" whose people also share Slavic origins. But it "is more an emotional than a rational relationship", explained Serbian economic analyst Biljana Stepanovic. According to a 2017 Serbian government survey, a quarter of the population believes that Russia is their country's top donor, while the same percentage says it is the EU.

In reality, 75 percent of donations come from the EU or its member states, while Russia doesn't

even make the top nine. The West also outpaces Russia in terms of direct investment and trade. However, the affection for Moscow is fanned by its unyielding support on the emotive issue of Kosovo, a former Serbian province that broke away in a 1998-99 guerilla war.

Serbia has never accepted the split and Russia similarly rejects it, wielding its veto power at the United Nations to thwart Kosovo's dreams of joining. In return, Belgrade refuses to join the international trade sanctions imposed on Russia over its 2014 annexation of Crimea. The phrase "Kosovo is Serbia, Crimea is Russia" can sometimes be spotted on Serbian streets.

Growing NATO sphere

Aware of his people's affection for Russia, Vucic has often talked up his relationship with Putin. On Monday, he described the details of a recent Moscow visit in an interview with the pro-government Pink TV. "When I went to his house to offer him a (religious) icon, he received me at 10:45 pm, we were alone and he was playing the piano," said Vucic, who critics accuse of being increasingly authoritarian.

But the fanfare does not mask Russia's recent setbacks in the Balkans, where the West is muscling in. Moscow was unable to prevent Montenegro from joining NATO in 2017, a goal which Macedonia is also on the cusp of achieving. If Macedonia suc-



BELGRADE: Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic welcomes his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin upon arrival at Belgrade's Nikola Tesla airport.—AFP

ceeds, all countries bordering Serbia—which does not aspire to join—will be in the NATO sphere, with the exception of Bosnia due to the veto of its Serb population. Before his arrival, Putin accused the West of "destabilizing" the Balkans with efforts to expand NATO, an accusation that the United States often lobs in his direction.

Puppy present

According to Serbian media reports, Vucic is expected to present Putin with a puppy of the Sarplan-

inac breed, a shepherd dog from the region. The Russian leader meanwhile will give Vucic a decoration. Maxim Samorukov, an analyst on Russia at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, said Putin is visiting Serbia mainly to seek "political prestige" and show that there is a "Russian influence in all parts of the world".

"The Balkans as such are of little importance" and do not represent "a priority of Russian foreign policy", he added. Moscow does, however, have some stake in the region.—AFP



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International

Greek PM wins confidence vote after Macedonia name row

Name-change deal aims to resolve 27-year diplomatic dispute

ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on Wednesday survived a confidence vote after a row over a landmark name deal with Macedonia sunk his four-year coalition. A total of 151 lawmakers supported Tsipras' government out of 299 present, including several independent MPs, the official count showed. "Parliament today gave a vote of confidence to stability (and) the effort to regain the country's international credibility," Tsipras told reporters after the vote.

"To a government which has already changed Greece and will continue until the completion of its constitutionally-mandated term," he said. Despite the victory, the subsequent fate of Tsipras' government—and whether he will complete his four-year term which ends in September—is far from certain. The PM now faces an immediate challenge to also push through parliament the controversial name deal with neighboring Macedonia, which has sparked protests in both countries.

In a speech to parliament on Tuesday, the 44-year-old leftist leader insisted his government "has another nine months and very important tasks to carry out," pointing to elections in October. Among his goals are a revision of the constitution, a minimum wage increase and the completion of a property deal with the church that was recently blocked by senior bishops.

"We do not seek (the support of) 151 lawmakers just to complete our term, but in order to carry out specific political initiatives," government spokesman Dimitris Tzanakopoulos told Open TV

on Wednesday. Yet many Greeks think the elections could take place earlier than October and may even be called to coincide with European and local elections in May, if not sooner.

Coalition in tatters

Another protest will be held in Athens on Sunday against the agreement with Skopje to rename the country the Republic of North Macedonia. Main opposition leader Kyriakos Mitsotakis of the New Democracy conservatives called Tsipras a "fortune-hunter" and "cheap demagogue" who had built a career on lies. "You took power with lies, managed it with lies, and will leave it will lies," Mitsotakis said during the confidence vote debate.

"You've dealt enough damage to the country... you see your end approaching," Mitsotakis, who leads Tsipras in opinion polls, told leftist MPs. The name-change deal aims to resolve a 27-year diplomatic dispute, but it broke up Tsipras' coalition with the nationalist ANEL party at the weekend, ending their four-year partnership. Macedonian lawmakers last week approved the deal, but it will only come into effect if it is also backed by the Greek parliament.

Alexander the Great's territory

Athens has not given a date for the vote on the Macedonia deal, but Tsipras recently said it would be before the end of January. The European Union and NATO have hailed the agreement which would lift Greek objections to Macedonia joining both organizations.



ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras addresses the parliament in Athens, on the second day of a two-day debate on a confidence vote he called after his coalition collapsed in a row over a planned name change deal with Macedonia. ,AFP

The proposal faces resistance in Greece because of what critics see as the implied claims to Greek land and cultural heritage. For most Greeks, Macedonia is the name of their history-rich northern province made famous by Alexander the Great's conquests. In many cities in northern Greece, posters were put up overnight to urge local lawmakers to vote against the deal. A number of MPs also said they had received anonymous threats.

Police made several arrests over the poster in-

cident, and are investigating the threats. ANEL chief Panos Kammenos, Tsipras' former coalition partner, on Wednesday said the name deal should be put to a referendum. Much will depend on the stance of small pro-EU party To Potami, whose position hardened this week after Tsipras poached one of their lawmakers. "You may have found 151 lawmakers for the confidence vote but you will not find 151 to back the (Macedonia) deal," the party's parliamentary spokesman Panos Amyras told the government on Wednesday.—AFP

Mexican truckers fight highway robbery with armored semis

MEXICO CITY: The speeding cars pull alongside a semi-truck, box it in and force it to a halt. Then the robbers, firing AK-47s, hijack its cargo and make their getaway. It seems like something out of Hollywood, but it is happening on a daily basis on Mexico's highways. And the mounting dangers on the road have fueled a booming new business as the trucking industry seeks to fight back: welcome to the world of armored and bullet-proof tractor trailers.

Jorge Coronel is one of those trying to stop these highway robberies, which have more than doubled in Mexico since 2015 to more than 30 a day, according to figures from the trucking industry and the government. Coronel runs a company that specializes in transporting high-value cargo such as electronics, appliances, pharmaceuticals and luxury clothes.

Many insurance companies operating in Mexico will no longer protect such shipments unless they are transported in vehicles capable of withstanding assault-rifle fire. "It's a growing niche," Coronel told

AFP. "It's expensive. It's very expensive. But insurance companies are demanding armored equipment for shipments worth more than a certain amount."

'Hand over your cargo'

Mexico is caught in the seemingly never-ending spiral of violent crime driven by its powerful drug cartels and other organized gangs. First, the criminals branched out into fuel theft, which has cost state oil company Pemex billions of dollars. Now, they are plaguing the country's highways. Mexican police received 11,425 reports of armed robberies of cargo vehicles in 2017 — or an average of more than 31 a day.

In 2018, there were 11,062 reports from January to November — 33 a day. To defend against the scourge, armored truck companies are coating tractor trailers in steel and putting bullet-proof glass in the windows. It costs around 550,000 pesos (\$27,000) to equip a semi-truck to withstand AK-47 fire. But for many shipping companies, there is little choice. A single high-value shipment can be worth nearly half a million dollars.

The trucking industry estimates it is losing \$4.6 billion a year because of violent crime. Coronel has experienced the consequences firsthand. In 2017, one of his company's trucks was transporting a load of clothing when it lost contact with its escort near Ecatepec, in a dangerous area outside Mexico City. His team used remote-control technology to bring the semi to a stop.—AFP

Nordic countries cry for kids

OSLO: "Norway needs more children! I don't think I need to tell anyone how this is done," Norway's prime minister said cheekily, but she was raising a real concern. Too few babies are being born in the Nordic region. The Nordic countries were long a bastion of strong fertility rates on an Old Continent that is rapidly getting older. But they are now experiencing a decline that threatens their cherished welfare model, which is funded by taxpayers.

"In the coming decades, we will encounter problems with this model," Prime Minister Erna Solberg warned Norwegians in her New Year's speech. "There will be fewer young people to bear the increasingly heavy burden of the welfare state." In Norway, Finland and Iceland, birth rates dropped to historic lows in 2017, with 1.49 to 1.71 children born per woman. Just a few years earlier, their birth rates hovered close to the 2.1 level required for their populations to remain stable.

"In all of the Nordic countries, birth rates started dropping in the years after the 2008 financial crisis," University of Oslo sociologist Trude Lappegard told AFP. "The crisis is over now but it's still falling." From Copenhagen to the North Cape, from Helsinki to Reykjavik, demographics across the Nordics reveal

two things: there are fewer large families, and women are waiting longer before having their first child.

There's no single explanation, but financial uncertainty and a sharp rise in housing costs are seen as likely factors. In the long term, this means there will be fewer people of working age to pay taxes that fund the generous state welfare systems. These systems pay for, among other things, lengthy parental leaves, which in Sweden can last up to 480 days.

Paying for pregnancies

Experts present differing diagnoses and prescriptions to remedy the situation. In Norway, one economist concerned about the effect the slowing demographics will have on economic growth has suggested giving women 500,000 kroner (50,000 euros, \$58,550) in pension savings for each child born. Another has suggested that, on the contrary, women in Norway who reach the age of 50 without having had a child should be paid one million kroner, since children also cost society a lot.

Finnish municipalities have already decided to loosen their purse strings to encourage locals to get busy under the covers. The town of Michikkala, home to 2,000 people, is offering 10,000 euros for each baby born and raised in the municipality. "The number of childless individuals is growing rapidly, and the number of women having three or more children is going down. This kind of fall is unheard of in modern times in Finland," said Anna Rotkirch, a family sociologist at the umbrella organization Finnish Family Federation.—AFP

International

US shutdown after four weeks - food banks and job fairs

Federal workers turn to soup kitchens to make ends meet

WASHINGTON: Four weeks into the US government shutdown, cash-strapped federal workers are tapping life savings, selling possessions and turning to soup kitchens to make ends meet—ramping up pressure Wednesday for leaders in Washington to strike a deal. Communities from Washington to Kodiak, Alaska are feeling increasing pain, with the cutoff of paychecks to families snowballing to hit stores and businesses dependent on their spending.

Volunteer groups are collecting food to hand out, towns are organizing job fairs, and banks and telecommunications firms have loosened rules on payments, all to cushion the hardship. In Washington, celebrated chef Jose Andres launched a “ChefsforFeds” program with a new “food kitchen” offering free meals to hard-hit workers on Pennsylvania Avenue—halfway between the White House and Congress.

In Pennsylvania, West Virginia and other states, furloughed federal workers were getting advice on applying for unemployment benefits. And in Middletown, New York, Pets Alive, an animal shelter, announced free dog and cat food for the pets of families hit by the shutdown. “We will provide 1 bag of food per family, Need proof of fed employment,” they announced.

No sign of compromise

By afternoon Wednesday, there was no sign of a breakthrough in the faceoff between President Donald Trump and Democrats in Congress, which led to the partial shutdown of the government on December 22. More than 800,000 federal workers didn't get paid last week, pain

shared by several million more contractors who also have been idled by the shutdown—many of them low-paid service workers who live paycheck to paycheck.

Trump insists he won't agree to open the government until Congress signs off on his demand for \$5.7 billion to build a border wall, which he argues is needed to prevent illegal immigration. “It is becoming more and more obvious that the Radical Democrats are a Party of open borders and crime. They want nothing to do with the major humanitarian Crisis on our Southern Border,” Trump tweeted Wednesday. “He is just sticking to his position and won't budge,” said Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the top Democrat in Congress, meanwhile pressed Trump to postpone his January 29 State of the Union address until after the government opens, citing security concerns arising from the shutdown. Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen—who oversees a department where many staff, including airport screeners and the Coast Guard, are working without pay — retorted that security personnel “are fully prepared to support and secure” the annual address.

Unpaid bills, battered economy

Furloughed government workers gathered at the congressional office of Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell Wednesday to pressure him to help get the government back to work. Even the Trump administration admits that the shutdown is damaging to the economy and



WASHINGTON: In this file photo US President Donald Trump delivers the State of the Union address at the US Capitol in Washington, DC. — AFP

people's lives. The White House Council of Economic Advisors says quarterly economic growth will lose 0.13 percentage points for every week the government remains partially closed.

The worst-hit area is Washington DC, but federal workers are spread across the country. In Kodiak, Alaska, for example, hundreds of Coast Guard workers haven't been paid for weeks, but

still have to work. Local shops are hurting because they have less to spend. “Many of the employees of the Coast Guard are below the poverty line ... I know that they're frustrated. They're sad. They're angry. They're still on duty,” said retired Rear Admiral Cari Thomas, chief executive of Coast Guard Mutual Assistance, a non-profit set up to help Coast Guard families. —AFP

Trump to visit Pentagon to unveil missile defense review

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is due to visit the Pentagon yesterday to unveil a comprehensive review of America's anti-missile systems, officials said. Trump in 2017 ordered an analysis of US missile defense technologies and how they should be adapted to keep up with changing threats. In an executive summary of the review provided to Pentagon reporters, the Missile Defense Agency (MDA) highlighted areas of concern.

Top among these is the push by China and Russia to develop hypersonic missiles. These weapons fly at many times the speed of sound and can change direction, instead of following a ballistic arc, making them much harder to intercept. The Pentagon is looking at ways to enhance its

ability to track hypersonic missiles, primarily by using existing sensors that are deployed in space.

The MDA also said it would conduct a study to assess the feasibility of creating a space-based interceptor system, in which an orbiting craft of some sort would be equipped with missiles that could destroy an incoming warhead while it was in space. Another focus for the MDA will be developing ways to knock out a ballistic missile immediately after it has launched.

Currently, anti-missile technologies focus on intercepting warheads while they are flying through space. By attacking the missiles while they are in their “boost phase” soon after launch, the MDA could add a layer of defense for America and its allies. One way of doing this would be by adding a new type of missile to F-35 stealth fighters patrolling near a suspected launch site, such as in a hypothetical conflict with North Korea, the MDA said.

The MDA is also looking at ways of boosting its “directed energy”—or laser-capabilities to take out ballistic missiles. The review was due to be released last year, but its publication saw repeated delays. — AFP

Shooting victim takes aim at US gun violence

BALTIMORE: At age 17, Joseph Sakran was shot in the throat after a high school football game—a life-threatening injury that set him on the path to becoming a doctor. Now a trauma surgeon who fights to save shooting victims on the operating table, Sakran says gun violence in America is a health crisis that medical professionals can and should help address. He has become the public face of a campaign to unite doctors, nurses and others who treat gun violence victims in an effort to reduce it, pushing back against the National Rifle Association (NRA) lobby's assertion that the issue is none of their concern.

“When you look at firearm-related violence... there's no question that it is a public health crisis that we are facing in this country,” Sakran said at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, where he is director of emergency general surgery. The 41-year-old doctor said that firearms deaths should be approached like other major threats to health, such as smoking and obesity. “It falls under the injury prevention piece that we as clinicians and as scien-

tists really consider as... part of our responsibility,” he said. For Sakran—who said he has talked with “hundreds if not thousands” of gun owners, finding that “we actually have a lot more in common than we have that divides us”—the issue is not banning firearms. “In the '60s and '70s, when people were dying from motor vehicle crashes, we didn't get rid of cars. We figured out, ‘How do we make cars safer?’”

This Is Our Lane

As someone who both survived a gunshot wound and treats them, Sakran was “a little bit incensed” when the NRA took aim at the involvement of doctors in the debate over gun violence. Firearms killed nearly 40,000 people in the US in 2017, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And despite the scale of the problem, efforts to address it legislatively have long been largely deadlocked at the federal level.

“Someone should tell self-important anti-gun doctors to stay in their lane,” the NRA tweeted in November, calling out a particular medical journal for publishing what it deemed to be too many articles backing gun control. “I think there was a significant amount of outrage from the medical community—and not just non-gun owners but also gun owners—for a group to say that we are not part of the solution,” Sakran said. He started the @ThisIsOurLane account on Twitter, which currently has over 28,000 followers. —AFP

International

Unwanted Afghan refugees pin hopes on Pakistan's Imran Khan

Pakistan's PM vows to grant citizenship to Afghan refugees

PESHAWAR: Shahzad Alam has proposed marriage to several women and been rejected each time for the same reason, he says: their discovery that he is not the Pakistani shoe shop owner they thought he was, but an Afghan refugee. His romantic future could be given a boost by Prime Minister Imran Khan, who has ignited a national debate with a controversial vow to grant citizenship to Afghan refugees born in Pakistan—potentially creating more than a million new citizens.

Pakistan is one of the largest refugee-hosting nations in the world, home to an estimated 2.4 million registered and undocumented people who have fled Afghanistan, some as far back as the Soviet invasion of 1979. But many Pakistanis view them with suspicion, accusing them of spurring militancy and criminality, and calling for them to be sent home. Under Pakistan's constitution, anyone born in the country after 1951 has the right to citizenship.

But feeling against the refugees is so strong that no leader has dared take moves to implement the policy—Khan's promise is the first time any Pakistani premier has made such a vow. Refugees greeted his words joyfully. Twitter users joked that Khan could now win elections in Afghanistan. "May God bless Imran Khan," Alam said. But the announcement has also prompted a national outcry, with columnists claiming he had opened a "Pandora's Box".

Heads of Pakistan's main opposition parties quickly condemned it. As the debate continues in the country's newspapers and on social media, salesman Alam's life remains in limbo. Alam speaks with a Pakistani accent, dresses in Pakistani fashions, and has lived all his life in the northwestern city of Peshawar where he was born after his parents fled Afghanistan in 1979. Although he says women have asked him to

propose marriage in the past, the relationship would always "end the moment we introduce ourselves as Afghan".

Pandora's box?

The United Nations says there are 1.4 million Afghans registered as refugees in Pakistan, and estimates that some 74 percent were born there. Many live in camps, while others have created lives for themselves in Pakistan's cities, marrying and raising children, opening shops and supporting themselves. In one Peshawar bazaar, thousands of Afghans could be seen running hundreds of shops bursting with local and Chinese goods, fresh fruits, and vegetables—visible signs of their economic contributions.

"I feel like I am in my own village, my own country," said Ashiqullah Jan, a 43-year-old refugee. But their status has always been temporary, with deadlines set for them to leave Pakistan repeatedly pushed back as the conflict in Afghanistan worsens. Many analysts predict security will continue to deteriorate in 2019 despite a renewed push for peace talks. In 2016 a wave of forced repatriations from Pakistan to Afghanistan sparked fears of a humanitarian crisis. The decision by Khan is a significant departure from such policies.

"When you are born in America, you get the American passport... so why not here? How cruel it is for them," he said when announcing the measure last September. Much of the outcry prompted by his words has been centered on security fears. Pakistan has fought a long and bloody war with militancy, with the army often blaming extremists based in Afghanistan and claiming insurgents hide in refugee camps.

Khan has reiterated his support for the measure, but faced with the outcry has not yet for-

mally taken it to parliament. Analyst Rahimullah Yusufzai warned that even if the prime minister—who has developed a reputation for U-turns since coming to power last July—does push the policy through, implementing it will take time. "It won't be easy to give them citizenship or to develop a consensus on the issue in parliament or in the country," he said.

'I do not want to leave'

The United Nations refugee agency UNHCR has welcomed the move. "So many of the young

Afghan refugees were born here and they only know Pakistan," country representative Ruven-drini Menikdiwela told AFP. Most Pakistanis who spoke to AFP in the bazaars of Peshawar, whose proximity to the Afghan border has made it a centre for refugees, remained staunchly opposed. The government should send the refugees home "as soon as possible", 42-year-old Rehman Gul said. Azeem Khan, a fresh produce seller, was one of the few Pakistanis supporting the move—but his stance sparked a heated argument among his customers. —AFP



ISLAMABAD: In this picture Afghan refugees make a roof for a mud house at a refugee camp on the outskirts of Islamabad. — AFP

Indian women seek police protection after entering Hindu temple

NEW DELHI: Two women who enraged conservatives by entering one of Hinduism's holiest temples have asked India's highest court for round-the-clock police protection, saying their lives are in danger. Hindu devotees went on a violent rampage after Bindu Ammini and Kanakadurga entered Sabarimala in January—a hilltop shrine in southern Kerala state that for centuries was off-limits to nearly all women.

The Supreme Court in September overturned a ban on women of menstruating age from praying at Sabarimala but temple devotees refused to accept the ruling and prevented female worshippers from entering. News that Ammini and Kanakadurga reached the shrine triggered days of violent protest, with one person killed and dozens injured in clashes with police that saw

buses torched and bombs hurled. The women's lawyer, Indira Jaising, told the country's top court on Thursday that the pair needed state protection as their welfare is in jeopardy. Kanakadurga, who goes by one name, was allegedly attacked by her mother-in-law on Tuesday after returning home and was admitted to hospital for her injuries. She had been on the run for days with Bindu Ammini, with the pair changing safe houses more than 10 times to avoid being tracked down.

The Supreme Court is expected to resume hearing their appeal for police protection on Friday, just days before it is due to start hearing a legal challenge on its ruling to lift the ban on female worshippers. The temple—considered among the holiest in Hinduism and set on top of a hill in a tiger reserve—receives millions of pilgrims a year. It is dedicated to the celibate deity Ayyappa, and followers believe letting in women of menstruating age goes against his wishes. After Bindu and Kanakadurga entered the temple, the head priest shut the temple doors for an hour-long "purification ceremony", in line with the widespread belief that menstruating women are impure.

Those wishing to visit Sabarimala undergo a 41-day period of introspection and detachment known as vratha, abstaining from sex, meat, intoxicants and even shaving. — AFP

Body of trapped Indian miner found after 36 days

NEW DELHI: Indian emergency workers said yesterday they have found the body of one of 15 miners trapped inside a so-called "rat hole" mine for over a month. The illegal and dangerous mine in the remote, mineral-rich state of Meghalaya in India's north-east was flooded on December 13. The Indian Navy said they spotted the body inside the deluged shaft at a depth of 160-210 feet with the help of a remote-controlled probe.

"The body has been pulled up to the mouth of Rat-hole mine and shall be extracted out of the mine under the supervision of doctors," the Indian Navy said in a tweet. The breakthrough comes after several attempts by navy divers to reach the trapped miners inside the treacherous mine. Efforts to pump out water have also failed. "Our operation is continuing," S K Singh, in-charge of the national disaster relief force, said.

Indian authorities were criticized for being slow to respond to the emergency, including from the Supreme Court which called for rescue operations to be stepped up. Rat-hole mines are deep vertical shafts dug mostly into hillsides that branch out into narrow tunnels to reach and retrieve coal and other substances. A federal environment court banned wildcat mining in Meghalaya in 2014 after local communities complained it was polluting water sources and putting lives at risk. But the practice continues, with mine owners and the state government challenging the ban at India's Supreme Court. At least 15 miners were killed after they were trapped in a flooded rat hole mine in Meghalaya in 2012. Their bodies were never recovered.—AFP

International

Incoming Pakistan Chief Justice opens new era for powerful court

Chief Justice Khosa to reform Pakistan's sluggish judiciary

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan swears in a new chief justice today, opening the next chapter for the Supreme Court which has made a name for an expansive agenda that has ranged from ousting a prime minister to pressing authorities to improve the public water supply. Outgoing Chief Justice Saqib Nisar cultivated a high profile, launching multiple inquiries aimed at reforming public institutions and going after political leaders, attracting both praise for cracking down on abuse and criticism that he was exceeding the court's role.

His successor, Supreme Court judge Asif Saeed Khosa, has a taste for literary quotation but is otherwise considered a more classical judge, preferring to stay out of the limelight. "I think Justice Khosa's tenure will be substantially different," said Saroop Ijaz, a lawyer for Human Rights Watch, who has been critical of Nisar's activist court. In one of its best-known judgments, the Supreme Court removed three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from office in July 2017 and ordered a corruption probe into his assets that led to Sharif being given a seven-year jail term in December.

The court enraged hardline Islamists last year by overturning the conviction of Asia Bibi, a Christian woman condemned to death for blasphemy against Islam. But it has also used so-called "suo motu" provisions in Pakistani law that allow the court to open cases on its own initiative

to set its stamp on wide swaths of public life and denounce the failure of public institutions.

It has ordered inquiries into issues ranging from payments to farmers by powerful sugar mills to milk prices, city water supplies and corruption allegations against managers of the railways and national airline PIA. However the outgoing chief justice's activism did little to drain the backlog of more than 40,000 cases at the Supreme Court and a staggering 1.9 million combined cases pending in other courts.

"It's a highly problematic period at multiple levels," said legal scholar Osama Siddique, an Associate Fellow at the Institute for Development and Economic Alternatives in Lahore. "Justice Saqib Nisar's entire emphasis was on other institutions and how they should improve their governance but he did not do anything to improve the governance and internal administration of the judiciary."

Cautionary tale

Nisar's high media profile has drawn parallels with Iftikhar Chaudhry, a chief justice who initially won plaudits for helping oust military dictator Pervez Musharraf in 2008, but was later criticized for overstepping his constitutional remit. "Saqib Nisar's tenure was in many ways a cautionary tale in unfettered judicial overreach," said Ijaz. "It was unprecedented in the extent of its activism and



ISLAMABAD: A policeman walks past the Supreme Court building in Islamabad, Pakistan. —Reuters

disregard of formal legal procedures." Nisar himself has said his suo motu cases and frequent public appearances to inspect development projects and facilities such as schools and hospitals were aimed at protecting the poor. Allies

of Sharif say his assertiveness served the interests of Pakistan's powerful military and hinted at a return to the past, when they say judges cut politicians down to size at the behest of the generals. —Reuters

Venezuelan court jails rogue agents over detained parliament president

CARACAS: A dozen intelligence service agents were sent to prison by a Venezuelan court Wednesday over the brief detention of parliamentary president Juan Guaido, a judicial source said. The Caracas court remanded the agents in pre-trial detention after they were accused of "abuse of functions, illegitimate deprivation of liberty and association to commit a crime." Guaido was heading to a political rally

Family of Canadian kidnapped at Burkina mine 'hopeful'

OUAGADOUGOU: A Canadian has been kidnapped by armed militants from a gold mine in eastern Burkina Faso, a region battling a rise in extremist violence and lawlessness, a senior government official said. Geologist Kirk Woodman is the vice president of Canadian company Progress Minerals, mining sources told AFP, which owns the mine in volatile Yagha province near the borders with Niger and Mali.

outside the Venezuelan capital on Sunday when his car was stopped on a highway and he was briefly detained by the SEBIN agents. President Nicolas Maduro's government denied any knowledge of the operation and initially claimed that four agents involved had been dismissed. Maduro branded the whole incident a "media circus" and accused the agents of conspiring with Venezuela's opposition. Guaido, meanwhile, responded by mocking Maduro and questioning his control over the state's security agencies.

"So Maduro no longer controls the armed forces because the chain of command was broken," said Guaido. "Who is commanding the regime now? If they're already admitting that they don't control the state's security agencies, there's a serious problem at Miraflores," he added, referring to the presidential palace. Guaido has been trying to attract support from the military as he leads the opposition bid to remove Maduro from power and set up a transitional government. —AFP

"The agents who were working were attacked by about ten armed men who rounded up the staff. They took the expat with them," the Burkina's security minister Clement Sawadogo said Wednesday, adding that Progress Minerals was exploring at the gold site. The raid happened on Tuesday evening, he added. "We have faith and trust in Canadian authorities to bring our husband and father home safe. We are hopeful for a fast resolution to the situation," Woodman's family said in a statement.

Canada currently has 250 soldiers and eight army helicopters deployed in neighboring Mali as part of a UN peacekeeping mission. Kidnappings have increased in the impoverished Sahel state, which has been battling a rising wave of jihadist attacks over the last three years. Earlier this month a Canadian woman taking part in a humanitarian aid program was reported missing after travelling in the West African country with an Italian friend. —AFP

Israeli student murdered in Australia while on phone with sister

SYDNEY: An Israeli student has been killed in a late-night attack in Australia while she was speaking on the phone with her sister, police said yesterday. Police appealed to the public for help tracking down the killer of 21-year-old Aii Maasarwe, whose body was found early Wednesday near the campus of the Melbourne university where she was studying. "This was an horrendous, horrific attack inflicted on a completely innocent young woman who was a visitor to our city," Detective Inspector Andrew Stamper told reporters in Melbourne yesterday.

Maasarwe, who was reportedly five months into a year-long exchange at Melbourne's LaTrobe University, was riding a tram home from a comedy club to the suburb of Bundoora before she was met by her attacker around midnight. She was talking on the phone with her sister, who was overseas and raised the alarm after something went awry mid-conversation, police said. "(Her sister) heard the sound of the phone falling to the ground and heard some voices," Stamper said. Her body was found Wednesday morning by passers-by at 7 am about 50 meters from the stop where she exited the tram.

Stamper said the report from her sister came in at about the same time. Police would not confirm reports they were investigating a sexual assault but said known sex offenders are an "active line of enquiry". Officers retrieved a black baseball cap and a grey t-shirt they believe were worn by the perpetrator from the crime scene, which they described as "very distressing". The victim's family, who are on their way to Australia, described Maasarwe as "happy", "adventurous" and "smart". —AFP

International

Vietnam prepares for N Korean leader Kim Jong Un's visit

Hanoi keen to host second summit with Kim, Trump

HANOI: Hanoi is preparing to receive North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for a state visit, two sources said, while officials and diplomats said Vietnam is keen to host a second summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump. A source familiar with the matter said Kim will travel to Vietnam for an official state visit after the Feb 4-8 lunar new year. A separate source confirmed Kim's visit but did not give any dates.

The United States and North Korea are holding high-level talks in Washington this week to discuss a second meeting between Trump and Kim to seek an "interim" deal to revitalize nuclear talks, US and South Korean media have said. Communist-ruled Vietnam, which has good relations with both the United States and North Korea, has been widely touted as the most likely venue for a second meeting. The Southeast Asian country is keen to host the summit as a demonstration of its normalized ties with the United States, its foe during the Vietnam War, a Vietnamese government official and two diplomatic sources told Reuters. The Vietnamese source did not confirm if a state visit by Kim would be combined with a US-North Korean summit. Media is heavily censored in Vietnam and the ruling Communist Party retains a tight control on information.

The officials who spoke to Reuters did so on the strict condition of anonymity, citing the sensitivity of the situation. Vietnam's foreign ministry did not respond to a request from Reuters for comment. A US embassy spokeswoman in Hanoi said the embassy did not have anything to an-

nounce regarding the summit location, and referred questions to the White House.

Trump told reporters in Washington on Jan. 6 that the United States and North Korea are "negotiating a location" for a second summit, and that "it will be announced probably in the not too distant future." White House officials have declined to comment further. Kim and Trump met for a historic summit in Singapore in June, but have since struggled to make progress towards denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Top North Korean officials, including former spy chief Kim Yong Chol, were seen at Beijing airport on Thursday, and are believed to be headed to the United States for meetings with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and possibly Trump. Asked about a possible high-level meeting this week, a State Department spokesman said: "We have no meetings to announce."

AI visit in Danang

Both Hanoi and the central Vietnam city of Danang have been viewed by analysts as possible locations for a second summit. A senior Danang-based official said the city had not been asked to host such an event, but had received instructions to prepare for a possible "AI" visit, referring to a high-profile foreign leader. A senior South Korean official earlier told Reuters that the United States has "various options" on the location, which would be decided after consultations with North Korea, while another official said that Vietnam is only one of the countries keen to host the summit.

Thailand signals more tolerant refugee policy after Saudi case

BANGKOK: Thailand's immigration chief vowed Wednesday not to force refugees to return home "involuntarily", after a Saudi woman's desperate plea for resettlement drew global attention to a country that does not recognize asylum seekers. The country is not a signatory to a UN convention on refugees and has long come under fire for holding them in detention centers or deporting them back to repressive regimes where they face prison or worse.

Many cases do not make headlines but that changed earlier this month when 18-year-old Saudi runaway Rahaf Mohammed al-Qunun arrived in Bangkok and staved off deportation by barricading herself in a hotel at the airport, live-tweeting the standoff to an international audience. She was handed over to the UN refugee agency within days and resettled to Canada within a week, where she was welcomed by Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland after landing in Toronto on Saturday.

Qunun said she suffered abuse in the ultra-conservative kingdom and refused to see family members who came to Thailand after her flight. The lightning-fast processing of her case was unprecedented for Thailand and was overseen almost from start to finish by immigration chief Surachate Hakpam, a blunt-talking media-savvy official nicknamed "Big Joke" who was recently appointed to the role and vowed reforms.

Responding to questions about Thailand's treatment of refugees, Surachate told an audience at the foreign correspondents' club he would take a new approach and that under his supervision "there will be no one involuntarily sent back to the country if they don't want to go back". He added that as chief of the department, "we will now follow international norms". But the claims were met with scepticism given the November arrest in Thailand of refugee footballer Hakeem Alaraibi, who had been granted permanent residency in Australia but was stopped at the airport in Bangkok while trying to go on vacation.

Alaraibi, a former player for Bahrain's national team, is wanted on charges relating to the damage of a police station during the Arab Spring in the Gulf State, but rights groups say he was playing a match at the time and the allegations are false. Surachate said the case was different as there was an outstanding arrest warrant for Alaraibi in Bahrain, but said that he could argue his case in court. —AFP



PYONGYANG: In this file photo released by North Korea's Korean Central News Agency North Korean leader Kim Jong Un poses in Pyongyang. —Reuters

Vietnam, which rose from the ashes of a victorious but costly war with the United States and transformed itself into one of Asia's fastest-growing economies, has developed close strategic ties with Washington. In 2016, Washington ended a decades-old arms embargo on Vietnam, and last year a US aircraft carrier visited Vietnam for the first time since the end of the Vietnam War. Vietnam's exports to the United States, its largest export market, rose 14.3 percent last year to \$47.53 billion, accounting for nearly 20 percent of Viet-

nam's total exports.

North Korea can learn from Vietnam's experience in building ties with the United States, said Le Dang Doanh, a Vietnamese economist and former government adviser who has given lectures to North Korean delegations visiting Vietnam. "They asked a lot about how Vietnam can normalize relations with the United States after losing so many Vietnamese lives during the war," Doanh said. "I told them we never forget the past, but we also look to the future." —Reuters

Volcano erupts on small Japan island

TOKYO: A Japanese volcano erupted yesterday, spewing ash and smoke six kilometers into the air over a small southern island. There were no reports of injuries or damage from the eruption on Kuchinoerabu, in the far south of Japan. A local official said there had been no evacuations on the island, which is home to just 109 people. Images broadcast by NHK showed large plumes of ash and grey smoke billowing above the island, which has regularly been affected by eruptions.

"We heard a huge explosion and there was shaking like an earthquake," a resident told the broadcaster. The meteorological agency said the eruption occurred shortly after it had issued a new warning. "There have been eruptions there since last year but we sent an alert out (this morning) for this latest eruption as it will have a wider impact," said Jun Fujimatsu, an official at the agency's volcanic activity division. "We have maintained a level three warning, which means a ban on entering the volcano area," he said.

"There are several craters at the volcano... The danger zone is two kilometers from the Shindake crater," he added. "We do not think the latest eruption will engulf the entire island." Government spokesman Yoshihide Suga said the plume of smoke and ash from the eruption rose 6,000 meters. "But there is no impact on the community and



KAGOSHIMA PREFECTURE, Japan: This handout video grab from the Japan Meteorological Agency's live webcam shows an eruption on Kuchinoerabu Island in Yakushima, Kagoshima prefecture. —AFP

no injury or damage has been reported," he said. There are currently "71 households comprising 109 people living on the island, including some who are just a few kilometers from the crater," local official Shogo Sado said.

He confirmed no evacuations had yet been ordered but said preparations were being made in case it became necessary to move people, some of whom are elderly and frail. In 2015, all 140 people living on the island were evacuated after a violent eruption that sent black clouds up as high as 9,000 meters and produced a five-minute volcanic quake. Japan, with scores of active volcanoes, sits on the so-called Pacific "Ring of Fire", where a large proportion of the world's earthquakes and volcanic eruptions are recorded. —AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 2019

www.kuwaittimes.net

A model presents a creation by Walter Van Beirendonck, during the men's Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection fashion show in Paris . — AFP

Rock and roll nuns to perform for pope in Panama

See Page 21

Rihanna to launch her own luxury fashion label

Pop idol Rihanna is preparing to launch her own luxury brand with the world's biggest fashion conglomerate, according to reports yesterday. The Barbados-born superstar, who already has her own highly successful Fenty sportswear label, is in secret talks with the French giant LVMH, according to Women's Wear Daily (WWD). The industry bible said the group, which owns such iconic brands as Dior, Louis Vuitton, Fendi and Givenchy, is assembling a gang of top designers for the project. LVMH, which is owned by the fashion titan Bernard Arnault, said they could not comment.

With her huge fan base and tens of millions of social media followers, Rihanna is one of the most powerful style influencers on the planet. A regular on the front row of fashion shows, and particularly at Dior in Paris, the singer has also proved herself to be a canny creator. As well as her Fenty line she upped sales at Puma when she became its creative director, and has also dipped her toe into lingerie. Her Fenty Beauty operation—which involved a hook-up with LVMH—racked up sales of more than \$100 dollars (88 million euros) within weeks of its 2016 launch.

WWD said that her planned luxury brand, which will take in ready-to-wear as well as leather goods and accessories, could be launched alongside her ninth album later this year. A new large-scale luxury label—especially one led by a black woman—would be huge development in the fashion world. The top end of the market has been traditionally hogged by historic French and Italian houses. Despite its dominance, LVMH have not started a luxury brand from scratch since Christian Lacroix in 1987. Black American designers have, however, been making dramatic inroads of late, with Virgil Abloh the most talked about designer at Paris men's fashion week.—AFP



In this file photo Rihanna attends Rihanna's 4th Annual Diamond Ball, benefitting the Clara Lionel Foundation, at Cipriani, Wall Street in New York City. — AFP



These aerial handout photo shows Indian Hindu devotees taking a holy dip at Sangam—the confluence of the Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers—during the auspicious bathing day of Makar Sankranti at the Kumbh Mela in Allahabad. — AFP photos

Mysterious naked holy men a huge draw at India's Kumbh Mela

Ash-smeared and dreadlocked Naga sadhus or Hindu ascetics, naked except for rosary beads and garlands and smoking wooden pipes, are a huge draw at the world's largest religious festival that began this week in India. At the Kumbh Mela, or "festival of the pot", held this year in Prayagraj in north India, organizers expect up to 150 million people to bathe at the confluence of three holy rivers: the Ganges, the Yamuna and a mythical third river, the Sarawati. The festival is one of the only opportunities to see the reclusive Naga sadhus, some of whom live in caves after taking a vow of celibacy and renouncing worldly possessions.

Their charge down to the waters to bathe at the opening of the Kumbh, many armed with tridents and swords, is one of the highlights of the festival. "It is a confluence of all Naga sadhus at the meeting point of these holy rivers," said Anandnad Saraswati, a Naga sadhu from Mathura, a holy city in north India. "They meet each other, they interact with each other and they meditate and pray here at the holy confluence. They give their message to the people and they transform people." Most of the Nagas enter the orders in their early teens, leaving their friends and families to immerse themselves in meditation, yoga and religious rituals. It can take years to be conferred with the title of a Naga, they say.

"One has to live a life of celibacy for six years. After that the person is given the title of a great man and 12 years after that he is made a Naga," said Digambar Kedar Giri, a Naga sadhu from Jaipur. During the eight-week Kumbh, generally held every three years in one of four cities in India, the Nagas live in makeshift monasteries called Akhara erected on the eastern banks of the Ganges. They spend their days meditating, smoking cannabis and receiving a stream of visitors who come to pay their respects.

"It feels surreal: all this time you have read about them. They are almost like fictional characters and then you meet them," said a woman who gave her name as Pallavi, on a visit to the Akhara. The Kumbh Mela has its roots in a Hindu tradition that says the

god Vishnu wrested a golden pot containing the nectar of immortality from demons. In a 12-day fight for possession, four drops fell to earth, in the cities of Prayagraj, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik, who share the Kumbhs as a result. — Reuters

Houellebecq's Muslim France novel to be made into TV series

A television version of French novelist Michel Houellebecq's most controversial book is in the pipeline, its backers said Wednesday. "Submission" has divided critics for imagining a near future in which sharia law is imposed in France after a Muslim president is elected. Many saw it as provocative, with the writer—who once described Islam as "the stupidest religion"—later admitting that he was "probably Islamophobic". The literary bad boy went into hiding the day it was published in January 2015 after jihadists attacked the Paris offices of Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine, killing 12 people, including a close friend of the writer. The French film and TV board told AFP that it was helping to fund a series based on the bestseller for the small screen by Guillaume Nicloux.

The film-maker directed the 2014 comedy, "The Kidnapping of Michel Houellebecq", in which the novelist also starred. Nicloux is also working on another project in which the socially awkward writer will act alongside French screen legend Gerard Depardieu. "Submission" sold nearly 800,000 copies in French and more than half a million in Germany alone, confirming Houellebecq's status as the most read modern French writer abroad. —AFP

ROCK AND ROLL NUNS to perform for pope in Panama

With millions of YouTube views and hits on Spotify and iTunes, a group of young nun rockers play one of their biggest gigs next week, and thousands of Catholics, including the pope himself, will lap it up. It may be rock and roll, but Twisted Sister they ain't, and sex and drugs are not an option for the Sisters of the Servants of the Plan of God. They play their brand of melodic rock in their traditional habits. "We're young sisters," says 37-year-old guitarist Sister Ivonne of the band, which includes members from Chile, Japan, Ecuador, China and Costa Rica.

"This is another form of bringing our evangelical message, showing our strength—that's to say, it's also music that we like, it shows a lot about who we are." Known as "Siervas" or Servants, the band plays catchy Christian songs that sound indistinguishable from many of their peers in mainstream rock. But the appearance is very different, rock's grunge and glad rags giving way to the nuns' tried and trusted black and white habits and veils on stage.

YouTube hit

With a half-dozen slickly produced videos on YouTube, Siervas has built an international following as it communicates its message of "love, joy, hope." Their "Trust in God" music video, which features the nuns playing on a helipad atop a Lima skyscraper, went viral on YouTube with nearly two million views. And now, the Peru-based sisters will play at the World Youth Day celebrations, a gathering of global Catholic youth in Panama presided over by Pope Francis.

The message at the heart of their music?

"We want to reach as many people as possible, and if the pope is included in that, we're more than satisfied," said Ivonne, who pens much of the lyrics. The 11-member band, which performs in Spanish, has previously played for crowds at Francis' visits to Mexico and Peru.

Not just music

"We're not just working in music, but we take the word of God and his consolation to the prisons, to the disabled," said Sister Daniela, the drummer from Costa Rica. Tuesdays, when they are back in Peru, they bring food to the homeless on the streets. The group will gig at a women's prison during the trip to Panama. They will also play at a children's cancer hospital and schools. "We go to the women's prisons to listen to them. All they ask is to be listened to and to know God has forgiven them," said Camila, the 22-year-old Peruvian guitarist. The band, which has so far visited 11 countries, including the United States, was formed in Lima in 2014 when the young musician nuns from different nationalities came together, said 24-year-old Sister Arisa, from Japan.

"It was God's plan that we come together," said Arisa, a violinist. After months of rehearsal, they held their first concert in the auditorium of the General Command of the Army, helping raise funds for a house for the order in Angola. The band has undergone several changes to its lineup since 2014, as sisters leave to fulfill their missionary role. "Until now we have not been able to talk to the pope, we would love it if he approaches us," said Ivonne, from Chile. "I wouldn't know what to say, I think I would faint."—AFP



Eight of the nine members of religious musical band 'Siervas' (Servants), known as the 'rock nuns' pose for a picture during a rehearsal in Lima. —AFP photos



Sister Teresa, 33, drum player from Chile and member of religious music band 'Siervas' (Servants), known as the 'rock nuns', participates in their weekly rehearsal in Lima.



(From left) Kathleen, 37, keyboard player and vocalist from the Philippines and Jessica, 36, clarinet player from China known as the 'rock nuns', participate in their weekly rehearsal.



Sisters (from left) Jessica, 36, clarinet player from China and Arisa, 24, violinist from Japan participate in their weekly rehearsal in Lima.



Sisters (from left) Ivonne, 37, composer, vocalist and guitar player from Chile, Dayana, 22, vocalist from Ecuador and Camila, 22, guitar player from Peru, members of religious music band 'Siervas' (Servants), known as the 'rock nuns', perform during their weekly rehearsal.

Lifestyle | Feature



This picture shows an ethnic Hmong girl weaving traditional textile at the Lung Tam Linen cooperative in northern Vietnam's Quan Ba district. — AFP photos



An ethnic Hmong woman hand-printing traditional textile at the Lung Tam Linen cooperative in northern Vietnam's Quan Ba district.



An ethnic Hmong woman softening traditional textiles at the Lung Tam Linen cooperative in northern Vietnam's Quan Ba district.



An ethnic Hmong girl dyeing traditional textiles at the Lung Tam Linen cooperative.



Ethnic Hmong women weaving traditional textiles.

One stitch at a time: Weaving rehab for Vietnam trafficking victims

Thao Thi Van was just two when her mother disappeared during a trip to the market, likely taken by traffickers preying on women from the Hmong hill tribes of northern Vietnam to sell as brides or into brothels in China. Now aged 13 she is still haunted by the fate of her missing mother but has found some solace at a textile cooperative for marginalized women in the region. "I have almost no friends at school because they tease me for having no mother. I envy those kids with a mum," the slight teenager told AFP in tears. "I have fun working here because I can earn some money and no-one teases me," Van said.

She's been taken in by the older women she works with at the co-op, where she has earned a reputation as a skilled embroiderer. The collective makes hemp handbags and table runners, coasters and stuffed animals, and the women can earn up to \$170 per month, a decent wage in impoverished Ha Giang province. Thousands of Vietnamese women are trafficked or tricked across the border every year and in this remote northern mountainous region of Vietnam, spitting distance from the Chinese border, women and girls frequently vanish from their communities. China's buy-a-bride industry is booming, fuelled by a surplus of 30 million males. Some women go willingly, others are kidnapped or find themselves forced into marriage.

The lucky few who escape marriages or sexual slavery in China often face stigma on their return to Vietnam and are shunned by neighbors. Driven to offer such victims a purpose-and an income-Vang Thi Mai set up the Lung Tam Linen Cooperative in 2001. "Society may not like them but here they are confident," said Mai, dressed in a traditional pleated indigo hemp skirt and embroidered coat.

Sexism runs deep

The co-op quickly grew and today is a hive of activity that employs more than 130 women, not just trafficking victims but

also orphans, single mothers and seniors, who weave, dye and stitch indigo blue and yam orange fabrics from dawn to dusk. With the jobs she is providing, Mai hopes to empower Hmong woman in a culture where sexism runs deep and where most women earn just a few dollars a month as farmers. That poverty is in part what drives the cross-border trade in women and boosting incomes protects potential victims-and increases their social status. "If women, especially trafficked women, are working in a group together they make themselves stronger by gaining negotiating power, accelerating knowledge and integrating into society," said Nguyen Tien Phong, head of inclusive growth at United Nations Development Program in Vietnam.

This is just the kind of support Mai envisioned when she established the center, today a popular spot for tourists winding through the mountain-specked province on motorbikes. But Mai has another goal too: to preserve the centuries-old custom of Hmong weaving, a tradition that has faded in many Hmong homes as modernity has crept in.

Girls who once learned the time-consuming craft from their mothers and grandmothers are busy these days with school work, or Facebook, or hanging out with friends. Most women in the area have swapped their colorfully embroidered hemp jackets and indigo blue hemp skirts for Made-in-China polyester outfits. "The traditional dignity and the cultural essence of the Hmong in Vietnam has eroded, I need to restore that with old women teaching to skills to younger ones," Mai said. "Here we do things manually to preserve our traditional identity, the pearl of Vietnamese culture." — AFP



An ethnic Hmong girl weaving traditional textile at the Lung Tam Linen cooperative.



Ethnic Hmong woman Vang Thi Mai arranging traditional table runners.



Simone Perele lingerie company head of technical development, Anne-Marie Afflard, poses during a photo session at the Simone Perele headquarters in Clichy, outside Paris. — AFP photos



Deputy general manager of French feminine lingerie company Aubade Martina Brown speaks at the Aubade headquarters.

Lingerie looks for new bottom line after #MeToo

“We haven’t yet found a better way of selling knickers than a beautiful bottom,” says Sarah Stagliano, one of a new breed of French lingerie designers grappling with how to make exciting underwear in the age of #MeToo. With G-strings and push-up bras losing their allure as ultra-sexiness gives way to comfort, and the whole idea of seduction being questioned, designers are grappling with how to be interesting without objectifying women. Aubade, one of France’s leading lingerie brands, does not shy away from sex in its advertising. But it found itself at the centre of controversy last month over a huge poster of a pair of perfectly rounded buttocks wearing embroidered panties. Hung from the facade of one of Paris’ biggest department stores, it sparked a furious response from the city’s deputy equality chief who called for it to be taken down. Communist councillor Helene Bidard accused the brand of objectifying a “faceless” woman and demanded “the immediate withdrawal of this sexist campaign.”

Others, however, countered that women’s rights tended to be the least respected in countries where such billboards were banned. “We were not expecting the fuss,” said Aubade boss Martina Brown. The brand’s “Lessons in Seduction” ad campaign sparked similar horror 25 years ago, she said, when it urged



A picture shows a close-up of a sewing machine’s needle as a seamstress works at the Simone Perele lingerie company.

women to “keep it spicy” and “let the situation work to your advantage”. “It shocked people but that did not stop women buying the lingerie nor the brand evolving,” said the German-born managing director. “Women love to see fine embroidery and lace; it talks to them, and that is why we have been zooming in on the underwear. “We have to cut off the models’ heads in the photos otherwise we can’t show the detailing,” she insisted.

‘Let women dream’

Nor did she feel that impossible body standards were being set for women. “Twenty years ago some brands used ordinary women rather than models for their ads. We prefer to let people dream,” Brown added. Aubade will be showing alongside 15 other big French brands at a huge “Lingerie Rocks” show this weekend during Paris fashion week. The line-up also includes Henriette H, a young label at the other end of the spectrum which works mostly on Instagram. Its creator Stagliano opened her boutique on a street in central Paris once known for its bordellos. Stagliano has tried to capture something of that risque air by putting her changing rooms in the window. It is up to the customers whether they pull the curtain or not.

Nor is her label averse to some rather provocative embroidery, with an explicit come-on delicately sewn into the arm of a chemise. “I can see how all this could be taken badly,” she told AFP. “But a woman should be at liberty to put herself in the window if she wants to. It’s about reappropriation.” And according to Stagliano, 36, that also extends to women being free to choose whether they want “to be a sexual object”.



A person works on a product at the French feminine lingerie company Aubade.

to be photoshopped even if her breasts have “fallen perhaps a little” after she breastfed her baby. Jazzmine has been the face of the brand for six years and “will still be in 10 years”, Stagliano declared. In this line of fashion, sensual photo shoots are a must, she said. “To sell a pair of knickers you need a pair of buttocks because that is where you wear them,” the designer added.

“We haven’t yet found a better way to sell them than a beautiful bottom. “If I was using a woman’s rear end to sell cream” that would be another thing, Stagliano argued. The Simone Perele brand takes a far more restrained view. For last year it has been showing its creations in still life draped on the end of a sofa, or glimpsed on a sportswoman or writer. “There is another way of doing it,” said Stephanie Perele, the grand-daughter of the label’s founder, who says women have had enough of photoshopped images. Renaud Cambuzat, a fashion photographer who is now artistic director of the Chantelle group, said there were still nowhere near enough underwear choices for modern women, who are “complex, multifaceted and ever changing”.

At one extreme you have the ailing American giant Victoria’s Secret, he said, “which seems totally oblivious to #MeToo” and whose difficulties show that “we could be seeing the end of an era”. On the other “there is the opposite extreme where you can no longer see the form of the body and we are in a kind of cartoonish plus-sized” universe. “Even after #MeToo we are stuck with a lot of stereotypes. Lots of things are changing but there is still a way to go,” Cambuzat argued. — AFP



Simone Perele lingerie company head of technical development, Anne-Marie Afflard, poses during a photo session.

No more Photoshop

She backs her model, Jazzmine, who is in her 30s, and refuses



LOUIS VUITTON'S ABLOH MAKES SUIT AND TIE STREET ON PARIS CATWALK

Having hogged the headlines throughout the last Paris men's fashion week, Louis Vuitton's streetwear supremo Virgil Abloh attempted to repeat the trick Wednesday by giving the suit and tie a millennial makeover. Having set Instagram alight by sending out Michael Jackson-style sparkly white gloves as invitations for his Louis Vuitton show Thursday, the American designer took his scissors to the business suit in his own Off-White label show. With the rappers Offset and Playboi Carti on the catwalk modelling massive puffer coats, and a further posse of hip hop stars on the front row, the only African-American in charge of a big brand set out to prove that there was more to him than street culture. "I zig while I zag," the one-time architect, civil engineer, DJ, artist and all-round renaissance man told reporters afterwards.

"If you look at how I am depicted, I am always the streetwear guy, but that is only part of the surface level. In culture you are supposed to lead," Abloh added. The show in the courtyard of the Louvre museum was one of the hottest tickets of the week. Set in an overgrown post-industrial wilderness, a gentle waft of hashish floated on the air. As well as his reimagined "authoritarian business suits" inspired by television newscasters from Abloh's youth in the "time before Instagram", several of his models wore American football helmets. Abloh—whose magpie imagination has set fashion alight in recent years—also treated his 3.4 million social media followers to a preview of his new jewelry line, inspired by the humble paper clip.



Models present creations by Off-White during the men's Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos



Ode to Michael Jackson

He also wrote a poem for his Jackson-inspired Vuitton show, his first “outside of a high-school homework assignment a million years ago”, the 38-year-old said. With his friend, former collaborator and fellow black American Heron Preston kicking off Paris fashion week, Abloh told reporters that it sometimes felt that their moment had come. Both are close to the rapper Kanye West, who long dreamed of leading a major fashion label himself before Abloh got their first by taking the helm at Vuitton last year.

Abloh will be subject of a major retrospective exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago in June. Elsewhere on the second day of the Paris men’s shows, black was also the dominant color on the autumn-winter catwalks, with Givenchy, Valentino and OAMC all opting for a relatively sombre palate.

One of the big exceptions was the Japanese youth label Undercover, whose designer Jun Takahashi mixed ski wear, Venetian ball masks and the swagger of Highland Jacobite rebels with plumed bonnets in his show. But it was Belgian maverick Walter Van Beirendonck who really turned up the chromatic temperature with his fabulously multi-coloured acid-trip looks that seemed to have escaped from an alien anthropological museum. His sharks’ teeth sneakers were also clear winners of the day’s snappiest shoes. Another Flemish legend Raf Simons rounded the day off, with his first show since he parted ways with New York brand Calvin Klein last month. — AFP



Models present creations by Raf Simons during the men’s Fashion Week for the Fall/Winter 2019/2020 collection in Paris.



Baked brie with jam or fruit is popular for good reason

Baked Brie topped with jam or fruit is popular for good reason. When the cheese is warmed, it becomes rich and gooey, and pairing it with sweet fruit brings out the savory notes in the cheese. For sweet and creamy flavor in every bite, we reengineered the traditional whole wheel of baked Brie by trimming off the rind (which doesn't melt that well) and slicing the cheese into cubes. This allowed our honey-apricot mixture to be evenly distributed throughout this deconstructed version of the dish, not just spooned on top.

Baking the cheese in a cast-iron skillet seemed like a no-brainer; since the skillet holds on to heat so well, it keeps the cheese in the ideal luscious, fluid state. We finished the dish with an extra drizzle of honey and some minced chives to reinforce the sweet-savory flavor

profile. Be sure to use a firm, fairly unripe Brie for this recipe. Serve with crackers or Melba toast.

BAKED BRIE WITH HONEYED APRICOTS

Ingredients

Servings: 8-10
Start to finish: 30 minutes
1/4 cup chopped dried apricots
1/4 cup honey
1 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
2 (8-ounce) wheels firm brie cheese, rind removed, cheese cut into 1-inch pieces
1 tablespoon minced fresh chives

Preparation

Adjust oven rack to middle position and heat oven to 400 F. Microwave apricots, 2 table-

spoons honey, rosemary, salt, and pepper in medium bowl until apricots are softened and mixture is fragrant, about 1 minute, stirring halfway through microwaving. Add Brie and toss to combine. Transfer mixture to 10-inch cast-iron skillet and bake until cheese is melted, 10 to 15 minutes. Drizzle with remaining 2 tablespoons honey and sprinkle with chives. Serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

239 calories; 141 calories from fat; 16 g fat (10 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 57 mg cholesterol; 432 mg sodium; 13 g carbohydrate; 1 g fiber; 13 g sugar; 12 g protein..

COOKING ON DEADLINE: Roasted Squash with Salsa Verde



By Katie Workman

Most of the time, I end up putting my energy into the main course. You, too, right? The side dishes then have a tiered level of time and effort afforded to each of them, often ending with something exciting like “rice.” But sometimes it just makes sense to flip that paradigm on its head, keep the main dish undemanding and uncomplicated, and show the side dishes some love.

Pick an entree that can be tossed into the oven and then - other than the setting of a timer and maybe an occasional basting - be ignored. A roast chicken, a filet, a leg of lamb. Then get started on this sexy side dish. In a way, this recipe is about lavishing attention on the details. Making roasted squash is just a matter of cubing squash (which can easily be bought peeled and seeded), tossing it with some oil and salt, and letting it do its thing in the oven.

Once the oven door is closed, you'll spend a few minutes pureeing several green and flavorful ingredients in a blender or food processor for a verdant salsa verde, washing the bowl, then pureeing some ricotta and feta for a creamy finish. By the time the vegetables (and the roast) are ready to come out of the oven, you've got your squash accessories ready to go. Add salt with a light hand here as several of the ingredients - feta, capers and anchovies - have a lot of salt already. You can always give the finished dish an extra sprinkle of salt if you think it's needed. You can let the squash cool to room temperature, or serve it warm. The salsa verde will keep in the fridge for up to three days. The ricotta and feta mixture will keep for

up to five days. So is this dish a little fussy? Yes. But, man, is it worth it.

ROASTED SQUASH WITH SALSA VERDE AND WHIPPED FETA AND RICOTTA

Ingredients

Servings: 8

Start to finish: 45 minutes

ROASTED SQUASH

2 butternut squash (about 3 pounds total), peeled and cubed

3 tablespoons olive oil

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

SCALLION SALSA VERDE

1 cup packed flat-leaf parsley leaves

1 cup sliced scallions

1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves

2 anchovies, rinsed

1 tablespoon capers, rinsed

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil

Zest and juice of 1 lemon

Pinch red pepper flakes

Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

WHIPPED RICOTTA AND FETA

1 cup fresh whole milk ricotta

1/2 cup crumbled feta

Freshly ground pepper to taste

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil, or more to taste

Salt to taste, if needed

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Spray a rimmed baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray, and then spread the squash on the baking sheet. Drizzle with the 3 tablespoons olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and toss until the squash is evenly coated. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes, until the squash is nicely browned in spots and tender inside.

Meanwhile, make the Scallion Salsa Verde. Place the parsley, scallions, thyme, anchovies, capers, 1/2 cup olive oil, lemon juice and zest, and red pepper flakes into the bowl of a food processor. Pulse several times, and then let the motor run until it is pureed. Taste and add salt and pepper as desired (be generous with the pepper, but perhaps lighter on the salt thanks to the anchovies and capers). Transfer to a small serving bowl. Then, make the Whipped Ricotta and Feta. Place the ricotta and feta into the (cleaned!) bowl of a food processor and pulse to combine. Add a nice amount of pepper. With the motor running, drizzle in the 1/4 cup olive oil until the mixture is fluffy and smooth. Taste and see if the mixture needs salt. Transfer to a small bowl. Transfer the squash to a serving platter. Spoon the Whipped Ricotta and Feta in little mounds over the squash. Drizzle the Salsa Verde over the squash. Remember to serve the roast.

Nutrition information per serving

358 calories; 249 calories from fat; 28 g fat (7 g saturated; 0 g trans fats); 25 mg cholesterol; 247 mg sodium; 23 g carbohydrate; 4 g fiber; 5 g sugar; 7 g protein.

Plan your perfect Greek island-hopping adventure



A fishing boat laden with nets lolls in the harbour on the Northeastern Aegean island of Lesvos.

Scattered like pearls across the shimmering Aegean and Ionian seas, the charms of the Greek islands have lured many. From Jason and his adventuring Argonauts to Frankish Crusaders and Mamma Mia film crews, myth and enchantment enfold the islands much like their ribbons of sugar-soft sand. There's nothing quite like spotting the shoreline from a sun-drenched ferry deck or sailing into a vibrant port. In Greece, getting there is an essential part of the adventure and, thankfully, island hopping is a breeze.

When to go

While the Greek islands are stunning at any time of year, aim for your visit to fall between Orthodox Easter (usually April) and the end of May, or from September to mid-October. During these times, services and amenities are up and running, temperatures are balmy and crowds are thinner. From June until the end of August, you will definitely have warm sea water and hot weather, but you'll be sharing it with the masses, paying top bill, and the meltemi (dry northerly wind) can play havoc with ferry schedules.

In the low season, many ferry routes cease to operate and hotels and restaurants shut up shop.

To plan or not to plan

In reality, it's best to do a little of both. A bit of planning can definitely take you a long way. Deciding where you want to go and getting your head around ferry schedules before you go will take the work out of your holiday. Having said that, Greece is known for its laid-back attitude, and it's worth emulating this while island hopping. Ferry schedules are always vulnerable to change, even pre-booked and paid journeys. Anything from windy weather to worker strikes can mean delay or cancellation at short notice. Building a little flexibility into your schedule is wise.

Suggested routes

You can definitely handpick a few islands from various groups and create your own route; however, many ferry lines service specific groups so planning can be easier if you stick to a single area. All flights lead to Athens - or so it seems - and arriving in the cap-

ital not only gives you the opportunity to take in its jaw-dropping sights, but it also brings you close to the port of Piraeus for boats to the Cyclades, Saronic Gulf islands, and even more remote ones like the Dodecanese. Athens also neighbors the port of Rafina for routes to the eastern Cyclades and further afield. To visit the Northeastern Aegean islands, land in Thessaloniki, Greece's second city.

If you're planning to spend most of your time in a specific island group, it's worth catching a domestic flight from Athens to get you started - it will save you both time and money. Practicality aside, there's nothing quite like descending in a twin engine onto a tiny airstrip in the middle of the bright blue sea. Some of these island destinations are also served by international flights in the high season.

The Cyclades

The appeal of the Cyclades is undeniable, and it's here that you'll find some of the most popular islands. Be prepared to share, especially in high season. From Piraeus, hop a ferry to Mykonos,



Adventure awaits at the quiet harbor of Makrygialos village in southern Crete.

the most glamorous of the Greek islands. Overlooked by its iconic windmills, you'll rub shoulders with the famous as you explore the flower-filled lanes and boutique shops and cafes. From here, day-trip to the tiny island of Delos with its ancient sun-bleached ruins. Carry on to Naxos, the largest of the Cyclades, with a walled seaside capital surrounding a hilltop castle. Even further south, you'll reach Santorini with its iconic sunsets, black-sand beaches, vineyards and incredible Minoan site. Complete the loop with a stop in laid-back Milos, with dozens of beaches and charming villages to explore. From here, hop a ferry back to Piraeus.

The Dodecanese

In the Dodecanese you'll see and taste the historical influences of the parade of cultures that have passed through, from Romans and crusading medieval knights to Byzantine and Ottoman rulers. Think plenty of pasta, sugary baklava, stunning minarets, walled cities and crumbling mountaintop castles. The catamaran service that regularly connects the islands makes island hopping simple. Begin by catching a flight to Rhodes, which abounds in sandy beaches, ancient history and a buzzing city life.

Visit volcanic Nisyros to hike through its verdant forests and into its steaming caldera, and Karpathos for its timeless hilltop village of Olymbos. Kalymnos will call climbers and divers with its undersea wrecks and limestone cliffs, while Patmos has an ethereal quality, where life is in tune with the monastery bells and where St John experienced his Revelations. If you're visiting around Orthodox Easter, Patmos is the place to be. Loop back to popular Kos for an endless strip of brown-sugar sand, nightlife, easily cycleable roads, and an airport with regular flights to Athens.

The Ionians

Nestled along the coast of the Peloponnese in the Ionian Sea, these islands have a slightly cooler climate, abundantly forested mountains and countless stands of olive and cypress trees. From Athens you can fly to Corfu where you'll be wooed by Parisian-style arcades, Venetian alleyways and Italian-inspired delicacies. Corfu is large enough to escape the crowds to cypress-studded hills, lofty villages and sandy coves. The next island is tiny Paxi, with beautiful harbor villages, rolling hills and ancient olive groves. Visit Lefkada for its sandy beaches and Kefallonia to kayak along the magnificent cobalt-blue bays. Take in time-forgotten Kythira for sugar-cube architecture and unspoiled wilderness. Far flung to the south, you can ferry back to Piraeus from here.

Ferries

With a network covering every inhabited island, the Greek ferry system is vast and varied. The slow rust buckets that once plied the seas are nearly a thing of the past. High-speed ferries are increasingly common and cover most popular routes. Local ferries, excursion boats and tiny, private fishing boats (called caiques) often connect neighboring islands and islets. Meanwhile, plush catamarans can drastically reduce travel time and cope better with poor weather. For long-haul ferry travel, you can travel in serious comfort. Many ferry companies have online booking services. Not surprisingly, high-speed boats sell out faster than slow chuggers. For overnight ferries, it's always best to book ahead. The following resources are useful for planning and booking:

Danae Travel: A good site for booking boat tickets.

Greek Travel: Pages Useful search option and links for ferries.



An island-hopping yacht moored in a secluded cove on Kalymnos island in the Dodecanese.

Lifestyle | Travel



Arrival into the port of Fira on the caldera edge of the stunning Santorini island in the Cyclades.

Greek ferries: Search ferry schedules, including accommodation options and multi-leg journeys.

Tips and tricks

- Deck-class is just that; access to the deck and interior but no overnight accommodation. Unless you state otherwise, you will automatically be given deck class when purchasing a ticket. From there, prices climb with aeroplane recliner seats right up to private cabins with bathrooms.

- A bed for the night in a cabin from Piraeus to Rhodes can be more expensive than a discounted airline ticket. It's worth shopping around.

- Children under five years of age travel for free, while tickets for those aged between five and 10 are usually half price.

- Food on ferries can be overpriced and underwhelming. Bring snacks and water.

- The water can be rough; if you veer towards seasickness, stare at the horizon, not the sea. Stay on deck for fresh air and don't be tempted to read or use binoculars.

- Bringing a car on board is expensive and generally requires advance booking. Care hire on the islands is relatively cheap and possible on almost every island.



A solitary sailboat at the famous Navagio beach on the Ionian island of Zakynthos.



Evening in the port of Piraeus, the starting point for many Greek island-hopping trips.

Comic

Word Search

Sewing

Find and circle all of the Sewing words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an old saying.

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

- | | | | |
|------------|------------------|---------------|---------------|
| AWL | HEM | PINS | SPOOL |
| BOBBIN | HOOCS | QUILTING | STITCH |
| BUTTONS | LACE | RIBBON | TAILOR |
| CLOTH | MAGNIFYING GLASS | RIPS | TAPE MEASURE |
| DARNING | MENDING | ROTARY CUTTER | TEARS |
| DRESSMAKER | NEEDLES | SCISSORS | THIMBLE |
| ELASTIC | PATCH | SEAM RIPPER | THREAD |
| EMBROIDERY | PATTERN | SEAMSTRESS | TRACING PAPER |
| EYES | PENCIL | SHEARS | TRACING WHEEL |
| FABRIC | PINCUSHION | SNAPS | ZIPPER |
| GROMMETS | | | |

Yesterday's Solution

SCUBA Diving

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

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

The hidden message is: SELF CONTAINED UNDERWATER BREATHING APPARATUS

Crossword 2113



ACROSS

- A piece of furniture that provides a place to sleep.
- (anatomy) Of or relating to a chiasm.
- The residue that remains when something is burned.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- Pearl oysters.
- Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
- (used informally) Very small.
- A person who tries to please someone in order to gain a personal advantage.
- Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
- Not out.
- Hard heavy red wood of a quira tree.
- The compass point that is one point south of due east.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- Being ten more than one hundred eighty.
- Large high frilly cap with a full crown.
- Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
- Catch sight of.
- A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
- Before noon.
- The mints.
- A doctor's degree in preventive medicine.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- A game in which numbered balls are drawn and random and players cover the corresponding numbers on their cards.
- Not having rhyme.
- An enclosed space.
- A rapid escape (as by criminals).
- Of or relating to anestrus.
- A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
- A strong-smelling plant from whose dried leaves a number of euphoriant and hallucinogenic drugs are prepared.
- (Greek mythology) The rarified fluid said to flow in the veins of the Gods.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- An associate degree in nursing.
- No longer having or seeming to have or expecting to have life.
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- An island in the Netherlands Antilles that is the top of an extinct volcano.
- An ugly evil-looking old woman.
- Everything that exists anywhere.
- A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A government agent responsible for collecting revenue (especially one responsible for stopping bootlegging).
- Counting the number of white and red blood cells and the number of platelets in 1 cubic millimeter of blood.
- A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
- A grant made by a law court.
- An associate degree in applied science.

DOWN

- Being or befitting or characteristic of an infant.
- A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
- A collection of facts from which conclusions may be drawn.
- An index of the cost of all goods and services to a typical consumer.
- Step on it.
- Not out.
- Presently existing in fact and not merely potential or possible.
- Seemingly unaffected by pleasure or pain.
- A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
- Large antelope with lightly spiraled horns of desert regions of North Africa.
- Concerning those not members of the clergy.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- Stable gear consisting of either of two curved supports that are attached to the collar of a draft horse and that hold the traces.
- A case or sheath especially a pollen sac or moss capsule.
- Offering little or no hope.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- Perennial northern temperate plant with toothed leaves and heads of small purplish-white flowers.
- German mystic and theosophist who founded modern theosophy.
- Conqueror of Gaul and master of Italy (100-44 BC).
- An ancient upright stone slab bearing markings.
- A republic on the Isthmus of Panama.
- Officer in the (ceremonial) bodyguard of the British monarch.
- (physics) Of or pertaining to a meson.
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- In or of the month preceding the present one.
- United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
- A city in western Germany.
- (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
- South African term for 'boss'.
- Cause to feel resentment or indignation.
- The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
- A sensation (as of a cold breeze or bright light) that precedes the onset of certain disorders such as a migraine attack or epileptic seizure.
- The Destroyer.
- Having come or been brought to a conclusion.
- Wild sheep of northern Africa.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- Not of long duration.
- A fractional monetary unit of Japan and Indonesia and Cambodia.
- A cgs unit of work or energy.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings



00:10 The Pastor
02:00 Ladder 49
04:00 Cyber Case
05:40 The Fast And The Furious
07:15 Chasing Gold
08:55 Ladder 49
10:55 Cyber Case
12:35 Resident Evil: Vendetta
14:15 Star Trek Beyond
16:20 The Wolverine
18:30 Vengeance: A Love Story
20:15 Robin Hood
22:00 Ultimate Justice
23:35 Carter And June

08:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
09:05 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
09:50 Homicide Hunter
10:35 Homicide: Hours To Kill
11:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill
12:25 Live PD: Police Patrol
12:55 Live PD: Police Patrol
13:20 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
14:15 Cults And Extreme Belief
15:10 Cults And Extreme Belief
16:05 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
18:00 Crimes That Shook Australia
19:00 The First 48
20:00 The First 48
21:00 Homicide Hunter
22:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
22:30 Live PD: Police Patrol
23:00 It Takes A Killer
23:30 It Takes A Killer

22:50 Xtreme Waterparks
23:15 Xtreme Waterparks
23:40 The Next Great Magician



00:50 What Lies Beneath
01:45 Blood Runs Cold
02:40 American Monster
03:35 Murder By Numbers
04:30 Reasonable Doubt
05:25 Evil Lives Here
06:20 Murder Calls
07:10 I Almost Got Away With It
08:00 I Was Murdered
08:25 Village Of The Damned
09:15 Nightmare Next Door
10:10 Swamp Murders
11:05 Forbidden: Dying For Love
12:00 Who Killed Jane Doe?
12:55 Village Of The Damned
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:45 Evil Lives Here
15:40 Murder Calls
16:35 Reasonable Doubt
17:30 Village Of The Damned
18:25 Nightmare Next Door
19:20 I Almost Got Away With It
20:15 Evil Lives Here
21:10 Murder Calls
22:05 Swamp Murders
23:00 Murder By Numbers
23:55 American Monster



00:10 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Alex & Co.
01:25 Alex & Co.
01:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
01:50 Evermoor Chronicles
02:15 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:40 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:05 Binny And The Ghost
03:30 Binny And The Ghost
03:55 Hank Zipzer
04:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
04:20 Hank Zipzer
04:45 Alex & Co.
05:10 Alex & Co.
05:35 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:00 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
06:25 Binny And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
07:25 Raven's Home
07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:55 Penny On M.A.R.S
08:20 Bunk'd
08:45 K.C. Undercover
09:10 Bizaardvark
09:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
10:25 Tangled: The Series
11:15 Bizaardvark
12:05 Liv And Maddie
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:45 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
14:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
15:00 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
15:15 Bunk'd
15:40 K.C. Undercover
16:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
16:10 A.N.T. Farm
16:35 Penny On M.A.R.S
17:00 That's So Raven
17:50 Raven's Home
18:15 Stuck In The Middle
18:40 Bunk'd
19:05 K.C. Undercover
19:30 Bizaardvark
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Raven's Home
20:25 Liv And Maddie
20:50 K.C. Undercover
21:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:20 A.N.T. Farm
21:45 Bizaardvark

22:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
22:35 Stuck In The Middle
23:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:50 Lolirock



00:00 Puppy Dog Pals
00:30 The Lion Guard
01:00 Sofia The First
01:25 Minnie's Bow-Toons
01:30 Zou
02:00 PJ Masks
02:50 The Hive
03:00 Zou
03:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 The Hive
04:40 Zou
05:25 The Hive
05:35 The Hive
05:45 Henry Hugglemonster
06:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
06:35 The Hive
06:45 PJ Masks
08:00 Disney Muppet Babies
08:20 Paprika
08:30 Paprika
08:40 PJ Masks
09:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:15 Puppy Dog Pals
09:30 Vampirina
09:45 Fancy Nancy
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Elena Of Avalor
11:00 Puppy Dog Pals
12:00 Disney Muppet Babies
12:20 Paprika
12:30 Paprika
12:40 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
13:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
13:40 PJ Masks
14:40 Paprika
15:00 Claude
15:20 Claude
15:40 Vampirina
16:00 Vampirina
16:30 Paprika
17:00 Disney Muppet Babies
17:15 Disney Muppet Babies
17:30 PJ Masks
18:00 Puppy Dog Pals
18:25 Chip And Dale's Nutty Tales
18:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:00 Fancy Nancy
19:15 Fancy Nancy
19:30 Vampirina
20:00 PJ Masks
20:30 The Lion Guard
21:00 Sofia The First
21:25 Claude
21:30 Elena Of Avalor
22:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
22:30 Fancy Nancy
22:45 Fancy Nancy
23:00 Vampirina
23:30 PJ Masks



00:15 Ultimate Survival
01:05 Abandoned Engineering
01:50 How Do They Do It?
02:15 How Do They Do It?
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Fast N' Loud
04:05 Fast N' Loud
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:15 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Property Wars
06:00 Storage Hunters UK
06:20 Property Wars
06:45 Ultimate Survival
07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Alaskan Bush People
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:10 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Fast N' Loud
12:20 Fast N' Loud
13:05 Storage Hunters UK
13:30 Property Wars
13:55 Alaskan Bush People

14:40 Alaska: The Last Frontier
15:30 Master Of Arms
16:15 Wheeler Dealers
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:05 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Fast N' Loud
20:15 Fast N' Loud
21:00 Sticker Shock
21:50 Wheeler Dealers
22:40 Race Night At Bowman Gray
23:30 Deadliest Catch



00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Booster
01:00 Booster
01:25 Counterfeit Cat
01:45 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
02:35 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Booster
03:20 Booster
03:45 Dude That's My Ghost
04:10 Dude That's My Ghost
04:35 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
05:29 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:29 Big Hero 6 The Series
07:00 Phineas And Ferb
07:29 Phineas And Ferb
08:00 Gravity Falls
08:29 Gravity Falls
09:00 Supa Strikas
09:29 Milo Murphy's Law
10:00 Milo Murphy's Law
10:29 Lab Rats Elite Force
11:00 Phineas And Ferb
11:29 Phineas And Ferb
12:00 Supa Strikas
12:29 Gravity Falls
13:00 Gravity Falls
13:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
14:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
14:29 Disney 11
15:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
15:31 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
16:00 Big City Greens
16:29 Lab Rats
17:00 Milo Murphy's Law
17:29 Supa Strikas
18:00 Disney 11
18:29 Big Hero 6 The Series
19:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:29 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
20:00 Big City Greens
20:29 Gravity Falls
21:00 Gravity Falls
21:29 Star Wars Resistance
22:00 Milo Murphy's Law
22:29 Furiki Wheels
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:25 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja



00:10 The Chase
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 What Would Your Kid Do?
04:20 Martin Clunes: Islands Of Australia
05:15 Don't Tell The Bride
06:15 Cannonball
07:10 The Chase
08:05 What Would Your Kid Do?
09:00 Martin Clunes: Islands Of Australia
09:55 Don't Tell The Bride
10:55 Cannonball
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Cannonball
15:10 The Chase
16:00 Change Your Tune
16:55 The Jonathan Ross Show
17:50 Don't Tell The Bride
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 Change Your Tune
21:55 The Jonathan Ross Show
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 Clash Of Warriors
01:00 Weapons At War
02:00 Ancient Discoveries
03:00 America's Book Of Secrets
03:50 UFO Hunters
04:40 Ancient Aliens
05:30 The Universe
06:20 Clash Of Warriors
07:10 Weapons At War
08:00 Ancient Discoveries
09:00 America's Book Of Secrets
10:00 UFO Hunters
11:00 Ancient Aliens
12:00 The Universe
13:00 Clash Of Warriors
14:00 Ancient Discoveries
15:00 America's Book Of Secrets
16:00 UFO Hunters
17:00 Ancient Aliens
18:00 The Universe
19:00 Ancient Discoveries
20:00 America's Book Of Secrets
21:00 UFO Hunters
22:00 Ancient Aliens
23:00 Clash Of The Gods



00:20 Alone: Lost And Found
01:05 The Lost Evidence
01:50 The Lost Evidence
02:35 Hunting Hitler
03:25 The Warfighters
04:15 The Lost Evidence
05:05 The Lost Evidence
06:00 The Lost Evidence
06:45 The Lost Evidence
07:30 Swamp People
08:15 Swamp People
09:00 Swamp People
09:45 The Warfighters
10:30 The Warfighters
11:15 Alone: Lost And Found
12:00 Alone: Lost And Found
13:30 Alone: Lost And Found
14:15 Alone: Lost And Found
15:00 Hunting Hitler
15:45 Hunting Hitler
16:30 Hunting Hitler
17:15 Hunting Hitler
18:00 Hunting Hitler
18:45 The Lost Evidence
19:30 The Lost Evidence
20:15 Detroit Steel
21:00 Ice Road Truckers
21:50 Swamp People
22:40 Swamp People
23:30 Swamp People



E! Entertainment HD
00:00 Botched
01:00 Botched
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 WAGs LA
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Botched
12:35 Model Squad
14:25 Model Squad
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Botched
21:00 Botched
22:00 Ashlee+evan
22:30 Ashlee+evan
23:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



00:50 Wolves And Warriors
01:45 North Woods Law
02:40 Swimming With Monsters: Steve Backshall
03:35 Kingdom Of The Elephants
04:25 Wolves And Warriors
05:15 North Woods Law
06:02 Mekong: Soul Of A River
06:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
07:36 Orangutan Island
08:00 Orangutan Island
08:25 Keeping Up With The Kruger
09:15 Animal Cops Houston
10:10 Wolves And Warriors
11:05 North Woods Law
12:00 Mekong: Soul Of A River
12:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
13:50 Kingdom Of The Elephants
14:45 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
15:40 Scaled
16:35 Swimming With Monsters: Steve Backshall
17:30 Keeping Up With The Kruger
18:25 Animal Cops Houston
19:20 Growing Up... Polar Bear Orphan
20:15 The Vet Life
21:10 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
22:05 Untamed China With Nigel Marven
23:00 I'm Alive
23:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees



00:05 Chappelle's Show
00:30 Broad City
00:55 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:25 Impractical Jokers
01:45 Chappelle's Show
02:10 Inside Amy Schumer
02:35 Broad City
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:30 Broad City
03:55 Broad City
04:20 Lip Sync Battle
04:45 Lip Sync Battle
05:10 Catch A Contractor
06:00 Friendszone
06:25 Friendszone
06:50 Snack Off
07:15 Snack Off
07:40 Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders: Making The Team
08:30 Lip Sync Battle
08:55 Lip Sync Battle
09:20 I Used To Be Fat
10:10 Kroll Show
11:25 Key And Peele
13:05 Friends
20:05 Friends
20:35 Barely Famous
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Demetri Martin: Person
22:25 Roast Battle UK
22:50 Tosh.0
23:15 Tosh.0
23:40 DL Hugley: Shocked And Appalled



00:30 Xploration Outer Space
01:20 Animal Airport
02:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
03:00 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
03:50 How It's Made
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Xploration Outer Space
06:20 React To That
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
07:50 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
08:40 How It's Made
09:30 React To That
10:20 Animal Airport
11:10 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Xploration Outer Space
14:30 How It's Made
15:20 React To That
15:45 Kids Do The Craziest Things
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
16:35 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 Animal Airport
17:25 Beverly Hills Groomer
17:50 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
18:40 Breaking Magic
19:05 Breaking Magic
19:30 The Next Great Magician
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
20:45 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
22:00 How It's Made
22:25 How It's Made



00:00 The First 48
01:00 Secrets Of The Morgue
01:55 Homicide: Hours To Kill
05:30 Live PD: Police Patrol
05:55 Live PD: Police Patrol
06:15 Crimes That Shook Britain
07:00 Holloway: Women Behind Bars
08:00 It Takes A Killer
08:20 Live PD: Police Patrol

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are fully aware you are not getting any younger. A desire to make the most of this life you have been given is a driving force for you. You have been too strict with yourself in the past. It is time to let your hair down and live a little. You tend to dismiss anyone and anything that does not conform to your way of thinking. This is a great time for you to surround yourself with your friends from other cultures, religions, and races. This could be an eye opener for you. A new outlook on life is what you need. Step out of your box and experience something new.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your main focus seems to be family. You crave a solid foundation and know that the root of your success and happiness begins and ends with your family. You have needs and you want to be needed by your family and those closest to you. This is a strong desire you have for your life and you are extremely focused on these relationships. You seem to be holding yourself to the highest possible standards and are extremely strict on yourself. You seem to dismiss anything that does not contribute to your goals. You may find that this is not the best of times to try and get your point across to others. You feel as if you encounter a bit of a block when trying to communicate with others today.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

People sometimes wonder about the secret to your contentment. It's not something you think about. You just go about each day being helpful and kind. You consider being reliable a part of who you are. You are not working at being happy, but happiness is a by-product of your lifestyle. If you could bottle and sell it, you might become financially rich. But you know that money is not the key to riches. You reap your rewards by continuing to invest in others.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may find yourself tense and anxious about a situation you have found yourself in. You may feel under pressure and feel somewhat anxious. This may lead to you mentally checking out. You may use this as a coping mechanism for the stress you are under. An out of body feeling in a dreamy state may be the way your mind chooses to handle this conflict. Others may not be fond of this side of you and this could result in conflict with someone close to you. You will find your way and through your ability to get to the root of your problems, this too will be solved. Cancer. Set your mind on a solution and make it happen.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have always been taught to treat others as you want to be treated. It seems as if this is beginning to pay off for you. You find yourself surrounded by some really caring and thoughtful friends. Being showered for your talents is a comforting feeling. You find this a time you not only are able to enjoy your life but truly love and appreciate the position you find yourself in.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

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



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today finds you in a very positive mood. You have learned to value adversity, as your positive approach keeps you focused on learning from your mistakes and experiences. This quality makes you very appealing to others. You may find others tend to seek and value your opinions and advice. You almost have a mystical quality about yourself today. You place great value on love and forgiveness of those closest to you. Libra, you may find much peace surrounding you today. Enjoy and relax!



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is a time others may find you marching to the beat of your own drum. There are times you long to be surrounded by friends and family and times that the only thing that appeals to you is time alone. This is a time you crave independence. You seem drawn to everything that is unique and different. A great day for a new outfit, a new hair color, or even time to make some cool new additions to your home. A new you side of you is coming to light. This will be a time of happiness and today will find you with a constant smile on your face. Others may be drawn to your high energy and uniqueness.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Just because something seems easy doesn't mean it is right. Taking the easy way out can lead to trouble. Not feeling right about the path before you, you may choose the long way around to accomplish your goals. This is a great time in your life to work with others. You may find you are chosen as just the right person to lead a new project at work. Not only are you highly organized, your directional abilities are great. You may be offered a new position or asked to lead a project. Your confidence levels are high now and for good reason.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This is your time to shine. You are full of pride and proud of your accomplishments. You are being noticed in the workplace and have been excelling at your job. You are very observant of the feelings of those around you and are able to make them feel good about themselves. You feel much support from your peers and family. Everything in your world is beginning to feel healthy and come natural. You begin to feel as if something doesn't come from the heart it is irrelevant in your world. You surround yourself with people you feel are real and true friends. This is a great time for you and others begin to admire you not only for your accomplishments that the way you make them feel about themselves.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may feel as if you wake up living in a fairy tale today. Everything seems to be going in your favor. An almost magical world surrounds you. A world where your dreams are becoming realities and you long for nothing. You are absolutely glowing and others will be drawn to you. Your smile is contagious. There is no better feeling than spreading joy. Always remember the gifts and blessings you receive are meant to be shared with others. Enjoy your magical day as you are surrounded with happiness and love.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

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

Country Codes

| | | | |
|--------------------------|---------|-----------------------|--------|
| Afghanistan | 0093 | Jordan | 00962 |
| Albania | 00355 | Kazakhstan | 007 |
| Algeria | 00213 | Kenya | 00254 |
| Andorra | 00376 | Kiribati | 00686 |
| Angola | 00244 | Kuwait | 00965 |
| Anguilla | 001264 | Kyrgyzstan | 00996 |
| Antigua | 001268 | Laos | 00856 |
| Argentina | 0054 | Latvia | 00371 |
| Armenia | 00374 | Lebanon | 00961 |
| Australia | 0061 | Liberia | 00231 |
| Austria | 0043 | Libya | 00218 |
| Bahamas | 001242 | Lithuania | 00370 |
| Bahrain | 00973 | Luxembourg | 00352 |
| Bangladesh | 00880 | Macau | 00853 |
| Barbados | 001246 | Macedonia | 00389 |
| Belarus | 00375 | Madagascar | 00261 |
| Belgium | 0032 | Majorca | 0034 |
| Belize | 00501 | Malawi | 00265 |
| Benin | 00229 | Malaysia | 0060 |
| Bermuda | 001441 | Maldives | 00960 |
| Bhutan | 00975 | Mali | 00223 |
| Bolivia | 00591 | Malta | 00356 |
| Bosnia | 00387 | Marshall Islands | 00692 |
| Botswana | 00267 | Martinique | 00596 |
| Brazil | 0055 | Mauritania | 00222 |
| Brunei | 00673 | Mauritius | 00230 |
| Bulgaria | 00359 | Mayotte | 00269 |
| Burkina | 00226 | Mexico | 0052 |
| Burundi | 00257 | Micronesia | 00691 |
| Cambodia | 00855 | Moldova | 00373 |
| Cameroon | 00237 | Monaco | 00377 |
| Canada | 001 | Mongolia | 00976 |
| Cape Verde | 00238 | Montserrat | 001664 |
| Cayman Islands | 001345 | Morocco | 00212 |
| Central African Republic | 00236 | Mozambique | 00258 |
| Chad | 00235 | Myanmar (Burma) | 0095 |
| Chile | 0056 | Namibia | 00264 |
| China | 0086 | Nepal | 00977 |
| Colombia | 0057 | Netherlands (Holland) | 0031 |
| Comoros | 00269 | Netherlands Antilles | 00599 |
| Congo | 00242 | New Caledonia | 00687 |
| Cook Islands | 00682 | New Zealand | 0064 |
| Costa Rica | 00506 | Nicaragua | 00505 |
| Croatia | 00385 | Niger | 00227 |
| Cuba | 0053 | Nigeria | 00234 |
| Cyprus | 00357 | Niue | 00683 |
| Cyprus (Northern) | 0090392 | Norfolk Island | 00672 |
| Czech Republic | 00420 | Northern Ireland (UK) | 0044 |
| Denmark | 0045 | North Korea | 00850 |
| Diego Garcia | 00246 | Norway | 0047 |
| Djibouti | 00253 | Oman | 00968 |
| Dominica | 001767 | Pakistan | 0092 |
| Dominican Republic | 001809 | Palau | 00680 |
| Ecuador | 00593 | Panama | 00507 |
| Egypt | 0020 | Papua New Guinea | 00675 |
| El Salvador | 00503 | Paraguay | 00595 |
| England (UK) | 0044 | Peru | 0051 |
| Equatorial Guinea | 00240 | Philippines | 0063 |
| Eritrea | 00291 | Poland | 0048 |
| Estonia | 00372 | Portugal | 00351 |
| Ethiopia | 00251 | Puerto Rico | 001787 |
| Falkland Islands | 00500 | Qatar | 00974 |
| Faroe Islands | 00298 | Romania | 0040 |
| Fiji | 00679 | Russian Federation | 007 |
| Finland | 00358 | Rwanda | 00250 |
| France | 0033 | Saint Helena | 00290 |
| French Guiana | 00594 | Saint Kitts | 001869 |
| French Polynesia | 00689 | Saint Lucia | 001758 |
| Gabon | 00241 | Saint Pierre | 00508 |
| Gambia | 00220 | Saint Vincent | 001784 |
| Georgia | 00995 | Samoa US | 00684 |
| Germany | 0049 | Samoa West | 00685 |
| Ghana | 00233 | San Marino | 00378 |
| Gibraltar | 00350 | Sao Tome | 00239 |
| Greece | 0030 | Saudi Arabia | 00966 |
| Greenland | 00299 | Scotland (UK) | 0044 |
| Grenada | 001473 | Senegal | 00221 |
| Guadeloupe | 00590 | Seychelles | 00284 |
| Guam | 001671 | Sierra Leone | 00232 |
| Guatemala | 00502 | Singapore | 0065 |
| Guinea | 00224 | Slovakia | 00421 |
| Guyana | 00592 | Slovenia | 00386 |
| Haiti | 00509 | Solomon Islands | 00677 |
| Holland (Netherlands) | 0031 | Somalia | 00252 |
| Honduras | 00504 | South Africa | 0027 |
| Hong Kong | 00852 | South Korea | 0082 |
| Hungary | 0036 | Spain | 0034 |
| Ibiza (Spain) | 0034 | Sri Lanka | 0094 |
| Iceland | 00354 | Sudan | 00249 |
| India | 0091 | Suriname | 00597 |
| Indian Ocean | 00873 | Swaziland | 00268 |
| Indonesia | 0062 | Sweden | 0046 |
| Iran | 0098 | Switzerland | 0041 |
| Iraq | 00964 | Syria | 00963 |
| Ireland | 00353 | Taiwan | 00886 |
| Italy | 0039 | Tanzania | 00255 |
| Ivory Coast | 00225 | Thailand | 0066 |
| Jamaica | 001876 | Toga | 00228 |
| Japan | 0081 | Tonga | 00676 |

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Friday, January 18, 2019

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|-------------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
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| Jazeera Airways | 177 | Qatar Airways | 22423888 |
| Wataniya Airways | 22 066 536 | KLM | 22425747 |
| American Airlines | 22087425 | Royal Jordanian | 22418064/5/6 |
| | 22087426 | British Airways | 22425635 |
| Jet Airways | 22924455 | Air France | 22430224 |

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Dusty and Cold with fresh to strong north westerly wind, with speed of 40 - 70 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Very cold with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h .

| WEATHER WARNING | | | Dust Storm | |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|--------------------------------|--|
| STATION | MAX. EXP. | MIN. REC. | SFC. CHART 17/01/2019 0000 UTC | |
| KUWAIT CITY | 20 °C | 17 °C | | |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 18 °C | 13 °C | | |
| ABDALY | 18 °C | 12 °C | | |
| BUBYAN | -- °C | -- °C | | |
| JAHRA | 19 °C | 15 °C | | |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 20 °C | 17 °C | | |
| SALMIYAH | 20 °C | 14 °C | | |
| AHMADI | 20 °C | 18 °C | | |
| NUWAISIB | 20 °C | 17 °C | | |
| WAFRA | 21 °C | 15 °C | | |
| SALMY | 18 °C | 12 °C | | |

4 DAYS FORECAST

| DAY | DATE | WEATHER | Temperatures | | Wind Direction | Wind Speed |
|----------|-------|--|--------------|-------|----------------|--------------|
| | | | MAX. | MIN. | | |
| Friday | 01/18 | Cold | 15 °C | 08 °C | NW | 15 - 35 km/h |
| Saturday | 01/19 | Cold | 13 °C | 04 °C | NW | 12 - 35 km/h |
| Sunday | 01/20 | Cold | 14 °C | 02 °C | NW | 08 - 32 km/h |
| Monday | 01/21 | Cold and some scattered clouds will appear | 15 °C | 03 °C | NW-VRB | 08 - 28 km/h |

PRAYER TIMES

| | |
|---------|-------|
| Fajr | 05:20 |
| Sunrise | 06:43 |
| Zuhr | 11:58 |
| Asr | 14:54 |
| Sunset | 17:13 |
| Isha | 18:34 |

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| MAX. Temp. | 24 °C |
| MIN. Temp. | 12 °C |
| MAX. RH | 100% |
| MIN. RH | 51 % |
| MAX. Wind | S 50 km/h |
| TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR. | .5 mm |

FOR RENT

*Super Deluxe floor in Hitteen
Infront of Al Salam Area*

2 master bedrooms + 2 rooms
with bathroom in between
1 maid's room with bathroom,
kitchen, large reception room

Rent KD 900/-

Ahmad

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Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Business

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38 Siemens, Alstom raise doubts about creating a rail behemoth

39 China growth set to slow to 6.3% in 2019, more stimulus likely

41 Japan's Hitachi freezes British nuclear power station in Wales

Crises to keep world leaders away from Davos

MILAN: An array of crises will keep several world leaders away from the annual World Economic Forum in Davos next week, which takes place against a backdrop of deepening gloom over the global economic and political outlook.

Anxiety over trade disputes, fractious international relations, Brexit and a growth slowdown that some fear could tip the world economy into recession are set to dominate the Jan. 22-25 Alpine meeting and the mood will be somber.

The WEF's own Global Risks Report set the tone this week with a stark warning of looming economic headwinds, in part due to geopolitical tensions among major powers. Some 3,000 business, government and civil society chiefs are due to gather in the snow-blanketed ski resort, but among them are only three leaders of the Group of Seven most industrialized countries: Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian premier Giuseppe Conte.

Donald Trump, who stole the Davos limelight last year with a rare appearance by a sitting US president, pulled out of this year's event as he grapples with a US government shutdown.

His French counterpart Emmanuel Macron is also skipping the meeting as he seeks to respond to the "yellow vest" protests, while Theresa May battles to find a consensus on Brexit.

Outside the G7, the leaders of Russia and India are shunning Davos, while China - whose President Xi Jinping was the first Chinese leader to attend the elite gathering in 2017 to offer a vigorous defense of free trade - is sending his deputy instead.

That will leave the likes of US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and his British colleague Philip Hammond, as well as China's Vice President Wang Qishan and a host of central bankers, with the task of trying to reassure business chiefs. "Davos will be dominated by a high level of anxiety about stock markets, a slow-

down in growth and international politics," said Nari-man Behraves, chief economist at IHS Markit.

"The leadership presence is lower than last year but those who are going, from Mnuchin to central bankers to Abe, will be seeking to impart a sense of confidence and calm business and investors' nerves."

Revamp

A US administration official said the US delegation, which includes Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, would also discuss the importance of reforming institutions such as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Trump has harshly criticized globalization and questioned America's participation in multilateral institutions like the WTO, calling for a revamp of international trade rules. "It's time to revisit ... how some of these groups are structured and are they optimized for

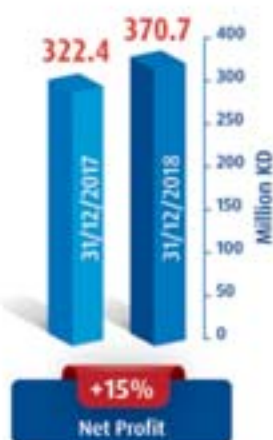
the challenges" of today's economy, the administration official said. "We fully intend to go to Davos and be able to carry the president's message." Davos watchers said the absence of so many top leaders this year did not mean the glitzy forum had lost its mojo as a global stage for top politicians to present their agendas.

"Abe is going to Davos not just as Japanese prime minister but also as chair of the G20. It will be a perfect opportunity to lay the groundwork of upcoming G20 meetings," said a Japanese government source familiar with international affairs. "Of course there may be inconveniences such as missing opportunities to hold bilateral meetings, but that won't undermine the importance of Davos," he said.

A Chinese official who has attended Davos regularly but will not go this year said China had never expected to make progress on the trade row with the United States at the meeting. "It's just an occasion for making a policy statement," he said. —Reuters

370.7

Million KD Net Profit for Year 2018



Moody's Aa3 FitchRatings AA- Standard & Poor's A+

Business

Siemens, Alstom raise doubts about creating a rail behemoth

Merger could create rail giant with operations in 60 countries

MUNICH: Confidence that the politically sensitive merger of their rail businesses would be waved through by the European Commission was ebbing at both Siemens and Alstom yesterday. A source at German group Siemens said Brussels had posed “insurmountable” demands for concessions that the groups would not make. Meanwhile Alstom, maker of France’s iconic TGV trains, said there was “no certainty” the companies could mollify the Commission.

Both Paris and Berlin have thrown their weight behind the proposed Siemens-Alstom tie-up, saying the arrival of Chinese giant CRRC on the global market will put European manufacturers in the shade.

It would be “an economic mistake and a political failing”, as well as a “negative signal to the peoples of Europe” to block the merger, French government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux said Wednesday.

If approved, the merger would create a rail behemoth with operations in 60 countries and annual turnover of 15.6 billion euros (\$17.8 billion). Alone, CRRC’s annual revenues of 26 billion euros outweigh the three Western heavyweights Bombardier, Siemens and Alstom, each of which brings in around eight billion a year.

It has already snapped up significant contracts in US cities like Boston, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, as well as in European nations like Serbia, Macedonia or the Czech Republic.

But the alleged Chinese danger has failed to

impress EU Competition Commissioner Margrethe Vestager. The Financial Times reported Wednesday that she was unmoved by pleas from the two capitals, urging other members of the EU’s executive arm to stick to existing antitrust rules.

Like other national authorities, Germany’s market watchdog the Bundeskartellamt has warned the Siemens-Alstom deal would create an overly dominant player, and that the concessions offered were “neither suitable nor sufficient”, according to press reports earlier this week.

‘Shut out’

Alstom insisted yesterday that proposed concessions worth four percent of the firms’ combined annual revenue “take into account the Commission’s concerns while preserving the economic and industrial fundamentals of the transaction”.

Siemens and Alstom have offered to sell off some business activities and license other technologies, hoping to allay Commission fears the new combination could dominate the European market for rail signalling and high-speed trains. But Siemens is adamant it will not give up its next-generation high-speed technology to secure a green light.

From the start, the Munich-based giant agreed to give up its older Velaro trains and offered some concessions on the second-generation Velaro Novo under pressure from Brussels.

needed to create jobs. That has forced the government to launch austerity measures to please donors and lenders including the International Monetary Fund.

The one-day strike hit airports, ports, schools, hospitals, state media and government offices. At Tunis Carthage airport, most flights were cancelled and check-in counters closed, leaving hundreds of angry passengers stranded.

“The power belongs to the people”, protesters chanted at a central UGTT rally near the central Habib Bourghiba Avenue, the scene of mass protests in 2011, also calling for salary increases. Police showed a strong presence but did not interfere.

Tunisia is under pressure from the IMF to freeze public sector wages as part of measures to reduce its budget deficit. The public sector wage bill has doubled to about 16 billion dinars (\$5.5 billion) in 2018 from 7.6 billion in 2010.

But the UGTT says the monthly average wage of about \$250 is one of the lowest in the world, while the state Institute of Strategic Studies says real purchasing power has fallen by 40 percent since 2014.

Sami Tahri, Deputy Secretary-General of the UGTT, said the government had opted for a confrontation with public servants in a bid to meet the IMF’s demands. —Reuters



The firm then balked at the Commission’s demand that it license a collection of patents and technology licenses related to future high-speed rolling stock, bundled together in an entity known as Velaro3G System, the source inside the company said.

“On the one hand, we have the fear of com-

petition from China. On the other, we have to offer a competitor ten years’ exclusivity” on the technology, they complained.

If the new entity were to give up the Velaro3G, they would be “completely shut out from high-speed train development in Europe for ten years,” the source added.—AFP

Tunisia’s largest union stages nationwide strike over pay

TUNIS: Rail, bus and air traffic stopped in Tunisia yesterday as the powerful UGTT union staged a one-day nationwide strike to protest against the government’s refusal to raise the salaries of 670,000 public servants.

Thousands gathered in front of UGTT headquarters in central Tunis chanting: “The people want the overthrow of the government”. The same slogan was used in 2011 when mass protests toppled strongman Ben Ali and kicked off “Arab Spring” uprisings across the region.

Tunisia is the only Arab country that has undergone a transition to democracy in the wake of those protests, avoiding civil war as in Syria or a return to autocratic rule like Egypt.

But an economic crisis has eroded living standards in the North African country and unemployment is high as political turmoil and lack of reforms have deterred investment

China’s top trade negotiator to visit US

BEIJING: China’s top trade negotiator will travel to the United States for talks later this month ahead of a March deadline to avoid bruising tariff hikes, the commerce ministry said yesterday.

Vice Premier Liu He will visit Washington on January 30-31 for the negotiations, the ministry said, following up on talks between lower-level officials in Beijing earlier this month. President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping agreed to a three-month trade war truce in December, suspending US plans to increase tariffs on Chinese goods to give negotiators space to find a solution.

Liu and US officials will “hold negotiations on economic and trade issues and work together to push forward and implement the important consensus” reached by Xi and Trump, ministry spokesman Gao Feng told reporters. But Liu’s trip could run into complications after a Wednesday report said US authorities were in the advanced stages of a criminal probe that could result in an indictment of Chinese telecom giant Huawei.

Citing anonymous sources, the Wall Street

Journal said the Department of Justice was looking into allegations of theft of trade secrets from Huawei’s US business partners, including a T-Mobile robotic device used to test smartphones.

US lawmakers also introduced a bill to ban the export of American parts and components to Chinese telecom companies who are in violation of US export control or sanctions laws—with Huawei and fellow Chinese firm ZTE the likely targets.

China blasted the US actions. “The whole world is very clear that the real intention of the United States is to use every possible piece of state machinery to suppress and smear China’s high-tech companies,” said foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying.

The US lawmakers’ actions reeked of “extreme arrogance,” she said, adding: “The actions of the US are not the normal actions of a normal country, let alone the world’s leading power.”

Canada’s arrest of Huawei’s chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou at the request of the United States on fraud charges related to Iran sanctions violations has already infuriated Beijing. Meng is the daughter of the company’s founder. Two Canadians have been detained in China since Meng’s arrest and a third has been sentenced to death on drug trafficking charges—moves observers see as attempts by Beijing to pressure Ottawa over her case.—AFP

Business

China growth set to slow to 6.3% in 2019, more stimulus likely

Central bank seen keeping lending rates steady in 2019

BEIJING: China's economy is expected to cool further this year as domestic demand weakens and exports are hit by US tariffs, a Reuters poll showed yesterday, reinforcing views Beijing will need to roll out more stimulus measures.

The world's second-largest economy got off to a strong start in 2018, but pressure soon built as a crackdown on riskier lending pushed up borrowing costs and made it harder for smaller companies to get funding, spurring record bond defaults. At the same time, the escalating dispute with the United States saw both sides slap tariffs on each other's goods, disrupting China's trade sector and weighing on Chinese business and consumer confidence. Slowing demand global is heightening those export pressures.

China's economic growth is expected to slow to 6.3 percent this year, which would be the weakest in 29 years, from an expected 6.6 percent in 2018, according to median forecast of 85 economists Reuters polled. The economy expanded 6.9 percent in 2017. Both forecasts were unchanged from the October poll.

"A significant Chinese slowdown may already be unfolding," Harvard University economics professor Kenneth Rogoff said in a recent commentary. A resumption of Sino-US trade talks has increased optimism among some analysts that Washington could agree to a further suspension of planned tariff hikes on Chinese goods, originally slated to take effect this month. However, a comprehensive agreement to end the dispute is seen as unlikely by the negotiating deadline of

early March, given the number of highly divisive and politically sensitive issues on the table.

Even if the two sides are able to reach a durable trade deal, analysts said it would offer only modest relief for China's economy unless Beijing can rekindle weak domestic investment and demand.

"We expect the economy to soften further this year. Domestic headwinds are likely to stay strong," analysts at Capital Economics said in a note. "Output would only be slightly stronger if China avoided further tariffs. And the broader tensions around technology and national security are likely to stay high."

Sources told Reuters last week that Beijing is planning to lower its economic growth target to 6-6.5 percent this year from around 6.5 percent in 2018.

Growth decelerated last year from 6.8 percent in the first quarter to an expected 6.4 percent in the fourth quarter. China will report its fourth quarter and 2018 GDP growth on Jan. 21 (0200 GMT). Shock contractions in December trade and factory activity readings have fuelled worries that economy is cooling more quickly than expected.

Investment growth has inched higher in the last few months as regulators fast-track infrastructure projects but it is still not far from record lows, while retail sales growth is the weakest since 2003 and the property sector looks wobbly.

Tepid expansion in industrial output and



BEIJING: Germany's Finance Minister Olaf Scholz (center) listens to fellow participants during a roundtable seminar on the digital economy and social development, at Renmin University in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

weaker consumer spending is squeezing companies' profit margins, discouraging fresh investment and raising the risk of higher job losses.

Rate cut not on cards

With earlier growth boosting measures showing little impact so far, China watchers widely expect Beijing to roll out more stimulus in coming months to avert a sharper slowdown. But analysts note it take time for those initiatives to filter through to the broader economy, with most not

expecting activity to convincingly bottom out until summer.

To free up more funds for lending, particularly to smaller, private firms, the central bank has cut reserves that banks need to set aside five times over the past year. It has also been guiding market interest rates lower. More sweeping tax cuts are expected on top of those unveiled last year, along with measures to boost consumer demand for products such as home appliances and cars.—Reuters

World's biggest sovereign fund ejects Chinese company

OSLO: Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's biggest, has excluded a Chinese company from its almost \$1 trillion portfolio because of human rights violations, the Norwegian central bank said yesterday.

Yarn, fabric and apparel manufacturer Texwinca is the main shareholder in Megawell Industrial, which has been criticized for working conditions at its factories in Vietnam.

The Council on Ethics, which makes recommendations to Norway's central bank which runs the fund, cited as concerns the discrimination of female workers, health and safety risks at the factories, and restrictions on the right to form unions. The central bank con-

cluded there existed an "unacceptable risk that the company is responsible for serious or systematic human rights violations."

According to the latest available data, the Norwegian fund held 1.01 percent of Texwinca at the end of 2017, worth \$7.7 million. The fund, which has holdings in some 9,000 companies around the world as well as bonds and real estate, is governed by ethical guidelines laid down by parliament.

These bar it from investing in, among other things, companies that commit serious human rights violations, manufacture nuclear or "particularly inhumane" weapons, or those in the coal and tobacco industries. The central bank also announced yesterday that it was excluding the coal-based energy companies Evergy of the US and Washington H. Soul Pattinson of Australia. Fuelled by Norway's state oil and gas revenue, the Government Pension Fund Global is currently worth 8.4 trillion kroner (\$983 billion, 860 billion euros). —AFP

Troubled Croatian shipbuilder draws interest from potential investors

ZAGREB: Croatia's largest shipbuilder Uljanik, which is trying to attract investors to stay afloat, extended a due diligence process until late next week after drawing the interest of potential strategic partners. Croatia's Economy Minister Darko Horvat said four potential investors were looking at Uljanik's business data and another company was also interested, but did not elaborate. "I expect at least two serious offers for Uljanik at the end of this process which would then prevent its bankruptcy," Horvat told reporters. Local media reported that there were potential investors from Ukraine, Italy, Germany, China and Australia for Uljanik, which is 25 percent state-owned.

"Due to an additional interest voiced by potential investors the management decided to extend a due diligence process until Jan. 24. The deadline for submitting bids to become

Uljanik's strategic partner remains Jan. 25 by 2000 local time (1900 GMT)," the company said in a filing to the Zagreb bourse. Originally, the due diligence process was due to be completed on Jan. 17. The company has been on the brink of bankruptcy after facing liquidity problems over the past 12 months, which led to two strikes by its workers in the second half of last year over unpaid wages.

Uljanik owns two shipyards in the northern Adriatic cities of Pula and Rijeka. In January last year the Croatian government helped it stay afloat with state guarantees for a loan worth 96 million euros (\$111 million), while previous governments guaranteed other loans extended to Uljanik, which is now putting pressure on public finances.

Under European Union state aid rules, no further state guarantees or direct payments from the budget are allowed. Croatia's once-prosperous shipbuilding industry has struggled to survive since independence from Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. It has lost business to Asian shipbuilders, such as those in South Korea, missing opportunities to modernize and produce more sophisticated vessels. Local banks and the country's top insurer, Croatia Osiguranje, also have stakes in Uljanik. —Reuters

Business

In Argentina crisis, companies do everything to cut costs

Small businesses hardest hit by inflation

BUENOS AIRES: Like many Argentine businessmen, Marco Meloni is doing everything he can to avoid laying off staff at his textile factory despite a slump in sales, more than 70 percent interest rates and soaring utility bills. The reason? He doesn't have the money to fire anyone. A little-reported and unusual feature of the economic crisis gripping Latin America's third-largest economy is the absence of many workers losing their jobs.

Small businesses, the biggest employer in Argentina, have been hardest hit by inflation that is nearly 48 percent, a tumbling peso, and major cuts to subsidies for public utilities that have sharply increased companies' operating costs. But the unemployment rate has barely budged from 9 percent.

Reuters interviews with business owners in textile, plastic, clothing and paint industries, government officials and union leaders show that many firms are adopting different strategies to try to survive until the economy begins to recover, which the International Monetary Fund expects to begin in the second quarter. Firms are reducing working hours, halting production on some days, cutting shifts and making workers take their vacations now in anticipation of more customer demand once the economy lifts.

The workforce contracted by just 120,000 registered workers between October 2017 and October 2018, the latest government data reviewed by Reuters shows. That represents about 1 percent of the 12 million-strong labor force. In contrast, the United States lost about 6 percent, or some 8.7 million people, of its workforce during the two years of the 2007/08 Great Recession as companies laid off

workers to stay afloat. Argentina has some of the world's most generous labor laws and they are making it more difficult for small business owners like Meloni to adapt to an economy now in recession. Typically in a tough economic climate a company might be expected to reduce its workforce to cut costs. But in Argentina taking that step could dramatically increase costs and potentially push a company into bankruptcy.

Introduced by successive populist Peronist governments since the 1940s, the labor laws make the country one of the most expensive in Latin America to employ, or fire, a worker. Argentine companies are required to pay workers laid off a month for every year of service plus at least one additional month simply for informing them they are being fired. And crucially, there is no cap on how much a company needs to pay. In contrast, neighboring Chile has a cap on severance pay. Layoff costs in Argentina are among the highest in the world, according to the World Bank's Doing Business project, which measures business regulations in 190 economies.

Giving notice

The Argentine labor laws have helped to contain what could have been a big increase in the unemployment rate. In addition, President Mauricio Macri, a free marketer who wants to reform the country's rigid labor system to encourage foreign investment, is taking steps to dissuade companies from firing workers. He announced on Nov. 13 that companies must give 10 days' notice of any plans to lay off workers so that the government can help find ways



BUENOS AIRES: View of goods inside a supermarket in Buenos Aires, the National Statistics and Censuses Institute announced the inflation rate for 2018. —AFP

to keep them employed. Macri wants to expand an existing program that helps to subsidize salaries of workers at companies that can show they are in financial straits. The government has not yet issued any regulations to enforce its announcement, so it is not clear whether companies are informing them of pending dismissals.

Like many small businessmen, Meloni has found himself caught in a vice. Sales from his plant in the town of Quilmes, 30 km (19 miles) outside the capital Buenos Aires, shrank by just over one third last year

as Argentina's economy sank deep into recession.

"It was not a storm," said Meloni, a reference to how the country's president has described the economic crisis. "It was a tsunami. The tsunami kills."

Meloni said the plant, which makes fabrics, used to operate 24 hours a day from Monday to Saturday but now just operates 16 hours a day, five days a week. Like many other businesses, Meloni advanced the holidays to his roughly 100 employees with the hope that once summer ends in March, demand will pick up. —Reuters

Microsoft pledges \$500m to ease local housing crunch

SAN FRANCISCO: Microsoft on Wednesday pledged \$500 million for loans and grants aimed at ramping up construction of affordable housing in the Puget Sound area of Washington state where the US technology giant has its home. "In recent years, our region hasn't built enough housing for the people who live here," Microsoft executives Amy Hood and Brad Smith said in a blog post.

"We are committing \$500 million as a company to advance affordable housing solutions."

Microsoft was only a few years old when it moved from New Mexico to the Seattle area city of Bellevue in 1979, and now has its headquarters in nearby Redmond.

Since 2011, job growth in the region has been 21 percent while housing construction growth has trailed at 13 percent. A gap in available housing has caused housing prices to nearly double in the past eight years, making the greater Seattle area the sixth most expensive region in the US, according to Hood and Smith.

"The gap between job growth and housing growth has been even greater in the suburban cities around Seattle than in Seattle itself," the blog post said.

"This is a big problem. And it's a problem that is continuing to get worse."

The \$500 million will be used to "help kick-start new solutions" to the housing crisis, according to the executives. Microsoft planned to make \$225 million available at below-market rates to subsidize preservation and construction of middle-income housing, initially targeting six cities east of Seattle and Lake Washington.

"Median income in the region hasn't kept pace with rising housing costs, increasingly making it impossible for lower- and middle-income workers to afford to live close to where they work," Hood and Smith said. "Teachers, nurses, first responders and many in key roles at nonprofits, businesses and tech companies now begin and end their workdays with long commutes."

A total of \$250 million will be made available at market rates for low-income housing development, while \$25 million will be devoted to philanthropic grants aimed at addressing homelessness, according to Microsoft. "With these and similar investments, it's possible to lend money, accelerate progress, be repaid and then lend this money again," Hood and Smith said. —AFP

Romania miners' strike sparks fear of power shortages

BUCHAREST: One of Romania's main electricity plants began shutting down yesterday due to insufficient coal caused by a miners' strike, operator Transelectrica said, sparking fears of power shortages across the country.

The first of three units of the Rovinari thermal power plant was shut down overnight, and the other two may cease activity later in the day, the company said in a statement.

The shutdown comes in the wake of six days of strikes by miners at the CE Oltenia combine in the south of the country, who are demanding better pay and working conditions, unions said.

Union official Nicu Bunoaica told AFP that CE Oltenia's 7,000 miners were demanding an increase of 1,000 lei (213 euros, \$240) in their monthly pay packet. Their average take-home salary currently stands at around 500 euros.

CE Oltenia generates around 30 percent

of Romania's electricity needs.

To make up for possible shortages, Bucharest has increased electricity imports in recent days but at prices well above those of local power producers.

Energy Minister Anton Anton is expected to talk to miners and union leaders yesterday to try and defuse tensions.

Prime Minister Viorica Dancila said the situation was "very serious."

"We are worried about the situation at CE Oltenia and the country's energy system," she told a cabinet meeting.

"I asked for an urgent report about the coal stockpiles in comparison to last year, a detailed analysis of the miners' situation, their income and working conditions, but also solutions for modernizing CE Oltenia," she said.

The prime minister had also consulted "all national security structures". Romania, which joined the European Union in 2007, has promised Brussels it will gradually close its coal mines and turn to non-polluting sources of energy.

But in recent years, Bucharest has asked to postpone the closures in order to limit lay-offs of miners.

CE Oltenia ran up losses of around one billion lei (213 million euros) in 2018 as coal mining becomes less and less profitable. —Reuters

Business

Japan's Hitachi freezes British nuclear power station in Wales

A blow to UK's nuclear strategy, a costly decision for Japanese firm

TOKYO: Hitachi said yesterday would freeze construction of its stalled nuclear power station in Wales due to financing problems, a blow to Britain's nuclear strategy and a costly decision for the Japanese firm.

Shelving the project at the Wylfa Newydd plant on Anglesey, a small island off the Welsh coast, will cost the Japanese firm 300 billion yen (\$2.8 billion), it said. Hitachi launched the three trillion yen project after acquiring Britain-based Horizon Nuclear Power in 2012.

The British government had reportedly agreed to finance two thirds of the construction cost, with Hitachi as well as Japanese and British investors scheduled to cover the balance.

But Hitachi's fund-raising efforts have been deadlocked at home while its request for additional investment from the British government has been shelved with London consumed by Brexit. "Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of everyone involved, the parties have not been able to reach an agreement to the satisfaction of all concerned," Hitachi said.

The Japanese firm added: "As a result, Hitachi has decided to suspend the project at this time... as it is now clear that further time is needed to develop a financial structure" for the project.

It said it had made the decision based on its economic reasoning as a private company. But in an apparent bid to reassure London of its commitment to the country, Hitachi also said it would "continue to discuss a nuclear power program with the UK Government" which it

hoped would "further contribute to UK energy policy." Asked about the deal in parliament Wednesday, Prime Minister Theresa May said London wanted new nuclear plants to contribute to the country's energy mix.

But she stressed: "We must also ensure that the cost of any energy that is provided by nuclear is at a reasonable level for the consumer."

'Unstable environment'

The unwelcome news comes as May is still reeling from a historic defeat over her Brexit deal but Hitachi CEO Toshiaki Higashihara told reporters that Britain's EU exit had had "no bearing" on the decision. Nevertheless, one analyst said Brexit would make it harder to attract long-term investments such as in nuclear plants.

Speaking to AFP ahead of the announcement, John Drzik, president of global risk and digital at US professional services giant Marsh, said that "cross-border investors in infrastructure are looking for stability in the legal, regulatory and political climate."

"If you have more confidence in that, you're more willing to invest. You have less confidence in that, you're going to pull back. It's going to be harder to attract foreign investors into an environment which is considered unstable," Drzik told AFP.

The halting of the project also deals a blow to Japan Inc's attempts to expand its nuclear power businesses overseas after the Fukushima disaster of March 2011 effectively halted demand for new

of GDP. The World Bank has estimated that financial transfers to the state-owned power producer alone averaged 3.8 percent of GDP from 2008 to 2017. A public-sector wage increase in 2017 and higher interest rates have added to pressures on the budget deficit.

Lebanon also has a current account deficit because it imports far more than it exports. Financing these two deficits has depended on critical financial transfers from its diaspora. But questions over this model have grown. "At the heart of concerns is the recent slowdown in remittance/deposit inflows, which have traditionally funded a large part (if not all) of Lebanon's financing requirement," Goldman Sachs said in a Dec. 3 analysis.

The World Bank, in an October report, said Lebanon was exposed to significant refinancing risks. "Attracting sufficient capital, and in particular deposits, to finance significantly larger budgetary and current account deficits is proving challenging in light of slower deposit growth."

Lower oil prices have been seen by economists as a major cause of the slowdown, with many Lebanese working in oil-producing Gulf Arab states. Political instability and lower growth in Lebanon have also been cited as factors. Economic growth rates have fallen to between 1 and 2 percent from between 8 and 10 percent in the four years before Syria's civil war began in 2011.

Central bank governor Riad Salameh said last month the banking sector was capable of financing the state's foreign and domestic debt in 2019. The central bank's net foreign assets stand at around \$40 billion. —Reuters



TOKYO: President of Japanese company Hitachi, Toshiaki Higashihara (left), speaks during a press conference at the company's headquarters in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

reactors in Japan. A massive tsunami triggered by a 9.0-magnitude earthquake in March 2011 overwhelmed reactor cooling systems at the Fukushima Daiichi plant in northeastern Japan.

It caused reactor meltdowns, releasing radiation in the most dangerous nuclear disaster since Chernobyl in 1986.

The crisis spurred Japan to strengthen its safety regulations under a new Nuclear Regulation Authority watchdog. The accident also prompted nuclear power companies overseas to

review their projects, a move that increased safety costs. Toshiba has also been on the ropes after being forced to sell off its troubled US nuclear energy firm Westinghouse, which racked up billions of dollars in losses before being placed under bankruptcy protection. A Japanese-led consortium including Mitsubishi Heavy Industries is also reportedly scrapping a project in Turkey. The setbacks have dealt a blow to Abe's efforts to help Japan Inc export its infrastructure—a key pillar of his business diplomacy.—AFP

How pressing is Lebanon's financial challenge?

BEIRUT: Financial strains in Lebanon have been brought into focus by turbulence on markets where its dollar-denominated sovereign bonds suffered a heavy sell-off last week following comments by the finance minister about the public debt. The bonds recovered this week on assurances the government is "absolutely not" planning to restructure the debt and is committed to paying its maturing debt and interest payments at predetermined dates.

But the episode has added to debate about Lebanon's debt sustainability after warnings from politicians, the IMF and World Bank over economic and financial conditions in a country that has suffered years of low economic growth. Lebanon's factional politics has led to years of policy paralysis and obstructed reforms needed to boost investor confidence. More than eight months after an election, politicians have been unable to agree a new government.

Lebanon has one of the world's biggest public debts compared to the size of its economy, largely generated through servicing existing debt and high state spending. It amounts to roughly 150 percent

Japan FM urges G20 to renew commitment against protectionism

TOKYO: Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso yesterday urged the Group of 20 major economies to renew their commitment to cooperation in the face of rising protectionism.

Speaking at the G20 meeting of deputy finance ministers and deputy central bank governors before the finance leaders' meetings under Japan's chair later this year, Aso warned that protectionism and unfair trade practices would undermine economic stability. "Dissatisfaction with economic inequality is growing. There is a serious risk that we will revert to a closed and fragmented world," Aso said in his opening remarks at

the G20 gathering.

The comments come at a time of growing trade tensions between the United States and China, which have already started to impact global investment and economic growth. The tariff dispute is set to further chip into China's economy this year, a Reuters poll showed yesterday. "Protectionism and unfair trade practices lead to instability and perverse economic outcomes. We must renew our commitment to international cooperation and openness," Aso said.

Japan wants to focus on issues ranging from global trade imbalances to the impact of ageing populations on the agenda when it chairs this year's G20 financial leaders meetings. Global imbalances had once been a key topic at G20 meetings with a focus on each country's current account balance, or the overall flow of money including, but not confined to, trade. This approach has come up against President Donald Trump's focus on narrowing the US trade deficit using import tariffs and bilateral deals. His "America First" policies and the US-China trade war have overshadowed debates at recent G20 meetings. Japan will host a G20 financial chiefs' meeting in Fukuoka in western Japan on June 8-9, followed by a leaders' summit in Osaka on June 28-29. —Reuters

Sports

Pakistan seeking a change of fortune against South Africa

PORT ELIZABETH: Pakistan will seek a change of fortune when they play South Africa in the first of five one-day internationals at St George's Park tomorrow. The tourists were mauled in a recent Test series, with none of the three matches going beyond lunch on the fourth day, but have reason to be optimistic in the 50-overs game where fast short-pitched bowling will likely not be a decisive factor.

For both teams, the series is an important step towards the Cricket World Cup in England and Wales later this year. "We're certainly a far better white-ball team than we are a Test unit at the minute," said Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur after the third Test on Monday. That seems a reasonable assessment as Pakistan have shown their ability in one-day cricket, notably when they won the Champions Trophy in England in 2017. Since the start of that tournament, during which they beat South Africa in a rain-shortened match, they have compiled a 17-10 winning record.

Pakistan's batting will be strengthened by the inclusion of Mohammad Hafeez, who retired from Test cricket at the end of last year, and Shoaib Malik, while they have a capable attack in which spinners Shadab Khan and Imad Wasim could play key roles. Fakhar Zaman, the aggressive left-handed opening batsman, was exposed against the short ball in the Tests, being dropped after scoring only 32 runs in four innings, but has hit 1275 runs at an average of 57.95 in one-day internationals, scored at close to a run a ball.

South Africa have based their World Cup plans on picking four specialist bowlers but have yet to settle on a batting all-rounder to fill the crucial number seven position. They announced a squad for the first two matches only. Since the squad was announced, it was decided to rest wicketkeeper-batsman Quinton de Kock and fast bowler Dale Steyn.

The changes provide opening batsman Aiden Markram with another opportunity to shine in a format in which he has yet to assert himself, while fast bowler Duanne Olivier was rewarded for his man of the series performances in the Tests with a first one-day call-up. Port Elizabeth usually has one of the slowest pitches in South Africa, which should suit the tourists. In their most recent appearance at the ground, in November 2013, they clinched their only one-day series win in South Africa.

Squads

South Africa: Faf du Plessis (capt), Hashim Amla, Reeza Hendricks, Imran Tahir, Heinrich Klaasen (wkt), Aiden Markram, David Miller, Duanne Olivier, Dane Paterson, Andile Phehlukwayo, Dwaine Pretorius, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen
Pakistan: Sarfraz Ahmed (capt, wkt), Babar Azam, Faheem Ashraf, Fakhar Zaman, Hasan Ali, Hussain Talat, Imad Wasim, Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Hafeez, Mohammad Rizwan (wkt), Shadab Khan, Shaheen Afridi, Shan Masood, Shoaib Malik, Usman Khan — AFP



JOHANNESBURG: Pakistan batsman Imam-ul-Haq avoids a bounce during the third day of the third Cricket Test match between South Africa and Pakistan at Wanderers cricket stadium in Johannesburg on January 13, 2019. — AFP

New Zealand bring back heavyweights for India series

WELLINGTON: New Zealand have assembled their strongest possible line up for the one-day series against India starting next week in what will be their toughest workout ahead of the World Cup. Tom Latham and Colin de Grandhomme, who were rested during the 3-0 sweep against Sri Lanka, were named Thursday in a 14-man squad for the first three games of the five-match series which starts next Wednesday.

Captain Kane Williamson and bowling spearhead Trent Boult, who sat out the Twenty20 against Sri Lanka last Friday, are back in the squad as is Mitchell Santner who made the Twenty20 after being sidelined by injury for 10 months. India and New Zealand are ranked second and third in the world, and coach Gary Stead said the composition of the squad reflected World Cup planning while also giving themselves the best possible chance of winning the series against Virat Kohli's tourists.

"Our two main priorities have been to select and prepare a squad capable of winning what is shaping as a massive series against India, and gathering as much information as possible ahead of the World Cup," Stead said. "Tom and Colin are experienced players in this format and will offer quality in their respective roles." **New Zealand squad:** Kane Williamson (capt), Trent Boult, Doug Bracewell, Colin de Grandhomme, Lockie Ferguson, Martin Guptill, Matt Henry, Tom Latham, Colin Munro, Henry Nicholls, Mitchell Santner, Ish Sodhi, Tim Southee, Ross Taylor.

Law hopes Smith and Warner's club calls set Australia example

LONDON: Stuart Law believes disgraced Australia stars Steve Smith and David Warner will have a better idea of "what life is all about" after playing club cricket as he called for their return to international duty as soon as they complete year-long bans. Australia captain Smith and Warner, his deputy, were both given 12-month suspensions from state and international fixtures by Cricket Australia for their roles in a ball-tampering scandal during a Test match in South Africa in March last year.

Australia have since slipped to fifth in the world Test rankings and, in the absence of world-class batsmen Smith and Warner, recently suffered a first home series defeat by India. But the CA bans did not include club games, with Smith playing for Sutherland against a Randwick-Petersham side featuring Warner in a Sydney grade match in September. "Australia definitely have got the talent, I think we've just lost track of what's important," said former Australia batsman Law, the new coach of Middlesex. "When I first started playing grade cricket in Brisbane, as a 15-year-old (I was) sharing a dressing room

with (Australia batsmen) Allan Border, Greg Ritchie, Kepler Wessels — that doesn't happen much anymore, the Test players don't really play club cricket.

"Once they are away from international duties, they are wrapped up in cotton wool and put away. "But kids coming through learn from guys who've done it before. I think David Warner and Steve Smith playing club cricket this (Australian) summer has not only given them an idea of what life is really about, but it's also helping the young kids they have been playing with now to improve," he added. "They are still very much looked up to in Australia as cricketers and they are two very fine players," insisted Law, who played one Test and 54 one-day internationals while averaging over 50 in first-class cricket.

'Australia could do worse'

"Australia could do worse than get them straight back in." Law, who has joined Middlesex on a four-year deal, stood down as the West Indies head coach in September, having previously been in charge of both Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. He would like West Indies

batsman Shai Hope to follow such Caribbean greats as Hampshire's Gordon Greenidge and Malcolm Marshall and Somerset's Vivian Richards and Joel Garner, in playing county cricket. But Law, who enjoyed successful county stints as a player with both Essex and Lancashire, said adding the 2019 World Cup in England to an already congested international schedule made it even more difficult to bring top overseas players into the English domestic game. "Shai Hope would be one I would target, not only because he's a champion young man, but he can play the game and he wants to live and breathe cricket. But he is going to be caught up in the World Cup."

While Law was excited both by being based at the "best ground in the world" and the challenge of getting Middlesex promoted to the First Division of the County Championship, a major part of the appeal of his new job was living in the same country as his wife and teenage son. "This Christmas was the first time I spent time with my wife and my son, on a 10-day period without any interruptions for the first time in 10 years," explained Law. — AFP

Sports

Nets erase seven point deficit, shock Harden, Rockets in OT

HOUSTON: Spencer Dinwiddie converted a three-point play with 28 seconds remaining in overtime, and the Brooklyn Nets erased a seven-point deficit in the extra session for a 145-142 victory over the host Houston Rockets on Wednesday. Dinwiddie scored 25 of his 33 points in the fourth period and overtime, including three 3-pointers in the final 27 seconds of regulation, allowing Brooklyn to overcome a season-high 58 points from Houston's James Harden. Harden recorded his second consecutive 50-point game, and he added 10 rebounds and six assists. The Rockets set an NBA record with 70 3-point attempts, with PJ Tucker hitting a 3-pointer with 1:09 left in regulation to bypass the old mark of 61. Brooklyn's Treveon Graham added 21 points while Jarrett Allen piled up 20 points and 24 rebounds.

Warriors 147, Pelicans 140

Stephen Curry led a comeback with seven 3-pointers in a 23-point third quarter as Golden State rallied past New Orleans in Oakland, Calif. Curry finished with 41 points and Kevin Durant scored 30 as the Warriors capped an impressive sweep of Denver on the road and New Orleans at home on consecutive nights. Anthony Davis finished with 30 points, 18 rebounds and seven assists, and Nikola Mirotic bombed in six 3-pointers in a 29-point effort for the Pelicans. New Orleans lost to the Warriors for the 22nd time in their past 24 regular-season meetings.

Celtics 117, Raptors 108

Kyrie Irving made a go-ahead jumper and added a 3-pointer during an 11-0 run late in the fourth quarter as Boston defeated visiting Toronto. Irving finished with 27 points and a career-best 18 assists as the Celtics ended a three-game losing streak and snapped Toronto's

five-game winning streak. Al Horford contributed some big points down the stretch in a 24-point game for the Celtics, and Gordon Hayward added 18. Kawhi Leonard scored 33 points to top Toronto, which led by four in the middle of the fourth quarter and was tied 106-106 with 2 1/2 minutes to go. Serge Ibaka added 22 points and 10 rebounds for the Raptors.

Spurs 105, Mavericks 101

San Antonio relied on its bench to rally from a 19-point deficit and win at Dallas. Marco Belinelli led the bench charge in the second half, and he topped the Spurs in scoring with 17 points. Patty Mills had 14 and Davis Bertans added 12 points, including a dagger 3-pointer with 1:42 to play. Rookie Luka Doncic led Dallas with 25 points, eight assists and eight rebounds.

Bucks 111, Grizzlies 101

Giannis Antetokounmpo recorded 27 points and 11 rebounds as Milwaukee posted a victory at Memphis. Eric Bledsoe added 16 points as the Bucks won for the 14th time in the past 17 games. DJ Wilson scored a career-best 13 points for Milwaukee, which led by as many as 31 points. Omri Casspi scored 17 points for Memphis, which has dropped nine of its past 10 games and 16 of 20. JaMychal Green had 14 points and 10 rebounds.

Pistons 120, Magic 115

Blake Griffin scored 30 points, including the last seven in overtime, and host Detroit emerged with a win over Orlando. The Pistons blew an 11-point lead in the fourth-quarter before pulling out the victory. Andre Drummond had 14 points and 22 rebounds, and Luke Kennard contributed 14 points off the Detroit bench. Terrence Ross and Nikola Vucevic had



HOUSTON: Joe Harris #12 of the Brooklyn Nets shoots the ball against the Houston Rockets on January 16, 2019 at the Toyota Center. —AFP

24 points apiece for the Magic, and Vucevic pulled down 13 rebounds.

Jazz 129, Clippers 109

Rudy Gobert had 23 points and 22 rebounds to lead Utah to its season-high fifth consecutive win, a blowout at Los Angeles. The Clippers lost their fourth in a row to match their season-worst skid. Jazz guard Donovan Mitchell scored 28 points to surpass his season scoring average (21.5) for the seventh straight game. He is averaging 29.7 points in that stretch. Utah also received 23 points from Jae Crowder and 19 from Kyle Korver, both players coming off the bench. Derrick Favors added 11

points and 10 rebounds, and Royce O'Neale contributed 10 points. Lou Williams scored 23 points off the bench to lead the Clippers.

Trail Blazers 129, Cavaliers 112

Damian Lillard scored 33 points to lead Portland past visiting Cleveland. CJ McCollum added 19 points and Jusuf Nurkic finished with 10 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists for his first career triple-double for the Trail Blazers, who won their fifth straight home contest. Jordan Clarkson came off the bench for 22 points and Rodney Hood added 20 for the Cavaliers, who lost for the 13th time in 14 games. —Reuters

Justice for all: Singh shows NBA has 'life changing' role

LONDON: Troy Justice played a leading role in Satnam Singh becoming the first Indian to be drafted into the NBA, telling AFP it is such "life changing" events that make his job so rewarding. Justice, the NBA's Associate Vice President, International Basketball Operations, came across Singh, who joined the Dallas Mavericks in 2015 — although he is currently in the Canadian League with St John's Edge — when he was based in India for the organization.

Justice, who features in the Netflix documentary 'One in a Billion' which charts Singh's remarkable journey from a remote Punjab village to the Mavericks, says it is the human aspect that makes him enjoy his job. "I am a heart guy," he told AFP ahead of the NBA game in London on Thursday between the Washington Wizards and the New York Knicks. "To see lives change through sport are the most powerful moments." They are what I

live for. It is not about basketball. It is these kids and their journeys. "To teach them how to grow as individuals is the biggest thing."

Justice, a former player, says it is moving to be able to use basketball to give something to youngsters who have had nothing. One such case that especially moved the American is a 16-year-old Haitian named Chedlet (only one name used). "As you know Haiti is a rough place, but we ran a junior NBA program there in four locations to select top players and bring them to an elite program," he said. "Up in a mountainous region of northern Haiti where we had previously done nothing, we discovered a seven foot boy who had no coach, no court, nothing, but he had natural raw athletic talent."

Justice says he will never forget Chedlet's reaction, having been selected to come to New York for more training, when he took him to an NBA game between the Brooklyn Nets and the Golden State Warriors. "He began to cry when we entered the arena," said Justice. "Then when we are sitting in the front row and he saw Steph Curry (NBA icon and three time champion with Golden State), he began to shake. "I mean for him it was a special moment, being from where he was from. He has gone in two months from no one knowing who he is to sitting in the Barclays Center. "He has been transformed by the game." —AFP

Rising Singapore badminton star eyes Olympics

SINGAPORE: Rising Singapore badminton star Loh Kean Yew has his sights set on a place at the Tokyo Olympics after a stunning victory against Chinese great Lin Dan in Thailand. The relatively unknown player beat two-time Olympic champion Lin 21-19, 21-18 to win the Thailand Masters at the weekend. "It is a big breakthrough, I did not really expect it," the 21-year-old told AFP late Wednesday. "He's an experienced player so it was not easy to catch him off-guard."

Loh shot 48 places up the world rank-

ings, and is now 77th following his victory over Lin, who was the top seed at the tournament in Bangkok. He will have to finish far higher up the rankings to qualify for a place at Tokyo 2020 — but he hopes to make enough progress in the coming year to do so. "My goal is to try to qualify for the Olympics, and then of course try to win the Olympic medal," said Loh. Loh played down suggestions that he could emulate the success of Joseph Schooling, the Singapore swimmer who won the tiny city-state's first ever Olympic gold medal at Rio in 2016. But he added: "Nothing is impossible, and I have always been trying to achieve that dream."

For China's Lin, 35, the loss was another crushing blow after a recent run of poor form. The former world number one, who has earned every major prize in badminton during a stellar career, suffered a string of first-round defeats last year and is currently ranked 13th, below compatriots Shi Yuqi and Chen Long. —AFP

Former champion Wawrinka edged by Raonic in titanic tussle

MELBO URNE: Three-time Grand Slam champion Stan Wawrinka said yesterday he was happy with his comeback from a major injury, despite being ousted from the Australian Open in the tightest of second-round battles. The 33-year-old Swiss, unseeded for the first time since his debut in 2006 after recovering from knee surgery, fell to Canada's Milos Raonic after four sets decided on tiebreaks 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (13/11), 7-6 (7/5).

"That's hard to describe," said the 16th seed Raonic. "I feel four hours went by in about 15 minutes. The adrenalin just takes over." Wawrinka was a break up in the fourth set but failed to serve out from 5-4 to take it to a fifth. "I was fortunate to stay alive in the fourth set," admitted the Canadian, whose best Slam performance was reaching the 2016 Wimbledon final where he lost to Andy Murray. "Four tie-breaks, three went my way," he added. "Could easily have been different."

Wawrinka won the Australian Open five years ago, beating Rafael Nadal in the final, but his knee operation during 2017 and lengthy battle back to fitness saw his ranking plunge to 263. He began slowly climbing back last year and is now 59th in the world. The Swiss showed more than a few glimpses of his old greatness, moving well around the baseline and ripping winners to

both wings with his classic single-handed backhand.

"For sure it's frustrating to lose, especially in a match with four tie-breaks," said Wawrinka. "I'm happy if I look the big picture. I'm happy with my level, the way I was moving, the way I'm playing in general. I think he also played really well. "I want to win more matches. Again, if I take some distance, see a little bit everything I've done the last few months to get at that level, I'm quite happy. "I'm looking forward for the rest of the year."

The match started under cloudy skies and finished indoors after a mid-match rain delay caused organizers to close the Rod Laver Arena roof. Wawrinka's serve in particular was in fine order, almost matching Raonic's renowned power as he banged down 28 aces to the Canadian's 39 during four hours and one minute of blistering play. "I just tried to get my hand on his serve, especially with the roof open," said Raonic. "It's how I like to go about my game, so it's tough to be on the receiving end of that. "I do a little better indoors normally. So thank you for raining up there," he added, looking towards the heavens. Raonic, whose best previous Australian Open performance was a semi-final in 2016 that he also lost to Murray, will face France's unseeded Pierre-Hugues Herbert in the third round. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Canada's Milos Raonic hits a return against Switzerland's Stanislas Wawrinka during their men's singles match on day four of the Australian Open tennis tournament. — AFP

Serena blitzes Bouchard to reach third round

MELBOURNE: Serena Williams stormed past Canada's Eugenie Bouchard and into the Australian Open third round yesterday as her quest for a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam title gathered pace. The American won 6-2, 6-2 in 70 minutes, setting up unseeded Ukrainian teenager Dayana Yastremska as the next hurdle in her bid for another major to equal the mark set by Australian great Margaret Court. The 37-year-old won her 23rd major Down Under two years ago while two months pregnant and is the bookies' favorite to claim an eighth Australian title, despite being seeded 16th.

Williams said she was wary of Bouchard, who is on the comeback trail after a slide down the rankings to number 79 in the world. "It wasn't an easy match tonight, Eugenie's been to the final of Wimbledon (in 2014) and the semi-finals of other Grand Slams," she said. "So I knew 'Serena, you've got to come out hot, you've got to come out firing, she's a really good player and I haven't had many matches since last year.'"

The signs looked ominous for Bouchard when she won only one point on her opening service game, then failed to hit a return when it was Williams' turn to serve. Yet the first set was a messy affair for both players, with only two games going on serve. It was testament to



MELBOURNE: Serena Williams of the US reacts after a point during her women's singles match against Canada's Eugenie Bouchard on day four of the Australian Open tennis tournament. — AFP

Bouchard's tenacity that she managed two breaks to four against Williams' howitzer serve, sending her supporters into raptures.

But it always looked like an exercise in damage control for the Canadian, who attempted to run Williams around the court but struggled to cope with her opponent's blistering power. Her resistance was slightly more effective early in the second set, when she managed to hold her two service games. Williams responded with a lift in intensity, going on a five-game winning streak to settle the match. — AFP

De Minaur-Nadal clash promises 'something special'

MELBOURNE: Half-Spanish Alex de Minaur said it will be special facing "king" Rafael Nadal at the Australian Open on Friday after the 17-time major champion called the teenager "one of the best players in the world". The 19-year-old Australian number one De Minaur went to primary school in Spain, has a Spanish mother and a Uruguayan father and speaks fluent Spanish.

Expectations are being heaped on the young shoulders of the 27th seed nicknamed "Demon" by a feverish home support. And pundits such as legend John McEnroe are predicting him as a future multiple major champion. "Yeah, it's a different position for me, a position I'm not really used to. It's sort of come out of nowhere," De Minaur said early yesterday morning after a late-night second-round win. The teenage sensation won the Sydney International warm-up last weekend, beating veteran Andreas Seppi in the final.

He extended his win streak to seven matches by surviving Wednesday night's four-hour marathon against little-known Swiss Henri Laaksonen to set up a blockbuster last-

32 clash with Nadal. "Obviously against Rafa that's going to be something special," said De Minaur, who was sent packing in a straight sets by the Spaniard at the same stage of last year's Wimbledon. "I got the chance to play him in Wimbledon on Centre Court. I feel like I learnt a lot from that experience, hopefully this time around I can go a bit more relaxed. "Rafa is pretty much like the king in Spain. It's going to be fun for me to get out on court and be able to test where I am."

Nadal said he was aware of De Minaur's Spanish heritage and rising status, and would not be taking him lightly. "Yeah, since couple of years ago we know that we have a good player coming," said Nadal, who is going for an Aussie hat-trick having already knocked out James Duckworth and Matthew Ebden without dropping a set. "I think he improved a lot during the last three years. Today is one of the best players of the world. That's the real thing. "He's young, very young. He is winning a lot of matches. He's having a great improvement year-by-year. So let's see. Going to be a tough one." Seven-time Grand Slam champion McEnroe is convinced De Minaur will be Australia's next big star.

"Alex de Minaur is coming along for sure — top 10 player to me," said the American on Australian TV of the slightly-built teenager, who has raised his career-high ranking 18 times since the start of 2018 from 208 to his current 29. "Possible multiple Grand Slam winner if he can fill out a bit more," added McEnroe. — AFP

Sports

No ordinary player: Ex-refugee with a mental health message

AL-AIN: An ex-refugee who campaigns for mental health issues is firing Australia's campaign at the Asian Cup — and may yet lead his adopted nation to their greatest football triumph. Far from the average footballer, Awer Mabil spent his childhood in a mud hut as a refugee from conflict in Sudan, but after moving to Australia he has risen to become one of the country's most important players.

Mabil, 23, scored on his Socceroos debut in October and he has already bagged two goals in three games at the Asian Cup in UAE, including a glorious, curling strike with his weaker left foot in the 3-2 win over Syria. He greeted that goal, as always, with a distinctive celebration of his own invention — covering his mouth with one hand, with two fingers from the other hand pointing at his forehead, signifying the need to open up about mental problems.

"It's for people suffering from mental problems or depression. It's trying to create awareness for them and bring peace to their mind," Mabil told AFP. "They need to be open and realise that there's people out there that care for them. A lot of people are going through a tough time but it's all in the mind, so you just need to talk to people and open up to someone."

'Thanks Mum'

It's a highly unusual topic for a player to discuss at an important tournament, but it's a subject that's close to Mabil's heart after witnessing mental problems "all over the world". "It's something that I keep in mind because I know a lot of people suffer from it. The sport we play, we're very grateful but it's not easy, it's not what peo-

ple think it is," he said. "People suffer from being alone — you can have all the things in the world but if you don't have peace of mind, what's the point?" He added: "I'm a person for the people and I want to make sure that the people are okay. "If I can represent the people at an international level, I will do that."

And that's what I do for my celebration, for all the people." Mabil also founded the Barefoot to Boots charity for people living in refugee camps, further demonstrating an altruistic streak which he says he owes to his mother. "I think the way my mum raised me in terms of the values that she put into me, she's a single mother and she's taught us a lot," he said. "A lot comes down to how she's raised us and big credit to her — everything that I have is because of her."

Mud hut to Asian Cup

Mabil was born in Kenya's Kakuma refugee camp after his parents fled Sudan, surviving on one meal a day as a child and kicking a ball around to pass the time. But after being resettled in Australia in 2006, he developed his football enough to join Adelaide United as a teenager and then moved to Denmark's FC Midtjylland, surviving two loan spells before nailing down a regular spot this season.

The right winger has seized his Socceroos opportunity with both hands, quickly becoming a starter under Graham Arnold — and he now has high hopes of securing a second straight Asian Cup title for Australia, and their first away from home. "It's an amazing team to be part of, the coaching staff, the players. It's such a good



DUBAI: Australia's forward Awer Mabil drives the ball during the 2019 AFC Asian Cup group B football match between Palestine and Australia at the Maktoum Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Stadium. — AFP

environment," he said. "It makes it easier for people to settle and I feel that I belong in this kind of family and it's easy to thrive in this kind of environment."

Mabil said he was confident Australia would be in the final in Abu Dhabi on February 1, for which he planned to fly over his mother, who is visiting family in Sudan. "I'm not sure if they've

got television in the village. I call her now and then and she sees things on Facebook and stuff like that. I'll call her tonight," he smiled. "For the final I'm planning to fly them over. That's the plan," added Mabil. "We're building good momentum now so we're going to go a long way. I'm very confident in our team, there's a lot more to give." — AFP

Southampton rocked as Derby win shoot-out

LONDON: Southampton's dismal season hit a new low as the Premier League strugglers were dumped out of the FA Cup by second tier Derby after a penalty shoot-out on Wednesday. In a third round replay heavily influenced by the latest controversy over the use of VAR, Ralph Hasenhuttl's side blew a two-goal lead in the closing stages at St Mary's. The tie finished 2-2 after extra-time, with Derby winning 5-3 on penalties.

"There were great penalties in the end and great courage. I'm really proud of them," Derby manager Frank Lampard said. "That takes a lot to come back against Premier League opposition and show the fight and bravery on the ball. I thought we were outstanding in the game." Having avoided falling behind when VAR dubiously ruled out a goal from Derby's Craig Bryson in the first half,

Saints went ahead through Stuart Armstrong's 68th minute header. Nathan Redmond doubled their lead with a cool finish two minutes later. Both Southampton goals were also referred to VAR, but the drama with the video assistant wasn't over.

Derby got one back with 14 minutes left when Harry Wilson's free-kick went straight in and was allowed to stand by VAR despite Southampton's claims that several Rams players were offside. Just six minutes later, Martyn Waghorn headed Derby's equalizer from Wilson's superb cross to force extra-time. Just as they had in the original match at Pride Park, Derby had battled back from 2-0 down. And Lampard's Championship promotion chasers, who knocked Manchester United out of the League Cup earlier this season, claimed another top-flight scalp in the shoot-out.

Redmond was the only player to miss on either team, firing wide before Derby captain Richard Keogh netted the winning kick. "I'm delighted for the team and the squad. The work rate they put in and coming through VAR going against us, it is small margins but it doesn't matter now," said Lampard, whose team won for the first time since being the victims of the Leeds spying scandal last week. — AFP

Son boosts Korea's Asian Cup hopes

ABU DHABI: Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino will be like a nervous parent for the next two weeks as Son Heung-min tries to help South Korea end 59 years of Asian Cup hurt. The mercurial Tottenham forward, who played in the London club's defeat by Manchester United three days earlier, had a hand in both goals as the Koreans beat China 2-0 on Wednesday to reach the last 16 as Group C winners.

But Pochettino will be more concerned that Son not only started the game in Abu Dhabi, but completed 87 minutes — long enough for China's rugged defenders to leave their mark on South Korea's talismanic captain. "Of course I didn't expect to play for so long," Son told AFP. "I'm a bit tired, but that's normal. It was my dream to play football when I was a kid and still it's my dream. I love to play for my country."

The 26-year-old has just come off a punishing run of fixtures with Spurs, playing in 13 matches since the beginning of December. But there were few signs of fatigue against China, as Son won the first-half penalty converted by Hwang Ui-jo and whipped in the corner for Kim Min-jae to head home just after the break. "I think we deserved to win the game," said Son. "We dominated from the start to the end. It was my first game this tournament — clean sheet, 2-0, it's a happy afternoon." Over the past year, Son has played for his country at the World Cup in Russia and

the Asian Games in Jakarta, where he led them to gold, earning him an exemption from South Korea's military service.

"It's an honor to wear this red shirt and play for the national team," he said. "Not everyone gets the chance, and if it's possible I try my best on the pitch always." South Korea, who have failed to win the Asian Cup since 1960, beat the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan 1-0 in their opening two matches in the United Arab Emirates. But the addition of Son has energized the 2015 runners-up, who suddenly look a very different proposition. It will not have done Pochettino's blood pressure any good, however, to see some of the industrial tackles dished out on his Korean star. — AFP



MATCHES ON TV LOCAL TIMING

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|-------|
| SPANISH LEAGUE | | |
| Getafe CF v Deportivo Alaves | | 23:00 |
| beIN SPORTS HD 3 | | |
| GERMAN BUNDESLIGA | | |
| TSG 1899 Hoffenheim v Bayern Munich | | 22:30 |
| beIN SPORTS HD 5 | | |
| FRENCH LEAGUE | | |
| LOSC Lille v Amiens SC | | 22:45 |
| beIN SPORTS HD 6 | | |

Sports

Ronaldo seals Italian Super Cup for Juventus in controversial win

JEDDAH: Cristiano Ronaldo scored the only goal to hand Juventus their first trophy of the season with a 1-0 win over ten-man AC Milan in the Italian Super Cup on Wednesday in Saudi Arabia. Ronaldo — signed by the Italian giants last year from Real Madrid as they target a first Champions League title since 1996 — headed in a 61st-minute winner.

AC Milan played the last quarter of an hour a man down after Ivorian midfielder Franck Kessie saw red for a bad tackle on Emre Can. “I have my first title with Juventus so I’m happy,” said the Portuguese star who now has 28 trophies including five Champions League and league titles from England and Spain, and a European Championship with Portugal. “I really wanted this, to get off to a good start in 2019. “This is only the start, we’ll take it one step at a time. We’ve got this cup, now we must keep working hard to achieve the next trophy,” warned Ronaldo.

The match had been overshadowed by controversy with calls for it to be relocated over human rights issues in Saudi Arabia with women only allowed to attend the game if they were accompanied by a man. Italian football league president Gaetano

Micciche hailed the match as a success, with reports there were up to 15,000 women among the 62,000 crowd in the stadium. “It was a wonderful evening, a festival of sport in a full stadium,” said Micciche. “I hope that it’s the starting point for social evolution in this country.”

Feeling the heat

On the pitch the players suffered in the heat with temperatures hitting 25 degrees Celsius amid freezing conditions in northern Italy. In the end Juventus came away with a record eighth Super Cup title, one more than AC Milan who have won seven. “It was very hot and the important thing was to win,” said coach Massimiliano Allegri who won the trophy for the second time, having lost to AC Milan in 2016 and Lazio last year.

“Ronaldo? We always say the same thing... that’s why we signed him. He is decisive and scores big goals, but the whole team put in a good performance.” AC Milan forward Gonzalo Higuain only played the final 20 minutes against his parent club, ahead of a touted move to Chelsea, having moved away from Turin to make way for Ronaldo last summer. Coach Genaro Gattuso said the Argentine was



JEDDAH: Juventus’ Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) and teammates celebrate their Supercoppa Italiana final win against AC Milan at the King Abdullah Sports City Stadium. — AFP

suffering from a fever and missed the team photo because they were afraid he would infect other players.

“It might seem like a joke, but it’s true. Higuain wasn’t in the picture when the Saudi Prince came to visit

because I was afraid the virus would spread among the other players, so that was my decision. “He had a fever last night, we did everything to get him better, but he didn’t play much, so I preferred a

fresh player.” Milan’s best shot on goal was a Patrick Cutrone effort after the break with their hopes dwindling after Kessie’s sending off. “We had to climb a mountain and we tried,” said Gattuso. — AFP

Atletico crash out of Copa but Real sneak through

MADRID: Antoine Griezmann scored one and set up another but could not prevent Atletico Madrid tumbling out of the Copa del Rey on Wednesday as Girona progressed on away goals after a thrilling 3-3 draw. Real Madrid and Sevilla each avoided upsets, their first-leg victories proving enough despite losses to Leganes and Athletic Bilbao respectively.

Defeat for Real, however, means they have now won only two of their five matches this year while Santiago Solari’s frosty relationship with Isco shows no signs of improvement. Isco started, but struggled, and was replaced in the 68th minute. For Atletico, Griezmann came off the bench in the second half and turned the tie in their favor, teeing up Angel Correa and then scoring himself to give his team a 3-2 lead at a rocking Wanda Metropolitan. But Girona pulled out one more surprise to go through to the quarter-finals as Seydou Doumbia’s shot found the corner in the 88th minute, snatching a 4-4 draw on aggregate after last week’s first leg finished 1-1.

Griezmann had scored then too, and in between against Levante on Saturday. This was his eighth goal in as many matches. “We thought we could leave Griezmann on the bench and only throw him on in the second half to do what he did, score the goal for 3-2,” Atletico coach Diego

Simeone said. “I didn’t take into account Girona scoring again.”

A sumptuous volley from Valery Fernandez and Cristhian Stuani’s header had put Girona in charge after Nikola Kalinic had given Atletico an early lead. Perhaps Simeone had one eye on the Champions League tie against Juventus next month, not to mention his side’s title challenge, which sees them five points behind Barcelona and the Catalans’ closest challengers in La Liga. But it is now six seasons since Atletico last reached the final of Spain’s most prestigious cup competition, which still represented their most likely source of a trophy this term.

They had looked set for a comfortable night when Kalinic was allowed to drift in behind Girona’s dozing defense in the 12th minute, let the ball bounce and drive in on the half-volley. Instead, Girona levelled thanks to a superb volley from Valery. The cross was flicked to the back post, where Valery cushioned the ball with his chest, before hammering it into the far corner. Saul Niguez hobbled off, replaced by Rodrigo, and Girona pulled ahead. Atletico were too generous in giving Stuani space at a free-kick and he nodded in Aleix Garcia’s cross with ease. The ball had hit the net in the 59th minute and in the 61st, Griezmann entered the field. In the 65th, he set up a goal, Kalinic letting his team-mate’s pass run but doing enough to distract Girona’s defense. Correa nipped in and finished.

Madrid were beaten 1-0 by Leganes, Martin Braithwaite giving hope to the hosts, who failed to take a number of chances to launch an unlikely comeback. Real had won the first leg 3-0. “We got through but the performance was weak,” Solari said. — AFP

‘Mad Marko’: Eye-catching addition to Chinese football

LONDON: Marko Arnautovic might not have the superstar status of China’s biggest football imports, but the volatile West Ham striker will provide goals and drama in equal measure if he completes his proposed move. Arnautovic was the subject of a reported £35 million (\$44 million) offer from an unnamed Chinese Super League club last week.

Although the Hammers declared the Austria international was not for sale, the player’s agent and brother Danijel Arnautovic said his client had a “great desire that West Ham accept the offer from China”. Shanghai SIPG are the side said to be interested and have reportedly offered Arnautovic a wage packet of £200,000 per week over a four-year deal. Despite the transfer speculation, the 29-year-old started for West Ham in their 1-0 win against Arsenal tomorrow. When he was taken off in the 71st minute, Arnautovic clapped and waved to West Ham’s fans in a gesture that was interpreted as a farewell.

If Arnautovic does get his wish to cash in on the lucrative offer, Chinese fans should

prepare themselves for an entertaining show from one of the Premier League’s most colorful characters. He does not have the global profile of Brazilians Oscar, Hulk, Alexandre Pato and Ramires, who have all made big-money moves to China in recent years. But Arnautovic, labeled ‘Mad Marko’ for his explosive antics, brings quite the reputation.

‘Keep my mouth shut’

While in Italy, Arnautovic borrowed teammate Samuel Eto’o’s Bentley and it was stolen while in his possession. “I drove it for two weeks to check whether I liked it. I was at a restaurant with friends when it was stolen. This incident affected me so badly I was unable to train,” Arnautovic said at the time. He has also cycled into a golf cart, tore a knee ligament while playing with his dog and reportedly insulted a Vienna policeman by saying: “Shut up, I earn so much I can buy your life”. While playing for Werder Bremen, he was suspended after he was pulled over in his sports car by police for speeding in the early hours of the morning before a match.

He had already got off to a bad start by turning up to training with ‘Champions League winner 2010’ printed on his boots, even though he was left out of the Inter squad for the final. Arnautovic vowed to turn over a new leaf after the birth of his baby daughter, just before his £2 million transfer to Stoke in 2013. “I must keep myself under control. I have a big responsibility as a father. That helps me to be more sensible,” he said. — AFP

Sports

Bayern convinced they can catch Dortmund as Bundesliga returns

BERLIN: Bayern Munich are feeling bullish in their bid to charge down Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund as the German champions kick off the second half of the season with Friday's trip to Hoffenheim. For the first time since January 2011, Bayern are not top of the league after the winter break as they trail Dortmund by six points, but Niko Kovac's side are confident they can overtake their rivals and win their seventh straight Bundesliga title.

"There is no one here who is not convinced we will be champions — six points is not the end of the world," said defender Niklas Sule, who is likely to partner Jerome Boateng at centre-back at Hoffenheim at the expense of the out-of-favour Germany defender Mats Hummels. Captain Manuel Neuer said that "nothing else interests us" but winning the league after Bayern beat Borussia Moenchengladbach on penalties in the final of a four-team mini tournament in Duesseldorf, while Bayern's sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic boasted that "experience is often important and we have a team who have experienced everything".

Former Germany captain and Bayern great Lothar Matthaeus said the title will be decided by which team best adapts to their new role in the title race. "Dortmund are the hunted and Bayern are the hunters," he said. "That is a new role for both teams — whoever can handle it best will win the title." In the Bundesliga warm-up, 18-year-old Canadian rising star Alphonso Davies made his Munich debut after his \$13 million (11.4m euros) signing from MLS team Van-

cover Whitecaps, a sign of Bayern's transfer policy of seeking youngsters to replace their ageing stars and bolster their squad. France World Cup-winner Benjamin Pavard, 22, is already confirmed as joining from Stuttgart in July, and Bayern are also chasing Chelsea winger Callum Hudson-Odoi, 18, defender Lucas Hernandez from Atletico Madrid and RB Leipzig's Germany striker Timo Werner, both 22.

'Stay cool'

Dortmund face a tricky away tie in Saturday evening's big match at fourth-placed RB Leipzig, but are taking Bayern's public display of confidence in their stride. "It's just one game — nothing more. What else should Bayern say in their situation?" said Dortmund midfielder Axel Witsel. "You have to see the thing through, on every occasion, and stay cool in every situation."

After a winter training camp in Marbella, which included wins over Dutch teams Feyenoord and Willem II plus Bundesliga rivals Fortuna Duesseldorf, Dortmund are quietly confident, with captain Marco Reus having recovered from a stomach illness. Striker Paco Alcacer, who has scored 12 goals in as many league games, is still struggling with a leg injury.

With Manuel Akanji sidelined long-term, Omer Toprak and midfielder Julian Weigl are likely to form a makeshift centre-back partnership in Leipzig. After one of the best starts to a season in their history, Dortmund have good reason to let Bayern worry about catching them, after collecting 42 points and scor-



DUSSELDORF: Bayern Munich's German defender Mats Hummels (L) and Moenchengladbach's German midfielder Patrick Herrmann vie for the ball during the Telekom Cup football match between FC Bayern Munich and Borussia Moenchengladbach. — AFP

ing 44 goals in 17 league games. "I'm optimistic, but we can't afford to make any more mistakes," admitted Bayern midfielder Joshua Kimmich after the Bavarians uncharacteristi-

cally lost to Hertha Berlin, Gladbach and Dortmund in the first half of the season. "After the game at Hoffenheim, we'll know where we really stand." — AFP

Chelsea close in on Higuain, Morata set for Atletico

LONDON: Chelsea are set to add some much-needed firepower by reuniting manager Maurizio Sarri with Argentine striker Gonzalo Higuain, according to widespread reports yesterday. Higuain, 31, is halfway through a season-long loan at AC Milan from Juventus, with an option to make the deal permanent. However, Chelsea have reportedly reached an agreement with the Italian sides to bring Higuain on loan with the option to make the deal permanent or extend the loan for another 12 months at the end of the season.

As a result of Higuain's arrival, Alvaro Morata is set to leave Chelsea to return to Spain at Atletico Madrid on loan. Higuain scored a record 36 Serie A goals under Sarri at Napoli before moving to Juventus in 2016 for then the third-highest transfer fee of all time in a 90 million euro move (\$103 million). After winning two league titles with the Bianconeri, though, he was forced out by the signing of Cristiano Ronaldo in July.

Milan paid 18 million euros to sign Higuain on loan, with a clause to make the deal permanent for a further 36 million euros. Yet he has struggled to settle at the San Siro, scoring eight goals in all competitions and was heavily criticized for a meltdown that saw him sent off in a 2-0 defeat to Juventus in November. Higuain only made a late appearance as a substitute when the sides met again, with Juventus 1-0 victors on Wednesday in the Italian Super Cup, which was held in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Milan boss Gennaro Gattuso insisted Higuain had been suffering from a fever, but admitted earlier this week that the striker was determined to link up once more with Sarri. — AFP

Henry, Vieira reunion ends in a stalemate

PARIS: It was honors even between Thierry Henry and Patrick Vieira as the old France and Arsenal teammates clashed for the first time as coaches on Wednesday in a controversy-laden 1-1 draw between Monaco and Nice. The presence of the two greats in the respective dugouts made an international event out of what is usually little more than a hotly contested local derby on the Cote d'Azur.

It was a spicy encounter, with Allan Saint-Maximin putting Nice ahead before youngster Benoit Badiashile levelled for the hosts in the second half. Nice played half the game with 10 men but also saw Saint-Maximin miss a great chance to win all three points when he had a late penalty saved. Members of France's 1998 World Cup-winning side and later colleagues for six years in Arsene Wenger's Arsenal team, Henry and Vieira embraced warmly before kick-off at the Stade Louis II. They did so again at full-time, both allowing themselves a smile even though the stalemate did not satisfy either man. "It was strange," Henry said about taking on his old friend.

"We played together for a long time and we came up the steps together," from the dressing rooms. "We had a little chat but we were both focused on the match." Henry's side are scrapping to pull away from the relegation zone in Ligue 1, and they remain 19th in the table, three points adrift of outright safety. They have still not won at home this season. "A point is not enough, but we could also have been talking about a defeat here," he said.

Vieira's Nice, meanwhile, have lost just once in 10 league matches but might regret dropping two points in their quest to qualify for Europe. "Thierry can be pleased, but that said the draw was the right result," admitted Vieira, who took over last year after leaving New York City FC.

Fabregas absent

Henry, 41, has now won just twice in 11 league games since being appointed to his first coaching job in October, although performances have improved since the turn of the year. He will also wonder how this game might have ended had new signing Cesc Fabregas been available. The Spaniard — another former protegee of Wenger's at Arsenal — joined from Chelsea last week and made his debut at Marseille on Sunday. Unveiled to the media earlier on Wednesday, he was nevertheless ineligible for this match because it was originally supposed to be played in December before being postponed due to security concerns linked to the 'yellow vest' protest movement in France. Fabregas instead watched from the stands, and he saw Saint-Maximin, a former Monaco player, put Nice in front on the half-hour mark, running through to score after some sloppy play from the home side.

Penalty miss

That has characterized Monaco's season, but they were helped when Nice were reduced to 10 men in first-half stoppage time. Ihsan Sacko raked his studs down the calf of Benjamin Henrichs, and was shown a straight red card after the referee reviewed the images. The hosts then drew level early in the second half, Badiashile's header just crossing the line despite the best efforts of Nice 'keeper Walter Benitez.

There was controversy as referee Benoit Bastien used VAR again to give 10-man Nice a penalty in the 76th minute, despite the footage suggesting that Youcef Atal had dived. Henry will feel that justice was done, though, as Saint-Maximin's kick was saved by Diego Benaglio. The home side could still have won it late on, but Radamel Falcao's shot came back off the post, and Monaco are now just a point clear of bottom side Guingamp, who defeated Rennes 2-1. Champions League hopefuls Lyon needed a brilliant late free-kick by Nabil Fekir to grab a point in a 2-2 draw at Toulouse, while Nimes beat Nantes 1-0. Marseille's rotten run persisted as they slumped to a 2-1 defeat at Saint-Etienne despite taking a first-half lead through Dutch midfielder Kevin Strootman. — AFP

A photograph of tennis player Milos Raonic celebrating a victory. He is wearing a teal shirt and a blue headband with a logo. His right arm is raised in a fist, and he has a wide, open-mouthed smile, shouting with joy. The background is dark and out of focus.

MELBOURNE: Canada's Milos Raonic reacts after match point against Switzerland's Stanislas Wawrinka during their men's singles match on day four of the Australian Open tennis tournament. — AFP

Wawrinka edged by Raonic in titanic tussle

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